



## The paths and the ways: an insight into transdisciplinarity

Paul Gibbs \*

In universities especially, the danger is still very great that we misunderstand what we hear of thinking, particularly if the immediate subject of the discussion is scientific (HEIDEGGER, 1968, p. 13).

The fields of the sciences lie far apart. Their methodologies are fundamentally different. The disrupted multiplicity of disciplines is to-day only held together by the technical organisation of the University and their faculties, and maintained as a unit by the practical aims of those faculties. As against this, however, the root of the sciences in their essential ground has atrophied. (HEIDEGGER, 1949)

**Abstract:** This is a short study of how the notion of thinking that Heidegger developed in his writing, in the *Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking* (2010a), can be read through a consideration of a Chinese Taoist text *Tao Te Ching* (Laozi) and the Confucian, though a Taoist inspired text, by Zisi, *the Zhongyong*, to illuminate the essential nature of openness in transdisciplinarity and the restrictions of disciplinarity of knowing taken as the ritual and rules of

---

\* Doutor em Educação pela Middlesex University London. Professor do Departamento de Educação da Middlesex University London. E-mail: [P.Gibbs@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:P.Gibbs@mdx.ac.uk). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9773-3977>

methodology. This approach offers a way to understand unconcealment in the onto-cosmology of the harmony of all Being and of personal cultivation which is essential to the ontology of Heidegger. I then suggest how this might be offered in what could be called a transdisciplinary pedagogy.

**Key words:** Heidegger. Confucianism. Taoism. Transdisciplinarity. Harmony.

### **Os caminhos e os meios: uma visão da transdisciplinaridade**

**Resumo:** Este é um breve estudo sobre como a noção de pensamento que Heidegger desenvolveu em seus escritos, em *Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking* [Uma Conversa no Caminho do Campo sobre o Pensar] (2010a), pode ser lida através da consideração de um texto taoísta chinês *Tao Te Ching* (Laozi) e de um texto confucionista, embora inspirado por taoístas, de Zisi, o *Zhongyong* [A Doutrina do Meio], para iluminar a natureza essencial da abertura na transdisciplinaridade e as restrições da disciplinaridade do conhecimento a serem tomadas como ritual e regras da metodologia. Essa abordagem oferece uma maneira de entender a desocultação na ontoc cosmologia da harmonia de todo o Ser e do cultivo pessoal, essencial à ontologia de Heidegger. Sugiro então como isso pode ser oferecido no que poderia ser chamado de pedagogia transdisciplinar.

**Palavras-chave:** Heidegger. Confucionismo. Taoísmo. Transdisciplinaridade. Harmonia.

## Los caminos y los medios: una visión de la transdisciplinariedad

**Resumen:** Este es un breve estudio de cómo la noción de pensamiento que desarrolló Heidegger en sus escritos, *Conversación sobre un camino rural sobre el pensamiento* (2010a), puede leerse mediante la consideración de un texto chino taoísta *Tao Te Ching* (Laozi) y un texto confuciano, aunque inspirado por los taoístas de Zisi, el *Zhongyong* [La Doctrina del Medio], para iluminar la naturaleza esencial de la apertura en la transdisciplinariedad y las limitaciones de la disciplina del conocimiento a tomado como ritual y reglas de metodología. Este enfoque ofrece una forma de entender la falta de cultivación de la ontocosmología de la armonía de todo Ser y el cultivo personal, esencial para la ontología de Heidegger. Luego sugiero cómo se podría ofrecer esto en lo que podría llamarse pedagogía transdisciplinaria.

**Palabras clave:** Heidegger. Confuciano. Taoísmo. Transdisciplinariedad. Armonía.

### Introduction

The premise offered here is that there is sufficient ontological dissimilarity between Confucianism and Taoism thinking to warrant meaningful comparison and insight into how Heidegger conceives of authenticity and inauthenticity in ways of thinking. Confucianism is taken as being based on a moral praxis that defines human behaviour; that is, the human being is a moral being and axiological whereas the Taoism being in its essence represents the universal undifferentiated state beyond the laws

of duality that control our physical existence and is ontological. For both, the *Tao* represents a primordial sense of Being in its harmonious state with the universe. In Heidegger earlier writings one might suggest that the two form of Tao could be recognised as the ontic (Confucian) and ontological (Taoism.) Moreover, all three reject the notion of rationality as the defining attribute of human essence, insisting ‘on the inseparability between Being and essence (CHAN, 1984, p. 194).

