

Heidegger`s concept of „*die Befindlichkeit*” and His Role in Human Cognition and Self-cognition

Abstract

The problem of cognition is one of the ancient questions of human inquiry and in its essence represents one of the most fundamental and crucial problems of philosophy. The reason for this is that the essence of cognition and the solution to its problems pre-determines the final result and character of any inquiry, and as a matter of fact, even our outlook on the world and ourselves. Do there exists something which can predetermine the cognition alone?

The present study approaches cognition through the analysis of Heidegger`s concept of “*die Stimmung*” and “*die Befindlichkeit*” which can be translated as a „*state of mind*”, „*being in the mood*” or an „*attunement*”¹. The author of this study analyses the role of this concept and especially its existential modifications, as an epistemological determinant of cognition. Attunement is not viewed here traditionally, as a superficial and emotionally fleeting mental state of an individual (in the structure affect – mood – passion) but in line with Heideggerian understanding as a fundamental epistemological “*attunement*” of a subject or a kind of hermeneutical “*approach*”. The author of study try to show that “*die Befindlichkeit*” pre-determines the entire perception, understanding and outlook on the world and ourselves.

Keywords:

Heidegger, Attunement, Mood, Understanding, Hermeneutic, Cognition.

Heidegger`in “*die Befindlichkeit*” Kavramı ve Onun İnsanın Bilmesinde ve Kendini Bilmede Üstlendiği Rol

Özet

Bilme problemi, insan soruşturmasının en eski sorularından birisidir ve onun özü, felsefenin en temel ve önemli sorularından birisini temsil eder. Bunun nedeni, bilmeye ait özü ve bu probleme ilişkin çözümün, her türlü soruşturmanın nihai sonucunu, karakterini ve işin doğrusu dünyaya ve kendimize ait bakışımızı bile

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¹ Since it is very complicated to provide an exact English equivalent of the German word “*der Stimmung*”, Slovak “*naladenie*”, the author opted for following expression: “*state of mind*”, “*frame of mind*”, “*attunement*”, “*point of view*”, “*approach*”, “*mindset*”,... .

önceden belirliyor oluşudur. Peki, bilmeyi tek başına önceden belirleyebilecek olan herhangi bir şey var mıdır?

Bu çalışma bilmeye, “zihin durumu”, “bir hal içinde olma” ya da “haletiruhiye” olarak tercüme edilebilecek olan Heidegger’in “die Stimmung” ve “die Befindlichkeit” kavramını analiz etme yoluyla yaklaşacaktır. Çalışmanın yazarı, bu kavramın üstlendiği rolü ve özellikle de bilmenin epistemolojik belirleyicisi olarak onun varoluşsal değişimlerini analiz edecektir. Haletiruhiye, burada bireyin geleneksel anlamda yüzeysel ve geçici duygusal bir zihin durumunu değil (etki-hal- tutkunun yapısında olduğu gibi), fakat bir tür hermeneutik yaklaşım ya da öznenin temel epistemolojik haletiruhiyesi olarak Heideggerci anlamı imlemektedir. Çalışma “die Befindlichkeit”in algı, kavrayış ve dünya ile kendimiz üzerine bakışımızı bütünüyle önceden belirlediğini göstermeye çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Heidegger, Haleti Ruhiye, Hal, Kavrayış, Hermeneutik, Bilme.

The classical epistemological approach to cognition analysed cognition by the analyses of the main problems, aspects and actors of knowledge. In modern philosophy the problem of subject (or Self) became a most important question of knowledge. Many philosophers like Descartes, Kant, Husserl (and many others) analysed the subject of thinking as an element, which can find knowledge. But the problem was, that each knowledge has the subjective aspects of cognition and “impregnation” by personal matters such passions, personal history, personality, historical, cultural and linguistic context². By an aristotelic pattern or paradigm of knowledge, they hope that correct cognition is only cognition without emotionality, temporal and individual determination of knowledge. So they tried to eliminate actors on cognition to entities which are no determinate by something other except logical thinking. Modern scientific thinking became a-sexual, a-historical and non-emotional reason – a transcendental ghost. And the modern vision of philosophical knowledge is the same.

