
THE *PEERS TY* SYSTEM: CONSIDERING ENVIRONMENTAL PRAXIS WITH REFERENCE TO HEIDEGGER'S IDEA OF BEING IN THE WORLD

Bensen Alex U. Pola and Jayrold Madarang¹

ABSTRACT

This paper will explain a system of environmental praxis which will be called the Peers Ty system. It will discuss it with reference to Martin Heidegger's idea of being-in-the-world. The term *Peers Ty* system is constructed to reflect its aims. *Peers*, which means brothers or comrades, is derived from the Pro-Environmental Act, Earth Friendly User, and the Five Rs and the SB way, (Reduce, Re-Use, Recycle, Recover, Re-think, and Stop Burning). While *Ty* means *Thank You* and comes from the Trees for Life movement and the You Forest movement. This is an environmental ethics based upon action. The necessity of an environmental praxis for relating to nature can be explicated with reference to Heidegger's philosophy and his ideas of *being in the world* and *dwelling*. This paper will show that the *Peers Ty* system realizes Heidegger's understanding of an authentic manner of being in the world. It creates a practical system for dwelling on the earth.

Keywords: Heidegger; dwelling; environmental praxis; Peers Ty System

¹ Mariano Marcos State University, Philippines. Bensen Alex U. Pola can be reached at: bupola@mmsu.edu.ph, bensen.pola@gmail.com. Jayrold Madarang can be reached at: madarangjayrold@gmail.com

The Human Relationship with the World

Human existence is made possible through the world. Pope Francis has asserted in his encyclical letter “Laudato Si” that the earth is our *common home*.² We call the earth ‘mother nature’ because it is through her that human beings are sustained and nourished. Without the earth’s providence, man is completely reduced to *nothingness*, for we knowingly become who and what we are through nature. But we often forget this. We need to be reminded how we are *beings in the world*.

How then are we to promote this manner of *being with the world*? The German philosopher Martin Heidegger introduces a distinction between two ways of approaching things in the world: the *ready-to-hand* and the *present-at-hand*. The *ready-to-hand*, describes our practical equipmental relation to things.³ But sometimes we experience something of the object which is deeper than its mere usefulness. The object shows itself as something *present-to-hand*. This experience brings us closer to a more authentic relationship to Being. Heidegger writes in his book *Being and Time*:

Now that we have suggested, however, that the ready-to-hand is thus encountered under modifications in which its presence-at-hand is revealed, how far does this clarify the phenomenon of the world? Even in analysing these modifications we have not gone beyond the Being of what is within-the-world, and we have come no closer to the world-phenomenon than before. But though we have not as yet grasped it, we have brought ourselves to a point where we can bring it into view.⁴

If we look at nature as merely something to be used, we are far from experiencing it in an authentic or spiritual way. Heidegger speaks

² Pope Francis, ‘Laudato Si’, Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis, ‘On Care for Our Common Home’, Rome, May 24, 2015, chapter 1, sec 17.

³ Ibid, 103.

⁴ Ibid, 102.

of praxis as ontologically prior to theory. This leads us to the question, how do we ‘use’ or interact with nature and yet experience our deeper relationship within it? The medium of connectivity between the two concepts, *theory* and *praxis* is one of the aims of this paper. It is to create a practical environmental ethics *vis-à-vis* care for our *home*, particularly in response to the problem of climate change.

The Abuse of Nature

The Industrial Revolution began in Britain in the 18th century and spread to Europe, America, and Asia. While leading to many positive developments it had also put enormous strain on the environment. This has led to exploitive practices like irresponsible mining, deforestation, the pollution of the air, the land and the oceans. And it has led to the dangerous increase of Greenhouse Gases (GHG).

Our exploitation of nature has not only diminished nature but has also diminished us. Whatever we do to nature reflects who we are as rational beings because of our relation to it. We dehumanize ourselves as we sever our relationship to our *home* because whatever we do to her, she certainly responds back. She responds with vengeance if she is abused and responds with prosperity if she is treated well. Now, nature is responding with vengeance in the form of climate change. Whether we like it or not, our co-existence with nature is dependent on whether we approach it through harmonious dwelling or unfavorable treatment. Human beings should show care for nature, just as Heidegger speaks about care in relation to Being.

In what way can we affirm the applicability of *being in the world* and *being with* in our relationship with nature? It involves experiencing the *sacredness* in a different way. It is not the way in which we directly relate to the Supreme Being, but rather, how we experience what is *sacred* in relating ourselves to nature. Sacredness happens when we establish a *mutual reciprocity* with nature that is expressed through action. Reverence is expressed in our active *interrelatedness* with our *home*. Interrelatedness can only be accomplished by concretely putting into praxis *being in* and

being with the world. This involves performing concrete projects. This is what the *Peers Ty* system attempts to guide.

The Peers Ty System

This *project* is what we would like to call *the Peers Ty system*. This *system* is a humanistic approach to dealing with nature that specifically addresses the global problems that we have created. The term *Peers Ty* is constructed to reflect its aims. *Peers*, which means brothers or comrades, is derived from the Pro-Environmental Act, Earth Friendly User, and the Five Rs and the SB way, (Reduce, Re-Use, Recycle, Recover, Re-think, and Stop Burning). While *Ty* means *Thank You* and comes from the Trees for Life movement and the You Forest movement.

