



Heidegger's Understanding of Being

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Abstract

Being has been said in ways. Our task is to uncover the manifold meaning of being. For this reason, we call this investigation of meaning of being as a reinterpretation of the meaning of being in its traditional, existential, ontological and phenomenological context. In this reinterpretation of the meaning of being, our main discussion will consider being in terms of the concept of Dasein, Being and world.

Key words: Heidegger, Descartes, Being, Dasein and World

Özet

Varlık, bir çok şekilde açıklandı. Bizim amacımız varlığın çok anlamlılığının üstünü açmaktır. Bu nedenle, amacımızı, varlığın anlamının yeniden yorumlanması olarak varlığın anlamını geleneksel, ontolojik, varoluşsal ve fenomenolojik yorumlama olarak adlandıracğız. Varlığın anlamını yeniden yorumlama çabamızda, ana tartışmamız dünya, Varlık, Dasein kavramları açısından varlığın düşünülmesi olacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Heidegger, Descartes, Varlık, Dasein ve dünya.

The question of what being is brings us back to the history of being in the traditional philosophy, because traditional philosophy is simply a search for being. Therefore to uncover the meaning of being with the concept of Being and time in the history of being, we refer to Heidegger's understanding of being, Dasein and world since we think that Heidegger is the main point for the destruction of history of ontology and the center of contemporary understanding of the meaning of being and world. In this presentation, firstly I would like to explain how traditional ontology grasps the being and world, especially in Descartes' ontology. Then I'll explain Heidegger's account of Being and world with compassion to Cartesian tradition. So I'll try to show that Being is understood as Being-in-the-world. All these will be limited on *Being and Time*, that is, first Heidegger.

In the traditional sense, Descartes' understanding of being is based on his theory of substance and its epistemological foundation. Descartes accepts that there are two kinds of substances, which are infinite and finite. The infinite substance is God. The finite substance can be divided into two substances: mind and body.

Traditional ontology prevents Descartes not from seeing his way into a deeper grasp of the problem of ontology of Dasein, and he leaves the phenomena of the world. Consequently, Descartes sees entities within the world as possessing a material nature, so

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he makes an ontological basis for entities within the world, which is understood as Things of Nature. In this sense, "Descartes has narrowed down the question of the world to that of Things of Nature as those entities within-the-world which are proximally accessible." (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 112) If Being is neither the body nor the spirit, then what kind of Being is there in the world? Dasein can ask about Being because it is distinct from other beings. Dasein can discover traditional, preserve it or can study and investigate it. Dasein is Being-in-the-world, and "if no Dasein exists, no world is 'there' either." (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 417)

Heidegger's interpretation of Being is limited to Dasein as Being-in-the-world in *Being and Time*. How does Heidegger interpret Being-in-the-world? What does he mean by "Being-in" and "the-world"? What distinguishes Heidegger's understanding of Being-in-the-world from entities-in-the-world? All these questions are essential to understand and to interpret the relationship between Being and world.

Dasein as Being-in-the-world is not to be thought of as a characteristic of objects, which are spatially located with respect to other objects. Objects are understood as present-at-hand because they are understood as isolated substances. Being-in-the-world does not mean to occur in the so-called "world" in the totality of beings. The "world" of Being-in-the-world is not a sum of things as present-at-hand. Heidegger does not grasp the world in which beings as a whole can show themselves. The world in which Dasein factually is located is not to Being-in-the-world because Dasein exists in the manner of Being-in-the-world. (Okrent, Mark 1988. 39)

However, in Cartesian understanding of the world, the world of nature is filled with things, houses, trees, people, animals, stars, events, etc. Traditionally, substances, as things existing within the world, have been determined ontologically as present-at-hand. In this sense, both things and men are found in the world of nature. Being-in-the-world must nevertheless be understood not only as things-in-the-world. There are things-in-the-world such as trees, houses, stones, etc. But Being-in-the-world is more than just another thing-in-the-world. This separation gives rise to the problem of subject and object distinction. For Heidegger, Being-in-the-world as Dasein may be interpreted as the subject in terms of traditional philosophy. It cannot be identified with the subject of the traditional world because Dasein is not separated from the world; it is in the world. "Being-in" means that Dasein is essentially a dwelling in and familiar with the world.

