

Research on Heidegger's Fundamental Ethics

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Abstract: Based on Heidegger's idea of original ethics, this paper analyzes the state of how Da-sein has being-in-the-world, takes Heidegger's concept of "conscience" as an entry point, explores the difference between Heidegger's original ethics and traditional ethics, and reflects on what kind of ethics his thought is. From the perspective of ontology, Heidegger takes the being of human as the highest philosophical ontology, inquires deeply into the existence of Da-sein, and explores the relationship between Da-sein and Being. Through the diffusion of the understanding of Potentiality-of-Being of Da-sein, this paper gradually analyzes the basic construction of Da-sein being-in-the-world, under the definition of the structure "Being-in" is embedded in the world, the existence of Da-sein being-in-the-world unfolds. In the process of understanding the world, Da-sein is thrown into everyday life, losing himself and falling prey, but the true nature of Da-sein keeps calling him, Da-sein listens to the call of its conscience and makes a decision to face death and his true one's self. Starting from the process of alienation from the true self to the untrue self of Da-sein, we analyze Heidegger's basic concept of human-centeredness. What exactly constitutes the Being of Da-sein and how does the existence of Da-sein unfold. Even though many later scholars and Heidegger himself did not consider his thought to be a concept under the banner of ethics, and considered his thought to be contrary to traditional ethics. What is undeniable is that Heidegger's original ethics, with its in-depth exploration of the inner man, greatly expands the definition of universal morality and norms in traditional ethics.

Keywords: Heidegger, Conscience, Ethics.

1. Introduction

Martin Heidegger, born in Germany, is the founder and one of the main representatives of modern existentialist philosophy. Influenced by Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger put forward the ontology of existence, a new philosophical direction that takes the existence of human as the fundamental ontology of philosophy. From the perspective of existentialism, Martin Heidegger put forward the concept of "Da-sein" in the process of searching for the meaning of "being". Heidegger believed that Da-sein, as the most prioritized being, is the core of understanding the essence of being, and from Da-sein he proposed the existential term "Being-in", which means being-in-the-world. According to Heidegger, the fundamental state of being-in-the-world is "sorge", a kind of "care", and its daily life is "falling prey". This being-in-the-world, this state of being in relation to human beings, leads to the notion of "Mitda-sein", which means "co-being". According to Heidegger, this is a world in which people coexist, and "Mitda-sein" is the proof of every Da-sein, and that every "Others"

who's not "Da-sein" is "the-They"(Das-man). "The-They" is the unspecified, neutral, anonymous "Da-sein". From "Da-sein" to "Mitda-sein", from living with the "the-They" to "falling prey", then be free from "falling prey", "Da-sein" listen to the call of conscience and return. This series of processes is a small-scale mapping of Heidegger's search for the meaning of human's being with human as the highest philosophical ontology. In this paper, I would like to analyze the emergence of the call of conscience and the decision to respond to the call of conscience, and to discuss the nature of Heidegger's origin ethics by combining his search for the meaning of human's being. According to Heidegger, "falling prey" of Da-sein does not mean degradation, but an inevitable result of being-in-the-world. The "angst" of "falling prey" allows Da-sein to listen to the call of conscience, then eventually to be lifted out of the "falling prey", beginning the path of return. From an anthropological point of view, human beings are divided into authentic and inauthentic states by Heidegger, and from an ontological point of view, the positive significance of Da-sein "falling prey" is affirmed, which also highlights the importance of the call of conscience. Based on the above views, this paper attempts to analyze the reality and necessity of "falling prey", compare the secular conscience with Heidegger's concept of conscience, by understanding what exactly Heidegger's origin ethics is, explore the upward meaning of people embracing their true selves and finding authentic spirit during the process from "falling prey" to the returning.

2. Being-in-the world

2.1. Existence

To understanding existence, first we need to begin with grasping the existence of Da-sein. As the most prioritized Being, the analysis of its Being will point to ourselves. In my own existence, I do not simply exist, but also constantly interlinked with and affected by my own being. This structure of dealing with myself proves that the existence of Da-sein is placed above its own being. [1] So the key to the existence of Da-sein is "how to be".

