

# Poetic Dwelling of the Ocean: Appreciating the Man Who Has Never Seen the Sea from Heidegger's Poetic View

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**Abstract.** Heidegger believed that the origin of a nation's historic existence is art. In the artistic world, we can expose the alienation of reality, uncover the original beauty, and return to poetic human habitation. In Le Clézio's works *The Man Who Has Never Seen the Sea*, bystanders, as "intermediaries", construct virtual dreams to escape from the city's dreams. In the interaction with the natural ocean field, Daniel, a pure child messenger, is shaped, and his original experience is used to restore the original language, so as to realize the original awakening of human beings and create a poetic dwelling.

**Keywords:** Heidegger; Le Clézio; ocean; poetics; reverie.

## 1. Introduction

After World War II, people doubted the rationality established during the Enlightenment. With the development of science and technology and the reconstruction of society, people began to fall into the blind carnival, alienating and plundering nature. Heidegger believed that the reorganization of the broken nature was consistent with the reconstruction of the declining humanistic spirit, and the highest state of getting along with nature was the poetic dwelling of people on the earth. [1] Le Clézio, who wrote *The Man Who Has Never Seen the Sea* in poetic language, constructed the other end which was different from the city, and built a poetic ocean space for the homeless people in the technological age to live in. He reflected on modern civilization with the original sea of truth, showed poetic nature with the naked children's perspective, talked with the ocean with profound and intense experience, and explored the true nature of making people human.

## 2. Urban Dream of the Homeless

Heidegger believes that the essence of technology is a frame, which enables people to set up a frame close to the essence of things with the understanding of technology. Technology is our destiny. We can only uncover the world in this background and understand the world according to the order of technology. [2] Thus, language is predetermined, and human's spiritual experience is linked with human's specific social and historical coordinates. The pre-existing assumptions surround our thinking and speech, and getting rid of the pre-understanding imposed on us by others is our destiny as homeless people looking for the lost homeland.

For Le Clézio, the search for the original power of language means a political condemnation of language alienation and fossilization, criticism of consumer social values, and rebellion against conservative rigid literary language. [3] In the novel, Daniel, who had a pure obsession with another kind of sea different from the city, took on the role of the seeker. Le Clézio, with his marginalized life, showed the strangeness and alienation that a natural person with the will to live feels when facing the urban landscape alienated by technology and utility. Daniel never took the initiative to talk about the sea. Even if he communicated with others, he found that people were not really talking about the sea, but the topics were about sea bathing, underwater fishing, beaches, and sunburn. Modern technological thinking urges nature, puts forward outrageous demands, and dwarfs nature with frame thinking, making nature only a tool of technology. The invisibility of the sea of nature and the absence of discourse power highlight the dilemma of narration represented by Daniel's humanistic ideal and the historical and natural context contained in the sea under the oppression of technical order. People

are not human beings, the sea is not a sea, nature is not nature, all things and the world are not themselves, and existence is in danger of losing its origin. Daniel was homeless with citizens, and people only talk about land, not about the original sea. Based on the abandonment of a being's existence, the natural sea is a sign of being forgotten. People are always just observers who only observe and deal with existence, and existence is forgotten. [4]

Therefore, under the language of the unreal sea created by the technical society, the disillusionment of characters' perception and their inner anxiety are aggravated. The urban experience which is full of fear and annoyance makes the characters gradually enter a state of unconscious dreams. Technological discourse plunders Daniel's natural life experience and makes self-existence disappear in modern civilization. Although the author did not write dreams, the unfamiliarity of the world in the viewer's perception means a sense of dreams. [5] "Though my eyes are open, it seems as if I am dreaming." "Staring ahead." From Daniel's silence and dullness in social life, we can see the double alienation of the world and people: the world is distorted by technical measurement, and people lose their own existence in the alienated world. "Human him/herself has become a kind of dream". Under the observation of things in frame thinking, the human who loses his or her self-orientation is disciplined into technical parts and erases his or her existence.

Le Clézio believed that "the real thing is hidden on the other side of the dream, outside the barriers." The city is an illusory dream, while nature is where the truth lies. This contrast is a criticism of the modern city. [5] Looking at Heidegger's poetics, Daniel's departure from the city shows the confrontation between the destiny and the non-real existence of the city, and his strong desire to follow with another kind of sea is the bud of the new life of fate.

### **3. The Original Poetic Pursuit of the Ocean**

#### **3.1 Children's Unmasking Perspective**

Children's narrative theory holds that children are a unique psychological prototype and narrative perspective. Children look at the strange adult world with different eyes from adults and show the innocent children's world and other faces of primitive wild natural life situations that are difficult for adults to observe. [6] Daniel's portrayal of children's images not only places the author's natural aesthetic ideal but also deviates from the rigid and utilitarian technical society. The image of a wanderer who seeks to lose his home exists in the novel, and it is to look into the world with its naked, open, and innocent eyes that are less influenced by the secular world, so as to break away from the habitual shackles and pursue the poetic ocean of freedom. Children's thinking is the thought of the naked truth and the thought of the art world which is more original than the technical world.

