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# HEIDEGGERIAN ECSTASIS OF MAN; EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS, AND APPLICABILITY TO NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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#### **Article History**

Received: 13/12/2024 Accepted: 27/12/2024 Published: 31/12/2024 **Abstract:** The existence of man is influenced by various inputs from the people around him. This is because he learns every day as he interacts with other people within his social milieu. This goes a long way in influencing his behavior and social outlook. Through such, he can confront whatever situation that may come his way with confidence without qualms or fretting. Thus, various theories, postulations, assertions and suggestions help to contribute to the development of the individual and the society. These often emanate from different individuals and are pointers to existence. Martin Heidegger is one of such individuals whose postulation is found to be of immense benefits to society and individuals as well. In his postulation on the ecstasies of man, Heidegger exposed how man can live his life and derive pleasure from nature's benevolence. This study, therefore, examined his teachings on the ecstasies of man, its educational implications, and its applicability to the Nigerian educational system. The study was carried out under these headings: Introduction, explication of key concepts, historical excursion on Martin Heidegger, applicability of his teaching to the Nigerian educational system and conclusion.

**Keywords:** Heideggerian Ecstasis, Implications, Applicability & Educational System.

#### Introduction

Man and his nature have been given different interpretations. These ranged from creation narrative, evolution or scientific views. From the creation narrative, man is said to be created in the image and likeness of an absolute Being or God. He (man) in this narrative is a tripartite being composite of body, soul and spirit. This view is further supported by the African traditionalists who believed that man is created by an invisible entity.

The scientific view is held by the evolutionists; the evolutionists are a group of people who believe in the theory of evolution. "The theory of evolution, which developed from the perspective of science states that man, like all other living things (animals and plants) have evolved from simpler forms of life by a process of slow and gradual change (evolution)". 1 Scientists in the field of paleontology, comparative anatomy, embryology, natural history, etc, have provide evidence for this evolutionary account of the origin of man and other creatures from the study of fossils. And through gradual processes, these fossils developed into different forms of species. This synchronizes with Charles Darwin postulation which gave explicit formulation of the theory of evolution. According to the theory, all living things (animals and plants) evolved from simpler forms through a gradual process of change. Every one of them struggles to exist. To exist, both food and a favourable environment are essentials. Only living things with those characteristics that enable them to feed on available food and to survive the effects of the environment can continue its line of development or evolution to a higher form.

In the struggle for existence, no two living things (for example, animals) are exactly alike. As a result, some are better suited to a particular environment than others. If the adaptable variations, traits or characteristics are inherited, then evolution will proceed through their natural selection and the fittest will survive. That is to say, evolution involves struggle for survival and in that struggle, only the fittest survives. Man happens to come out victorious and attain the present status quo. In this struggle for survival, man is aided by his inherent capacity for physical and psychological changes, through various forms of physical, intellectual and spiritual nourishment and transformations of his environment. Man also possessed certain attributes that are given to him alone, and some similar to those of lower brutes and plants.

The essence and nature of man need a careful study in the contemporary society of today, where we find a total yes to atheism and agnosticism, where to contemporary man, his nature as in consisted in living consciousness with the supreme is no longer a matter of fact but that those who have posited this idea of God previously, had resorted to it because of fear or as a consolation for their unexamined and fearful world. This idea for the contemporary man is now vague and unfounded. The transcendental and ontological Being (God) no longer exists and not only just that, but like Fredrick Nietzsche (1841 - 1900) who proclaimed the "death of God" and was heavily bolstered by Jean Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980) that He (God) no longer is and for Karl Mark, "God ought not to exist" since, he is the cause of human alienation.

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Contemporary man, finds rest and peace in his experience in the world which has caused him all the hullaballoo and of which he has come to understand according to his own judgement. It was this kind of mentality that gave assurance to Karl Mark (1818 - 1883) that "God ought exist". This worrisome scenario gave impetus to the evolutiss of some many schools of thought in philosophy ranging from Idealism, Realism, Existentialism, Naturalism etc.

