

## A Revisiting of Heidegger's Thinking- Thanking and Zen's Non-rationality

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*Maria Majorie R. Purino*

**Abstract:** This article is a comparative study between Heidegger's essential query in *What is Called Thinking* and Zen's Non-rationality. It takes its cue from Heidegger's pronouncement in *What is Called Thinking* that the most thought-provoking thing is that we are still not thinking. This article claims that bereft thinking, a product of our technological age, brings about the collapse of our essence, instead of ushering in authentic existence. In the process, we revisit Heidegger's question of Being that will ultimately lead us to the examination of the distinction between calculative and meditative thinking. The idea of thinking as a form of thanking—that is, a kind of thinking infused with thankfulness—is also highlighted as meditative thinking. Essential principles in Zen such as the *koan* is discussed to point out Zen's non-rationality, which frowns upon purely logical, discursive, pragmatic, and calculative thinking. This article claims that bereft thinking can be eliminated by taking the stance of meditative thinking and applying Zen's non-rationality. Hence, philosophy remains important as it allows us to challenge our current ways of thinking.

**Keywords:** Heidegger, Zen, calculative thinking, meditative thinking

### Introduction

Martin Heidegger, in his work *What is Called Thinking?*, claims that the “most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking.”<sup>1</sup> Following the path that Heidegger took when he questioned the entirety of western ontology, this re-evaluation of thinking also calls for a re-orientation and re-alignment of the way we understand thinking.

Heidegger writes:

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 4.

On the basis of the Greeks' initial contributions towards an Interpretation of Being, a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of *Being* to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect.<sup>2</sup>

According to him, ontology as we know it, from the Greeks, cannot account for the question of *Being* except in so far as beings appear as entities. However, he says, "The Being of entities 'is' not itself an entity."<sup>3</sup> Hence, Heidegger's purpose in *What is Called Thinking* is to revisit, and ultimately, to clarify the role of philosophy today.

In the process, this paper will do a comparative analysis of what Heidegger means by thinking and what Zen calls non-rationality as an attempt to address the 'bereft thinking' observed in our society.

What is the role of philosophy in our time? How does Heidegger's thinking and Zen's non-rationality figure out in all of these? This Zen non-rationality points to the way of enlightenment of Zen or *satori*. The *satori* experience is rooted on the sudden enlightenment of the Buddha, which manifests itself as a silent transmission and is not the same as the calculative mind's acquisition and accumulation of knowledge.

Alfredo Co writes that "there is in Buddhism, a message that rises above the categories of reason, beyond the convention of everyday language."<sup>4</sup> There is only so much that the calculative mind can do, but to be arrested in such a fashion is not the path of sudden enlightenment. "Shakyamuni did not gain enlightenment in a gradual ascent of degrees of knowledge, but rather attained it all at once."<sup>5</sup> We may also recall how the chief disciple of the Buddha, venerable Mahakasyapa was awakened to the entirety of the Buddha's teachings by simply witnessing the Buddha smile as he raised and held a flower in silence.

It is the essential tradition of Zen that what cannot be conveyed by speech can nevertheless be passed on by 'direct pointing,' by some nonverbal means of communication without which the Buddhist experience

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<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Alfredo Co, *Under the Bo-Tree ... On the Lotus Flower Philosophy of the Compassionate Buddha* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas, 2003), 44.

<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment Origins and Meaning*, trans. by John C. Maraldo (Boston: Shambhala, 1979), 15.

could never have been handed down to future generations.<sup>6</sup>

According to DT Suzuki, this sudden enlightenment or abrupt seeing does not follow the rules of logic. He writes: "This does not take place as the result of reasoning, but when reasoning has been abandoned as futile, and psychologically when the will-power is brought to a finish."<sup>7</sup> Thus, by revisiting Heidegger's *What is called thinking?* and Zen's non-rationality, the status of philosophy is examined, showing why a re-evaluation of the current brand of thinking is a necessary and urgent task of contemporary philosophy.