In Heidegger’s early work it is certainly difficult to see how the basic premise of a non-rational way can illuminate and in his later work, especially in his discussion of being as releasement, there seems room for the development of a teleological process for revelation to the spirit of the mystical. Here there are further similarities in the notion of and to the non-willing of open spaces that Heidegger referred to in the *Conversation*. For Heidegger’s anthropological perspective human beings are the entity for the revelation of Being, rather than any other being (see HEIDEGGER, 2010a, p. 91); human beings are central to the cosmos, and the dynamic nature of Being is in the being of change, both inherent and cultivated in humans and, perhaps unexpectedly in Heidegger Taoist authenticity and reminiscent of Zisi, humans take the central role in noble-mindedness and gratitude. For instance, in response to the comment from the Teacher, the Scholar replied, ‘Noble-mindedness would be the essence of thinking and thus of thanking’<sup>1</sup> (2010a, p. 97).

---

<sup>1</sup> This idea was taken up in by Heidegger in part II, chap 3 of *What Is Called Thinking?* (1968).

## Heidegger on the awaking of releasement

Heidegger's focus on Being as the subject that ought to dominate our thinking emerged from his shift from time, to language, to thinking as platforms for investigations of Being. This is clear in *Being and Time*, where he suggested that only an investigation into the fundamental ontology from which all other ontologies must spring, an inquiry into the foundational sense of being, yields an existential analysis of *Dasein*. He stated that the 'analytic of *Dasein* remains wholly oriented toward the guiding task of working out the question of Being' (1962, p. 38). He thus conferred a special status on humans to review the nature of Being. This theme continues, and in *Letter on Humanity* he wrote that the 'human being is the shepherd of being' (1998, p. 252). Even with this special status Heidegger claims we still need an education in thinking for that will awaken "a readiness for a possibility" (1977a, p. 378). Ordinarily, thinking hides the truth of our being and when we practise thinking which unconceals our being in a complex wholeness and is not thus representational, then "being and thinking belong together" (1977a, p. 388). This belonging together is only achievable by ceasing to look for metaphysical ground, as discussed by Heidegger in "The principle of ground" (1956, p. 1974), and to make a leap into the nothingness of the world. Heidegger is clear however that this leap is not a leap of faith but one made after deliberation. This preparation is the recognition of

calculative thinking<sup>2</sup> and our preparedness for meditative thinking<sup>3</sup> in our decision to accept the way towards our authentic place in the world as the opening chapter of the *Tao Te Ching* make clear.

I will focus the remainder of this discussion on Heidegger's latter works, specifically his discussions on thinking and willing/non-willing that are extensively explored in *Conversation on a Country Path* (2010a). I have chosen this work for its seemingly direct metaphorical links between the meditative, authentic and respect for individuality and diversity contained in 'Way of Tao and the calculativeness and inauthenticity of Confucianism on a journey for Heidegger which offers a process of organic emergence through the actual Conversation on the path: a conversation which itself illustrates the different thinking shared by the travellers and the importance of their emergent ability to confront accepted societal forms of truthful being.

Heidegger's conversations try to break from metaphysic and physic to reveal another way of thinking; not in the form of formal metaphysical questioning, rather an onto-epistemological enquiry. For Heidegger, metaphysics' failure is that it enquires into the being of human

---

<sup>2</sup> Calculative thinking, despite being of great importance in our technological world, is a thinking "of a special kind." It deals, in fact, with circumstances that are already given, and which we take into consideration, to carry out projects or to reach goals that we want to achieve. Calculative thinking does not pause to consider the meaning inherent in "everything that is". It is always on the move, is restless and it "never collects itself" (HEIDEGGER, 1966b, p. 46).

<sup>3</sup> Meditative thinking does not estrange us from reality. On the contrary, it keeps us extremely focused on our reality. To enact meditative thinking, Heidegger says that we need to dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history (HEIDEGGER, 1966b, p. 47).

beings, not into the notion of Being – of which being is contingent. This ‘Being’ is for Heidegger the fundamental ontology and represents a thread running through much of Heidegger’s early work, leading to his more poetic, even mystical, later contributions. His struggle is hampered by the use of forms of thinking designed for the understanding of being in its enframing of a technological way of being, especially the calculative thinking that encourages nature, including humans, to be seen as resources in the gift of those in power. His insistence on thinking of Being, at the core of our understanding of being, began to resolve itself in language that is more poetic and mystical to understand Being.

This letting of understanding to emerge unshackled from forms of logical, rational investigation, a process that defines something fixed as an object of study that may not correspond to its nature but only to the representation we have made of it, opens new realities and new truths. Moreover, it allows a letting of the nature of Being of things come into the context of the present as a totality of Being. Heidegger comments that “(M) an is obviously a being. As such he belongs to the totality of Being – just like the stone, the tree, or the eagle” (2002, p. 31). This thinking is essentially meditative and can be considered metaphorically as ‘the activity of walking along a path which leads to Being’ (1966b, p. 25). Further, it requires a releasement (*Gelassenheit*) of that which enframes and defines the characteristic of man’s nature. Releasement seeks equanimity<sup>4</sup> that allows technology into our lives yet also resists it. It creates the context of meditative or ‘inceptual’ thinking (HEIDEGGER,

---

<sup>4</sup> See Shun (2014) for a discussion of equanimity in ancient Chinese literature, upon which I will draw.

