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## **The vagrancy of Odysseus and Oedipus through the darkness and the quest of Daseinsanalysis\***

Dear friends, two stories, just two moments of two ancient Greek stories. Of course, we should always keep in mind that these are not just stories. Ancient stories are not simply stories. They are not made for fun. They are not made in order to pass the time. They are fingers, forefingers that show. Sometimes they say what cannot be said and they try to express what cannot be expressed. If we pay the necessary attention, at the time something is said, something else will start to be revealed. These stories can open a door.

The first moment is from the Odyssey: Odysseus asks to leave the island of Kirki (the place of oblivion and illusion). He wants to go on his journey to Ithaca. But Odysseus becomes desperate when Kirki reveals to him that his way lies through Hades. He has to go down to Hades! It's not so simple! He tries to avoid this, but the gods insist: Your journey lies through Hades! His desperation reaches crisis point, but Odysseus does not give up the fight, he looks for support and asks: But how can I find this way? ***“Who will govern on such a road?”*** (τίς γάρ ταύτην οδόν ηγεμονεύσει); (501-502).

Kirki gives an unexpected answer which enlightens the whole epic: ***“Put your trust in the Ocean itself and its deep whirlpools”***.

Perhaps here is the epicentre of the whole epic. Odysseus, the resourceful hero, he who does not trust anything except the power of his mind, he who has the solution for everything, will be able to find his home (and become himself?) only to the degree to which he will abandon his familiar identity and will let himself trust. To be able to go on his journey – perhaps we could say an authentic journey- he will have to abandon his familiar ways and set himself free to trust. That which will lead him is not the power of his Ego but his trust in the Ocean itself. “Home” is revealed after such a wandering (Perhaps the wandering itself is the “home”).

Okay, this is a story, but what is its relevance to the quest of Daseinsanalysis? We'll see that next.

Dear friends, we owe to Heidegger a new conceptual framework and especially we owe to the Analysis of Dasein a new understanding of people. That consists in the fact that the human being is no longer understood on the basis of some mechanistic, biological, or psychological theory, or on the basis of the dichotomy of internal and external, - Daseinsanalysis overcomes this. Instead understanding is based on Dasein as *“Being-in-the-world”* as the fundamental mode of existence. The term *‘world’* does not mean the universe of things in the environment or an external world, but rather a whole in the sense of the all-embracing horizon of feeling and meaning in which all human experience, thinking, and acting takes place. A person prereflectively lives and experiences, within the totality of his horizon with its situations, conditions, movements, effects and its possibilities. The human being, each individual person, is already and from the beginning in a *“world”*, is *“thrown”* into a *“world”*, moves in a *“world”* and

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everything that happens to him, everything he undertakes, all his experiences and behavior have (or have not) a meaning in this “world”.

As a consequence, psychotherapists inspired by Daseinsanalysis will move away from trying to change the “inner” or the “outer” states of the patient and instead focus on his experience, and that means, on his “world”.

We should emphasize, here, that Daseinsanalysis focuses on the experience in a phenomenological way.

But what means “in a phenomenological way”? Perhaps here we can see the relevance between the above mentioned story of the Odyssey and Daseinsanalysis. Phenomenology means, nothing less than to trust the phenomenon: Not our intellectual constructions, not our theories, not the power of our Ego, but the phenomenon itself. Phenomenology means, to respect the phenomena themselves and Heidegger says that “*Phenomenon is understood as what shows itself in itself, what is revealed to us*” (Heidegger, 1927).

Since Heidegger, the phenomenon has been understood not as a simple sequence of static facts but as an ever-evolving and temporal whole (*world*). That’s why the way of Daseinsanalysis is especially the hermeneutical-phenomenological way. The topic of hermeneutic phenomenology is not merely descriptive since in the phenomenon is included the “*hidden*” of the phenomenon, the *hidden* of “*what shows itself in itself*”, that is, the “*world*” of the phenomenon. As a consequence, Daseinsanalysis does not mean a mere description of our experience and an assessment of how this falls short of an ideal of openness and freedom towards the world. It means a journey which demands our engagement and the outcome of our illusionary security. Perhaps, Daseinsanalysis is just a journey similar to that of Odysseus.

Such a journey is like a play, a dance, between concealment and unconcealment, truth and fallacy and illusion. Such a journey, is the authentic movement of the Dasein, the movement of the “Being-in-the-World” as temporality. This is the movement of the Hermeneutic Phenomenology which has the form of a circle in which the beginning and the end join. This circular process means that I return to the same place, (perhaps I always stay in the same place, at the phenomenon) but I return and stay there with a changed perception. Just as Odysseus: He returned to Ithaca, but he was not the same. Another “Being-in-the-world” has been revealed!

A similar experience is seen in Sophocles’ Oedipus: Oedipus doesn’t want to become his mother’s husband and his own father’s murderer and –as every one of us- takes fate into his own hands, through his decision. With his strong will and the power of his intellect, he proceeds from triumph to triumph and from glory to glory! The course of Oedipus stops -in «Oedipus Rex»-, at his “world’s” (and his Ego’s) total collapse (we know the facts very well). But at this point, another course begins. In «*Oedipus at Colonus*», the play that Sophocles wrote at a late age, Oedipus encounters places and cities as a blind wanderer (it seems like Sophocles is telling us that we can only meet the true otherness with our eyes closed!) ... and he arrives at Athens. There, he meets Theseus, the king of Athens. Two men, who have known solitude and wandering meet each other in the epicentre of the city and process this solitude into a common world, silence into speech...

The ancient Greek tragedy tells us (just like Heidegger?) that I can be in an authentic way, if I have resigned from my own illusionary constructions, which means when I have passed through their collapse and I have accepted my mortality, that is, my nothingness. Authenticity presupposes the absolute collapse of my (inauthentic) “world” and my demolishment into Nothing.

But this is not enough! To be a blind wanderer is not enough! Perhaps it's the first step, but this is not enough! To exist means to "Be-in-the-world". I need to be a resident of a "world", a common "world", a "world" which I can share and communicate with others and that means not a closed and static "world". Perhaps this which gives rise to a common "world" is to join with someone else who knows about wondering as well (just as Oedipus meets Theseus). Perhaps, only the join and the acceptance of otherness gives rise to an open and authentic "world", so as to be able to see: Ex-isting in Nothing, is ex-isting in otherness, is ex-isting in Being. Perhaps the Greek experience, the Greek view, is characterized from such a transcendence: the abandonment of Ego as the acceptance of otherness and all this as a glow of ex-istence. Such a view is filled with admiration of the miracle of Being.

Dear friends, we owe to Heidegger the understanding that names are not just labels for something static and still but at the same time a sign for a moving and temporal "world". Names, permit a "world" to unfold and it's fascinating to wonder and free ourselves into the experience of this "world", especially when the subject is names such as Dasein, Being, Nothingness. We could say that experience is organized and takes its form through the different social and cultural "worlds" to which the person belongs. And that means that the experience and the understanding of the names cannot be independent from the language, the tradition, and the "world", in which someone lives. I find this fascinating.

In Greek tradition, from ancient times until now, an experience comes again and again, in different variations: It concerns an experience which enables me a Greek Daseins therapist to access and to communicate with some names and some meanings which derive from another culture in another language.

Could we call this "the experience of Nothingness as the acceptance of the otherness and all this as the glow of ex-isting.?"

We could reflect on this...