The essence of being is to "to be". This has two meanings: firstly, Da-sein exists. Secondly, even though it exists, it is not ready-made. Therefore, the existence of "Da-sein" is neither already existing nor not yet existing, but is a kind of "being" - in the midst of. This process of "being" is "to be". "To be" is a dynamic projection that represents the possibilities available to Da-sein. Because of such possibilities, Da-sein can choose to be Da-sein, and can choose between authentic and inauthentic states. Heidegger defines such a possibility of Da-sein as "existence", which is more appropriately understood as "to be", and as a dynamic projection that expresses the existence of Da-sein, rather than as a concrete object. Because Da-sein is a being which is related understandingly in its being toward that being. Da-sein exists, and at the same time, Da-sein is the being which I myself always am, and mineness belongs to existing Da-sein.[2]

The basic structure of "being-in-the-world" is the precondition for further analyzing and comprehending the specifications of all existence of Da-sein. In order to further analyze the structure of being, Heidegger creates a completely new term - "being-in-the-world". "Being-in-the-world" refers to a unified phenomenon, a predetermined phenomenon that needs to be viewed as a whole, not as a collection of concepts that can be pieced together and reorganized. On this basis, starting from the multiplicity of constructs, "being-in-the-world" can be analyzed in terms of three links: "in-the-world", "who", and "being-in". These three links are interlocked, each being a search for the phenomenon as a whole,[2] and none of them can be formulated without the presence of the other two. However, this prior construction of "being-in-the-world" is not enough to fully define the existence of Da-sein, and before analyzing the three links one by one, a direction of the overall analysis should be set through the link of "being-in". We usually understand "being-in" in relation to the world as "being-in something". For example, like water in a glass, a pencil in a drawer, or a person

in a room, this kind of understanding means the existential relationship between a certain entity and the space in which it is located, a being exist in another, a kind of ready-made existence, which belongs to the beings whose kind of being is unlike Da-sein, and we call this kind of ontological nature categorial. From the point of view of the innate structure of Da-sein itself, “being-in” indeed means being-in the world, is the relation between Da-sein—human being, and the world in which he or she lives, and it is indeed consistent with the nature of the category of “being-in something”. However, “being-in” actually refers to the construction of being of Da-sein, which is existential in nature, not merely ontological, and therefore cannot be understood as the present existence of the human body is in another ready-made existence.[2] Analyzing etymologically, Heidegger said, “Being as the infinitive of “I am”: that is, understood as an existential, means to dwell near ... , to be familiar with With this we learn that “being-in” is the formal existential expression for the being of Da-sein, which has the essential constitution of “being-in-the-world”.

Instead of existing in the ready-made world, Da-sein dwell near in the world. “Being-in-the-world” is not a spatial existence in the world, but a sense of being absorbed in the world, which is a constant projection of the possibility of Da-sein in interaction with the world of its existence, and this “being-in” is the direction of the construction of the essence of existentialism. “Being-in” gives Da-sein a way of obtaining the world's indication by being-in the world, which also indicate Da-sein has always apprehended the world. [1]

2.2. Falling Prey

There, as the unfolding of Da-sein, is composed of three forms: “Attunement”, “Understanding”, and “Discourse”. In this world, human expresses the most primitive emotion, and in dealing with the world and with people, human gradually realizes the possibility of his “potentiality-of-being” as an individual, and this possibility of understanding is not the exact specific analysis of other individuals or a certain thing, but a projection of the possibility of his own authentic nature, which does not have a certain scope or range. After experiencing the state of understanding, human being opens the path of speech as a way of understanding the world and communicating with people, which we call it discourse. In talking with the “the-they” present as the “others”, a commonality is enlarged, authentic nature is weakened, “the-they” do not have the true nature of the self, “the-they” participates in everything but has no responsibility to undertake and no commitment, and thus Da-sein begin a state of “falling prey”, into the shroud of “others”, into the state of non-truth. The state of non-authenticity.