The attunement was in modern philosophy accepted as a desultory and psychological (and so astatic) quality of thinking, therefore we can eliminate it. Nay, they contaminate our knowledge and so we must clean thinking and eliminate influence of passions and attunements from it. This was the only reason why attunements and passions were analysed in history of philosophy. Democritus, Plato, Aristotle, but especially epicureism a Roman stoicism (Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Marcus Aurelius) and partially Augustine of Hippo analysed passions, but as a barrier to peace of thinking and wisdom.

Maybe the first modern philosopher, who studied nature and influence of moods and attunements on our understanding to reality, was Blaise Pascal. Pascal analysed existential aspects of emotions and moods and shows that our emotionality has another kind of logic like logic of reason³. Attunement so became to philosophy as an

² Look Bacon`s destructive part of *Novum organon* – teaching on idola specus, tribus, fori and theatri.

³ “The heart has its reasons which reason does not know” (Pascal: 2004, 277).

epistemological relevant aspect, which we may study and analyse. But Pascal didn't make this epistemological analyse of emotional frame of mind only to show impact of attunements for (religious) cognition. Kierkegaard made it very similar, but in *Fear and Trembling* or in *The Concept of Anxiety* he had shows that attunement can open the base of our existence. For Kierkegaard by fear, anxiety and further attunements we can understand the relation between us and God, the world and ourselves. And this was the first really epistemological and hermeneutical approach to attunements. However inspiration by Kierkegaard the first academic analyse of epistemological and hermeneutical aspects of attunement brought Martin Heidegger in his *Being and Time*.

Heidegger shows that attunement has in cognition a more important role as we can see at first glance. At first he showed that each of us is always in a certain attunement, even though we think we are not. Our mood can go bad and change and this proves, that the "Dasein" is always already in a specific attunement⁴. Sometimes we are in good mood, sometimes not. We can be (or not) in a mood for something, but always we are in some mood or attunement⁵.

The attunement is something similar to weather and many people call attunement "inside weather". Just as we cannot absolute predict the weather outside (always and all about is some weather) we cannot predict attunements (in the mean that we are always in certain attunement). This made attunements very important. In this aspect attunement is something similar to Kant's form of appearances – time and space – or transcendental contribution of understanding.

Unfortunately Heidegger`s concept of attunement belongs to very difficult and unclear terms of his philosophy. Nevertheless of is sure, that just this concept is very important to good understanding of Heidegger`s philosophy. I agree with Eugene T. Gendlin who asserts, that this concept „is among the most frequently misunderstood concepts in Heidegger's work. Certainly it is the most important among those that are frequently misunderstood.“ (Gendlin: 1978)

There are many reasons for these misunderstandings. First is problem with translation of heideggerian terms in foreign languages. Many languages haven't the same (identical) terms for German philosophical and psychological vocabulary. And German language is full of these concepts. Heidegger used this vocabulary very often and very widely. Second problem is, that Heidegger alone used German terms not in common use. Heidegger often used old German word but in another – new context (like Da-seyn). And many times he created a new type of words (by using prefixes and word breaking marks). Tertio: Heidegger use very metaphoric and visual language with many terms for denotation and explanation of his concepts. The concept of attunement suffers from all kinds of difficulties.

⁴ „The fact that moods can deteriorate [verdoben warden] and change over means simply that in every case Dasein always has some mood [gestimm ist]“ (Heidegger: 1962, 173)

⁵ About latent presence of attunement see: (Heidegger: 1992, 60)

Heidegger used for this concept term “*die Stimmung*” and “*die Gestimmtheit*”⁶. He says that “*Stimmung*” is the same what is ordinarily called “mood”, “being in the mood” and wide refers to “affect” or “feeling”.

Heidegger analysed in *Time and Being* fear and anxiety in great detail. He showed what is typical for these moods. But Heidegger could not make some variant of psychology of moods (Démuth: 2007). His conception “offers a radically different way of thinking about this ordinary experience. He focused attention on the kind of beings that humans are, that aspect of these beings which makes for them having moods, feelings, or affects” (Gendlin: 1978). Commonly defined moods are based on a deeper, unavoidable, almost fundamental state of mind⁷ of a subject. Heidegger got a name for this fundamental level of moods “*die Grundstimmung*” – “grounding-attunement” and he said that through this grounding-attunement moods are otherwise ontically visible. In the line of Husserl`s phenomenological analyses Heidegger focus his attention on this ground aspect of moods.

