



HEIDEGGER AND EASTERN PHILOSOPHIES: TOWARD AN INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF BEING

Alimardon Mustafaev

*Lecturer of the Ajou university
Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

Key words: Heidegger; Being; Dasein; authenticity; temporality; Daoism; Zen Buddhism; Advaita Vedānta; comparative philosophy; intercultural dialogue.

Received: 30.05.25

Accepted: 01.06.25

Published: 03.06.25

Abstract: The present article is a comparative analysis of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger in conversation with Daoism, Zen Buddhism, and Advaita Vedanta. It explores the resonances and differences between the main concepts of Heidegger, Being (Sein), Dasein, authenticity, and temporality and the main Eastern concepts. As an example, Heidegger and Daoism both emphasize the inadequacy of language to understand ultimate reality, Heidegger describes nothingness as Buddhist emptiness, and the Vedanta concept of the Self as Brahman provides an opposite of absolute unity. These comparisons are placed in the context of the literature review and our analysis shows that there are convergences and unique commitments in both traditions. We claim that the comparison between Heidegger and Eastern thought not only explains his ideas but also enhances all traditions in question. Such dialogue, as Poggeler observes, can allow the west as well as the east to find its way back to itself, and this is the reciprocity that this exchange can bring about.

HAYDEGGER VA SHARQ FALSAFASI: BORLIQNING MADANIYATLARARO ANGLANISHI

Alimardon Mustafayev

*Nodavlat oliy ta'lim muassasasi o'qituvchisi
Adju University
Toshkent, O'zbekiston*

MAQOLA HAQIDA

Kalit so'zlar: Haydegger; Borliq; Dasein; haqiqatga sodiqlik; vaqtilik; daoizm; zen buddizm; advaita vedanta; qiyosiy falsafa; madaniyatlararo muloqot.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqola Martin Haydegger falsafasining daoizm, zen buddizm va advaita vedanta bilan qiyosiy tahliliga bag'ishlangan. Unda Heideggerning asosiy tushunchalari — Borliq (Sein), Dasein, haqiqatga sodiqlik (authenticity) va vaqtilik (temporality) — Sharq falsafiy an'alaridagi asosiy tushunchalar bilan qanday uyg'unlashuvi yoki farq qilishi o'rganiladi. Masalan, Haydegger va daoizm ikkalasi ham til orqali yakuniy haqiqatni tushunib bo'lmasligini ta'kidlaydi; Haydegger "hech narsa" tushunchasini buddaviy "bo'shliq" bilan taqqoslaydi; Vedanta falsafasidagi "Brahman – bu O'zlik" g'oyasi esa butunlay yagona haqiqatni bildiradi. Ushbu qiyosiy tahlil adabiyotlar sharhi doirasida olib borilgan va natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, har ikki falsafiy yo'nalishda yaqinliklar mavjud bo'lishi bilan birga o'ziga xosliklar ham bor. Bizning da'voga ko'ra, Nemis faylasuf va Sharq tafakkuri o'rtasidagi solishtirma yondashuv nafaqat Haydegger g'oyalarini chuqurroq anglashga yordam beradi, balki har ikki tomonning falsafiy an'alarini boyitadi. Otto Pöggeler ta'kidlaganidek, bunday muloqot Sharq ham, G'arb ham o'z mohiyatiga qaytishini ta'minlashi mumkin — aynan mana shunday o'zaro ta'sir orqali umumiy donolik sari harakat yuz beradi.

ХАЙДЕГГЕР И ВОСТОЧНЫЕ ФИЛОСОФИИ: К ИНТЕРКУЛЬТУРНОМУ ПОНИМАНИЮ БЫТИЯ

Алимардон Мустафаев

Преподаватель университета Аджу

Ташкент, Узбекистан

О СТАТЬЕ

Ключевые слова: Хайдеггер; Бытие; Dasein; подлинность; временность; даосизм; дзэн-буддизм; адвайта-веданта; сравнительная философия; межкультурный диалог.