This work has as a focal point on the teachings of the existentialist philosophers of which Martin Heidegger (1883-1976), is one of them. Other existentialist philosophers are Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), Martin Buber (1887-1965) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Among all of them, this work revolves around the teachings of Martin Heidegger. Education is the process that has enabled all the afore-mentioned to come to terms the realities of their various postulation or speculations.

The work therefore covers the following areas: Introduction, explications of key concepts, a brief historical excursion about the man Martin Heidegger, components of Heidegger's view on the ecstasis of man, educational implications of his teachings Pari passu the Nigerian educational system and finally summary and conclusion.

#### **Explication of Key concepts**

Francis Bacon once opined that no man can claim to be master of words. One word may be interpreted differently by different people. Thus, it is worthwhile to commence a work like this by trying to explain words in the context in which they are used. In trying to know the contextual nature of our topics, we tend them to apply such words, not as used in everyday speaking but as implied in the context.

Therefore, in the context of this work, the following words are explained:

**Existentialism:** Existentialism, as a philosophical school of thought, focuses on the existence of mankind. It emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice. It is their view that human beings define their meaning in life and try to make rational decisions irrespective of existing in an irrational universe.

Etymologically, the concept is coined from the Latin word "existere" which literally means "to stand out". Thus, existentialism suggest that individuals have to take responsibility for taking action and their own destinies where choices vital and inevitable to human existence are to be made.

The chambers 20<sup>th</sup> century dictionary define existentialism as ... "a term covering a number of objective universal values and holding that a man must create values for himself through action and by living each moment to the full" (Chambers Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2014).

This is an important definition to which this whole work will be anchored upon. The existentialist, (proponents of existentialism) discuss man as a tangible being full of a nature which perplex or astonished man himself; they do not deal or discuss man as merely among a class of beings called by the universal name man. Existentialism stresses more on the existence of man, than on his essence. It scans and expanciates upon the human condition and activities pessimistically, stressing the © Copyright IRASS Publisher. All Rights Reserved

individuality and uniqueness of every man in terms of choice and freedom and holding that these go a long way to make man suffer.

**Ecstasis:** This concept has different connotations. It suffices to say that synonymous words often differ in the context of their usugeor application. This tally with Langwid Wittgenstein (1889-1915) who avers that the meaning of a word or term is only gotten in the context in which such a term; word or concept is used.

Etymologically, the concept "ecstasis" is the Greek phrase "ekstasis" which when literally translated means a displacement from an original positon, standing out, from the proper place hence rising above. It also implies a transference of consciousness from the physical plane to another inner and superior plane, accompanied by awareness and memory of the experience. In line with this Macquairrie J. wrote that etymologically the concept as an existentialist concept "...is nothing but the Greek cognate of existence" (Macquairrie, 1972).

To be in estacy or ecstatic in this sense is to "go beyond oneself". Man is always on his way going somewhere, not in terms of moving from place to place but that, his whole being is geared to a destiny. To exist for the existentialists is "stand out" and man in very nature is such, hence, he 'stands out' from all other being in the sense that; of all beings and things that are, man is the only one capable of self-consciousness. "Ecstasis" is therefore, nothing but "existence".

According to Wikipedia, the concept is used "in existentialism usually to mean 'outside-itself'. consciousness, for example, is not self-enclosed as one can be conscious of another person, who falls well outside one's own self. In a sense, consciousness is usually "outside itself" in that its object (what it, what are, thinks about, or perceives is not itself). This is in contrast to the term "ecstasis" which means from "standing within oneself" which relate to contemplation from the perspective of a speculator. All these refers to man's existence. Existence is not the action of a thing in respect of time and space but there are merely conditions in which one can exist for if we agree with the former, then we could as well say that a stone, tree or even God exist as man does. Martin Heidegger holds that all these are of being-in-the-world. To exist therefore; is to 'go beyond' oneself, to love, be free and to communicate with others in consciousness. Over idea of existence as 'going beyond' oneself to another is then, as a reliance on this 'other' (un-satisfaction of man in himself) and this idea of man's reliance on another, can lead to other standpoint of certain fields in man's life.