Heidegger made effort to analyse fundamental level of our consciousness and shows some problems of intentionality and understanding of things. For distinction to psychological and common used mean of moods Heidegger used another – a new word: “*die Befindlichkeit*”.

“*Die Befindlichkeit*” is spatial metaphor of mood. In German language the term “*finden*”, which is etymological root of “*die Befindlichkeit*”, refers to verb “find” and so “*die Befindlichkeit*” means something like “to be situated”. It is a matter of course that each man is in each moment anyway situated. And so situation is always and already present and man is always in any situation similar how we are in any attunement.

To be situated is a kind of “position” of a subject which is kept in the whole of the universe. It is no mistake that any position determines our interpretation of reality. Some positions enable us to see some things or aspects, other not. When we look at thing, we cannot see any things or aspects because they are hidden by another thing. We can see mutual relations between object and object and, more importantly, their fundamental relationship towards us as subjects. This moment is very similar to the Einsteinian principle of an observer in the special theory of relativity, because our position in the world forms a referential frame for our understanding and judging objects.

Each situation makes the world present according to its specific position. “*Die Befindlichkeit*” is the position which characterizes the “*point of view*” of a subject to

⁶ German word „die Stimmung“ first of all refers to voice (germ. „Stimme“) and tuning of voices or musical instruments. (German “es stimmt” means “it is O.K.”, “it is right”; this concept concern on harmony). This was the reason why I agree with Gerard Kuperus (Kuperus: 2007, 25) and I have prefer in first part term “attunement”. Heidegger used this word for „moods“ too, but with notice that this is not psychological aspect of moods, but fundamental existential element of Dasein. (Heidegger: 1962, § 29).

⁷ Is very difficult use term state of mind because Heidegger`s conception is not psychological and used not term „mind”. But in Macquarrie and Robinson`s English translation of *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), is the term “*Befindlichkeit*” translated as “state of mind.”

objects and determines what we can see. Some “being situated” disclose some events and some drive us away or cover them. Heidegger had seen this problem, but his attention was not concerned on special or relativistic aspects but on intentional aspects of cognition. He understood “*die Befindlichkeit*” as an hermeneutical approach. In the Scheiermacher`s and Dilthey`s line he knew, that each seeing is determined by our background and our approach. The most important aspect “to be situated” is not only about what I can see, but also, that I understand an object by certain kind. And already this moment is the more important aspect of “*die Befindlichkeit*”.

Heidegger had showed that perception of things is at the same time understanding to them by certain way⁸. When I feel happy, I see only this aspect, which makes me happy. So I understand the reality in this way and I cannot see sadness or sad things remain as if covered. When I have fear, I see something, which is dangerous. Fear puts forward only those entities which we view as potentially threatening. But to be in fear means, that I have to view things as fearful first. When we are afraid, we somehow understand things, because we view things in their phenomenological “fearfulness”. This basic understanding enables us to concentrate our attention on the nature of the object that is being revealed to us.

To be in certain attunement means that we have sensibility to see some aspects of things, or that we are capable of understanding things in a certain way. In this way, we can “unlock” things as phenomena so that we can grasp them. Heidegger understood to attunement as a mental optic, which make things visible, through “unlocking” their phenomenality. Only this “unlocking” by attunement enables any other “*orientation towards...*” to be possible. Individual *attunement* so discloses things every time from a specific aspect. It is like we change variety of optics. Some eye-glasses make it possible to see some things and aspects, but they are wrong for further aspects. If we want to see other thing or aspects, we must change eye-glasses or filters to see it. We can make it again and again, but (what is important) we must have some eye-glasses always. Without these mental optic we are blind and no “orientation towards” is possible⁹. Therefore “*die Befindlichkeit*” or the attunement is a fundamental relations to things, it enables us to view the forms of being. In this fact, attunements constitutes being in its whole¹⁰.

The classical philosophical viewing of things asserts that appearance of things is without value. The perception can never say anything about the “fearfulness” or

⁸ Many thinkers differs three kinds of existential basic parameters of human existence: attunement, understanding and speech (Gendlin: 1978). This distinction arise from different parts of Heidegger`s *Sein und Zeit* (§29, 32, 35). In this point I must agree with Thiemo Brayer which asserts that „Understanding and mood are so strongly connected that one cannot be without the other – every act of understanding is hence colored by moods and every mood is as such an understanding mood” (Brayer: 2007, 47).