Аннотация: Настоящая статья представляет собой сравнительный анализ философии Мартина Хайдеггера в диалоге с даосизмом, дзэн-буддизмом и адвайта-ведантой. Исследуются сходства и различия между основными концепциями Хайдеггера — Бытие (Sein), Dasein, подлинность и временность — и ключевыми восточными понятиями. Например, и Хайдеггер, и даосизм подчеркивают недостаточность языка для понимания предельной реальности; Хайдеггер описывает ничто в категориях буддийской пустоты, тогда как

концепция Самости как Брахмана в веданте предлагает противоположное представление — об абсолютном единстве. Эти сравнения рассматриваются в контексте обзора литературы, и наш анализ показывает, что в обеих традициях существуют как точки соприкосновения, так и уникальные особенности. Мы утверждаем, что сопоставление взглядов Хайдеггера и восточной мысли не только проясняет его идеи, но и обогащает все рассматриваемые традиции. Такой диалог, как отмечает Пёггелер, может позволить и Западу, и Востоку «вернуться к самим себе» — это и есть взаимность, которую способен породить подобный обмен.

Introduction: Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) is credited with a powerful study of Being (Sein) and human existence (Dasein). Although his thought is based on Western ontology, it has long been compared with Asian philosophies that answer similar existential questions. As an example, the focus of Heidegger on the ineffability of Being and his criticism of calculative thinking is similar to Daoist admonitions regarding the unsayable Dao. Similarly, his idea of a clearing or open space where things emerge reminds Buddhist ideas of *sūnyatā* (emptiness). His appeal to genuine living has also been likened to Eastern search of enlightenment or liberation. These observations raise further questions: How far do the ideas of Heidegger correspond to Daoism, Zen Buddhism, or Advaita Vedanta, and how far do they differ fundamentally? This article answers these questions by systematic comparative analysis. By so doing, we take heed of the warnings of scholars that one should not impose the conceptual scheme of one tradition on another [1;3]. We do not dismiss the context of any tradition as we make connections. Kyoto School philosophers have even proposed profound similarities: Nishitani Keiji, in particular, has written that Heidegger led to Buddhist emptiness by his turn to nothingness [2;24] and Reinhard May has argued that Heidegger was influenced by Daoism and Zen in his later work [4;25]. These cross-currents imply that an intercultural dialogue can help to highlight the strengths of each philosophy without disrespecting differences. The rest of the article continues with a literature review of the most important scholarship, a thematic analysis of Heidegger with Daoism, Zen, and Advaita Vedanta, and a discussion and conclusion on the larger implications of this dialogue.

Literature Review

Interest in Heidegger's relation to Asian thought has grown over decades, producing a rich scholarship. The Kyoto School pioneered this work: philosophers like Kuki Shūzō, Nishida

Kitarō, and Nishitani Keiji blended Heideggerian and Zen themes. Nishitani, a Zen practitioner and Heidegger's former student, argued in *Religion and Nothingness* that Heidegger's focus on nothingness indeed approached the Buddhist idea of emptiness, even though Heidegger himself did not fully embrace a spiritual resolution [2;26]. A landmark volume is *Heidegger and Asian Thought* (1987, ed. Graham Parkes), which gathered essays on Heidegger in relation to Daoism, Zen, and Vedānta. In that volume, J.L. Mehta's essay cautions that comparing Heidegger with Advaita is "questionable" because the traditions arise from different worldviews [12;17], noting that Heidegger's rejection of a permanent metaphysical ground contrasts with Advaita's affirmation of an eternal Brahman. Otto Pöggeler's essay in the same volume traces Heidegger's postwar engagement with Daoism: he documents Heidegger's attempts to translate the *Daodejing* into German and his keeping of Daoist aphorisms as inspiration, concluding that Daoist concepts like the Way (Dao) and non-being (wu) offered poetic hints for Heidegger's thought. Reinhard May's *Heidegger's Hidden Sources* (1996) similarly documents Heidegger's reading of Taoist and Zen texts and notes parallels such as Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* (releasement) and the Daoist *wuwei* [4;30]. These works underline significant affinities across traditions even as they highlight differences to be cautious of.