1999) as an alternative to calculative thinking where reality is defined and measured.

The *Conversation* is an imaginary triadic conversation between a Scientist (disposed to calculative thinking), a Scholar (a metaphysical thinker) and a teacher<sup>5</sup> (the voice of Heidegger as a thinker of thoughts). The focus becomes the understanding revealed in the act of the dialogue rather than what is actually said, not in a linear manner but through hermeneutic circles. It is a counter-movement to logical statement in a certain reality as the only way to reach valid points of departure from the present-facing horizontal of time and place, nearness and farness (see HEIDEGGER, 2012b) and the mystery of the beyond as well as Laozi.

Consider the following extract from the *Conversations*:

Scholar: From this it suddenly becomes clearer to me how movement on a way [*Be-wegung*] comes from rest and remains engaged in rest.

Teacher: The releasement would not just be the way [*Weg*], but rather the movement (on the way) [*Bewegung*]

Scholar: Where does this strange way go, and where does the movement befitting it rest?

The dialogues have two central themes which emerge and with which all three struggle to articulate as they seek releasement from their role-determined thought. The first is the ‘open-region’, which is both the

---

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that, in *Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking* (2010a), Heidegger takes the role of the teacher. The thinker is able to converse not from the grounds of science or philosophy, but from a position I would suggest is occupied and recognised by the great ancient Chinese thinkers by the designation ‘*zi*’.



place of being and where beings can be with one another; a ‘topology of being’;<sup>6</sup> the second is a critique of the willfulness of representational thinking and ‘a search for a way of releasement from its grip and into authentic, non-willing manner of thoughtfully dwelling within the open-space of being’ (DAVIES, 2010, p. xiii). This concept, especially the discussion of waiting rather than awaking for thinking, creates a transformative way of thinking that opens a way to understanding transdisciplinary thinking.

Releasement is a central theme for the latter works of Heidegger and is first discussed in the *Memorial Address* for Kreuter (1996a), and its reliance is on the notion of the meditative thinking which Heidegger counterpoints against calculative thinking. He argues that meditative thinking is as difficult as any other and concerns us in ‘what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history’ (HEIDEGGER, 1996a, p. 47). We “notice” aspects of our reality and we keep them in mind. We then “remember” elements, events, circumstances related to them. This invites us to “think further”, and by doing so we clarify, discern, elements that pertain to our situation. Through this process we “grow thoughtful”, and this generates questions that further deepen our thinking and awareness of the roots of what moved us to think; and that was just something barely noticed before. It is about contemplating what it might mean to self and humanity. It is not willed thinking (and it links to the essence of being as Heidegger discusses in the

---

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger refers to this in his work, ‘Four Seminars’ (2012).

work of Nietzsche, 2012), but allows an openness to things; it is open-systems thinking across barriers and between ideas.

It might be reframed as transdisciplinary thinking as it engenders a comportment, a way of being that allows the meaning of change to be. As Heidegger reported: ‘profound change is taking place in a man’s relationship to nature and to the world. But the meaning that reigns in this change remains obscure’ (HEIDEGGER, 1996a, p. 55). Moreover, Heidegger referred to this comportment as ‘openness to the mystery’ (HEIDEGGER, 1996a, p. 55) and that the releasement to things and the openness to the mystery belong together to offer ways to dwell in the contemporary world in ways totally different from those that the enframement of technology dictate; of planning of representable rather than relations thinking. This way is to think poetically, a way that overcomes the representational horizon-bound<sup>7</sup> thinking of the philosophy of our revealed world. Meditative and poetic thinking allows us to grasp the ungraspable (YOUNG, 2002, p. 19) but need courageous, persistent thinking. This is required, says Heidegger, to preserve our existential nature.

As Lewin suggests, to teach ‘is to draw attention to the world and, in a sense, the learning is between the world and the student’ (2015, p. 229). For Heidegger, education was ontological and, for this cultivation of the student as learner and human being, he was unable to unshackle

---

<sup>7</sup> By this Heidegger is pointing us towards that which makes sense of our understanding of the world; a shared background and unquestioned reality of our world that allows communication and shared living.

himself sufficiently from his western thinking tradition, notwithstanding his valorisation of poetry.

These terms are complex, if not confusing, but are central to the mystical approach to our being that constitutes Heidegger's mature teachings. Indeed, there is a certain feel to Heidegger's work that might lead one to consider an onto-theological stance. Heidegger foresaw danger in humanity's reliance on calculative thinking (and its manifestation in machination) that prompted the comment in his 1966 *Der Spiegel* interview, 'only God can save us' (WOLIN, 1993, p. 91).