Existence is nothing but humanism from the foregoing. To exist is to be human. Humanity is encapsulated in instincts. Plants and animals in this sense can be said not to exist because of their blind instincts, whereas, God does not need to exist because He is above everything to require anything.

Having a-rayed briefly what ecstasis (existence) is, it is pertinent to clarify the notion of man per se. Everyone knows and can easily identify the being of man but when asked about the definition of him, extra-studies is often needed.

Man: The common conception of man very often underweights what really man is and most often too, we give different views of what really, he is or is not. Man can never be explored in the totality of his being Ipso facto, different studies consider man from different perspectives; just as the sociologist

IRASS Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies Vol-1, Iss-3 (December - 2024): 89-94 will see the man in a community, the psychologist would from evolutionary trends (Micharlson, 1956).

Philosophers and many religious leaders, however, point out that, no matter how man came to be, no matter what his genesis is, he is no less than what he is - a self-conscious, rational being with unique characteristics. The nature and character of a thing is determined not so much by its beginning but by its end. Man's aspirations give him his place and his importance in the world. Man has a great variety of characteristics not shared by another living creatures. Man also has great adaptive powers and the capacity to exert some control over his own development.

The view about the nature of man as far as philosophical discussion is concern can continue ad infinitum. But to borrow a leaf from Harold H. Titus (1970) in his most celebrated work titled "living issues in philosophy" there are three perspectives from which the nature of man can be look at. These are the classical or rational view inherited largely from Greece and Rome. The religious view supported by most of the great religions of the world such as Judaeo - Christianity, Islam, Hinduism etc. The naturalistic or biological view which is largely a brain-child of the natural sciences.

A summary of the stand of the first group (classically or rationalistic) is that "man is to be understood primarily from the viewpoint of the nature and the uniqueness of his rational powers". Mind is the unifying and organizing principle and, as such, is distinguished from the body. Reason is the pride and glory of man; <sup>5</sup> on the other hand, the religious viewpoint portray man as a creature of God having a divine nature, whose nature is not tie down to his "reason" or his relation to nature. Man stands at the point where nature and spirit meet.

Man stands at the point where nature and spirit meet. The fact that man is a finite creature, bound to the earth explains his weakness and his sinfulness. The fact that man is in part

a spiritual being who transcend nature explains his uniqueness worth, and almost unlimited possibilities.

... Man is an expression of the intelligence and moral purpose presenting the universe. Man transcends the natural conditions of life; he does not become himself until he is devoted to the highest that he knows, to God (Ibid).

The scientific interpretation of man are many and varied, depending on the science to which an individual wishes to consider or philosophize. All in all, the summary of the scientific viewpoint is that man's origin is independent of the creation narrative and his interpretation of who he is (nature-nurture dichotomy Naturan naturantan). Man evolved from a single species, Homo sapiens. Man thus differs from other living things (animals and plants) by his "advanced anatomical and physiological complexity", and his more elaborate behavioural patterns (Wikipedia, https/enim Wikipedia.org wiki).

**Education:** as a concept, education is pregnant with a lot of meanings as it is a potent tool of change for both an individual and the society at large. It reforms, enlightens, empowers, informs, and broadens one's horizon. It resuscitates, unifies and it is such that any nation neglecting its services, does that at her own peril. For one to be educated, he must learn and to learn one must be

ready to acquire necessary skills and learning experiences associated with some precepts like the ecstasis of man.

The recognition of the relevance of education in both national, state, local and individual development has arouse overwhelming interest in recent time, particularly in Nigeria where the importance of education has been increasingly emphasized considering the substantial increase in the resources allocated to it by various agencies. It is an instrument of training and development of any nation and its citizenry. It is therefore an inevitable huge and dynamic venture for the good of man and his society. It is a process of impartation of knowledge.

Education is a process whereby one acquires positive changes in behaviour geared towards contributing to positive development of one's self and the society in which one lives (Nwaka & Nneka, 2012) in view of this, the contribution of many scholars towards the development of education cannot be overemphasized, hence the contribution of Martin Heidegger and his postulations.

