

Article

## ***Homo Humanus* as the New Essence of a Human Being in Heidegger's Philosophy**

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**Abstract:** In fundamental ontology, Heidegger indeed rejects the traditional concept of a human being defined as *homo animalis* and *homo rationalis*. In contrast to this concept, he introduces the new essence of a human being, namely, *homo humanus*. However, the meaning of *homo humanus* that is opposed to *homo animalis* still remains ambiguous. In this paper, I show the distinctive meaning of *homo humanus* by indicating the fact that whereas *homo humanus* defined as “man of cultivated land” primarily dwells in the social world, *homo animalis* proximally live in the natural world.

**Keywords:** anti-humanism, individual person, *homo humanus*, care

Since Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, the concept of a human being has remained problematic in the Western world. Before Darwin, people had a clear idea about what constitutes the essence of a human being. Whether from the Christian background or a philosophical perspective, they firmly believed that a human being is absolutely distinguished from animals. This belief, however, was shattered by Darwin's theory of evolution. Since then, there exists now a conflict view on the understanding of a human being.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Max Scheler, aware of this conflicting view, states in *Man's Place in Nature*, that there is no unitary understanding of man: “Thus we have a scientific, a philosophical and a philosophical and a theological anthropology in separation from each other. We do not have a unified idea of man.”<sup>1</sup> Even though there is a vast

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<sup>1</sup> Max Scheler, *Man's Place in Nature*, trans. by H. Meyerhoff (New York: Beacon Press, 1981), 5-6.

accumulation of knowledge attained by biologists, medical researchers, and psychologists, the essence of a human being remains hidden. Hence, to overcome the irreconcilable view of a human being, Scheler seeks to offer a new understanding of a human being. In his philosophical anthropology, a human being is defined as a spirit by which the antagonism of life and reason is finally overcome. Similar to Scheler, Heidegger is also concerned with establishing a new concept of man in the analytic of Dasein. Nevertheless, his approach is quite different from the philosophical anthropology of Scheler.

While Scheler's philosophical anthropology begins with criticism of the Darwinian theory on the origin of man that is founded in biology, Heidegger's account of man delves into the more primordial ground that precedes biology. For Heidegger, the theory of evolution established in biology does not actually present a radical view of man in relation to metaphysics, for metaphysics already makes the same assertion that man is defined as '*homo animalis*': "In principle we are still thinking of *homo animalis*-even when *anima* is posited as *animus sive mens* (spirit or mind), and this in turn is later posited as subject, person, or spirit. Such positing is the manner of metaphysics."<sup>2</sup> With the term *homo animalis*, we can ascertain that Darwin's naturalistic view of man is traced back to traditional metaphysics. Regarding this point, Heidegger states: "Metaphysics thinks of the human being on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of his *humanitas*."<sup>3</sup> With this claim, we can also understand why Heidegger rejects the traditional definition of man as '*animal rationale*.'<sup>4</sup> In this definition, the foundation of man lies in *animalitas*.

But in contrast to the concept of a human being in traditional metaphysics, Heidegger attempts to introduce a new foundation of a human being defined as '*homo humanus*': "The descent leads to the poverty of the existence of *homo humanus*. In ex-sistence the region of *homo animalis*, of metaphysics is abandoned."<sup>5</sup> As shown here, the new essence of man is defined as *homo humanus* that is fundamentally distinguished from *homo animalis* and *animal rationales*.

However, in dealing with Heidegger's thoughts, this new essence of man as *homo humanus* has been completely neglected, for Heidegger explicitly stated that the analytic of Dasein is not to be identified with philosophical anthropology.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Heidegger's discourse on a new essence of man

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks*, ed. by W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 246.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 246-47.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 245-46.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), 71-77.

has been overlooked because the analytic of Dasein has been tangled up with the controversy on subjectivity and anti-subjectivity or on humanism and anti-humanism. The concept of Dasein, on the one hand, has been defined as human subjectivity due to the influence of Sartre's existential humanism. On the other hand, it has been claimed by post-modern thinkers, for instance, Derrida, that the concept of Dasein has absolutely nothing to do with human subjectivity at all. Moreover, since Derrida's interpretation has been accepted as the standard interpretation, it has become almost taboo to understand Dasein with respect to a human being. Consequently, the meaning of Dasein with respect to *homo humanus* remains obscure.