For Heidegger, the most general characteristics of the entities, which are called as present-at-hand entities, are called "categories". But categories are not the character of Dasein since the most general characteristics of Dasein are called "*existentiale*". Heidegger states that "Dasein's characters of Being are defined in terms of existentiality; we call them '*existentiale*'. These are to be sharply distinguished from what we call '*categories*' - characteristics of Being for entities whose character is not that of Dasein." (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 70) Therefore, Dasein's characters of Being are totally different from the characteristics of Being as entities. Being in as an *existentiale* is not the Being present-at-hand of any corporeal thing: In other words, Dasein as Being-in-the-world is not a human body, which is a spatial relationship with regard to other entities. Dasein's essential structure is not to have a corporeal body, but it is an "*existentiale*". Consequently, the Cartesian project of extended substances understood as present-at-hand cannot signify the most general characteristics of Being of Dasein. Dasein's Being must be interpreted within its existential structure rather than its categorical structure.

"...the concept of Being must be Articulated; because of this, and because this structure is in principle one which cannot be grasped by the traditional ontological categories..." (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 81)

Although Heidegger distinguishes Being-in-the-world as Dasein from beings present-at-hand, he thinks that Dasein has a Being-in-space; in other words, Dasein is also in space. However, if Dasein's being-in-space is considered as a spatial property in a world, then offering Dasein's Being-in-the-world is understood in terms of present-at-hand. This interpretation makes Dasein's Being a spatial entity along with being a corporeal thing. This is an incorrect interpretation of Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Dasein's ontic spatiality is not an essential structure of its existence but one must understand Dasein's Being-in-the-world as an essential structure of Dasein in its existential spatiality. In its existential spatiality, Dasein always disperses itself into definite ways of Being-in. All dispersing ways of Being-in have concern which basically means "to carry out something", "to get it done", "to straighten it out", "to provide oneself with something." (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 83)

Dasein is in the world, of course, as a body, occupying a space among other object like any corporeal entity. However, its spatiality as a material body is not what characterizes most essentially the relationship of Dasein's Being to things and to other Daseins. The relationship of Dasein to Being-in-the-world is based on its concern (*Be-sorgen*). Heidegger does not use the expression "concern" in its ontical significations, but he uses it in its ontological meaning as an *existentiale* which designates Being as a possible way of Being-in-the-world. Heidegger chooses the term "concern", because "the Being of Dasein itself is to be made visible as care". (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 84) The phenomenon of concern shows that Dasein's world is a world of meaningful relations of Dasein. Therefore, Dasein's Being-in-the-world is essentially "Care". "Care" is an *existentiale* for Dasein's Being as Being-in-the-world.

For Heidegger the world cannot be interpreted in terms of nature as Descartes did because nature can be comprehended only in so far as it is present-at-hand. Contrary to nature, the world in Heidegger's thinking is comprehended as ready-at-hand. Moreover, contrary to a mathematical grasp of the Cartesian world, Heidegger's interpretation of Dasein as Being-in-the-world, which has always been thrown into the world, is essentially "care". For Heidegger, reality as things present-at-hand is not a reality of the phenomenon of world of Dasein is not only a nature world. That is to say, the realities of natural world are not the realities of Dasein's world as Being-in-the-world, which is essentially care. What is the relation between reality and care? Heidegger must answer this question because Reality as present-at-hand, in traditional ontology, shows itself as belonging to the natural world. However, as we have already discussed, the thing present-at-hand does not represent the Being-in-the-world; so the Reality of the Being-in-the-world is different from the Reality of present-at-hand in the existential-ontological sense.

Starting with Descartes, the traditional ontology takes the entities of the external world as Real, and Real is to be proved in the context of epistemology. Heidegger claims that Reality must be interpreted in its ontological basis because it is not our task to prove whether there is Reality and the external world. This is the so-called "the scandal of philosophy." (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 249) Reality must be ontologically established in the Being of Dasein as an understanding of Being because Reality is not some-

thing present-at-hand. Reality is something ready-to-hand and based on the understanding of Being. Since Being is dependent on the understanding of Being, Reality is dependent upon care. (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 255) When Dasein does not exist, and then is no understanding of Being.

Of course only long as Dasein is (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), is "there" Being. When Dasein does not exist, "independence" "is" not either, nor "is" the "in-itself". In such a case this sort of thing can be neither understood nor not understood. In such a case even entities within-the-world can neither be discovered nor lie hidden. *In such a case* it cannot be said that entities are, nor can it be said that they are not. But now, as long as there is an understanding of Being, and therefore an understanding of presence-at-hand, it can indeed be said that *in this case* entities will still continue to be. (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 255)

Therefore, as long as there is an understanding of Being, entities become accessible. Understanding of Being as care makes possible the phenomenon of Reality in its ontological structure. In this sense, the Cartesian assertion "*cogito sum*" must be turned around. In the new phenomenological-ontological approach, the "*sum*" must be asserted first. "I am in the world" as potentiality-for-Being precedes the cogitare of *res cogitans*. "I am in the world" as an understanding of Being reveals Reality ontologically upon the phenomenon of care.