An excursion on Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Martin Heidegger was a German philosopher and a seminal thinker in the continental tradition of philosophy. He was best known for contributions to phenomenology, hermeneutics, and existentialism. He was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September, 1889 in Messkirch, Germany and died on the 26<sup>th</sup> May, 1970 in Freburg in Breisgau Germany. Martin Heidegger was influenced Friedrich Nietzsche, Immanuel Kant and George Wilhelm Friedrich. But at an early age before he met with the duo, has influenced by Aristotle, mediated through Catholic theology, medieval philosophy and Franz Brentano. Aristotle ethical, logical, and metaphysical works were crucial to the development of his thought in the crucial period of the 1920s. He was also an adent admirer of Edmund Hurssel who he is regarded as a student whom he dedicated his work "Being and time" published in 1927. To this work "Catapulted Heidegger to a positon of international intellectual visibility and provided the philosophical impetus for a number of later programmes and ideas in the contemporary European tradition, including Sartre's existentialism".

In short, Heidegger exerted much influence on European both philosophically, socially politically and religiously. His teaching touched so many facets of European life. His idea about man and other teachings are whereby briefly presented.

Exposition on Heidegger's teaching on the ecstasis of Man & educational implication to (NIGERIA): Martin Heidegger's philosophical stand offers profound insights into human existence and its ecstasis nature, which in turn have immense educational implications. His idea of ectasis refers to the human beings unique ability to transcend toward the past (tradition and memory), present (engagement and action), and future (anticipation and potentiality).

Accordingly, some of his teaching on the ecstasis of man and their educational implications visa vis Nigeria are hereby presented.

**Ecstatic Temporality:** In one of his works titled "Being and Time", Martin Heidegger describes human existence (Dasein) as fundamentally temporal and characterized by an ecstatic relationship to time. This has three components:

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The Past (Gewesenheit): here, an individual is shaped by his historical context, tradition, and personal experiences. This falls in line with what Fafunwai wrote "A people with no knowledge of their past would suffer from collective amnesia, groping blindly into the future without guide-posts of precedence to shape their course" (Fafunwa, 2004). Ecstasis gives an individual the sense of possibility and responsibility for what one can become. This tallies with the general belief of existentialists philosophers that man is a bundle of possibilities that are constantly actualized depending on an individual's disposition and self-awareness. This calls to mind the idea of ecstatic temporality and the temporal structure which emphasizes that human being are not static but are always "beingthere" in a dynamic and unfolding way. In support of this, Okafor defined education as a process of acculturalization, through which an individual in helped to realized his potentialities and their maximum activation when necessary according to right reasons, and to attain thereby his perfection self-fulfillment (Okafor, 2021).

From this stand point, every individual comes to this world with latent potentials which as a result of inactivity, it is dormant and needs re-awakening. In this wise, Heidegger's postulation on the concept of ecstasis in temporality standing out from oneself to fully grasp existence resonates with educational theories that encourages students to confront their own existence and meaning in the world, a transformative, ecstatic encounter with life's mysteries. This is in consonant with Nigerian stand that the aim of education is to fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society (National Policy on Education, 2014).

**Ontological Education:** the concept on ontology connotes diverse meanings in philosophy. As a branch of metaphysic, it central thoughts is about the beingness of being, reality, nature of being. Thus, it is the philosophical study of being. It is the study of existence. It goes further to determine if things exist or not, as well as the classification of existence it attempts to take things that are abstract and establish that they are, infact real. <sup>12</sup>

In philosophy of education, ontology can be used to understand how students develop their identities and how teachers can guide them. It is about the object of inquiry, what one is set to examine. On the other hand, ontological education refers to an approach to education that revolves around the nature of being and existence, often linked to questions about reality, consciousness, and the human experience. It draws on ontological philosophy which investigates what exists, what it means to be, and how individuals related to their world (Popkin, Richard, Avrum & Stroll, 2009).