In this paper, however, I intend to untangle this confusion over the meaning of Dasein by showing that although Heidegger rejects the traditional concept of man in terms of *homo animalis*, he acknowledges at the same time a new concept of man founded in *homo humanus*. Therefore, as we will see later, although Heidegger emphasizes *homo humanus* as the new essence of a human being, his philosophy lies beyond the opposition of "humanism" and "anti-humanism." But how are we to understand the meaning of *homo humanus* in the philosophy of Heidegger? Before explicating the meaning of *homo humanus*, it is first necessary to free ourselves of the interpretation of Dasein by post-modern philosophers, notably that of Derrida's, which advocates that Heidegger's analysis of Dasein has essentially nothing to do with the essence of man.

### **Derrida's Interpretation of Dasein as Anti-Subjectivity**

Although in *Being and Time*, Heidegger is concerned with the question of Being, what he actually seeks to present is the analysis of Dasein that has an understanding of Being: "Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being."<sup>7</sup> Hence, to understand Heidegger's concept of Being, we need to first grasp the meaning of Dasein. But in dealing with Heidegger's account of Dasein, we are confronted with two opposing philosophical views, namely, Sartre's existential humanism and Derrida's anti-humanism. In contrast to the philosophy of Sartre, which is based on the self-centered man who chooses what he has to be, Derrida maintains in his deconstructive philosophy that a human subject is no longer conceived of as the unshakable ground of thinking and action.<sup>8</sup> He furthermore tries to justify the philosophy of anti-subjectivity by providing a new interpretation of Dasein.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by A. Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 134.

In his influential article “The Ends of Man,” Derrida criticizes the anthropological or humanistic understanding of Heidegger’s concept of Dasein. According to him, this anthropological understanding of Dasein is derived from a “monstrous translation”<sup>9</sup> of Dasein as “human reality” authorized by Sartre. Dasein does not signify “human reality,” and consequently, Derrida contends that in order to understand correctly the meaning of “Dasein,” one has to overcome “the anthropologicistic deformations in the reading of *Sein und Zeit*, notably in France.”<sup>10</sup> With the analysis of Heidegger’s criticism of humanism in *Letter on Humanism*, Derrida defends his arguments against the anthropological understanding of Dasein.

According to Derrida’s interpretation, the central argument of *Letter on Humanism* consists in Heidegger’s statement that “every humanism is either grounded in metaphysics or is itself made to be the ground of one.”<sup>11</sup> Here, it should be noted that by the term “metaphysics,” Heidegger means “metaphysical subjectivism.”<sup>12</sup> From this view, metaphysical subjectivism is the foundation of humanism, which regards human beings as the center of all beings. Nevertheless, how does metaphysical subjectivism become the foundation of humanism?

In ancient philosophy, metaphysics was concerned with establishing the ground of beings, and this ground of beings is found in God. However, in modern philosophy, a new ground of beings is revealed. Descartes, a founder of modern philosophy, successfully establishes the ground of beings on man’s thinking ego (cogito). Here one sees a defining characteristic of modern metaphysics. It consists of—at least according to Heidegger’s interpretation<sup>13</sup>— the fact that the ultimate ground of beings is sought no longer in God but in the subjectivity of a human being. And when a human being is defined as a subject, things are experienced as represented objects. In addition, in this subject-object relation, a human being defined as a representing subject can seize objects and have absolute control over them. Hence by this absolute control over objects, a human subject becomes the master and center of beings. Here we see why Heidegger says that every kind of humanism presupposes metaphysical subjectivism.

However, Heidegger, who rejects the modern philosophical concept of a human subject, argues that “the human being is not the lord of beings

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 127. In a similar manner, von Herrmann also makes a claim that the existential analysis of Dasein has nothing to do with the subjectivity-bound philosophy. Cf. F-W. von Herrmann, *Subjekt und Dasein* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1974), 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” 245.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Die Zeit des Weltbildes,” in *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980), 96-98.