### What is Called Thinking?

In his collection of lectures, Heidegger presents the striking claim that, "Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking—not even yet, although the state of the world is becoming constantly more thought-provoking."<sup>8</sup> Here, Heidegger is saying that the task of thinking has become problematic in the sense that we are still not thinking. Thus, by saying that the most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking, he indicates something alarming about what at present we consider as thinking. Is thinking like a chore that should be done for the sake of results? Can thinking be only a matter of scientific experiments to validate theories and hypotheses? Isn't thinking that which has propelled our world to be what it is now, loaded with advanced technologies and art systems that have put man in a seemingly better position than in the past? Isn't thinking the task of philosophers and have they not traced the history of thought to the time of Plato and Aristotle? Whereas the Aristotelian *sophia* is prompted by wonder at the nature of things, the Heideggerian *Seinsdenken* is prompted by wonder at the very fact that there is something.<sup>9</sup> Now, if we are to equate thinking with any of these components or even slightly consider thinking as that which makes for an easy and ready fix for all possible contrivances of our being in the world, then perhaps. Heidegger was right all along—that what is most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking.

"To answer the question "What is called thinking?" is itself always to keep asking, so as to remain underway."<sup>10</sup> This statement brings us to an

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<sup>6</sup> Allan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism: Selected writings of D.T. Suzuki*, ed. by William Barrett (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 223.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ted Sadler, *Heidegger & Aristotle: The Question of Being* (London: Athlone Press, 1996), 159.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

earlier endeavor of Heidegger to revisit the question of Being. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger confronts the question of Being. Although the question has been examined and pursued, what it all amounts to is the presupposition of Being as the most universal concept, indefinable and self-evident. Now, given these prejudices, one is no longer tempted to ask: "What is Being?" Yet, Heidegger doggedly insisted on retracing and going back to that question.

"What Heidegger proposes is the study of Being from the starting point of Dasein, an authentic existence."<sup>11</sup> The authenticity of Dasein stems from the ontical and ontological priority of the question of Being. To be ontic is to consider all objects or entities but only in so far as they are things; whereas to be ontological is to ask about what it means *to be*. Thus, in order to reformulate Heidegger's question of Being, we do not just ask about being as ontic but we also strive to go deeper and proceed from an ontological inquiry of Being. This means that we have to start and come from all possible entities present in the world. We have to start with the ontic, and from there, sift through and pick that which is ontological. We do not just name any random object or thing; we have to come from that one, among all things, that has the capacity and is entirely equipped to inquire about Being. "Being cannot be analyzed as an entity, and hence the ontical analysis that makes use of categories—by which we describe entities—is in principle inadequate."<sup>12</sup> To see Being only in the form of categories will be limiting the possibilities of even the entirety of Being. To ask what it means *to be* at all is more than just subjecting the question to genus and differentia, as what Aristotle is doing. As we consider all possible entities, it is man that is most qualified and fit to be that entity which has the potential to be Dasein. Thus, it is man who is in the position to ask about himself. There is the potential for an honest inquiry about what it means *to be*—this, coming from a genuine vantage point, reveals man as Dasein, an authentic Being in the world.

And so, to go back to Heidegger's urgent claim that the most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking, and to respond to this by saying that to think is to remain underway, draws a striking resemblance to his reformulation of the question of Being. To be underway is to continually ask about and be always in the process of thinking. Just as the title pointedly asks, "What is called thinking?" Heidegger took it upon himself not to directly answer this query by describing thinking to be this or that but rather, by immersing himself even further in thought. "The title question is designed

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<sup>11</sup> Emerita Quito, "The Historical Concept of Being and Truth," in *A Life of Philosophy Festschrift in Honor of Emerita S. Quito* (De La Salle University Press, 1988), 562.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), 29.

not to elicit an answer but to effect a transformation, a deepening of thought”<sup>13</sup>

Further, to return to Heidegger’s claim that what is most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking, two things could be pointed out: it is one thing to claim that we are still not thinking, and it is quite another thing to also claim that the state of the world is most thought-provoking. To clarify these two points, we consider first the inquiry into what thinking is. Usually, the term thinking has something to do with the intellect at work for an intended output.

