

Unifying Heidegger and Sartre: A Way via Yogācāra Buddhism

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Abstract : It is well-known that Heidegger was highly critical of Sartre's existential philosophy. In his famous "Letter on Humanism," Heidegger not only draw a clear cutline between his thinking of Being and Sartre's existentialism but also introduced a kind of anti-humanism. Such a hostile attitude towards Sartre's Existentialism as Humanism seems to have created an unbridgeable gap between these them. Indeed, already in his Being and Nothingness, Sartre complained: Heidegger "has completely avoided any appeal to consciousness in his description of Dasein." In reality, Sartre was mainly faithful to Husserlian phenomenology, in spite of his rejection of Husserl's idealism. Thanks to the Japanese Buddhist scholar Yoshifumi Ueda's work on the Old School of Yogācāra Buddhism as represented by Sthiramati and Paramārtha, we learn that in addition to the thesis of transforming vijñāna (knowing consciousness) into jñāna (wisdom), there is an idea of prṣṭa-labdha-jñāna (the subsequently acquired wisdom). According to Ueda, the latter is a "non-discriminative discrimination." This gives rise to a possibility of synthesizing Heidegger's thinking of Being and Sartre's existential phenomenology. Structurally, this paper will first show that Heidegger focuses on the side of non-discrimination, whereas Sartre concentrates on the side of discrimination. It will then clarify in what sense that each of them, in itself, remains incomplete. Finally, it will demonstrate how to synthesize them in term of the notion of "non-discriminative discrimination."

Keywords : heidegger, sartre, phenomenology, yogācāra buddhism

Conference Title : ICEPHF 2022 : International Conference on Existential Philosophy, Humanism and Freedom

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : August 08-09, 2022