[*Der Mensch ist nicht der Herr des Seienden*].”<sup>14</sup> In opposition to the determination of man in metaphysical subjectivism, Heidegger defines the essence of the human being as “the shepherd of being [*der Hirt des Seins*].”<sup>15</sup> As the shepherd of Being, the human being can no longer dominate beings. Consequently, since the human being is no longer conceived of as a center of beings, it is impossible to maintain the stance of humanism based on metaphysical subjectivism. Moreover, man is the shepherd of Being because, among other entities, only he has understanding of Being. Hence for Heidegger, “there” (Da) of Dasein refers to a place where the disclosure of Being occurs. Agreeing with this, Derrida also maintains that Dasein should be understood with respect to Being.

Referring to these statements of Heidegger, Derrida interprets the term “Da-sein” as signifying the place of Being. If this interpretation is correct, then what Heidegger wants to establish by the term “Dasein” is not a new ground of the human being but the new meaning of Being. Regarding this sense, Derrida also argues that Heidegger’s concept of Dasein must be understood from the ontological perspective rather than from the anthropological perspective. By interpreting the meaning of “Dasein” as a place of Being, he further contends that any attempt to understand Heidegger’s Dasein as the human subject is a mistake. Moreover, he believes that contrary to the subject-bound philosophy, the objective of Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein is found in anti-subjectivity philosophy. Consequently, since Derrida’s interpretation, people believe that the philosophy of Heidegger has absolutely nothing to do with founding a new essence of a human being.

But is it really the case that by “Dasein,” Heidegger wants ultimately to abolish, as Derrida argues, the concept of a human being or a human subject? Is a translation of Dasein as “human reality” truly a monstrous translation?

When we carefully examine the existential analytic of Dasein in *Being and Time*, the translation of Dasein as “human reality” is not a monstrous translation. For Heidegger himself explains “Dasein” in reference to a human being: “As ways in which man behaves, sciences have the manner of Being which this entity—man himself—possesses. This entity [Mensch] we denote by the term ‘Dasein’.”<sup>16</sup> As shown clearly here, “Dasein” refers to a human being. However, it is important to note that when Heidegger speaks of a human being in terms of “Dasein,” he does not mean *homo rationalis* nor *homo animalis* in the traditional sense. Thus, when “Dasein” is understood as

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<sup>14</sup> Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” 260.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32.

“human reality” in the traditional sense, this understanding would be monstrous, as Derrida suggests. However, if we break away from the traditional determination and understand “human reality” in Heidegger’s own definition, then the identification of “Dasein” with “human reality” is not an incorrect understanding. In fact, Heidegger himself also insists that what he intends to abandon is not the concept of a human being or subjectivity itself at all but only the modern philosophical concept of a subject based on a “thinking ego” that is derived from a traditional understanding of man as “rational animal.” Thus, instead of a modern subject, Heidegger seeks to set up a new essence of man in terms of *homo humanus* whose meaning is completely neglected in Derrida’s interpretation of Dasein. The meaning of *homo humanus* is first explicated along with the individual person of Dasein.

### ***Homo Humanus* and the Individual Person of Dasein**

In this section, I discuss Heidegger’s account of *homo humanus* with respect to the individual person of Dasein. As shown earlier, in fundamental ontology, Heidegger seeks to deconstruct not only the traditional concept of Being but also the traditional concept of man. At the end of *Being and Time*, Heidegger explicitly states why he repudiates the concept of man in traditional ontology. This concept of man is rejected because there is “a danger of ‘reifying consciousness.’”<sup>17</sup> There is a danger of “reifying consciousness” because in overlooking a fundamental difference between the essence of man and the essence of thing, traditional ontology treats man in the same manner as things. This is shown by the fact that in traditional ontology, the essence of man and the essence of things are indiscriminately interrogated with just one mode of question, namely, “what is the thing? (*quid est res?*).”<sup>18</sup>

For Heidegger, by contrast, the essence of man (Dasein) is fundamentally distinguished from the essence of things, and consequently, man cannot be interrogated as such by the question “What is the thing?” An inquiry into the essence of Dasein requires a new mode of question, which Heidegger formulates as “Who is it?” He then maintains that it is in the question of “whoness,” not in the question of “whatness,” in which the essence of man is understood. “The Dasein is not constituted by whatness but—if we may coin the expression—by *whoness*.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, in the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. by A. Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 120.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

question of “Whoness,” the essence of man is determined quite differently from the traditional conception of man.