### **Learning to become**

The Taoist sage does not preach morals or compliance with convention but demonstrates by example and lives in accordance with eternal Tao. For Zisi however the learned are wise and exemplary individuals (*Junzi*, 君子); people of similar intent and action to the Greek *Phronimos*. Their wisdom is evident in their practice and in this practice they become. Indeed one might imagine that Nietzsche's<sup>8</sup> *Zarathustra* also has a similar function in trying to reveal the truth (as in Plato's Cave where truth is offered to those who did not want to accept the hurt and pain of the transcendence involved). Our concern about our ability to reflect on fake news has a contemporary significance. Of the many works that we could

---

<sup>8</sup> This is event is in the original work by Nietzsche and in commentary by Heidegger (1991) himself and by Gordon (1980).

discuss in terms of these points, I have chosen one of the great works of Confucianism, the *Zhongyong*, attributed to Zisi.

### **Comparing the Tao of Zisi and Laozi**

In the opening chapter of *Tao Te Chang* Laozi states:

The WAY that can be told of is not an Unvarying Way.  
The names that can be named are not unvarying names.  
It is from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang;  
The named is but the mother that rears the ten thousand creatures, each after its kind.  
(LAO TZI, 1999, ch. 1)

The Tao need not model itself after anything for the Tao is the way of nature, and if a person believes and follows the Tao, (s)he should respect and follow her(him)self.

For Zisi the opening and most important positioning statement of the book is on to how one might cultivate oneself. *Zhongyong* specifically refers to teaching. The first sentence sets the cosmological tone:

What Heaven decrees is called 'nature'. Complying with nature is called the 'Way'. Properly practicing the Way is called 'teaching'... When joy and anger, sorrow and happiness have not yet arisen, call it "the centre". When they are arisen and yet are all in perfect balance call it "harmony", being in the "the centre" is the great foundation of the world; being in "harmony" is the all-pervading Way of the world. Reach the

“centre” and “harmony” and Heaven and Earth are in their proper positions and ten thousand things will be born and grow. (Zisi, in JOHNSTON and PING translation and with note from Zhu Xi, 2012, p. 407).

Human nature therefore is dynamic and determined by heaven. To act in compliance with nature is called the Way and cannot be deviated from, responding in harmony to the wholeness of one’s being in the Being of nature. This proclamation of the way requires students to reflect upon themselves to find an opening to their being, to lose the inducement of the world of self-interest and to find their basic goodness and this implies there is resonance with Heidegger’s notion of the fourfold of the world in worlding found in *The Thing* (2012a). Heidegger says the “Earth and sky, divinities and mortals belong together, united from themselves, in a single fold of the unifying fourfold” (2012, p. 17). In terms of Confucian harmony the fourfold need not only be understood as a state of affairs but also as a cosmic order and moral value.

Moreover Zisi suggests that it is through reflection that one comes to know what one should become in; deed, intellect and emotion. In doing one remains a sense of awe and respect of the Way and its unforced revelation. Reference to the awakening of appropriate levels of emotion is achieved through the centre so they remain correct and in balance within the situation. This is not a logic-over-emotion dichotomy but an expression of rationality within the scope of emotional dispositions in ways that are reminiscent of Heidegger’s early writing. In this sense the two texts have much in common with each other. However, as Zisi develops this notion more explicitly in the Black Robes, the harmony he

talks of is inauthentic compared to Heidegger as for Zisi it is a continuous process of adjusting differences and reconciling conflicts in ways that are defined in the forms of being that others construct for us.

For Taoists, harmony is not sameness but a creative construction of tensions of being in the world, and cosmic order is cosmic patterning emerging from the Being in the world. This is at the core of Heidegger's deliberation as he struggles to understand Being, given that Metaphysics has failed him. He achieves this by reference to Aristotle's notion of entelechy in *De anima* in ways that have resonance with the Confucian notion of *qi*. For Heidegger, this is the key to understanding the highest term that Aristotle used for Being: *entelecheia*, something's holding-(or maintaining)-itself-in its completion-(or limit). [...] Whatever places itself into and thereby enacts its limit, and thus stands, has form, *morphē*. The essence of form, as understood by the Greeks, comes from the emergent placing-itself-forth-into-the-(limit) (HEIDEGGER, 2000, p. 63).

