

An Existential Dialogue between Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing in Novel Reverend Insanity: A Heideggerian Perspective

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Abstract

This paper delves into the existential dialogue between Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing, two central characters in the xianxia novel *Reverend Insanity*. Through Heideggerian lens, researcher examine understanding of existence, mortality, and the pursuit of meaning. Fang Yuan, a seasoned cultivator, embodies a mature understanding of Being-in-the-world, accepting death and living authentically. In contrast, Bai Ning Bing grapples with his own mortality and seeks a path to meaning. By analyzing their dialogue, researcher explore themes of freedom, authenticity, and the role of the other in shaping individual identity. This paper argues that the dialogue between these two characters offers a profound exploration of the human condition and the challenges of finding meaning in the world.

Keywords: Existential Analytic; Martin Heidegger; Reverend Insanity

Introduction

Reverend Insanity is a fantasy novel written by Gu Zhen Re and published by Reverend Novel on November 26, 2019. This 2186-page digital book, available on Google Play Books, offers readers a unique and immersive experience. The realm of xianxia, a genre of Chinese fantasy novels, often delves into themes of cultivation, immortality, and the pursuit of power. However, beneath the surface of these fantastical elements, profound philosophical questions about existence, mortality, and the meaning of life emerge. One such novel, *Reverend Insanity*, offers a unique opportunity to explore these existential themes through the lens of Martin Heidegger's philosophy.

Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world provides a powerful framework for understanding the human condition. This concept suggests that humans are inherently intertwined with their environment and that our understanding of ourselves is shaped by our interactions with the world around us. By applying this lens to the characters of Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing, researcher seek deeper insights into their motivations, struggles, and ultimate destinies.¹

Fang Yuan, a complex and enigmatic figure, embodies a mature understanding of Being-in-the-world. He has transcended the fear of death and embraced his mortality. His acceptance of death allows him to live authentically, without being bound by the constraints of others. He understands that true freedom lies in recognizing the finite nature of life and living each moment to the fullest. His unwavering determination and pursuit of power are driven by a desire to control his own destiny and to leave a lasting impact on the world.

In contrast, Bai Ning Bing a character who is still grappling with the complexities of existence. He is torn between his desire for immortality and his recognition of the inevitability of death. His initial fear of death hinders his ability to fully engage with the world and to live authentically. However, through his encounters with Fang Yuan, he begins to awaken to the possibilities of a different way of being.

The dialogue between Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing offers a unique perspective on the meaning of life. His conversations with Bai Ning Bing provide a rich ground for exploring existential themes. This paper delves into these dialogues, analyzing them through the lens of

¹ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*, 8.

Martin Heidegger's philosophy. By examining Fang Yuan's understanding of existence and mortality, researchers seek valuable insights into the search for meaning in a complex world.

Research Method

This research employs a qualitative content analysis approach,² to examine the existential dialogue between Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing in the novel *Reverend Insanity*. By closely analyzing the textual content of their interactions, we aim to uncover the underlying philosophical themes and insights. This method involves a systematic process of interpreting the relevant passages. By applying a Heideggerian lens to the analysis, we seek to explore the characters' experiences of being-in-the-world, their understanding of death, and their search for meaning.

Results And Discussion

The Dialogue

This is a paragraph of dialogue between Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing³:

"Fang Yuan's hearty laughter echoed through the air, a stark contrast to his slow, deliberate steps. His voice, aged and wise, carried a profound message: 'Humans, mere fleeting existences, live out their hundred years like a dream. What is the purpose of this life? Simply to journey, to witness the wonders of the world. I do not fear death, for I have walked my path with no regrets.' This was the truth, a truth that Fang Yuan deeply understood. From the dawn of time, even the mightiest Gu Masters and the legendary Ren Zu, could only extend their lives, not conquer death. In the grand scheme of existence, death was inevitable. Fang Yuan, having dedicated his life to his goals, had no fear. He had lived his life to the fullest, transcending the fear of mortality. Bai Ning Bing, upon hearing Fang Yuan's words, was shaken to his core. Despite his claims of fearlessness, he was still bound by the chains of life and death. He lacked the clarity to see beyond his mortal coil. Fang Yuan's wisdom, however, offered a new perspective. 'Witnessing interesting things... already on your path... no regrets even if you die?' Bai

Ning Bing pondered, his mind racing. 'Path, what is a path?' he questioned.