“Thinking becomes reduced to a ‘rationality’ that is a means to an end.”<sup>14</sup> This kind of thinking is calculative thinking, and does not amount to anything but instrumental reasoning. In the *Discourse on Thinking*, Heidegger differentiates between calculative and meditative thinking:

Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next, Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is.<sup>15</sup>

Given these two kinds of thinking, one cannot discredit the importance of calculative thinking. Perhaps to a certain extent, in so far as the world needs to function, the calculative mood of thinking is appropriate. “Scientific thinking is classed by Heidegger as ‘calculative’ thinking, the kind of thinking that can be done by computers.”<sup>16</sup> But then again, calculative thinking can only do so much. Although results may accumulate, no amount of calculative thinking can properly respond to the question of Being or what it means *to be*. The same is the case with the ontical nature of being. If we recognize objects merely as things in the world, then no great value or meaning may be drawn from them. Entities should be taken in an ontological manner in order to gain a deeper understanding than a mere checklist of what are at-hand. Thus, Heidegger’s reconsideration of the question of Being is pivotal to our

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<sup>13</sup> David Loy, *Nonduality A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (New York: Humanity Books, 1988), 165.

<sup>14</sup> Brendt Dean Robbins, “Joyful Thinking-Thanking: A Reading of Heidegger’s *What is Called Thinking?*” in *Janus Head Journal*, 13 (2012), 13–21.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 46.

<sup>16</sup> John Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1999), 78.

understanding of thinking beyond its operative, technical, and rational meaning. Such ontological thinking must come from a primordial pulse.

Heidegger says that our time is thought-provoking. "When Heidegger speaks of 'our thought-provoking time,' he is referring to our technological age."<sup>17</sup> In an article titled "On the Origin of Nihilism—In View of the Problem of Technology and Karma," Akihiro Takeichi reiterates what Heidegger claims of the essence of technology: that it is not even technical. "Rather, it has a transcendental character which is unmanipulated by man, tools, or machines produced by man. It claims man and thereby, controls him."<sup>18</sup> The article argues that both karma and the essence of technology are all about a repetition of human actions devoid of any sense and has its roots on ignorance, which Takeichi refers to as nihilism itself. Indeed, if we try to stand at a distance from ourselves and wonder how advanced we have become over the years, perhaps, the expected reaction would be one of pride and joy over what we have accomplished in the field of science and technology. But exactly how great have we become? Erich Fromm, in his book entitled *The Revolution of Hope*, writes:

A specter is stalking in our midst .... [a] completely mechanized society, devoted to maximal material output and consumption, directed by computers; and in this social process, man himself is being transformed into a part of the total machine, well fed and entertained, yet passive, unalive, and with little feeling.<sup>19</sup>

In the first part of *What is Called Thinking*, there is a repeated mention of Nietzsche and what the prophet Zarathustra calls the "wasteland."

With greater clarity than any man before him, Nietzsche saw the necessity of a change in the realm of essential thinking, and with this change the danger that conventional man will adhere with growing obstinacy to the trivial surface of his conventional nature ....<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Robbins, *Joyful Thinking-Thinking*, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Akihiro Takeichi, "On the Nature of Nihilism—In View of the Problem of Technology and Karma," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. by Graham Parkes (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 184.

<sup>19</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1968), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 57.

It was Nietzsche who already saw a foreshadowing of what was to come, which was this steady downtrodden path thinking has become. Indeed, the wasteland grows as the vast gap between conventional thinking and that more primordial call to think, which is a going back to and a retrieval of Being from our forgetfulness of it. "Being withdraws in our technological age as the experience of thinking is reduced to calculative rationality."<sup>21</sup> According to Heidegger, the technological worldview of our age (*Gestell*) drives essential thinking away from Being. So, the most thought-provoking time is at hand, the time of *Gestell*, and this is so because thinking has become merely calculative. Such calculative thought can bring us only to beings, never to Being. "Only thinking that is 'an event of Being' can be both means and goal, for only such thinking is sufficient unto itself and needs to accomplish nothing else."<sup>22</sup> Thus, to remain in calculative thinking only widens the wasteland and intensifies the most thought-provoking thought that we are still not thinking.