He initially gains an understanding of entelechy through meditative thinking and then through poetic thinking, as it is not susceptible to direct revelation. This is because we live outside nature, inauthentically using it as resource to form our anthropologic way of thinking of progress in an epoch of technology and its systems' manifestations – consumerism. The embracing of the technological way of being recognised by Heidegger is a departure from the Way (referred to in the Conversation as drifting from the path), and returning to it is through the teaching of those who achieved the Way: Sages or thinkers. Those who are exemplars of the way are the teachers and, as we have noted, Heidegger takes this guise in the conversations. This is also at the core of

Heidegger's meditative and poetic thinking<sup>9</sup>, as it is not susceptible to direct revelation of nature. We rarely have to think deeply at all because the prosaic nature of our language does not call for it. Heidegger says this split from true thinking comes, "as soon as we regard the common as the only legitimate standard, and become generally incapable of fathoming the commonness of the common" (HEIDEGGER, 2000, p. 63).

Heidegger does, however, suggest that the essence of Being and beings can be found in *Ereignis*, of the appropriating event. This is the primordial "understanding" as the projection of *Dasein* which is always ahead of thematic cognition. It is a knowing ourselves within the otherness of a presenting world which is outside the language of the rationale. This complex but central theme to Heidegger's thinking is quite different from conceptual and epistemological cognition and shares this with Tao<sup>10</sup>. It is rather a process of getting rid of representational modes of knowing. Heidegger explains: "The event of appropriation [*Ereignis*] is that realm, vibrating within itself, through which man and Being reach each other in their nature, achieve their active nature by losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them" (2002, p. 37).

This manner of being can be seen in the embracing of the technological way of being recognised by Heidegger as a departure from the Way in the same way as Zisi's articulation of ways of being articulated through ritual, role and acceptance of place differ from the Tao of Taoism.

---

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of sameness in Heidegger see Identity and Difference (2002).

<sup>10</sup> Nicolescu also refers to a "kind of thinking which precedes conceptual"; and identifies this in children (2012, p. 70).

These rituals might be interpreted as inauthentic but, if taken as fundamental ontology, as Heidegger proposed, meditatively they provide routes into the social structure into which he suggested we are thrown.

### **Humanity and values**

What Heidegger is arguing for is a reconfiguring of the relationship between humanity and the world and he conceptualises this through the special significance of the ability of *Dasein* to apprehend Being . He seeks this without recourse to values thinking. Heidegger's position on value seems similar to both Zisi who considers that merely acting virtuously is inadequate for being virtuous (Zi Yi) and to Laozi who in the opening of chapter 38 of the *Tao Te Chang* states:

The man of highest “power”<sup>11</sup> does not reveal himself as a possessor of “power”;  
Therefore he keeps his “power”  
The man of inferior “power” cannot rid it of the appearance of “power”  
Therefore he is the truth without “power”.  
(Lao Tzi, 1999, ch. 38)

Laozi's position is mirrored by Heidegger in his criticism of Nietzsche use albeit in a revealed way in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* and in his *Letter on Humanity*. This is a representation of Nietzsche who claims that indeed values in our current epoch are shabby

---

<sup>11</sup> Depending on translation, power might be translated as virtue.



and should be purged but that does not necessarily constitute a comprehensive critique of the notion of value. Together, what emerges is that we cannot live without values but we cannot live with the values we have.<sup>12</sup> Heidegger argues that it is important to “realize that precisely through the characterization of something as “a value” what is so valued is robbed of its worth... It does not let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets being: be valid - solely as the objects of its doing (1988, p. 264).

Heidegger goes further with his discussion on ethics and ontology. His aim is to think clearly on these, not to reject them; indeed, he seems to accept a peremptory directive and for rules that say how the human being is desirable but questions how being in the world of technology shapes these values in the fourfold. In accepting being’s relationship to divinities, he argues it is this aboding and dwelling within such ontological relationships that how we ought to live is revealed. He holds, however, that the reification of this into ethical, moral or virtue statement objectifies being. When Heidegger speaks against values he is not speaking against the aboding in the fourfold, but against the dominance of human nature over nature. Heidegger sets forth “a deepening of humanism, but a deepening that, at the same time, recognises forces somehow beyond ‘Man’”. (PETERS, 2002, p. 6).

This position differs from that of, say, Nietzsche, whose argument as Irwin suggests “centers upon a reclaiming of the genuine importance, the ecstatic moment of existing in the here and now, rather than some abstracted heavenly ‘beyond’. He describes this simply as ‘life’ (2003, p.

---

<sup>12</sup> See Detmer (1989) for a closely argued discussion of these points.

241). This results in a loss of meaningfulness and ultimately in a nihilism in which the will to power asserts that the significance of human life is the ability to be creative and enquire about our environment and ourselves. These enquiries have no recourse to the authority of God, or the legitimacy of the State. The will to power of different perspectives generates institutions, communities and modes of social organisation, rather than relying upon rigid societal structures as a source of legitimation.