Fang Yuan responded with a cold, knowing smile, 'Each person has their own unique path. I cannot reveal mine, nor can I discern yours.'

In this vast world, many wander aimlessly, devoid of a clear direction. Others, however, strive tirelessly to find their path, seeking enlightenment amidst the darkness. Bai Ning Bing, lost and uncertain, was now illuminated by a new understanding.

A surge of excitement coursed through him. It was as if he had found the missing piece to a long-forgotten puzzle. The weight of uncertainty lifted, replaced by a newfound purpose. He was ready to embark on his own journey, to discover his destiny."

A Heideggerian Interpretation Dialogue of Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing

Heidegger's philosophy profoundly emphasizes the notion of existentialism, which posits that human existence cannot be separated from the world in which it inhabits. This interconnectedness suggests that our identities are shaped not only by our thoughts but also by our interactions with the environment and others around.⁴ Fang Yuan exemplifies this concept through his acceptance of mortality and his unwavering commitment to his own path. His understanding of existence transcends mere survival; he embodies a state of authentic being. Fang Yuan does not simply exist within the world as a passive observer; rather, he actively engages with it, shaping his own identity and experiences through purposeful actions. In his laughter and wise words, we see a man who has embraced his place in the world, illustrating that true existence is found in the connections we forge and the meanings we create.

Heidegger asserts that an awareness of death is essential for achieving authentic existence. By confronting mortality, Fang Yuan can strip away the superficialities of life and focus on what truly matters, allowing him to experience life more fully in the present moment.⁵ Fang Yuan's acceptance of death as a natural part of existence empowers him to live without fear or regret. He articulates a profound truth when he states that he has "no regrets even if he dies." This perspective liberates him from the constraints of time, enabling him to master his own destiny rather than becoming enslaved by the ticking clock. In this way, Fang

² Kholilah, "Analisa Dan Pemahaman Perkembangan Islam Dalam Novel 99 Cahaya Di Langit Eropa," 2159.

³ Re, *Reverend Insanity 1 : A Demon's Nature Doesn't Change*, 1731–32.

⁴ Taylor & Francis, *Martin Heidegger*, 187.

⁵ Shariatnia, "Heidegger's Ideas about Death," 96.

Yuan embodies a unique form of freedom that comes from recognizing the impermanence of life; he does not shy away from the inevitable but rather embraces it as a catalyst for living authentically and with intention.

The metaphor of a "path" is significant in the dialogue between Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing, particularly when interpreted through a Heideggerian lens. A path is not merely a physical route or a predetermined course; it represents the unique journey each individual must navigate in their quest for authenticity.⁶ For Fang Yuan, his path is characterized by a commitment to acceptance and an unwavering dedication to his goals. He walks the path with a clear sense of purpose, illustrating that authenticity is not found in conformity but in the courage to forge one's own way. In contrast, Bai Ning Bing's initial lack of direction highlights the existential crisis many face when they are unable to discern their path. This struggle signifies a deeper quest for meaning, where the journey of self-discovery is often fraught with confusion and fear.

The notion of "path" as elucidated in *Reverend Insanity* is intrinsically linked to the concept of a "way of being" in Heideggerian thought. The selection of a particular path is not a discrete choice but a projection of an individual's underlying values, objectives, and ontological understanding. In essence, a path serves as a tangible manifestation of one's existential orientation. Conversely, the experiences encountered while traversing this path serve to mold and refine one's way of being. Consequently, the concepts of path and way of being are mutually interdependent, forming an indivisible unity.⁷

Bai Ning Bing embodies the quintessential existential crisis, grappling with feelings of dislocation and uncertainty. His inability to find meaning in life, compounded by a profound fear of death, prevents him from engaging with the world authentically. Unlike Fang Yuan, who possesses clarity and resolve, Bai Ning Bing is ensnared by his anxieties, causing him to live in a state of paralysis. However, the encounter with Fang Yuan serves as a turning point for him. Through Fang Yuan's insights, Bai Ning Bing begins to glimpse the possibility of stepping beyond his fears and embracing a more authentic existence. This transformation signifies the potential for growth and self-discovery that lies

within each person, highlighting that even in the depths of despair, the spark of enlightenment can ignite a journey toward finding one's path.