Later scholars have continued mapping these resonances. Fred Dallmayr observes that Heidegger's critique of Western nihilism "resonates" with Zen concepts of *śūnyatā* and nonattachment [11;220]. Wing-cheuk Chan compares Heidegger's notion of the "place of nothingness" to the Zen experience of *wúxīn* (no-mind). On the Indian side, Vensur A. George systematically parallels Shankara's Advaita Vedānta with Heidegger's ontology, finding both "convergence and divergence" in their approaches to overcoming inauthenticity [5;15]. In short, this vibrant literature has uncovered rich intersections and cautions, providing a foundation for our comparative analysis.

Discussion

When Heidegger is introduced to Daoism, Zen, and Advaita Vedanta, similarities and helpful differences emerge. One of the main convergences is the diagnosis of human estrangement. The Eastern images of being lost, whether in wandering off the Dao, or in Buddhist, or in attachment to a false self, are analogous to Heideggerian *Seinsvergessenheit* (forgetfulness of Being). Every tradition has its awakening: Heidegger calls to authenticity in anxiety and resoluteness; Daoism advises *wuwei* (effortless action) in accord with the Dao; Zen Buddhism requires sudden realization of emptiness (usually through meditation); and Advaita promises liberation through knowledge of the unity of the Self with Brahman. This is important: it indicates that in different cultures, philosophers feel the necessity to awaken out of the daily

amnesia. In fact, critics observe that Heidegger and Buddhism share a common intuition that modernity is a veil that hides a more profound truth [11;220]. Through this, the inauthenticity of the Heideggerian they-self offers a new language to issues that have long been expressed in Buddhism, and the focus on meditation and direct practice in Zen offers a practical element to the abstract language of Heidegger.

Meanwhile, deep contrasts appear. Heidegger ontology is essentially temporal and finite: meaning can only emerge in the process of time and in connection to death. In contrast, Advaita Vedanta finds ultimate reality in the infinite, eternal Brahman, and regards the world of change as *mAyA* (illusion). These views are not easily compatible. This dialogue also highlights areas Heidegger left undeveloped. Heidegger famously insisted that fundamental ontology “has nothing to do with ethics,” whereas Daoism, Buddhism, and Vedānta are explicitly ethical-spiritual paths. Daoism teaches living in harmony with the Dao and simple humility, Zen stresses compassion (*karuṇā*) and nonattachment, and Advaita’s insight of unity naturally implies nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*). This suggests that intercultural exchange could enrich Heidegger’s framework by reintegrating an ethical or communal dimension. For instance, one can read Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* (releasement) through the lens of *ahimsa* (non-injury), yielding a respectful openness toward beings. Conversely, encountering Heidegger challenges Eastern thinkers to clarify their concepts with philosophical rigor. Practice versus theory is another insight: a Zen teacher might quip “Stop talking and taste the tea” to remind Heideggerians that insight must be lived, whereas Heidegger would caution that action without understanding can become empty ritual. A balanced dialogue acknowledges that insight and understanding go hand in hand.

Throughout this dialogue, Heidegger’s originality remains intact. He developed his ideas largely within the European tradition, responding to the crises of his time. The fact that parallels arise in Daoism, Zen, and Vedānta suggests that his concerns about mortality, meaning, and alienation tap into universal human conditions rather than being direct borrowings. Heidegger’s questions about Being and authenticity thus emerge as part of a broader human quest for truth. In this intercultural context, Heidegger’s voice is neither diminished nor overshadowed; rather, it is situated in a global conversation. Comparative inquiry shows how Heidegger’s thought can engage issues he did not fully explore (for example, the environmental or ethical implications of *Gelassenheit*) and how Eastern perspectives can benefit from Heidegger’s analytical clarity.