Le Clézio intends to portray Daniel as a marginal person and a vagrant without belonging to the society, which makes him suffer from the problems of family absence and social absence, so as to strengthen the alienation of pursuers from the technological world and protect children's authentic vision. Marginalized living condition is a kind of self-marginalization, Daniel's free choice, the only way to escape the oppression of the adult world and the material society, and to find freedom and happiness in the other sea and his lost home. The indeterminacy and growth of children bring endless possibilities for their poetic generation of open-minded understanding of the world. Daniel plays the role of an emissary who seeks the forgotten existence of mankind.

#### **3.2 Experiential Purification of Senses**

Heidegger believed that we were not only bound by pre-understanding but at the same time, each of us cannot fully understand our situation. Because "being here" cannot be caught, the relationship between self and the world is changing all the time, and we always project our subjective experience to the world continuously. Because language is also pre-understood, it cannot be used by us to express our own experiences exactly. To understand language, we must experience the essence of the world by relaxing our senses.

Le Clézio also attaches importance to the experience of the senses. He advocates perception, feeling, and sensibility, and opposes stereotypes, reason, and logic. He proposes intimate contact with the world with the physical body, with particular emphasis on the desire of perception and the sensitivity of perception. We must watch with all our strength with hot, and violent eyes. “Or even, turning one’s eyes away from the existence of characters into an independent and conscious individual, which always has to grasp the world and penetrate the scenery.” [5] In the novel, he deliberately described Daniel’s eyes many times. When living in the city: “Although his eyes are open, he seems to be dreaming.” “A pair of black eyes are beautiful but expressionless.” His eyes showed a state of numbness. When living by the sea, his eyes had different expressions: “Eyes almost never leave the sea”, and “He stared at the sea with his eyes, trying to stop the seawater.” This kind of perceptual desire is just the manifestation of the character’s willpower. The blending of Daniel and the sea water brings it into the ecstasy of the senses, objectifies the essential power of human beings, and competes with the sea with the original power. It finally enters the transcendent existence and breaks into the unmasked world.

### 3.2.1 The Poetic Carnival of the Sea

Le Clézio believes that the root of alienation in modern society is the rupture of the relationship between man and the world, and the most important thing to repair this rupture is to return to nature and go to the other end of the world. [1] In the novel, it is going to the sea. Only by being in the nature that contains ancient history can people fully stretch their senses and comprehend the power of life. For the West, which was born in the maritime civilization, the sea itself has the original desire and the historical connotation of nationality. Facing the original discourse of the ocean and returning to the original prototype can make people instantly enter the original perfection. [7]

Material is the unconscious form. The open, primitive, violent, pure, and beautiful sea shows the eternal vitality of the world. When Daniel really lived in the sea, he experienced surging tides and thunderstorms, and the seawater “got into his eyes, ears, mouth, and nostrils”. He saw the sea with his own eyes, and the sea is described as “surging, rolling waves, foaming white waves stirring up drizzle, fog-like dust, and flying in the sunshine”, and being “bitten by salt, making a grinding sound like glass powder”. Water has strong inner power, it can purify the inner existence, and can give the guilty soul the whiteness of snow again. [7] The sea purifies people by whipping them, making them find their original existence and reappear in some mysterious ceremony. Daniel arrived in the ocean and returned to the original language, experiencing double purification of body and mind.

### 3.2.2 The Poetic Experience of Human

The poetic interaction between water and people can be traced back to ancient myths. Narcissus looked at himself with water as a mirror, and had a dialogue with himself, resulting in the narcissism of the transcendence of truth. When we interact with water, we converge our eyes and realize the unity of self-image and world center in the unrealistic world. In the reflection of water, we see our idealized selves like a mirage. This process reveals Platonic solemnity. By understanding and experiencing water, we form the feeling that “I am lonely and I am my vision”, and achieve the coexistence and symbiosis with nature. As the mirror of the largest water in the ocean, it creates a poetic experience and constructs self-identity with the root obsession of human beings.

In this novel, Daniel, who has never seen the sea before, came to the beach and resonated with the sea with a childlike defamiliarization perspective. Daniel experienced the process of being thrown down by huge waves, actively jumping into the waves, living with the tide, fighting against the wind and waves, and returning to calm. In the process of interacting with the ocean, a special and dual Swinburne obsession appears. The duality of this obsession shows double significance in Daniel’s swimming experience of close contact with the sea.

The one is a warm enlightenment. Every time you jump into the waves, people who are contaminated with technical thinking try to touch the instinct of nature. Jumping into the sea can

revive the dangerous and hostile echo of enlightenment more than any other physical movement. This kind of jump is the only accurate and reasonable image that people can experience to jump into the unknown. There is not other actual jump into the unknown. To jump into the unknown is to jump into the water. This is the first jump of a beginner swimmer. When material imagination returns this statement to the original discourse, a person thrown by the waves will soon have a new experience in this respect. [7] Make it announce like Schopenhauer: the world is my will, the world is my provocation, and I am stirring the sea.

