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HUMAN CARE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A HEIDEGGERIAN PERSPECTIVE ON INTERRELATEDNESS

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Abstract
The modern development theory tends to disregard the fact that the human sustainable development presupposes relational interconnectedness rather than individual autonomy. Modern theories of development are concentrated on economic growth, technological development, industrial efficiency, and individual achievements. However, they disregard the ontological truth that humans are relational by nature. The contemporary sustainability crisis is therefore not only an environmental, economic, or social issue but also an ontological issue, which concerns the understanding of the human and their place in the world.
The study employs the conceptual—analytical and critical hermeneutic method to interpret the existential ontology of Heidegger and evaluate its significance for the contemporary sustainable development. The study argues that sustainable human development can neither be achieved through economic growth, technological development, nor institutional intervention. It demands a new understanding of human being, which implies relationality, responsibility, and ecologicity of the human existence. In particular, the concept of challenges the perception of nature as an object that is accessible for unlimited exploitation, while the concept of "Being-with" reveals the essentially communal nature of human being. Furthermore, the concept of care reveals the fact that human being involves responsibility for oneself, for other humans and for the world, where human life takes place.
Thus, the main conclusion of the study is that sustainable human development should not only be perceived through the lens of material or economic development but also as a flourishing of the human being in the relational world.
Keywords: "Being—in—the—World", "Being—with", interrelatedness, care, and sustainable development

Introduction

One of the central problems in the philosophical tradition was the problem of interrelatednessand its relationship to the sustainable development. In the current study, interconnectedness means the basic ontological condition that the human beings are never isolated from their surroundings or nature. The famous German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) defines human being as "Being—in—the—World". The central question raised in the study is why does the contemporary development theory disregard the fact that sustainable human development implies relational interconnectedness rather than isolated individual autonomy? The study evaluates the existential

ontology of Heidegger as the philosophical basis for the human sustainability.

1.0 Background of the Study

The modern discourse of sustainable development has become especially relevant due to increasing environmental pollution, social inequality, and the need to resolve the tension between economic development and preservation of natural resources. According to the approach to

sustainable development, the needs of the current generation should be met without harming the capability of future generations to satisfy theirs.[1] While the paradigm of sustainable development includes such spheres as economic, social, and environmental spheres, its philosophical foundations should also be addressed. In particular, the relationship between humans and nature should be studied as the basis of sustainable development. Therefore, sustainable development is mostly considered within the economy, technology, and environment, while its philosophical like the question of human existence, is rarely discussed. Thus, the question arises: can sustainable development be achieved without the review of the relation between humans and the world they live in?

In this context, the ideas of Martin Heidegger may help in answering this question. In his work *Being and Time*, he develops the concept of *Dasein*, whose main characteristic is "Being—in—the—World".[2]Humans are not just detached subjects who exist in a neutral environment; on the contrary, they exist through interaction with other people and the world around them. Also, care (*Sorge*) is identified by Heidegger as the existential structure of *Dasein*. Care implies interaction with the world, concern about different opportunities, and consideration of conditions of existence.[3] Thus, care cannot be seen only as emotional concern but also as an existential foundation of human existence that can be useful in the philosophy of sustainable development.

Also, the criticism of technology by Heidegger helps to understand how the nature may be perceived as the source of human exploitation. In his work The Question Concerning Technology, he describes the technological way of revealing (enframing – Gestell) in which things are constructed according to their utility value.[4] Such an approach to the world creates certain dangers for the practices of development aimed at economic efficiency but ignoring ecological relations and human well-being. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the potential for using the concepts of care, "Being—in—the—World", and enframing for the discussion of the philosophy of sustainable development. It focuses on the relations between humans and the world, and human relationships. Thus, the ideas of Heidegger can help to achieve the philosophical understanding of sustainable development by criticizing instrumentalism and considering existential aspects. This study is not focused on the fact that Heidegger developed the theory of sustainability.

2.0 Heideggerian Concept of Interrelatedness

Martin Heidegger is the one of the most influential and controversial philosophers of the twentieth century. Born in 1889 in Messkirch, Germany, Heidegger develops the philosophical project concerned with the question of Being.[5] The most influential contribution to this project is *Being and Time*, written in 1827, where he conducts the existential analysis of human being through the concept of *Dasein*.[6]

In the current study, Heidegger's importance lies in the fact that he rejects the idea of the human being as an isolated subject who exists separately

[1]. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 43.

[2]. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 12–13.

[3].Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 41.

[4].Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essay,* trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 19—23.

[5]. Rüdigar Safranski and Martin Heidegger*: Between Good and Evil* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 45–52.