In the traditional inquiry of “whatness,” the essence of man is sought in the realm of universal. In contrast to this, the essence of man revealed in the question of “whoness” is defined as an individual person. Interrogating Dasein (man) by the question of “whoness,” Heidegger, however, does not mention the term “individual.” Instead of this, he uses his own term “mineness” (*Jemeinigkeit*): “Furthermore, Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent Dasein.”<sup>20</sup> For Heidegger, the “mineness” of Dasein implies an individual person, and this is shown by the fact that a personal pronoun must be used in order to describe Dasein’s mode of Being: “Because Dasein has in each case mineness, one must always use a personal pronoun when one addresses it: ‘I am’, ‘you are.’”<sup>21</sup> Hence from the perspective of the question of “whoness,” what Heidegger means by the term *Jemeinigkeit* is that Dasein is constituted in an individual person.

With an individual person, we can first discover a meaning of *homo humanus* distinguished from *homo animalis* and *homo rationalis* whose essence is determined in terms of universality. However, it should be noted that for Heidegger, the ground of an individual person lies not in the practical reason, as in the case of Kant’s philosophy, but in “existence.” Concerning this point, Heidegger states: “The ‘essence’ of Dasein lies in its existence.”<sup>22</sup> And since *homo humanus* defined as a person is founded in “existence,” in order to understand *homo humanus* we should first clarify what “existence” means in Heidegger’s thoughts.

For the definition of “existence,” Heidegger states: “What does ‘existence’ mean in *Being and Time*? The word names a way of Being; specifically, the Being of that being which stands open for the openness of Being in which it stands in withstanding it ... Withstanding (*Ausstehen*), experienced in this manner, is the essence of the ecstasis that is to be thought here.”<sup>23</sup> Here it should be noted that “existence” is defined as “withstanding,” and this “withstanding” also implies “standing out” (*Hinausstehen*).

Generally, the analysis of Dasein proceeds with a distinction between “existence” and “thinking ego” in consciousness. Whereas the “thinking ego” in modern philosophy is regarded as an isolated subject separated from the world, the term “existence” refers to man that finds himself in the world. Thus, an encapsulated subject is replaced with the existence of Dasein in fundamental ontology.

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<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 78

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Introduction to ‘What is Metaphysics?’” in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 283-84.

Yet Heidegger claims that the “ecstatic essence of existence is therefore still understood inadequately as long as one thinks of it as merely a ‘standing out’ while interpreting the ‘out [*hinaus*] as meaning ‘away from’ the interior of an immanence of consciousness or spirit.”<sup>24</sup> Actually, animals also escape from inner consciousness, and consequently, they exist in the world. In this sense, if the meaning of “existence” is exclusively understood as a replacement of an isolated subject, one cannot see the difference between *homo animalis* and *homo humanus*. Hence, to understand the peculiar feature of *homo humanus* founded on the existence of an individual person, the meaning of existence as “standing out” must be sought in a more primordial sense. In a primordial sense, the existence as “standing out” signifies that Dasein is away from the natural world. And this meaning of existence is ascertained in the fact that by existence, Heidegger means the dwelling of Dasein in the social world.

In fundamental ontology, the Cartesian statement “I think therefore I am” is inverted. Concerning this matter, Heidegger states: “If the ‘*cogito sum*’ is to serve as the point of departure for the existential analytic of Dasein, then it needs to be turned around ... The ‘*sum*’ is then asserted first and indeed in the sense that ‘I am in a world.’”<sup>25</sup> However, it should be noted that when Heidegger speaks of a world in which Dasein exists, he does not mean a natural world. Regarding this point, he states: “Nevertheless—the world is not nature, and it is certainly not the extant.”<sup>26</sup> In fact, a world of animals is a natural world, and in this sense, only animals are in a natural world. But in contrast to animals, Heidegger insists that “*sum*,” namely, the “existence” of man signifies “dwelling” in a social world.

Heidegger asks, “What then does ‘I am’ mean? The old word building (*bauen*), to which the am (*bin*) belongs, answers: I am (*ich sein*), you are (*du bist*) mean: I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are, and I am, the manner in which we human beings are on the earth is dwelling (*Buan*).”<sup>27</sup> As indicated here, Dasein dwells in the social world, for this world is based on ‘building.’ Furthermore, Heidegger identifies “building” with “culture”: “Here building (*Bauen*) means a construction (*Errichten*). The two modes of building are bound up with ‘*colere*’ or ‘*cultura*’ in Latin.”<sup>28</sup> In this quotation, Heidegger explicitly relates a world of “building” with “culture.” From this, we can see that when Heidegger speaks of the existence of Dasein in a world, he means that Dasein dwells in a constructed building that is only found in a

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*: 254.