The other is the new life of violence. Swinburne believes that the worship of raging water represents a symptom of Stockholm syndrome. Swinburne said to wave, “My lips celebrate the droplets on your lips ... Your tender and the urgent kiss is as sweet as wine, and your broad arms are as sharp as pain.” However, this adversary is still fierce: “Every wave is painful, and every wave whips like a whip.” “The whipping of the waves left traces from the shoulders to the knees, throwing him to the shore and making his whole body red with the whips of the sea.” The sea beats the people who are defeated by it and thrown to the shore. The duality of happiness and pain brought by the sea is very poetic. [7] The irrational sea of nature, with its powerful waves, whips its believer Daniel uncontrollably, but this divine and painful ceremony can lead Daniel to look for his true concern. In the invasion of wind and waves, Daniel has no timidity, roars at the huge waves, returns to the essential nature in the provocation with the sea, and awakens the prototype.

The poetic experience of the ocean brings us closer to the historical moment of the origin. Le Clézio constantly sets up the sea in different situations for Daniel, who has never seen the sea and was separated from existence, to show the power of existence. Daniel, on the other hand, devoted himself unreservedly to the call of existence, got enlightenment from examining the existence and communicating with existence, and was finally reborn. In the duality of the ocean, the existentialist, who is metaphorical by Daniel, draws poetic experience and original thoughts from the original language of the ocean, and establishes its existence mode on the basis of existence, so as to establish the subjective position of humans as the object. Human blends with nature in the sensory experience throwing away the filth of the technological world and grasping the truth in the existence of nature. The poetic ocean is the “planning of the enlightened” for human’s uncovering, the “shining light that opens the naked” and makes the beings shine and roar, and guides the beings to “live poetically”. [8]

#### **4. Dream Salvation beyond Poetry**

It is worth noting that the focus of the novel changes with the scene. When showing Daniel’s urban life, the spectator’s perspective of limited knowledge and external focus is used. The spectator only knows a little external information about Daniel, and cannot see into his inner world, resulting in an impersonal narrative style. This kind of sheltered viewing is not the true embodiment of the daily life of the technical society, but also the rejection and alienation of the tool judgment in the art world. On the other hand, when at the seaside, the author uses an open narrative with an internal focus. As onlookers dream poetically in reverie, instead, they can resonate with Daniel, experience the sea together, provoke the sea, and finally be purified by it.

Le Clézio believes that reverie is not only an external pursuit but also a pursuit of self-awareness. Reverie is a way to meet another self. [5] It is contradictory and fractured with the technological world, pointing to the ocean at the other end. “The suffocating city forces bystanders to look for such a way of self-protection and self-salvation. Reveries bring them a sense of stability and help them get rid of the control of time and live in the world, instead of the society again.” [5] This deep desire at the bottom of the subconscious mind is the desire to merge with the world. Naturally, with the departure of Daniel, the seeker, became explicit and revealed, and became a kind of discourse against society. The turning point comes from imaginary reveries, and the characters approach poetry with thinking in the surreal world, thus realizing self-purification.

This kind of purification is produced through the elaboration of reveries, and Daniel’s seaside stories are filled with vibrant words. The bystanders who seem to be assimilated by the city are the

real people who have never seen the sea. However, they actually weave a dream, awaken poetry with words, activate the still referred world, and construct poetic dreams. “Le Clézio believes that telling is a kind of magic. Language is alive only when it is told, and the world and existence it indicates are smart. As an abstract existence, sound can stimulate one’s imagination and construct incomplete existence.” [5] When bystanders talk about Daniel’s dream, what they carry is the desire of citizens to forget their homeland and get tired of city life.

Heidegger believes that the poetic creation of this dream is still subject to double constraints: one is that the poet should obey the hints of the gods, and the other is that the poet should explain the national voice. The hints of the gods are placed in poetic language, while the national voice contains the original and true relationship between a nation and the whole being. This kind of voice will become hoarse with the passage of time and the extrusion of technology. Therefore, the poet needs to reinterpret the ancient fateful voice of the nation, and re-express the authentic things in the poet’s pure poetic language. Therefore, the poet is not only the “intermediary” between the gods and the nation but also creates the intermediary domain where people poetically inhabit the earth. [9] The ocean, as the origin of the birth and reproduction of western nations, flows with the distant collective unconsciousness. Spectators’ poetic remarks about the original home ocean have broken the authoritative discourse of people in the technological age, and Daniel, who is extremely wild and revered for the ocean, constructed a bridge linking with the original and converted to fate.

By creating a reverie of Daniel’s ocean adventure, onlookers’ nostalgia for the original has a real impact on the technological world. “The dream that started like this will not end there.” “Maybe because they miss Daniel month after month and think too much, they really forget him instead.” “No one has forgotten him, not even those who do not know him.” After a strong reverie, it seems that all onlookers can no longer turn a blind eye to the poetic language rooted in the national blood. Although the framework of the technological world still nails people in the framework, poetic reveries have brought them national salvation. Spectators “seem to see the vast sea, blue sky, white clouds, desolate reefs, and surging waves, and see the giant white birds flying in the wind.” “Looking at the sky like a sailor” awakens people who struggle with technology and look back at the prototype, tears open a hole in the frame of the real society, lives poetically in the reverie of the ocean, and cherishes the historical and national origins.

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