[6]. Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 78–79.

from the world and establishes relationships with it. Instead, he argues that *Dasein* is essentially "Being—in—the—World".[7]Humans do not first exist as isolated subjects and establish relationships with the world but their existence is defined through the situated involvement with the world, other human beings, activities, and possibilities of the existence.

The term interrelatedness in this study is used as an interpretive term, which is derived from the implication of the concepts such as "Being—in—the—World", "Being—with",worldhood, practical involvement, and care. It should not be regarded as the technical term, which Heidegger used to develop his theory of sustainable development.

Heidegger's analysis of ordinary existence reveals that human beings encounter the world not as a set of isolated objects but as the meaningful context of involvement. Through the analysis of equipment and practical activities, Heidegger demonstrates that the entities acquire significance within the network of the relationships, purposes, and activities. The notion of "ready—to—hand" (Zuhandenheit) reveals this practical structure since the entities encountered in the everyday activities are meaningful in relation to what humans are doing and to the other entities within the broader context of involvement.[8]

Thus, the world is not initially encountered as the detached set of the neutral objects. It is experienced as the meaningful field in which human beings act, think, plan, communicate, work, and realize their possibilities. This ontological insight provides the foundation for the understanding of human being as relational rather than isolated.

2.1 "Being—in—the—World"

"Being—in—the—World" is the basic structure, which Heidegger uses for the analysis of human being in *Being and Time*. "Being—in—the—World" is a radical departure from the philosophical approaches, which conceive human being as the thinking subject separate from the external world.[9] For instance, Descartes starts his philosophical investigation with the certainty of the thinking subject and afterwards faces the problem of the knowledge of the external world. Heidegger turns this approach upside down by arguing that human being is always situated in the meaningful world.

"Being—in—the—World" does not mean the simple physical location. It is the existential structure showing that human beings are always involved in the world of relationships, activities, meanings, projects, and possibilities.[10]Working, speaking, studying, using the equipment, planning, caring, fearing, and communicating all presuppose the involvement of the human being with the world. Therefore, Heidegger considers it inadequate to perceive human being only through abstract theories of the isolated mind.[11]

This conception has very important implications for the perception of development. If human being is "Being—in—the—World", then the environment cannot be perceived only as the external background of the human development. The world is the meaningful context of human being. Human beings depend on the ecological, social, cultural, and historical conditions that cannot be simply separated from the existence.

Therefore, the account of Heidegger challenges the subject—object model, where human beings appear as the autonomous subjects standing in front of the external world of objects. Human existence is instead situated, practical, historical,

[7]. Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 80–87.

[8].Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 98–107.

[9].Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 90–97

[10].Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 78.

[11]. Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 78.

and relational.[12] This ontological insight provides the foundation for reconsideration of the sustainable development as the question of not only managing the external resources but also inhabiting the world.

2.2 "Being—with": Coexistence and Relationality

The relational nature of *Dasein* is even more evident in Heidegger's concept of "Being—with". Human being is not only the individual relationship between the self and the world. It is also the essentially existence with others. Therefore, Heidegger rejects the assumption that individual existence is primary and social existence is added after that. "Being—with" is an integral part of the structure of *Dasein* itself.[13]

Even when a person is physically alone, they exists in the world, which is shaped by the others. Like language, customs, institutions, traditions, technologies, and practices have the social and historical character. Therefore, human beings shape themselves in the world constituted by relationships with the others.

At the same time, Heidegger also describes the possibility of inauthentic existence through the concept of das Man, which is usually translated as "the They". People can surrender their possibilities of existence to the anonymous social expectations about the way of thinking, acting, and living.[14] Authenticity is the taking responsibility for one's possibilities rather than conforming to the prevailing expectations.

This aspect is important for the sustainable development since unsustainable practices are not produced by the isolated individuals. The patterns of consumption, production, technological application, and environmental behavior are embedded into the social practices and institutions. Therefore, the transformation towards sustainability requires the consideration of the social world where individual decisions are formed.

2.2.1 Human Relationship and Coexistence

"Being—with" establishes the ontological foundation for human coexistence. Humans exist in the shared world in which the relationships influence their identity, perception, and possibilities. Language, education, culture, values, and social practices are acquired through the interactions with the others. Therefore, the self cannot be understood apart from the community in which it exists.[15]

This relational perspective undermines the extreme forms of individualism that assume that the individual is completely self-sufficient. Human beings are dependent on the social relations for the development and realization of their potentials. Working, studying, communicating, participating in politics, and leading the cultural life all take place in the shared world.