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 165.

<sup>27</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Bauen Wohnen Denken” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. Korean trans. by K. Lee and S. Sin. (Seoul: Lee Hak Sa Publisher, 2008), 187.

<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, “Bauen Wohnen Denken,” 187.



social and cultural world. Moreover, since the “existence” of Dasein means dwelling in a social world, one can also say that the individual person of Dasein is constituted in the social world. In other words, only the essence of Dasein founded in “existence” is defined as an individual person because the mode of Being of “I am” and “you are” is possible in dwelling in the social world with others.

In fundamental ontology, Heidegger, who objects to the traditional concept of man that falls into a danger of reifying consciousness, seeks to establish a new essence of man, which he calls *homo humanus*. For him, man’s new essence consists of an individual person founded in “existence.” Furthermore, with the existence of Dasein, which refers to the fact that Dasein is no longer in the immanent consciousness but in the world, Heidegger successfully overcomes an encapsulated subject in modern philosophy. However, although it has been neglected in previous studies, there is a more primordial meaning in the existence of Dasein. By the existence of Dasein, Heidegger wants to show that whereas animals live in the natural world, only human beings dwell in the social and cultural world. Here we can see that *homo humanus* is fundamentally distinguished from *homo animalis*, for only *homo humanus* exists in the social world based on construction (*Bauen*). The “existence” of *homo humanus* entailing the dwelling in the social and cultural world can be further ascertained in the phenomenon of care (*Sorge*).

### ***Homo Humanus* and Care (*Sorge*)**

As indicated in the preceding section, in *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger proposes a new essence of man concerning *homo humanus* distinguished from *homo animalis* and *homo rationalis*. Therefore, to understand *homo humanus*, we need to first grasp the meaning of *humanus*. Actually, *humanus* is derived from the root word *humus*. Hence unless the meaning of *humus* is explained, it is difficult to understand the term *homo humanus*. Yet in the *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger hardly discusses *humus*.

In contrast, in *Being and Time*, he offers a specific meaning of it in an analysis of care (*Sorge*). He states that since care creates a human being from clay, *humus* is called “earth”: “But since ‘Care’ first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called ‘*homo*,’ for it is made out of *humus* (earth).”<sup>29</sup> Hence, we can understand *homo humanus* as “earthly human.” But what does

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<sup>29</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 242. Moreover, in the discussion of “Care,” which constitutes the essence of Dasein, Heidegger explicitly equates “lived body” with “earth.” “... but also because this priority of ‘care’ emerges in connection with the familiar way of taking man as compounded of body (earth) and spirit.” Cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 243.

“earth” mean in Heidegger’s fundamental ontology? Hitherto the meaning of “earth” remains obscure in the philosophy of Heidegger.

It is well-known that the analytic of Dasein is difficult to understand because in defining Dasein, Heidegger uses unfamiliar concepts in the context of modern philosophy. For instance, Heidegger claims that the Being of Dasein lies in care. “Dasein’s Being reveals itself as care,”<sup>30</sup> In modern philosophy, philosophers never used the term “care” to define a human being. In contrast to modern philosophers, Heidegger maintains that the essence of a human being is revealed in care, insofar as care creates man from earth. In this sense, one can say that earth is the foundation of a human being. But it is important to see that by the term “earth” Heidegger does not mean a mass of matter that is investigated in geology: “At the same time *phusis* lights up that on which man bases his dwelling. We call this the earth. What this word means here is far removed from the idea of a mass of matter and from the merely astronomical idea of a planet.”<sup>31</sup> If the earth is understood as a mass of matter in a natural world, there is no distinction between *homo humanus* and animals, for animals also dwell on the earth. This definition given by Heidegger, however, is inadequate because it only presents a negative meaning of earth rather than a positive meaning.