#### Four-fold Way of Asking the Question

1. What does the word "thinking" signify?
2. What does the prevailing doctrine mean by thinking?
3. What is needed in order for us to accomplish thinking with essential rightness?
4. What is That which calls us into thinking?<sup>23</sup>

The first question simply asks about the meaning of thinking. By asking what thinking signifies, we take a closer look at what thinking does. The second question calls to mind all the possible histories of the term "thinking" as we attempt to go back to the very first origin of thought and thinking. Such an endeavor brings us back to the Greeks and their highly esteemed concept of *logos*. The third question necessitates certain prerequisites before we can think with essential rightness. The fourth question points to *that* which calls us to think, or that which is the impetus for us to enter into the task of thinking. Heidegger considers the fourth question as the most important one. Once examined, one will come face to face with these conclusions:

1. Thinking does not bring knowledge as do the sciences.
2. Thinking does not produce usable practical wisdom.
3. Thinking solves no cosmic riddles.

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<sup>21</sup> Robbins, *Joyful Thinking-Thanking*, 14.

<sup>22</sup> Loy, *Nonduality*, 166.

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 157.

4. Thinking does not endow us directly with the power to act.<sup>24</sup>

From here, it is evident that the question, "What is called thinking?" deserves more than a cursory glance; rather, it calls for a deepening of thought. To be called to think means to enter into something which is not a falling away from our nature, such as when we subject ourselves to mere scientific and calculative thinking. To be called to think involves a moving closer to this relationship which we are supposed to have not so much with beings as with Being. "For Heidegger, that which is worthy to be called 'thinking' must have a relation to Being."<sup>25</sup>

### Thinking-Thanking and Memory

After having gone through a myriad of possible approaches, Heidegger finally finds sanctuary in language where we can hope to clarify what we call thinking. He seems to be taking his cue from the language that is being presented to us which is reminiscent of his Letter on Humanism claiming that "language is the house of Being."<sup>26</sup> There seems to be a need to pay heed to language and listen to it before reading the signification of its terms.

The Old English *thencan*, to think, and *thancian*, to thank, are closely related; the Old English noun for thought is *thanc* or *thonc*—a thought, a grateful thought, and the expression of such a thought; today it survives in the plural *thanks*. The "thanc," that which is thought, the thought, implies the thanks.<sup>27</sup>

Looking at the language makes one ask if thinking really is a form of giving thanks. And, if we continue further with our analysis, we will find the term memory coming very close to the equation since to thank someone is actually to think of that someone in remembrance. Such reminiscence is a thinking in the form of a memory. Thus, to have a memory is to remember someone or something in a recollection that is held closely with gratitude, with fond remembrance. "Originally, 'memory' means as much devotion: a

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>25</sup> Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 78.

<sup>26</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1993), 217.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 139. "Closely connected with these words are the German *danken* and its English equivalent 'thank'; to thank someone is to have that person in one's memory and to think gratefully of him." Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 81.



constant concentrated abiding with something—not just with something that has passed, but in the same way with what is present and with what may come.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, we can say that real and non-compartmentalized thinking involves a standpoint of gratitude, a giving thanks. To think, to arrest our attention unto this calling is a gathering of thought, which allows for a communion with Being. This kind of thinking is clearly not done by the traditional and conventional calculative thinking; rather, it is what Heidegger calls meditative thinking. “A true thinking is more than an intellectual operation, it is a disposition infused with thankfulness.”<sup>29</sup> To remember a teacher, for example, is not only to memorize the instructions on certain ethical principles given, but also, in the process, allows the student to arrive at some level of insight about what it means to live. Thus, true thinking is more than just an intellectual play. Here, thinking is more than just the intellect at work, but rather, it is also infused with thankfulness, in the sense that the actual remembering fills one with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and meaning.