In the context of education, ontological education seeks to transform students' or learners' understanding of themselves and their place in the world, encouraging them to reflect on their being, purpose, and existence. This encompasses exploring existential questions, ethical dilemma, and the role of personal and social identity in teaching-learning process or situation. This stand is in affirmation, of Pythagoras maxim of "Man, know thyself then thou will know the universe and God". Socrates on his part asserted that "an unexamined life is not worth living". This is in tandem with Nigeria national goals in education which among others include; the inculcation of the type of values and attitude for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society, the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around (Crowell & Mallpas,

2007). These quotes emphasize the relevance of self-reflection and critical thinking. It suggests that a life without introspection is meaningless and lacks of value. In summary, the critical elements of ontological education include amongst others the following:

- > Self-awareness: This encourages learners to explore their sense of self-identity and existence. This tallies with item number 9d of the NPE: Educational activities shall be centered on the learner for maximum self-development and self-fulfillment.
- Critical Cogitation: This is the modus operandi of promoting deep thought about the nature of knowledge, truth, and reality, especially regarding human experience, for the distinguishing factor between man and the lower brute is the identity of homo sapien.
- ➤ **Alteration of Consciousness:** Ontological education foster in students a shift in how individuals perceive and locate the world, themselves and others. This in essence foster inter-subjectivity.
- ➤ Comprehensive development of the teaching-learning situation: Ontological education brings about holistic development of the education situation by focusing on the emotional, ethical and social dimensions of learning, alongside intellectual growth. In a nutshell, Heidegger's idea or framework, encourages students to confront existential questions, fostering authenticity (Thomson and Heidegger, 2001)

**Temporal Learning:** The ecstatic mode of time proffers an educational model that integrates past, present, and future. By this, Heidegger explore how educators and other stakeholders in education can draw from tradition while preparing students to navigate an uncertain future that is so blink and full of uncertainty.

John Dewey, an American philosopher and educationist lend credence to this when in his work titled "Education and Democracy" averred that the American education system was too rigid without provision for improvement and innovation. He therefore proposed a pragmatic approach to education that is opened to improvement and innovation and which will make learners self-reliance after graduation. Thus, the introduction of progressive education which in turn gave birth the to present system of education in Nigeria. Nigeria educational system in a replica of the American system of education.

Any educational system that does not make room for temporal learning situation cannot progress. The world is ever changing. The society is dynamic, and in the state of flux. Heracultus an ancient philosopher has once said that no one can see step on a running water twice. Change is constant hence Heidegger's postulation of the temporality is learning. This is why the Nigerian government opined that educational assessment and evaluation should be liberalized either in whole or part to meet the demand of the society.

#### Authenticity and freedoms

Heidegger in his work distinguishes between authentic and inauthentic ways of being. Authenticity implies taking ownership of one's life by facing one's finitude (the state of having limits or bounds) and living in alignment with one's true potential. This requires the audacity to break away from conformity and societal expectation (class man).

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The greatest disservice an individual can do to himself is to live his life on the distaste of society, living to please people. Living as if the world is in his pocket and not mindful of the transitory nature of life, life is indeed transient. This calls for critical thinking and reflection about the nature of man's "Nothingness" in this world. Heidegger oblivious of this, admonished that teachers should create space where students critically question societal norms, challenge assumptions, and traverse their unique potentials. Indeed, encouraging selfexamination assist learners in challenging their existential questions such as "I" and "What is my purpose in life?" What am I living for etc. attesting to this assertion, Peters and Irwin advocated for teaching methods that encourages learners to critically question societal norms (class man), empowering them to make authentic choice (Smeyers & Standish, 2007). This is necessary as one of the values to be inculcated in Nigeria school system is faith in man to make rational decisions.

Another author links Heideggerian authenticity to environmental education, urging a rethinking of human rapport with nature. This is similar with what is enshrined in the National Policy on Education section 7, sub-section a-d (FME, 2014).

This calls for relational and contextual Pedagogics, which is applicable to higher education, emphasising the relevance of embodied, situated learning that connects students to their environment and communities. Ardent believers in this position criticizes modern educational models for prioritizing abstract knowledge over relational and experiential learning, incorporating learning by doing.