Conclusion

To conclude, the philosophy of Heidegger has deep interests in common with Daoism, Zen, and Advaita but is still different. Each struggles with ultimate reality (which may be

referred to as Being, Dao, Sunnatata, or Brahman) and regards ordinary existence as lacking or illusory in some sense. All of them imagine a transformed way of being: Heidegger, the Dasein beyond the inauthentic they-self, the Daoist sage in spontaneous harmony with the Dao, the Zen practitioner in the emptiness of ego, and the Advaitin in the realization that the individual Self (Atman) is Brahman. It is remarkable that four such diverse voices all express a way to awakening. It posits an anthropological constant: human beings seem to be susceptible to an existential sleep and cultures have developed different paths to awaken. This similarity offers fertile soil to dialogue, since both traditions see in each other a familiar quest in different language.

However, the distinctions between these ways are educative and incomparable. The approach of Heidegger (similar to Daoism and Zen) is anti-metaphysical and process-oriented, in which a letting-be of beings is appreciated, as opposed to Advaita, which assumes an unchanging metaphysical foundation. This contrast we should not gloss over. Advaita may question Heidegger to explain an absolute source of meaning or value and Heidegger would remind Advaitins that the focus on eternity may lead to the neglect of the importance of finitude and change. Comparative reflection enables us to explore these tensions: e.g. some philosophers have conjectured that the Buddhist nirvana (extinction of self) and the Advaitic realization of Brahman may be the same final state, but negatively or positively conceived. These questions are only answered by careful intercultural inquiry, not by supposing that all traditions were saying the same thing.

The involvement of these comparisons also brings out the cultural context of each philosophy. Heidegger was a 20th-century European who lived in the midst of modern crises, and his vision tends to evoke the images of rural habitation and poetic simplicity as solutions. Daoism and Zen emerged in pre-modern agrarian cultures that never lost the feeling of unity with nature. The discussion reveals that the Heideggerian turn to earth is echoed by Eastern concerns with harmony with nature and community. This does not demean Heidegger (he had to take his own long detour to rediscover these things) nor does it romanticize Eastern thought as having possessed all the answers. Rather, it highlights the fact that such issues as ecological crisis and nihilism are universal, and that Eastern approaches (mindfulness, harmony, compassion) are essential contributions. On the other hand, the analytic and historical approach of Heidegger can assist the Eastern traditions to express their knowledge in modern terms (such as Buddhist phenomenology interacting with Western science has led to the modern mindfulness studies).

References:

1. Burik, Steven. *The End of Comparative Philosophy: The Case of Heidegger and Asian Thought*. SUNY Press, 2010.
2. Nishitani, Keiji. *Religion and Nothingness*. Translated by Jan Van Bragt. University of California Press, 1982.
3. Pöggeler, Otto. "Heidegger and Lao-tzu: A Hermeneutic Reading." In *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, edited by Graham Parkes, pp. 47–61. University of Hawaii Press, 1987.
4. May, Reinhard. *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*. Routledge, 1996.
5. George, Vensus A. *The Authentic Human Destiny: The Paths of Shankara and Heidegger*. CRVP, 1998.
6. Chan, Wing-Cheuk. *Heidegger and the Question of National Socialism: Disclosure and Gestell*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.
7. Abe, Masao. "A Buddhist View of the Absolute." In *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, edited by Graham Parkes, pp. 181–199. University of Hawaii Press, 1987.
8. Parkes, Graham. *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.
9. Dallmayr, Fred. "Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Nihilism." In *The Other Heidegger*, edited by Fred Dallmayr, pp. 213–228. Cornell University Press, 1993.
10. Suzuki, D. T. *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. Grove Press, 1964.
11. Dallmayr, Fred. *The Other Heidegger*. Cornell University Press, 1993.