So far, we have retraced Heidegger’s question of Being in order to clear the way for the examination in *What is Called Thinking?* We have also pointed out the difference between calculative and meditative thinking, where meditative thinking is more original and more meaningful, infused with gratitude. We now cross to the other shore and look at Zen’s non-rationality. From here, we try to assess the importance or non-importance of reason and rationalization, of thinking and non-thinking in view of the state of philosophy today.

### Zen’s Non-rationality

When we think of Zen Buddhism,<sup>30</sup> we may recall the story of how the Buddha, instead of his usual practice of dharma service in front of the entire congregation of monks, raised a flower and smiled, uttering nothing. Such an act was startling to everybody except for Mahakasyapa, who understood the full intent of the Buddha, and smiled back to his Master. No word was said, no handing down of teachings, except for the raising of the flower and the exchange of a smile between master and disciple that paved

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<sup>28</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 140.

<sup>29</sup> Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 82.

<sup>30</sup> Although Buddhism started in India, it is best to consider China to be the soil which cultivated Zen Buddhism. The kind of Buddhism that flourished in India was not exactly the kind that bloomed in China. Some aspects of Indian tradition did not blend well with the consciousness of the Chinese. So, what was purely and originally Indian awareness has been combined with the Chinese consciousness, and it is this special mixture that led to the growing awakening of Ch’an, also known as Zen, in Japan. See Christmas Humphreys, *Zen Buddhism* (London: Allen & Unwin Publishers, 1976), 20.

the way for the silent transmission of Zen. "The satisfaction the Buddha experienced in this case was altogether too deep, too penetrating, and too far-reaching in result to be a matter of mere logic."<sup>31</sup>

It is incidents like this which enable us to see the leanings of Zen to the non-rational, which requires the observance of silence and direct seeing or sudden enlightenment. Zen Buddhism is known for its irrational nature. It categorically rejects rationality, logic, and the conventional use of syllogistic assumptions to arrive at conclusions. It is beyond reason and is not under the clutches of the intellect in the articulation of its tenets. "... Zen thought is in opposition to the western rational way of thinking, an irrational, non-rational way of thinking."<sup>32</sup>

## Koan

One of the essential features of Zen is a *koan* that is supposed to be a method that would lead towards enlightenment. The Japanese Rinzai master Issh Miura writes:

The koan is not a conundrum to be solved by a nimble wit. It is not a verbal psychiatric device for shocking the disintegrated ego of a student into some kind of stability. Nor, in my opinion, is it ever a paradoxical statement except to those who view it from the outside. When the koan is resolved it is realized to be a simple and clear statement made from the state of consciousness which it has helped to awaken.<sup>33</sup>

The nature of the *koan* lies between the Zen master and the pupil. The training that follows is supposed to be strictly adhered to as a form of reverence to the Zen master. "The pupil is expected to accord absolute obedience and authority to the master, and to hold him in almost higher respect than his own father—and in Asian countries this is saying a great deal."<sup>34</sup> And so the process goes such that the pupil receives the *koan* from the master and from there the pupil will meditate upon it usually in the Zen style of meditation.

Although it has been noted that Zen is beyond reason and logic, there is, in fact, a feature in Zen that, at first glance, would readily show that it is irrational and illogical. But a careful assessment of its nature will make one

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<sup>31</sup> Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1949), 122.

<sup>32</sup> Torataro Shimomura, "D.T. Suzuki's Place in the History of Human Thought," in *A Zen Life: D.T. Suzuki Remembered*, ed. by Masao Abe (New York: Weatherhill, 1986), 66.

<sup>33</sup> Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment*, 65.

<sup>34</sup> Watts, *The Way of Zen*, 163.

realize that it is a matter not just of distrust for the intellect and reason, but of a simple acknowledgment that both the intellect and reason are not sound instruments and mechanisms for enlightenment.