Nihilism is a crucial part of a cycle of decision making as we rid ourselves of outdated moral truth concepts which have become life degenerating rather than life enhancing. Nihilism is something to be overcome through willing, choosing values to motivate our own actions, in the knowledge, however, that these motivations will also be subject to question and the disorientation of disillusionment.

All three authors illustrate an inherent way of realising potentiality based on capacity to change other entities and ourselves by actions, where the capability can be taught. This has resonance with the Aristotelian notion of *dunamis*, as both the power and the potential to change. For instance, we need both to want and have the disposition to change the state in which we currently exist; yet this is not sufficient. We also need the means to do this, and the two need to be synchronised. To want to be better at something is not sufficient to warrant the end one wants. By mentioning nature and Heaven's decrees<sup>13</sup> in the first chapter there is implicit reference to realities, not just the statistical reality of that which is proven.

---

<sup>13</sup> In his note, Zheng Xuan takes this to be a reference to what heaven decrees for mortals through the spirits of the Wu Xing; the forces of wood, metal fire, water and earth; their manifestations in being as benevolence, righteousness, rites, trustworthiness and wisdom.

The distinctiveness of the Confucian text, I believe, is the centrality of the given Way, a teleology that does not sidestep the notion of being but locates it in the intertwining of force and spirit in an ever-changing cosmos. Such an intertwining embraces mystery and, seemingly, offers a metaphor for the transdisciplinary approach of Nicolescu and the multi-layered realities and emergent themes of Bhaskar's work.

### **Pathways to Transdisciplinarity**

Heidegger's notion of Being and Confucian and Taoist notion Tao share a harmony of our being as Being in the world. The Confucian perhaps, like Heideggerian enframing, more susceptible to fracture when conceived in terms of disciplines or set roles. Disciplines structure a world in parts, developing barriers to understanding the whole and, in what Nicolescu refers to as the epoch of 'Technoscience'. Technoscience has resonance with Heidegger's technological way of being as a state where we have lost spirituality in favour of economic powers' (NICOLESCU, 2014). Nicolescu suggests that *transdisciplinary hermeneutics* will enable a fusion of fields of human cultural activity, claiming that transdisciplinary hermeneutics: "avoids the trap of trying to formulate a super-science or super-religion. Unity of knowledge can only be a complex, and plural unity" (2014, p. 201). This approach is used by Nicolescu to explore the possibilities of a conceptual framework for imagining and understanding the question of the 'unity' of our knowledge as a pre-condition for finding sustainable solutions to complex problems. Through such a hermeneutical

way of being *homo sui transcendentalis* emerges from practice in the world which seeks the active and creativity of Confucian harmony with the insights into thinking revealed by Heidegger<sup>14</sup>. For Nicolescu, *homo sui transcendentalis* is “not a ‘New Man’, but a person who has become anew” (2002, p. 144). Further, the “dignity of the human being is also in the planetary and cosmic order” (2002, p. 144).

This might be reframed as transdisciplinary thinking, as it engenders a comportment, a way of being, that allows the meaning of change to be. As Heidegger reported, “profound change is taking place in a man’s relationship to nature and to the world. But the meaning that reigns in this change remains obscure” (HEIDEGGER, 1996a, p. 55). Moreover, Heidegger referred to this comportment as ‘openness to the mystery’ (HEIDEGGER, 1996a, p. 55), and that the releasement and the mystery belong together to offer ways to take an autochthonous stand in the contemporary world. This is to think poetically, this is a way that overcomes the representational horizon-bound thinking of the philosophy of our revealed world. Meditative and poetic thinking allows us to grasp the ungraspable (YOUNG, 2002, p. 19).

Rieser’s analysis of poetic thinking distinguishes it from scientific thinking and has similarities with Lefebvre’s rhythms of life (2004). For Rieser, the poet created an affective state where the clarity and sobriety which is the mark of other kinds of mental activity is missing for: “[D]uring realistic thinking the emotions are muted and their unconscious background is relatively quiescent” (1969, p. 18). This shifting to an inner

---

<sup>14</sup> Nicolescu builds the concept on the work on Gadamer’s fusion of horizons so I accept my interpretation may differ from the original.

imaginary world to dreamlike content is essential for the differentiation of poetical from scientific and in general from any practical activity of thinking. This exploration has much in common with Heidegger's approach, with language in the primordial sense in relation to the constitution of the world.