The relationship with others may, however, foster either authentic or inauthentic existence. Social uniformity may decrease individual responsibility while relations may generate conditions for mutual understanding and responsible coexistence. "Being—with" shows that human existence is relational but without reduction of the individual into the community.

2.2.2 Care and the Relational Structure of Existence

Heidegger's ontology interprets the relational structure of *Dasein* as an aspect of his concept of care (*Sorge*). Care cannot be regarded merely as a norm or principle of ethics or environment. The concept of care is central to Heidegger's ontology

[12]. Hubert L. Dreyfus, *"Being—in—the—World": A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 40–45.

[13]. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 149–155.

[14]. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 164–168.

[15]. Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 153–160.

since care constitutes the structure of human existence. It means that humans are those beings for whom their own existence, relations with others and potentialities matter.[16]

That is why care correlates with the fact that *Dasein* is placed in the world, exists with others and projects itself toward potentialities. The mentioned structure has great significance in relation to sustainable development since it enables to interpret the relation between human existence and those conditions which preserve it in more profound way.

Care for oneself does not mean the absolute individualism and self—interests. *Dasein* needs to take responsibility for its own possibilities instead of being surrendered to "the They".[17] In the context of sustainability, the mentioned insight can help to reflect on consumption, moderation, and responsible long-run decision-making. These applications are, however, an interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy but not his direct environmental ethic.

Care is also connected with the human coexistence. Being *Dasein* "Being—with" human existence cannot be reduced to isolated self—interests. The development of individual's correlates with the world in which they exist and it gives ontological ground for thinking about the social aspects of sustainability such as solidarity, participation and the care for those conditions of existence which allow individuals' flourishing.

On the whole, being *Dasein* is "Being—in—the—World" so the conditions of the world cannot be considered entirely external for human existence. It does not mean that Heidegger has developed the ecological conservation theory or the theory of intergenerational justice. It is rather the ontological ground for overcoming the assumption that the natural world is merely the external collection of objects for unlimited human use. It is the ontological ground for challenging the separation between human beings and their world which becomes especially crucial in consideration of the technological conception of nature.

3.0 Sustainable Development

The modern concept of sustainable development is an institutional answer to the interconnections and challenges which have been identified in the previous sections. *Our common future* the Brandt and report defines sustainable development as development which meets the needs of the present generation without the harm to the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs.[18]

This definition became the basis for considering sustainable development as the way of the relation between present and future development. After that, sustainable development acquired connection with economic prosperity, social inclusion, environmental protection, governance, innovation, and more.

Three dimensions of sustainability which are economic, social, and environmental are not the independent spheres of existence but the interconnected aspects of human development.[19]Failure in one of them may cause some consequences in another.

From the perspective of this study, however, the significance of these dimensions extends beyond the policy classification. The interdependence of these spheres raises the philosophical question of how the conception of human existence becomes understandable for interpretation of economic, social and environmental life as the interconnected phenomena?

3.1 Economic Dimension

[16]. Dreyfus, *Being—in—the—World,*99–11.

[17]. Dreyfus, *Being—in—the—World,* 221–230.

[18]. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future,* 41–42.

[19]. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future,* 43.

The economic dimension of sustainable development includes the necessity to create stable and productive economies able to provide livelihoods, to reduce poverty and improve human wellbeing. The sustainable economy uses the resources wisely and responsibly, promotes innovation, creates jobs and gives the material conditions necessary for education, health care, infrastructure and other types of development.

Nevertheless, economic development can be harmful to sustainability as well if it becomes the unlimited resource extraction and use. For example, fossil fuel based economic development can provide short—term profit but lead to ecological damage and climatic change.

Therefore, the sustainable economic development should be based on the balance between production, human wellbeing, the ecology and responsibility.

Herman Daly's critique of the unlimited growth of the economy is particularly interesting in this case. According to Daly, economy is a sub—system of ecological system and thus cannot grow infinitely on the finite planet.[20]It challenges the assumption that economy can grow without consideration of the limits which it faces.

The philosophical significance of this assumption lies in the fact that wealth should not be regarded as the mere accumulation of goods. The sustainable economic development concerns human well—being, dignity, security and other conditions of human meaningful life. Therefore, sustainable economic development presupposes long-run vision of things and the concept of sufficiency.

3.2 Social Dimension

Social dimension of sustainable development is correlated with the justice, equality, human dignity, participation and inclusion. When development benefits certain privileged groups of people while other individuals experience poverty, exclusion, discrimination or exploitation it can be regarded as non—sustainable.