Although in the *Letter on Humanism* Heidegger introduces a new concept of man defined as *homo humanus*, the meaning of *homo humanus* remains ambiguous because the Latin term *homo humanus* has been used without a translation. Even in the English translation of the *Letter on Humanism*, the term “*homo humanus*” is untranslated. If we want to understand the term *homo humanus*, this term has to be first translated. Roughly, *homo humanus* can be translated into English as “humanly human” or “earthly human.” Nevertheless, a formal translation is inadequate, for it only indicates a tautological meaning. And even in the latter translation, unless a meaning of earth is clarified, we are unable to grasp what Heidegger means by *humanus* distinguished from *animalis*. In order to understand *homo humanus*, we need to have a positive meaning of “earth.” While Heidegger’s writings hardly provide a positive meaning of earth, we can nonetheless discern this positive meaning from an etymological analysis of *humanus*.

It is indeed correct to translate the term *humus* into “earth.” However, in the philosophy of Heidegger, the term “earth,” which does not signify a mass of matter but a dwelling place of Dasein, has a specific meaning. Since Dasein dwells in a constructed building in the social world, in Heidegger’s thought, the “earth” denotes a “cultivated land.” The Latin term “*humus*” has

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<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 227.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. by J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

two meanings. On the one hand, it refers to “earth,” but on the other hand, it signifies a “cultivated land.”<sup>32</sup> It is with a “cultivated land” that we can finally ascertain a positive meaning of “earth” in the philosophy of Heidegger. By the term “earth,” in which the essence of man disclosed in care is founded, Heidegger means a “cultivated land.” Hence when it is literally translated, the term *homo humanus* means “man of cultivated land.”

In dealing with Heidegger’s new essence of man concerning *homo humanus*, it is crucial to see that the earth signifies a “cultivated land.” Moreover, it should be noted that a “cultivated land” is closely bound up with a social world insofar as it is not equated with natural soil. Therefore, when Heidegger argues that the essence of man is defined as *homo humanus*, he wants to show that a human being proximally dwells not in the natural world but in the social world. Besides this etymological analysis of the term “*humus*,” we can also indicate a connection between the “earth” and a “cultivated land” in Heidegger’s identification of the “earth” with “homeland (*Landschaftt*)” in his conception of language.

According to Heidegger, only a human being has language, and a human being dwells in language: “Language is the house of Being. In its home human beings dwell.”<sup>33</sup> Also, contrary to the general opinion, he argues that language is primarily founded not on written words but on vocal sounds: “Language is represented in terms of speech in the sense of vocal sound.”<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, he insists that these vocal sounds are constituted as language in dialect (*Mundarten*) whose origin is found not in reason (*logos*) but in the earth, namely, “*Landschaftt*.”

For this point, Heidegger states:

Even the simple fact that we Germans call the different manners of speaking in different sections of the country *Mundarten*, mode of the mouth, hardly ever receives a thought. Those differences do not solely nor primarily grow out of different movement patterns of the organs of speech. The landscape (*Landschaftt*), and that means the earth speaks in them.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Langenscheidts Großes Schulwörterbuch: Lateinisch-Deutsch*, s.v. “*humus*.” In this dictionary, we can ascertain that the word *humus* is translated as on the one hand *Erdboden* (earth) and on the other hand *Ackerland* (cultivated land).

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” 239.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The Nature of Language,” in *On the Way to Language*, trans. by P. Hertz (San Francisco, Harper Collins Publishers, 1982), 97.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

In this quotation, Heidegger explicitly says that *Mundarten*, where Dasein dwells, derives from the earth. But this concept of earth denotes not a mass of matter, but the *Landschaft* that presupposes a “man of cultivated land”. Therefore, when *Mundarten* is highlighted in the philosophy of Heidegger, we can clearly see that by the “earth,” Heidegger means a “cultivated land.”

In the *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger introduces a new essence of man with respect to *homo humanus* rooted in the earth, but this earth refers to the native soil. And since human beings are rooted in native soil, they receive their life-giving nourishments not from natural soil but from the native soil:

‘We are plants which—whether we like to admit it to ourselves or not—must with our roots rise out of the earth in order to bloom in the ether and to bear fruit.’ The poem means to say: For a truly joyous and salutary human work to flourish, man must be able to mount from the depth of his home ground up into the ether.<sup>36</sup>

In other words, human beings are like plants, but unlike natural plants, the foundation of human beings is a native soil.