According to Heidegger, one cannot accept the traditional explanation of a subject-knowing object as the basis of the investigation of Being-in-the-world because Being-in-the-world is more than the traditional account of it. Therefore, we must look at what we do in our everyday concerned life in which we encounter the being of those being closest to us. These beings are called "equipment". Therefore, the world of Dasein lies in its everydayness, but things of natural world lie the environment as present-at-hand: The world of Dasein is not merely the environment, but the beings which we meet every day is ready-at-hand, a piece of equipment with an involvement, with a purpose, and with a meaning. He states that we shall call these entities, which we encounter in concern "*equipment*". In our dealing we come across equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement. The kind of Being which equipment possesses must be exhibited. The clue for doing this lies in our first defining what makes an item of equipment- namely, its equipmentality. (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 97)

For Heidegger, our everyday experiences with equipment are not the test itself but the work which is to be produced as the "towards-which", i.e., for usability, for functionality. Therefore, "in equipment that is used, 'Nature' is discovered along with it by that use- the 'Nature' we find in natural products." (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 100) In other words, nature is not to be understood as present-at-hand-things. Traditional accounts of nature as present-at-hand is rejected by Heidegger, and manipulation and usage of nature is understood as ready-to-hand in order to use something for something else.

Heidegger defines ready-to-hand as equipment with "reference" or "assignment". Assignment can be more explicit when something is unusable for some purpose; this is the ontological structure. Assignment and reference have the character of the "in-order-to" and "serviceability-for" which they are an ontologico-categorical attribute of equipment as equipment. (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 109) For Heidegger, the world cannot be discovered thematically because in anything ready-to-hand, the world is always there.

and whenever we encounter anything, the world has already been previously discovered. (Heidegger, Martin 1988, 114) For this reason, ready-to-hand as equipment is just such an involvement which implies assignment or reference as the relationship of the "with...in..." (Heidegger, Martin 1962, 115) Heidegger understands involvement ontologically, so Dasein always assigns itself from a for-the-sake-of- which to the "with-which" as an involvement. In other worlds, Dasein understands itself before hand in its worldhood of the world.

The world is not nature nor an extant, nor the totality of things. The world is the con-texture of equipment as the enviroing world, *Umwelt*. The world must be understood as 'beforehand not afterward. "Beforehand as that which stands forth as always already unveiled to us." (Heidegger, Martin 1988, 165) Therefore, we are always already in a world. As an existing being, Dasein always already understands the world in advance as in-order-to, or being-for. Heidegger calls this understanding of the world as the phenomenological understanding of the world, which is different from the ordinary prephilosophical concept of the world. In the phenomenological concept of the world, "a chair does not have Being-in-the world's mode of Being but it occurs within the intrawordly extent." (Heidegger, Martin 1988, 166) The world is something *da* of Dasein. It is not extant things, but it is there-here like Dasein. The world exists.

Heidegger's understanding of world belongs to Dasein's Being that I myself in each instance am; so the world is subjective. "If the world is not something extant but belongs to the Dasein's Being, then it is something subjective." (Heidegger, Martin 1988, 167) "To say that the world is subjective is to say it belongs to the Dasein, so far as this being is in the mode of Being-in-the-world. The world is something which is the 'subject' 'project-outward' as it were, from within itself." (Heidegger, Martin 1988, 168) As long as Dasein exists, the world is cast-forth with the Dasein's Being. Dasein exists in such a way that with the thrownness of this projection. Therefore, Being-in-the-world belongs to the concept of existence and factically existent Dasein is always already Being-with intrawordly beings. Consequently, "world is only, if and as long as a Dasein exists. Nature can also be when no Dasein exists." (Heidegger, Martin 1988, 117)

In conclusion, Heidegger's understanding of Dasein as Being-in-the-world is not the *cogito* of Descartes and is not the pure consciousness of Husserl. Rather, it is existence taken as the essence of Dasein and is characterized by Being-in-the-world, care, finitude, temporality, and historicity. Being-in-the-world belongs to the Dasein's ontological constitution. Nature, extant entities, can be without a Dasein existing because Dasein's world is not natural world, but, rather, a phenomenal world. The phenomenal world is more than the natural world, and Dasein cannot exist without phenomenal world because the phenomenal world belongs to Dasein's Being.

RESOURCES

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