The problem with reason, according to the Buddhist seers, is that it becomes trapped in a limited, arbitrary, conditioned view of the world. Reason becomes entangled with our conditional biases, desires and aversions. It is limited by the categories we have been conditioned to accept by our linguistic and cultural communities, and our personal histories. This conditioned version of reason sets itself up as a tyrant, channeling our perception into limiting, pre-conceived categories and censoring all inputs from reality that would tend to reveal a bigger picture.<sup>35</sup>

J.C. Cleary justifies why the Zen *koan* does not adhere to traditional thinking. In his book, *Meditating with Koans*, Cleary attempts to correct the common notion that the *koans* and Zen in general are anti-reason. In fact, it is not so much the case that Zen is anti-reason as that reason has its limitations and simply cannot embrace the breadth and depth of true enlightenment.

The enlightened wisdom which Buddhist teaching aims to activate includes the capacity for what is called 'differentiating wisdom'—the ability to accurately perceive the workings of complex, interlocking webs of cause and effect, and to formulate effective strategies for accomplishing the teaching mission of the Buddhas.<sup>36</sup>

Further, Cleary asks how—if indeed Zen is anti-intellectual—has Zen managed to make such a profound impact on the intellectual world of East Asia?<sup>37</sup> And not just in East Asia but most especially in the West, since it is the Japanese Zen Buddhism that thoroughly attracted a large following even in the West.

Examples of *koans*:

1. When both hands are clapped a sound is produced; listen to the sound of one hand clapping.

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<sup>35</sup> J.C. Cleary, *Meditating With Koans* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1992), 11.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

2. There is nothing true anywhere,  
The true is nowhere to be seen;  
If you say you see the true,  
This seeing is not the true one.
  
3. Where the true is left to itself,  
There is nothing false in it, which is Mind itself.  
When Mind in itself is not liberated from the false,  
There is nothing true, nowhere is the true to be found.<sup>38</sup>
  
4. An example of the first koan that was directed to the sixth patriarch by the monk Myo (Ming) goes like this: When asked what Zen was, he said: *When your mind is not dwelling on the dualism of good and evil, what is your original face before you were born?*<sup>39</sup>

Reading the different *koans*, one gathers that answering a *koan* directly would be impossible. Indeed, it is not in the nature of *koans* that one can answer them directly, especially if one is using one's conventional calculative mind. It may also seem like the answers to the *koans* may call for many distinct levels and that no immediate answer is readily available. "[D.T.] Suzuki repeatedly emphasizes that the Zen koan is nothing more than a paradox of rational thought, and is a method of breaking through from such rational thought."<sup>40</sup>

### Bereft Thinking

Although our age is technological, and we are far more advanced than any other period in our history, still, there is a call to pause and somehow detach ourselves from where we are and just observe what has become of the world. This may be hard indeed, for how can we actually be detached if we are already too deeply involved in what this world has made of us. Still, the call has never been more urgent, never been more dire and earnest, than today. The Socratic "know thyself" and "an unexamined life is not worth living" ring even more loudly in our times than ever before. Nietzsche's warning should never leave any stone unturned, "the wasteland grows!"<sup>41</sup> In her book, *Eastern and Western Cultural Values: Conflict or Harmony*, To Thi Anh writes:

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<sup>38</sup> Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (London: Forgotten Books, 2007), 83.

<sup>39</sup> Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1964), 104.

<sup>40</sup> Torataro, *D.T. Suzuki Remembered*, 79.

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, 49 cites Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Thus, the main protest against technology are put out in the name of nature, society, and the human person. Nature is devastated, forests are denuded, rivers, harbors, seacoasts polluted, the landscapes become ugly. Society is ravaged by the harsh imperatives of competition, the dissolution of family, of traditions, of faith. Human beings themselves are alienated from the environment and society, as well as from their own individual beings. The person is in danger of becoming a mere cog in the production-consumption thinking.<sup>42</sup>