In Heideggerian philosophy, the presence of the other plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of ourselves.⁸ Fang Yuan acts as a significant other for Bai Ning Bing, challenging his worldview and encouraging him to question the assumptions that have constrained him. This interaction illuminates the importance of relationships in the quest for authenticity. Fang Yuan's fearless demeanor and acceptance of life's impermanence act as a mirror for Bai Ning Bing, reflecting the potential for a different way of being. Through this encounter, Bai Ning Bing is inspired to embark on his own path of self-discovery, illustrating how the presence of another can catalyze profound change and awaken a dormant desire for authenticity. The dialogue between Fang Yuan and Bai Ning Bing serves as a rich exploration of existential themes that resonate deeply with the core concepts of Heidegger's philosophy. By examining their contrasting approaches to existence, we gain valuable insights into the human condition and the nature of authentic being. Fang Yuan's unwavering acceptance of mortality and commitment to his path exemplify the principles of Being-in-the-world, whereas Bai Ning Bing's struggle highlights the challenges many face in their search for meaning. Ultimately, this dialogue encourages us to confront our own fears and uncertainties, inviting us to embark on our unique journeys toward authenticity and self-discovery. Through this lens, we see that the path to understanding oneself.

Heidegger's Dasein Analytic On Fang Yuan Path of Life

Fang Yuan Path of Life is found in chapter 123⁹: Fang Yuan's voice, smooth and resonant, filled the hushed room as he recited the poignant poem, "White snow blankets the land as I travel alone through heaven and earth. Alone without any attachments, my solitary shadow travels freely." The words, imbued with a sense of profound solitude and detachment, painted a vivid picture of a wanderer traversing a desolate landscape, unburdened by worldly ties.

Fang Yuan's voice, described as smooth and resonant, immediately captivates the audience in the hushed room, setting the stage for an

⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time* John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Trans), 153.

⁷ Heidegger, 152–53.

⁸ Bax, "Otherwise than Being-with: Levinas on Heidegger and Community," 382.

⁹ Re, *Reverend Insanity 1 : A Demon's Nature Doesn't Change*, 1224.

immersive experience. The quality of his voice not only conveys the emotional weight of the poem but also invites listeners to engage deeply with the themes of solitude and detachment that the poem encapsulates. The atmosphere created by his delivery fosters an intimate connection between the speaker and the audience, allowing them to feel the nuances of the poet's journey. This resonance signifies more than just sound; it embodies the profound emotional exploration that Fang Yuan is about to undertake, making the poem a shared experience rather than a solitary recitation.

As Fang Yuan recites the lines, "White snow blankets the land as I travel alone through heaven and earth," the imagery evokes a striking visual of a solitary figure navigating a vast, snow-covered landscape. The white snow symbolizes purity and stillness, while the vastness of the land emphasizes the theme of isolation. This juxtaposition creates a vivid picture of a wanderer who is not merely traversing physical space but is also on an inner journey of self-discovery. The word "alone" is particularly significant, as it conveys a conscious choice to embrace solitude, free from the burdens of societal expectations and worldly attachments. This detachment, while it may initially appear melancholic, is portrayed as a path to freedom and enlightenment, allowing the wanderer to explore the depths of existence without distraction.

The line "Alone without any attachments" encapsulates the essence of the poem's message. It suggests a deliberate renunciation of the ties that typically bind individuals to the material world—relationships, possessions, and societal obligations. This choice to detach is not an act of despair; rather, it signifies a quest for deeper understanding and spiritual clarity. By shedding these attachments, the poet opens himself to profound experiences of existence. This solitude becomes a means of self-exploration, enabling the wanderer to confront the complexities of life and the self without interference. In this context, detachment transforms from a state of loneliness into a liberating experience that allows for personal growth and exploration of one's true essence.