### **Transdisciplinary pedagogy as a patterning of thinking in complexity**

Education creates uncertainty and so learning involves searching and struggle, and admits to doubts and to forms of despair. For Heidegger it is the practices of the modern world and modern technology that produce a different kind of subject – a subject who does not simply objectify and dominate the world through technology, but who is constituted by this technology (DREYFUS, 2002) although Joseph Brenner has stated that transdisciplinarity is a “method for thinking about the relations and implications between human actions and events and about how to include emotional, artistic and philosophical elements in discussion of solutions to practical problems” (2014, p. 4). This suggests a link with Confucius, Heidegger and Nicolescu which can also be used to propose an illumination of the transdisciplinary ideas which might lead to a transformative way of teaching: a way which refuses to allow the teacher to be just a technician in a Foucauldian sense of “telling the knowledge he possesses and the truth he knows, because this knowledge and truth are aligned to a whole weight of tradition” (2011, p. 23). To think and speak

out beyond the hegemonies which are mediated through the universities changes us from technician to parrhesiastes. A parrhesiastes risks everything to tell the truth as he sees it. Nicolescu offers such thinking in seeking an understanding of our being cosmologically within the constraints of an integrated system and showed such courage in his own career.

This awareness requires changes to the way in which we conceive education and the ideas of institutional study in terms of thinking and teaching. Moreover, as Foucault argues, to develop a way of caring for oneself and for others “implies also a relationship to the other to the extent that, in order to really care for self, one must listen to the teachings of a master. One needs a guide, a counsellor, a friend – someone who will tell you the truth” (1987, p. 118). As Peters suggests, this leads to a “cultural significance of truth-telling as a set of educational practices” (2003, p. 218). With respect to Nicolescu’s notion of instilling complex and disciplinary thought into “the structures and programs of the university [which] will permit its evolution towards its somewhat forgotten mission today – the study of the universal” (2002, p. 140) and lead to a renewed university which would become the place for “welcoming a new humanism” (2002, p. 140). For Nicolescu “learning to be” involves discovering our conditioning, the harmony or disharmony between our individual and social lives and testing the foundations of our convictions. Confucius, I suggest, helps here, as for him thinking is not an abstraction from the world of practical and performative activity, but thinking activities lead to a practical result. These activities are, as Hall and Ames

(1987) suggest, fundamentally integrative which seek to maximise the thinker's potential.

It is an ongoing invitation to think, and not in the sense that Heidegger says that “science does not think”. In this quote, Heidegger's view was that formalised and structured scientific<sup>15</sup> investigation does not illuminate but adds opacity to the essence of Being. This is because failure to concern the world in its totality for disciplines can, at best, only provide limited revelations constrained and shaped by the rituals and truth claims of their collective world views. As Davies suggests in his introduction to Heidegger's *Country Path Conversations*, “modern and scientific thinking is characterized as a wilful representation, an objectification that transcends—climbs over—things to determine a transcendental horizon which delimits the forms through which things can only appear as objects to subjects” (2010a, p. XIII) “[...] which sets forth nature as object, shows itself as a human attack on nature” (HEIDEGGER, 2010, p. 11). It is as if thinking beyond the horizon of established modern concepts is limited by the conceptual notion that gives rise to the representational world we take as reality.

Heidegger argued that it is not through science but an ontological understanding, revealed through mood, that the totality of Being is unconcealed. He began to offer us a distinction between disciplines: inter- and multi-disciplines and transdisciplinarity, which will be developed later. From a Heideggerian perspective, knowledge organised by discipline leads to a refusal of the totality that is implicit in the calculative and

---

sanctioned thinking of these disciplines. Even the notion of data from these disciplines has a particular epistemological and methodological structure. Thinking which transcends such enframement is offered by Petersen when she replaces data with ‘’ which is “generated from observation, participation in talk, events and rituals, from documents of various sorts, and self-reflection about what it means to be in a kind of culture” (2013, p. 297).

For Heidegger the student-teacher relationship is not conceived as a vehicle for the attainment of some authoritarian engagement – what is in effect a management tool – but as a genuinely creative encounter in which the lecturer senses the quality of the learning event. This strikes a sharp contrast with the effective thinking in the calculative mode. For Heidegger, learning to think is conceived as mystery and wonder. It is based on trusting which perceives the integrity of the learner and the lecturer. The essence of inceptual thinking, then, is in the unfolding of the world in wonder rather than attempting to control it. This thinking is non-conceptual: it does not require concepts to enable us to think but does require us to have the openness to the world to do so. It is the thinking Heidegger refers to as “releasement” in his latter works. The focus becomes the understanding revealed in the act of the dialogue of the unfolding moment rather than what is actually said, not in a linear manner but through hermeneutic circles. This seemingly has direct metaphorical links between the “Way” of Confucianism and the path. It is about waiting for what is in the event that needs to be thought rather than the awakening to thinking and creates a transformative way of thinking that opens a way to understanding transdisciplinary thinking. His struggle is hampered by



the use of forms of thinking designed for the understanding of being in its enframement of a technological way of being, especially the calculative thinking that encourages nature, including humans, to be seen as resources in the gift of those in power. His insistence on thinking on Being, at the core of our understanding of human being, began to resolve itself in language that is more poetical and mystical in order to understand Being.