The Pro-Environmental Act asks governments enact environmental laws and pioneer environmental projects. Governments must use their political power and lead the way in taking actions for the sake of the environment. This involves the creation and enforcement of laws with corresponding reward systems and legal penalties.

The second approach is the Earth Friendly User. It encourages citizens to pursue eco-friendly activities to attain the goals of the *system*. This includes the use of bicycles, use of electric public utility vehicles, eating local food, turning off air conditions when not needed, use of compact led lights, practicing waste segregation, digging compost pits for biodegradable waste, use of refillable containers, and use of paper bags, and among many other activities. Earth Friendly User reflects an authentic individual participation in addressing environmental issues so that they can be a true steward of Mother Nature.

Third is the obligatory implementation of the 5Rs and SB Way to be practiced by all persons, businesses, churches, schools, corporations, and other civic groups. Any altered dealings with nature always harm the environment. Guarding against the over-utilization of the resources of nature and minimizing the exploitation of the wealth of the earth, are the foremost obligations of all human beings.

Fourth is the constant practice of Trees for Life. Without trees, the world will face with annihilation. Trees for Life should be a compulsory practice when celebrating memorable occasions like birthdays, weddings, baptisms, promotions, Christmas Day, Earth Day, New Year's Day, anniversaries, and among others. Making this a practice guarantees a healthy process of afforestation.

Similarly, the fifth, and last approach is You Forest. The purpose is to enlighten and encourage owners of privately owned land to engage in a lifetime entrepreneurial endeavor. This can turn unproductive lands into income-generating projects by planting either lumber or fruit trees. The dual purpose of the You Forest is to provide lifetime income and preserve green ecology.

Following the *Peers Ty* system realizes Heidegger's understanding of an authentic relationship of 'Being' and 'being in the world'. As Heidegger points out: "The world is the fabric of our being and that the world is a common world that is experienced together with others."⁵

Our *sacredness* involves maintaining this authentic relationship. It allows us to dwell on the earth. Heidegger writes:

In saving the earth, in receiving the sky, in awaiting the divinities, in initiating mortals, dwelling occurs as the fourfold preservation of the fourfold. To spare and preserve means: to take under our care, to look after the fourfold in its presencing. What we take under our care must be kept safe. But if dwelling preserves the fourfold, where does it keep the fourfold's nature? How do mortals make their dwelling such a preserving? Mortals would never be capable of it if dwelling were merely a staying on earth under the sky, before the divinities, among mortals. Rather, dwelling itself is always a staying with things. Dwelling as preserving keeps the fourfold in that with which mortal stay: in things.⁶

⁵ Ibid, 99-100.

⁶ Ibid, 151.

For Heidegger, mortals are in a continuum always seeking for contentment they get from their abode and dwelling. Homelessness pervades thinking that mortals need to dwell and not just by naïve dwelling, but by dwelling that mandates a high sense of putting into practice the *Peers Ty*. This is, in a real sense, a manifestation of hermeneutical interplay between the *Peers Ty* and the concepts of Heidegger, *being in the world*, and *being with*. Moreover, the condition of the *Peers Ty*, is that, if one of the approaches is left out, man will not dwell but merely exist in an *Anthropocene Era*. Embracing, living, and practicing the system is essential for a harmonious bond between human beings and nature. Thus, the hermeneutical interplay is in how we establish understanding of the whole with respect to the condition of the world as how human beings treat it, and at the same time, understanding its parts, the specific impacts, and the actions human beings must do. Practicing *Peers Ty* is putting in praxis both *being in the world* and *being with* that invigorates this hermeneutic interplay.

Conclusion

How is it to dwell relative to the *Peers Ty*? We see that the planet is in danger because of anthropogenic negligence in the occurrence of climate change, and thus, confirms the notion of irresponsible human beings, prioritizing desire and consumption rather than promoting a *reciprocal bond* between nature and man. Though human beings' imperfection bears their negligence, such imperfection becomes the power to determine their true *beingness*. *Peers Ty*, the environmental project, is necessarily a product of man's determination, depending on his sincerity in achieving his real intention of how he should *dwell*. We are constantly challenged to put the *Peers Ty* into action towards fulfilling care for our *common home*.

In what ways can the *Peers Ty* manifest a hermeneutical interplay with Heidegger's reflections on *Building, Dwelling, and Thinking*? This is expressed most succinctly in Heidegger's claim, that '*dwelling is the manner in which mortals are on the earth*'. How do mortals make their dwelling such a preserving? It involves something beyond mere living

on earth, under the sky, before the divinities, among mortals. Rather, dwelling itself involves something more active. The *Peers Ty* is a way of promoting this dwelling. Following the *system* is a form of *building*, it is *building* that necessitates the actual sense of *dwelling*.

We are confronted with the challenge of becoming a well-accomplished being. It is the earth that completes humanity's existential purpose. Our identity as human beings is replicated in the world, and whatever man gives to nature, it comes back to him. It is in this way that the *Peers Ty* is a theoretical approach that ensures that we preserve ourselves by giving back to nature. Hence, the medium of connectivity is the positive environmental accomplishment of the *Peers Ty*, which is the attainment of ecological balance.

REFERENCES

- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.
_____. *Poetry Language Thought*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.
Pope Francis, "Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home." Rome, May 24, 2015, chapter 1, sec 17.