The theory of justice of John Rawls and the concept of capability by Amartya Sen can be interpreted as the philosophical backgrounds for thinking about the sustainable distribution of opportunities and resources.[21]From these perspectives, sustainable development should generate such conditions in which people have opportunities to develop their capabilities and to take part in social processes.[22]

Therefore, the social sustainability is the complex phenomenon of education, health care, gender equality, human rights, inclusion, cultural continuity, participation in decision—making and many others. The inequality can undermine social coherence and stability which are necessary for development in the long run. Therefore, sustainable development needs not only economic productivity but also the relationships of humans which can foster human dignity and collective flourishing.

This dimension relates to the Heidegger's analysis of "Being—in—the—World" since the human existence cannot be fully separate from other individuals. However, Heidegger's philosophy is not a complete theory of social justice. It contributes mainly to the understanding of the relational nature of human existence.

3.3 Environmental Dimension

Environmental dimension concerns the preservation of ecosystems, biodiversity, forests, water, land, minerals, climate systems and other ecological conditions necessary for life. The activities such as deforestation, pollution, over—fishing, emission of greenhousegas and

[20]. Herman Daly, *Steady—State Economics* (Washington Dc: Island Press, 1991), 23–29.

[21]. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 45–49.

[22]. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 30–39.

unsustainable extraction put increasing pressure on ecological systems.[23] The idea of environmental sustainability challenges the assumption that nature is the limitless reservoir of resources. Such a deep ecological perspective as Arne Næss's perspective challenges pure anthropocentrism.

Environmental sustainability involves not only the preservation of resources for future human consumption. It also needs the reconsideration of the manner of humans understanding and inhabiting the natural world. Recycling, renewable energy, reforestation, sustainable agriculture, conservation and pollution control are necessary for it but their long—run success depends upon the values and conceptions of nature that humans follow in practice.

It is in this case when Heidegger's ontology becomes relevant for our discussion. Being *Dasein* "Being—in—the—World" it is obvious that the natural world cannot be regarded as the external object for human existence.[24]This does not mean that all living beings possess some intrinsic value. It provides just the critique of the conceptual separation enabling to interpret nature as the object for human use.

3.4 Obstacles to Human Sustainable Development

The human sustainable development concerns the satisfaction of the needs of the present while preserving the conditions necessary for future generations to satisfy theirs. It implies not only technological progress and economic development but also the justice, dignity, security, cooperation, responsible governance, ecological stewardship.[25]

One of the main obstacles is the conflict between human desires and the social, economic, political and ecological constraints for those desires. On one hand, the modern civilization has reached the high level of technological progress.

On the other hand, poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, political instability and social alienation coexist with it.

Such facts show that development is not the automatic and the purely technical process. The economic inequality can contribute to the political instability, the political corruption can exacerbate social injustice, the social exclusion may undermine economic participation, and ecological degradation may threaten the economic and social stability. The sustainable development presupposes therefore not an isolated intervention but integration.

The existence of such obstacles, however, raises the question which is answered in this study. It concerns the possibility that not only the problem of the implementation of development policies lies in the wrong conception of human beings and nature informing these policies.

4.0 Reframing Sustainable Development in Light of Heidegger's Existential Ontology

The above discussion has established two interrelated themes. First, there is the trend evident in the history of development whereby concern gradually moves from human well—being and economic production toward social justice, freedom, environmental protection and generational responsibility. Second, the existential ontology of Heidegger challenges the notion of the human being as an isolated individual being faced with an objective world outside of him. The bringing together of these two lines of inquiry leads to philosophical reframing of sustainable development.

Reframing is not done in a manner that attempts to replace the economics, environmental sciences, political theory or development policy with Heidegger an philosophy. Rather, it entails

[23]. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 45–47.

[24]. Arne Næss, "The Shallow and the Deep, Long—Range Ecology Movement," Inquiry 16, no.1 1973: 95–100.

[25]. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136–174.

looking at the ontological presumptions underlying our conceptions of nature and development. Sustainable development may therefore require not just better institutions and technologies but also a new way of viewing what human being within the world entails.

The Brandt and conception of sustainable development plays an essential role in defining sustainable development as concerning the future generations.[26] Nevertheless, this conception has tended to be expressed by means of measurable indicators such as economic productivity, poverty reduction, environmental protection, technological advances and good governance. All these factors are part and parcel of sustainable development. But by themselves, they fail to address an ontological question that needs answering before any development can be said to be sustainable.

4.1 From the isolated subject to "Being—in—the—World"

First basis for the reframing of sustainable development can be found in Heidegger's idea of "Being—in—the—World". If humans are necessarily situated within the world, then the environment cannot be taken to be an external domain that the humans move into once they establish their identity as autonomous individuals.