This thinking is essentially meditative and can be considered metaphorically as “the activity of walking along a path which leads to Being” (HEIDEGGER, 1966b, p. 25). Further, it requires a releasement (*Gelassenheit*) from that which enframes and defines the characteristic of man’s nature. Releasement seeks equanimity that allows technology into our lives yet also resists it. It creates the context of meditative or “inceptual” thinking (HEIDEGGER, 1999) as an alternative to calculative thinking where reality is defined and measured. In an education sense, it is restorative of what it is to be human and the way to cultivate our being within Being.

## References

DAVIES, B. W. Translator’s Foreword to M. Heidegger, Conversation on a country path. In: *Martin Heidegger* (trans. B. W. Davis). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

DETMER, D. Heidegger and Nietzsche on ‘Thinking in Value.’” *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 23, 1989. p. 275-283.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00136923>

DREYUS, H. L. Heidegger and Foucault on the Subject, Agency and Practices. Berkeley: Regents of University of California, 2002. Accessed 23.01.2017.

FOUCAULT, M. *The Courage of Truth*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2011.

FOUCAULT, M. Technologies of the self. In L. H. Martein, H. Gutman and P. H. Hutton (Eds.). *Technologies of the Self*. Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987. p. 16-50.

HALL, D. and AMES, R. *Thinking through Confucius*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1987.

HEIDEGGER. M. What is metaphysics. In: *Existence and Being* (trans. R. F. C. Hull and A. Crick). Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1949. p. 353-393.

HEIDEGGER. M. *Being and Time*. Trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1962.

HEIDEGGER. M. Memorial address, in Conversation on a country path. In: *Martin Heidegger*, trans. B. W. Davis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996a.

HEIDEGGER. M. *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund. New York: Harper and Row, 1966b.

HEIDEGGER. M. *What is Called Thinking?* trans. J. G. Gray. New York Harper Row, 1968.

HEIDEGGER. M. *Nietzsche: Vol. IV*. San Francisco: Harper, 1991.

HEIDEGGER. M. Letter on humanism. In William McNeill (ed.). *Pathmarks* (trans. Frank A. Capuzzi). New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. p. 239-276.

HEIDEGGER. M. Contributions to philosophy. In *Enowning* (trans. P. Emad and K. Maly). Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1999.

HEIDEGGER. M. *Identity and Difference* (Trans. J. Stambaugh). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

HEIDEGGER. M. *Conversation on a country path*. (trans. B. W. Davis). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010a.

HEIDEGGER. M. *Introduction to Philosophy – Thinking and poetizing*. (trans. P. J. Braunstein). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010b.

HEIDEGGER. M. *Four Seminars*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

HEIDEGGER. M. The Thing, in *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures. Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking* (trans. Andrew J. Mitchell) Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012a. p. 5-22.

HEIDEGGER. M. Positionality. In *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures. Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012b. p. 23-437.

IRWIN R. Heidegger and Nietzsche; The Question of Value and Nihilism in Relation to Education, *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 22: 227-244, 2003. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022821421560>

JOHNSTON, I. and PING, W. *Daxue and Zhonhyong*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2012.

LEWIN, D. Heidegger East and West: Philosophy as educative contemplation. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Special Issue: Philosophy East/West: Exploring intersections between educational and contemplative practices, 49(2), 2015, p. 221-239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12138>

LAOZI. *Tao Te Chang* (trans A Wiley). Southern Hunan province: Hunan People's Publishing house, 1999.

NICOLESCU, B. *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity* (Trans K-C Voss). New York: SUNY, 2002.

NICOLESCU, B. *From Modernity to Cosmodernity, Science, Culture and Spirituality*. New York: SUNY, 2014.

PETERS, M. A (Ed.). *Heidegger, Education, and Modernity*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002.

PETERS, M.A. Truth-telling as an educational practice of the self: Foucault, parrhesia and the ethics of subjectivity. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29(2), 2003, p. 207-224.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0305498032000080684>

PETERSEN, E. B. Cutting Edge(s): An Ethnographic Drama in Three Acts. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 13(4) 2013, p. 293-298.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708613487876>

SHUN, K.-L. On reflective equanimity – A Confucian perspective. In: LI CHENYANG and NI PEIMIN (eds). *Moral Cultivation and Confucian Character: Engaging Joel J. Kupperman*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2014.

WOLIN, R. Only a god can save us. *Der Spiegel's* interview with Martin Heidegger (1966). In: Richard Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy: A critical reader*. Boston: MIT Press, 1993. p. 91-116.

YOUNG, J. *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

ZISI. Zi YI in *The Book of Rites* (Ed D. Sheng, trans J. Legge). Beijing: Intercultural Press, 2013. p. 275-279.

Data de registro: 30/07/2020

Data de aceite: 21/10/2020