Dasein, whose essence is revealed in care, is grounded in the earth. In this sense, we can see why the essence of Dasein (man) is defined as *homo humanus*. However, it should be noted that since the earth is understood as the “cultivated land,” we now have to say that *homo humanus* signifies “man of cultivated land.” And when this identification of “*humanus*” and the “cultivated land” is highlighted, we can finally understand why *homo humanus* is essentially distinguished from a traditional conception of man as *homo animalis*. Whereas *homo animalis* lives in the natural world, *homo humanus* founded in the “cultivated land” dwells in the social world. Thus with this emphasis of the “cultivated land,” we can finally understand the meaning of *homo humanus* in the philosophy of Heidegger. With *homo humanus* Heidegger seeks to establish a new essence of man that is founded in a social world.

In summary, we have attempted to argue that Heidegger never abandons the concept of man in fundamental ontology. He only rejects the naturalistic view of man defined as *homo animalis* and the universal ego of *homo rationalis*. Although *homo animalis* and *homo rationalis* are opposed to each other, they presuppose a common ground. They both originate in the natural world, and their essences are defined with respect to universality. Nevertheless, contrary to these concepts of man, *homo humanus* is defined as

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<sup>36</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by M. Anderson and E. Freund (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1966), 47.

an individual person who dwells in the “cultivated land” in which the social world is founded. Hence with this new concept of man as *homo humanus* that provides a ground for a social world, we finally understand that although Dasein signifies a human being, Heidegger can break away from the naturalistic concept of man as well as the modern philosophical concept of man as a thinking subject.

## Conclusion

The essence of man is defined as “rational animal (*zoon logon echon*)” in ancient philosophy, and in this definition, “rational” is highlighted. However, when closely examined, “rational” is only a derivative of animality (*zoon*). Thus, Heidegger argues that since the time of ancient philosophy, man is understood as *homo animalis* and this concept of man has become further strengthened in Darwin’s theory of evolution. In philosophical anthropology, Scheler seeks to overcome this naturalistic view of man in his very inclusive concept of free spirit. Nevertheless, Scheler’s account of free spirit that is still thought to be separated from the world remains inadequate, for it is not completely detached from the encapsulated subject in modern philosophy. It is only with Heidegger’s concept of *homo humanus* founded in a “cultivated land” of a social world that the encapsulated thinking subject is finally overcome.

The modern philosophical concept of subject is indeed deconstructed by Heidegger in the existential analytic of Dasein. While the deconstruction of the modern subject is well known, it is not quite clear whether Heidegger introduces a new essence of man or not. There is certainly a new essence of man in the philosophy of Heidegger. What comes after the deconstructed modern subject is *homo humanus*, who escapes from inner consciousness and dwells on the earth, namely, the “cultivated land.”

Heidegger claims that “being-in-world” refers to “dwelling on the earth”: “This dwelling is the essence of ‘being-in-the-world.’ The reference in *Being and Time* to ‘being-in’ as ‘dwelling’ is not some etymological play. The same reference in the 1936 essay on Hölderlin’s word ‘Full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells upon the earth,’ is not the adornment of a thinking that rescues itself from science by means of poetry.”<sup>37</sup> But people could object to our interpretation on *homo humanus* in which the world of Dasein is identified with the earth, for in the philosophy of Heidegger, the world is indeed distinguished from the earth.

In *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger states that world is in strife with earth: “Truth establishes itself in the work. Truth is present only as the

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<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” 272.

strife between clearing and concealing in the opposition between world and earth.”<sup>38</sup> As shown clearly here, world is opposed to earth. However, we can overcome this dilemma by highlighting the fact that for Heidegger, the concept of “earth” has two meanings. On the one hand, earth denotes the world of Dasein, but on the other hand, as the term *Landschaft* indicates, it refers to the spatiality of the world. In this sense, the concept of earth shown in the expression “the strife between world and earth” should be understood as the spatiality of the world that is opposed to the temporality of the world. While in *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphasizes the temporality of the world over the spatiality of the world, in his later thoughts on language and the work of art he advocates that the spatiality of the world (earth) is as important as the temporality of world. This is the reason why he speaks of the strife between world and earth. In dealing with research in the philosophy of Heidegger, it remains our future task to reconcile the strife between world and earth.

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<sup>38</sup> Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” 37.

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