The phrase "my solitary shadow travels freely" introduces an intriguing layer of meaning to the poem. The shadow is often perceived as a reflection of the self, representing the duality of

human existence—the physical and the spiritual. By depicting the shadow as traveling freely, the poet suggests that the essence of the individual transcends the limitations of the physical body and the constraints of the material world. This imagery implies a recognition of the importance of the inner self, which can roam freely in the realms of thought and spirit, unencumbered by external influences. The shadow's freedom symbolizes the potential for transformation and the exploration of identity beyond societal labels, emphasizing that true freedom comes from within.

The above excerpts, with its depiction of the solitude experienced by Fang Yuan, provides a powerful narrative illustration of the concept of solitude as an existential condition, as explored by Martin Heidegger.¹⁰ The solitude felt by Fang Yuan is not merely physical or emotional isolation, but rather a deep awareness of his own existence in the world. He observes the "stage" of life around him—battles, everyday life—but feels detached, not genuinely involved. This feeling is not caused by his status or the secrets he holds, but rather by a more fundamental truth: "everyone is born alone!"

Heidegger distinguishes between solitude and loneliness. Loneliness refers to the feeling of being isolated and lacking social connection, whereas solitude is an ontological condition, a fundamental aloneness inherent in human existence. In this context, Fang Yuan's solitude is closer to Heideggerian solitude. He realizes that humans are fundamentally like "isolated islands, floating in a sea of fate." Encounters between humans are merely "collisions of these lonely islands," which may result in temporary unions, but will eventually separate. This view aligns with Heidegger's idea that individuation—the process of becoming oneself—occurs in solitude.¹¹

Furthermore, the excerpt touches upon humanity's fear of solitude and their desire for company. This fear, according to Heidegger, is an escape from authentic solitude. Facing solitude means facing "pain and hardship," but it also opens the way for "talent and courage."¹² This idea is reflected in the saying "high achievers are definitely lonely." In Fang Yuan's context, his acceptance of solitude actually strengthens his resolve to "pursue the demonic path." For him, "solitude is the deepest darkness," which contrasts with the "light of kinship" that he considers a mere

¹⁰ Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics — World, Finitude, Solitude* (W. McNeill & N. Walker, Trans.), 13.

¹¹ Costache, "On Solitude and Loneliness in Hermeneutical Philosophy," 132–34.

¹² Gallagher, "A Critique of Existential Loneliness," 1166.

"facade." This demonstrates a deep understanding of the human condition, where social relationships are often superficial and temporary, while solitude is an unavoidable reality. Thus, this excerpt, through Fang Yuan's experience, provides a powerful illustration of the Heideggerian concept of solitude. It portrays solitude not as something negative to be avoided, but rather as a fundamental condition underlying human existence and forming the basis for individuation and a deeper understanding of oneself and the world.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the excerpt's depiction of Fang Yuan's experience provides a compelling illustration of Heidegger's concept of solitude as a fundamental condition of human existence. Fang Yuan's solitude transcends mere loneliness or isolation, reflecting a deep awareness of his being-in-the-world, akin to Heidegger's *Dasein*. This existential solitude is not a negative state to be avoided but rather the very ground for individuation, the process of becoming oneself. Moreover, Fang Yuan's contemplation, particularly the principle of non-attachment and the illusory nature of self, further illuminates this understanding of solitude. By recognizing the impermanence of all things, the equality of all beings, and the interconnectedness of existence, Fang Yuan achieves a state of equanimity and detachment. This detachment, however, is not a withdrawal from the world but rather a way of seeing it with clarity, free from the biases of personal preference and emotional attachment. Thus, Fang Yuan's embrace of solitude allows him to navigate his world with a profound sense of self-awareness and a deep understanding of the interconnected and impermanent nature of reality, strengthening his resolve and influencing his actions.

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