⁹ Without basic understanding to some aspects of things we cannot focus on these things. Attunement chooses what is important for a specific point of view and on which aspects we shall focus.

¹⁰ Günter Figal remarks on latest Heidegger`s lecture-course in winter semester 1929-30 in which Heidegger had explain “attunement” as „world-projection“ or „world-formation“. (Figal: 2009, 14).

“dangerousness” of an object. The perception brings unclassified and “neutral” sense data. We give its meaning only by evaluation. However Heidegger shows that appearance in attunement is another matter. In attunement we understand things, we see their quality, aspects and concernment. The attunement is a kind of understanding to the world through understanding ourselves.

The really fundamental feature of attunement is that, in relating to the world’s phenomena, it actually reveals the level of understanding ourselves. If I’m afraid of something, I must understand this thing that is enable to damage me. Its means, that I reflect not only the quality of things, but also the quality of myself. Why can I feel fear, if I believe in my imperishability? Only a reflection of my impermanence can focus my attention on things, which are able to damage myself. In attunement, we understand ourselves at first. By means of this understanding, we identify and evaluate things as such. To the essence of attunement belongs the primary knowledge of how we feel, what is important for us and what we need. This is the reason why attunement is the very understanding of ourselves at the same time.

Eugene Gendlin shows that “German common way of asking “How are you?“ is “*Wie befinden Sie sich?*“... “*Sich befinden*“ (finding oneself) thus has three allusions: The reflexivity of finding oneself; feeling; and being situated. All three are caught in the ordinary phrase, “How are you?“ That refers to how you feel but also to how things are going for you and what sort of situation you find yourself in. To answer the question you must find yourself, find how you already are. And when you do, you find yourself amidst the circumstances of your living“(Gendlin: 1978). Therefore „*die Befindlichkeit*“ was so important in Heidegger`s philosophy, because it offer to us a way to our existence.

Heidegger believed that fear and even more anxiety can open up to us the essence of our existence. Through these existentially important attunements¹¹ we can penetrate towards a deeper understanding of ourselves and reflect (by example) death, freedom or voice of conscience (Démuth, 2011). Existential attunement is for him a basic condition of cognition because it enables us to understand to the world and to live as with a care. And by this understanding we can explain all others things and aspects of life.

The optic of “*Die Befindlichkeit*” is for Freiburger thinker a fundamental kind of understanding of the world. “»Fundamental« in the sense that it first open (one) up (to) a world, prior to the determination of »who« is opened up »what«. We reflectively find ourselves always already involved in such an attunement, just as we perceptively find the world always already disclosed through such an attunement.”(Davis: 2007, 8) In this way we may point at a certain similarity between existential attunement and attunement to true as *aletheia* (Gordon: 2007, 28). In attunement we are opened to ourselves and by this understanding to ourselves we can leave things which have an effect on us.

Many philosophers dispute what kind of attunement has priority. Daseinanalyst believe that a fundamental attunement ist anxiety (Condrau: 1998). Their arguments are

¹¹ (or through such as boredom, fear, loathing, anxiety, or, on the other hand, love, hope, faith, etc..)

deduced from a chronological priority of this mood, existential concernment, finality and many others. Heidegger prefers anxiety for its possibility to show the finality of Dasein. I suppose that the most valuable of his notices is in focusing attention on concernment of attunement in cognition. In summary are in these points:

At first: that each man is in each moment in certain attunement.

Second: Since we find ourselves always in some kind of *attunement*, this *attunement* determines all forms of our cognition.

Tertio: Our cognition is not the knowledge of the world “as such”, it is in fact a permanent construction of objects of our cognition and the world as a whole. Attunement is a word-projection by understanding ourselves and by understanding our needs.

Fourthly: The objectivity of knowledge of things “as such” lies in the fact in knowing things through the possible changes in *frames of mind* and general availability of many aspects of the viewed phenomena in individual frames.

Fifthly: Since the *attunement* is always the understanding of the world and ourselves, and our cognition is always presented through the *attunement*, man is in principle (self) hermeneutical entity.

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