It is in this light that this article claims our time to be a time of bereft thinking. Our technological age may be bringing about the collapse of our essence, instead of authentic advancement. "Why can technology, which has lightened in a quasi-magic way human existence, be at the same time so dehumanizing?"<sup>43</sup> What seems to be praiseworthy, even wonderful, about technology, such as the recent scientific breakthroughs and their latest applications, could actually spell a drawback to our Being. This trend in thinking, which is highly calculative, is the kind that Heidegger deeply frowns upon. "The current conception of technology, according to which it is a means and a human activity, can therefore be called the instrumental and anthropological definition of technology."<sup>44</sup> This human activity, the call to endless repetitive action, faster speed, more demand, is exactly what Takeichi claims as nihilism itself; and just like karma, it reaps and sows as it is grounded on ignorance. This definition is not something that stands any dispute for even Heidegger would claim that it is uncannily correct.<sup>45</sup> He uses the word "uncanny" as a fitting description—indeed, a very strangely correct anthropological definition—of technology. But up to what extent is technology really only a means to an end? "Technology, which has been regarded throughout the length of Western history as an instrumental cause or means in the production or attainment of something, is now under question."<sup>46</sup>

If we try to trace the history of such instrumental thinking of technology, we situate its beginnings during the time of the Greeks—the same time when thinking and logos first became conveniently misconstrued.

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<sup>42</sup> To Thi Anh, *Eastern and Western Cultural Values*, 62.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>44</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, 312.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>46</sup> Romualdo E. Abulad, "The Role of Philosophy in the Technological Age," in *Karunungan: A Journal of Philosophy*, 21 (2004), 172.

Since then, thinking has been equated and identified with mere logic and technology, easily taken for a means to an end.

Heidegger attempts to illuminate by tracing what was lost in translation when the Greek word for thinking, *legein*, was translated into the Latin, *ratio*. He finds that two significations for *legein* are not found in *ratio*: a) thinking as speaking and b) thinking as gathering.<sup>47</sup>

From here, there seems to be the reduction of philosophy, as well as thinking, to reason and rationality. Somehow, calculative thinking has stepped on meditative thinking, which is supposed to be a being-thoughtful. Thus, Heidegger was right when he claimed that we are still not thinking even at our most thought-provoking time! This thought-provoking time, our time which is technological, is still not thinking because calculative thinking has trumped meditative thinking.

Heidegger's *On Time and Being* further declares that our thinking is not authentic thinking since it is only up to the level of instrumental or calculative thinking. "Unconcealment is, so to speak, the element in which Being and thinking and their belonging together exist."<sup>48</sup> For Heidegger, the term, "unconcealment" points to his notion of truth as *aletheia* or undisclosedness. In this sense, what is revealed is the relation between Being and thinking. Thus, thinking should not only be seen as a means to an end. So far, in our history and in all our technological advances, thinking is seen only as something that can produce an end. While it is not totally wrong to view thinking as such, there is still some truth in Heidegger's claims that compels us to re-evaluate and rethink our notion of thinking as something more than that which produces something. Heidegger's thinking Being is not to be identified with a being who thinks or thinks about Being. Thinking Being is an unconcealment of Being, an *aletheia*, because they—thinking and Being—belong together. This is why Heidegger insists that we are still not thinking; and this is why this article describes our traditional way of thinking as bereft thinking. "In contrast to calculative thinking of modern instrumental reason, it is a meditative thinking which, according to Heidegger, was there in the beginning of philosophy, but was very soon forgotten."<sup>49</sup> It is only meditative thinking that can erase this downtrodden way of thinking—this thinking that is not thinking. And it is only meditative thinking that will

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<sup>47</sup> Robbins, *Joyful Thinking-Thinking*, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 69.

<sup>49</sup> Bo Dahlin, "On the Path Towards Thinking: Learning from Martin Heidegger and Rudolf Steiner," in *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 28:6 (2009), 540.

usher in a re-evaluation and re-orientation of thinking. What is this meditative thinking? What is there in the beginning that has been forgotten? What is unconcealment?