Embracing uncertainty and openness: An educational system that operates the methodology of openness is prone to fast development while on the other hand, the reverse is the case with a closed system of education that will not welcome innovations. Thus; education informed by Heidegger acknowledges that learning is an open-ended, transformative process. Teachers and learners must embrace, the unknown and the "Yet-to-be", fostering an attitude of wonder and inquiring. The "Act and Potency" Saga must be at the front burner of the educative process bearing in mind that what is, is, and what is to be may be, or not. Therefore, building of castles on the air should be dissuaded. However, students through teaching should be encouraged to view their lives as being open to possibilities rather than as fixed or predetermined. This allows learners to think about who they are in relation to whom they might become, an idea central to Heideggerian ecstatic openness.

Nigerian educational system on this premise is not a static one as it is open to innovations, adaptability of new ideas and policies that assist in the improvement of the system and curriculum. With the globalized world, Nigeria is borrowing from other countries educational systems, building upon them to improve its system. Students are also given the opportunity to choose their own subjects cum courses of interest.

#### Summary

Heidegger originated as an ontological pluralist who believed that there are multiple distinct kinds of being. Human beings or "Dasein", Heidegger argued, must be understood as beings-in-the-world, and thus as constituted by our relationships to the practical and social contexts that give meaning to our actions.

To this end, Heidegger's concept of the human ecstasis, talks about the individual or the human existence as an openness and standing-out from oneself, not as a static object but as a being inherently brought forth in the world and the disclosure of Being. This ecstatic state is characterized by temporality a temporal openness in the past, present, and future and the human being's unique role as the "there" (Da-sein) where Being itself can disclose its truth, or "clearing". Authentic existence involves recognizing and staying open to this condition, whereas inauthenticity arises when we turn away from this fundamental openness towards Being, becoming lost in everyday concerns and technological thinking. Thus, in conclusion, human beings do not exist like things; instead, they exist by being which means being set outside of themselves, or in a state of standing out.

#### Conclusion

Heidegger's stand on ecstasis provides a compelling foundation for rethinking education as a medium of promoting profound, transformative experiences. His emphasis on temporality, authenticity and Being-toward-death connotes that education should be less about dogmatic the accumulation of abstract knowledge and more about awakening individuals to a further, more authentic experience of life.

Through guiding students via experiences that encourage self-reflection, existential questioning, and a commitment to authentic truth, education can become an ecstatic practice, one that assists learners in transcending the "they-self" and encounter the richness of their being. In this wise, Heidegger's philosophy invites educators to view their work or task not merely as the conveyance of information but as the cultivation of a lifelong openness to the profound mysteries of existence.

All said and done, certainly, Heidegger's postulations cannot be without some flaws. Among such shortcomings or critiques is that his abstract language and philosophical focus may seem detached from practical educational concerns.

Furthermore, his emphasis on authenticity might undervalue the communal and collective dimensions of education if interpreted individualistically.

Lastly, ethical concerns arise from Heidegger's controversial political association, requiring educators to critically engage with his work. However, much ado about nothing, if we go by the philosophical question of "why is there something instead of nothing", Heidegger's postulations has contributed immensely to the development and understanding of philosophy of education and by extension, the Nigerian educational system.

# Educational Implication and applicability of Heidegger Ian Ecstasies of Man

The educational implication of Heidegger's ecstatic temporality is a call for an encounter education that transcends linear, knowledge-based approaches. It suggests that authentic education requires an attunement to our worldly existence, a cultivation of authentic selfhood (Dasein), and an openness to the mystery of Being, rather than mere technological manipulation of information. This implies an education that integrates reflective and meditative thinking, fosters compassion through awareness of finitude, and values qualitative understanding over quantifiable progress, ultimately guiding students to become what they

are. Heidegger's work has strongly applicability as it has influenced philosophy, theology, and the humanities. Within philosophy it played a crucial role in the development of existentialism, hermeneutics, deconstruction, postmodernism, and continental philosophy in in the entire world.

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