Humans are dependent on the world in ecological, social, cultural and historical relations. Conditions in food, water, air, land, institutions, communities, language, technology and culture form the conditions in which human existence becomes possible. As a result, environmental degradation cannot be taken merely as damaging of the external to human existence. Environmental degradation is also the transformation of the conditions in which humans are able to live.

What this is not implying is the claim that nature exists for human beings alone. On the contrary, it challenges reduction of nature to an object that exhausts its significance in being useful to humanity. Human existence in this case would need to be seen in terms of sustainable development.

4.2 Going beyond Instrumental development

Instrumentality of nature goes hand—in—hand with instrumentalism of development as seen in conventional developmental indicators. Production, income, infrastructure, industrialization and technological modernization among others are very crucial factors. But they become inadequate once they are seen as complete measures of the good for humans.

By seeing sustainable development in terms of human capabilities Sen's concept of development as freedom already goes beyond the reduction of development to economic accumulation.[27] Heidegger makes it possible for this kind of critique to go a step further by posing an ontological question. The question is no longer about the possession of goods and freedoms by human beings. Rather, the question becomes what it means for humans to be living beings and thriving within a world.

Economic growth can co—exist with environmental destruction, inequality, social breakdown and ecological deterioration. What this implies is that quantitative aspects such as production cannot by themselves determine the quality and sustainability of human existence. In other words, development can only be properly assessed in relation to relationships, practices and ways of living within the world that make existence possible.

Philosophical contribution of Heidegger, therefore, consists in making the shift from seeing development in terms of accumulation of objects to seeing it as mode of human existence. This shift neither dismisses the economic aspect of development but contextualizes it within a broader ontological horizon.

[26]. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, 43.

[27]. Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 3–11.

4.3 Caring and sustainable practice

Caring is an ontological characteristic of human beings since they are beings who are interested in their own existence and are continually involved in the possibilities, other beings and the world.[28]

Caring, can provide ontological foundation for the sustainable practices. Humans are in dependence of the conditions in which they live and their projects take place in a world sustaining them. Destruction of the world, therefore, becomes the undoing of the possibilities of human existence.

Care for oneself, in Heidegger's sense, is not restricted to self interest. It entails taking up of responsibilities of the one's own possibilities in a manner independent of socially anonymous pressures.[29] Such a concept of care, once applied in terms of sustainable development, can support practices of moderation, responsible consumption, environmental consciousness and long term thinking.

But these applications of Heidegger's ontology should be viewed in their philosophical extension rather than direct application in terms of the prescriptions of Heidegger. He does not offer theory of sustainable consumption or environmental policy. But he offers more profound ontological account that can philosophically interpret responsible practices of dwelling.

4.4 Intergenerational responsibility and the question of possibilities

Temporal factor is introduced in the sustainable development by reason of the fact that present generation makes decisions whose effects go beyond their existence in the immediate period. In the Brundtland definition of sustainability, it is placed at the center whereas environmental ethic sees the problem in the responsibility of the present towards the future generations.

Temporal existence and orientation to possibilities characteristic of *Dasein* can help this question of sustainability to be seen ontologically in terms of Heidegger's analysis. Sustainability of the world concerns itself with the preservation of the conditions enabling future generations to make the world meaningful to themselves and pursue the possibilities of their existence.

In other words, the problem is not merely to ensure that enough quantities of resources are left to support the future generations. Rather, it is about ensuring a world that preserves the conditions of existence that allow the meaningful way of living.

Conclusion

Analysis conducted in the above study has established that the current sustainability crisis has both practical and philosophical dimensions. Heidegger's existential ontology provides an alternative to this crisis. In his "Being—in—the—World", he shows us that the human existence is essentially situational within the world instead of being initially an isolated individual before moving into a relationship with the world. By virtue of "Being—with", he shows the social character of the human existence.

Also by his critique of the modern technology, he exposes us to the danger of disclosing of nature in the mode of standing reserve. In his concept of care, he provides the existential foundation through which human being is interested in his or her existence and possibilities.

In this regard, the main argument of this study is that human sustainable development requires an ontological shift from understanding of human beings as isolated subject facing nature as an external resource to a situation whereby human existence is seen in terms of "Being—in—the—World"and "Being—with—others".

In this respect, Heidegger's existential ontology can contribute to sustainable development by

[28]. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 332.

[29]. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 232–244, 343–348.

revealing that ecological crisis is the crisis of human self—understanding. It is no longer a question of how human beings can exploit the nature more efficiently or leave enough quantities for the future generation. It is the question of how they can live within their worlds responsibly.

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