It is in this light that Zen Buddhism's non-rationality is being considered. Heidegger is popular for his self-identification with oriental thinking. "Heidegger's reported enthusiasm over the Zen Buddhist approach to such questions suggests that he believed in a path or a meditative practice leading to such experience."<sup>50</sup> We find in the language of Zen's anti-reason, which simply translates to a non-reliance on reason, something akin to Heidegger's distrust of calculative thinking. There is a certain familiarity and similarity between Heidegger and Zen Buddhism. It seems like there is a leap from the traditional way of thinking, which is common and at-hand today. But Heidegger frowns upon such type of thinking in the same manner that Zen essentially considers a sudden enlightenment to be like a crossing over to a province that is open, spontaneous, and is not bounded by any biases, claims, or thinking of any sort. "The leap itself seems also similar to what is called *satori*, or "enlightenment", in Zen."<sup>51</sup> This enlightenment experience does not come from being too full and loaded with thought, with thinking and reasoning, but from being empty, from not being consumed by tenets, mechanizations, instruments, and systems. "Reasoning and scriptures are not necessary for enlightenment; one must meditate on *sunyata* (emptiness) and sudden enlightenment results."<sup>52</sup>

What is obvious in Zen is that it defies logic and reason by agreeing that when it comes to the unconcealment of the truth, there is something about the use of reason that disquiets the revealing. "Silence speaks" is a Zen ideal, which means that no amount of words or language will unconceal that which has been concealed. Enlightenment can only happen if there is a leap from these processes.

It is not logos but silence as 'basic mood / voice' (*Grundstimme*) that encounters the wonder of the presencing of Being, being attuned (*gestimmt*) by the silent voice (*lautlose Stimme*) of Being, and responding (*abstimmen*) from it.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> P.T. Raju, *Introduction to Comparative Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Press, 1962), 146.

<sup>53</sup> Tetsuaki Kotoh, "Language and Silence: Self Inquiry in Heidegger and Zen," in *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, 210.

The silence that ensues is fuller than any articulation with words but has become a *koan* where it calls one to the presencing of thought. "A silence that is not intellectually understood as the mere absence of sound, but as one that is experienced as the palpable presence of the here-and-now of being-time."<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper considers Heidegger's *What is Called Thinking?* as its primary text to uncover what is meant by thinking. To think is not equal to something that is meant in an operational manner so as to get results. To think is not calculative, but meditative. This meditative thinking comes from the gathering of thought, which is, in actuality, a kind of thanking, thanking that springs from memory. Remembrance is brought about by a sense of fondness for that which is being remembered. To think is a form of worship of that which is being remembered and thanked—that which is thoughtworthy and thought-evoking.<sup>55</sup>

That thinking ought not to be calculative is linked to the non-rationality of Zen which goes beyond reason, rationalization and logic. The very essence of Zen is to do away with the calculative mind and to see directly. This direct seeing is known as *satori* or sudden enlightenment. No intellectualization is needed, just a direct seeing. Bringing together Heidegger's thinking as thanking and Zen's non-rationality opens up to the unconcealment of Being, which is revealed in that silence where there is only oneness with Being. This unveiling, therefore, is not just a recount of things that are in the world in the sense of objects and entities, but it speaks of the revealing of Being that is not a random showing of parts and categories. Instead, this unveiling is a revelation of the truth of Being, an *aletheia*, where the possibility of Being, as seen in the horizon of time, constitutes an awareness of meaning, of owning up to something which is not just an accumulation of concepts, but a showing of a deeper truth of the character of Being. This unconcealment is the Zen ideal of seeing into one's own nature, a *satori* experience, a revealing and a taking hold of truth that really is beyond calculative thinking.

This closeness or oneness with Being is that which we hope to recover in our thought-provoking time, which is the time of the machine. Technology and modernity deepen this bereft thinking—thinking that is not thinking.

Bereft thinking in our supposed highly technological age should heed Heidegger's caveat that we are still not thinking in our most thought-provoking time. It is here that we consider Zen Buddhism's non-rationality

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<sup>54</sup> Parkes, *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, 527.

<sup>55</sup> Macquarrie, *Heidegger and Christianity*, 82.



as a sudden enlightenment which can be likened to Heidegger's meditative thinking. It brings forth silence as a gathering of that which calls us into thinking. There is a shared connection between that which is non-logical and also what is non-linguistic in Zen and in Heidegger. Meditative thinking in the light of both Heidegger and Zen is what the society needs to reaffirm the role of philosophy today.

*Department of Philosophy, University of San Carlos, Cebu City, Philippines*

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