“Falling prey” does not have any positive or negative orientation, it is a simple manifestation of the present's daily state of Da-sein of being-in-the-world. Heidegger sees it as a process of descent, in which the true nature of Da-sein gradually dissolves into daily life, and Da-sein is thrown into the world of “the-they”. To unfold “falling prey”, one can see three links, “idle talk”, “curiosity”, and “ambiguity”. “curiosity, and ambiguity”. It is these three styles that are relied upon to guide Da-sein’s being-in-the-world, that is, and its co-presence with the “Others”. [3]

“Discourse” is the way in which a person connects to the state of comprehension, and the way in which he or she is able to understand the world and others.[4] Da-sein is thrown into the world of “the-they” and is surrounded by all kinds of words and conversations,[4] and such conversations are a combination of words thrown out by “the-they”, which is called “Idle talk”. It is not to say that such talk has no real meaning, it still preserves an appreciation of the unfolding world, but the words conveyed through communion may no longer be the most intimate of existence, and not all listeners will be able to directly appreciate the essence to which the words refer.[5] Such “idle talk” is reduced to the existence of a crowd, a kind of irrelevant “talk”, which makes people gradually get lost in the mouths of the crowd, often floating on the surface of the words, and losing the ability to comprehend the real meaning of the text. Always following other people’s talking without knowing what it really is, own voices and own opinions of Da-sein are drowned out in every other’s opinion.

As it's being-in-the-world and is surrounded by "idle talk", Da-sein is also perceiving the world, feeling the words and things around it, and thus the second part of "falling prey", "curiosity", opens up. "Curiosity" is a kind of 'seeing', a kind of contact with the world, a face-to-face contact. But such "curiosity" has no time for the true nature of things, it looks at everything and look everywhere, but does not dwell on what is near, it is a tendency to just-perceive . [2] It begins with the curiosity of Da-sein, lingering on the surface of things, thinking that one has already understood them thoroughly, but in reality Da-sein is continually disorganized in new possibilities, and continues to lose oneself in new possibilities and new things. Curiosity is everywhere and nowhere.[2] "Idle talk" and "curiosity" are entrusted to each other and keep influencing each other, by "idle talk" everything is understood, by "curiosity" everything is known. Because of "gossip" everything is understood, and because of "curiosity" everything is revealed. In such a contented and self-righteous existence, the third state of "falling prey" begins to appear.

In daily life everything is heard and seen, nothing is unknowable, nothing is true or false, the essence is obscured, and Da-sein is in a state of ambiguity. Everything in front of Da-sein is easily presented in a fixed way, it seems to be clear to what is the essence and what is the truth, but it is not, or everything seems not to be so, but it is. [2] In "ambiguity", there is no indication of attitude, and there is no need to make a choice, because everything seems to be clear, and everything that is understood is right, and whatever is right is possible. This kind of being-in-the-world offers a stable and peaceful atmosphere for Da-sein, and "falling prey" became so seductive.[5] Existing in the way that "the-they" exist in the world, with nothing to bear and no need to choose, Da-sein is unable to realize his or her own loss and confusion, and continues the "falling prey" in a seemingly stable environment.

3. Conscience

3.1. The Call of Conscience

In daily existence, Da-sein gradually loses its true nature, separates itself from the true self, leaves behind the search for its true nature, and "falling prey". Conscience is not a sense of morality as stated in original ethics, but an inner voice, a call from the Da-sein in search of the true self. Conscience calls on Da-sein to get rid of its muddle-headed state, to get out of "falling prey" which is covered by the world of "the-they". Conscience let Da-sein realize the emptiness of the present, and realize the poverty of true self and authenticity during "falling prey" . Through the concept of conscience, Heidegger calls for a return to the true nature.

The call of Conscience goes beyond the ordinary state of losing itself to its true self, and to answer the call of conscience is the choice to choose, to plan for Da-sein's most original self.[6] Da-sein is both the caller and the called. The call is not guided by the outside world, it does not come from the conversation of outside world, but it is a silent call that exists within Da-sein, and it is only in silence that Da-sein can hear the call of conscience. This call cuts off Da-sein from listening to idle talk and brings death into the life of Da-sein. By truly feeling death and understand death in a real and personal way, Da-sein can face death directly. Knowing that others will face death does not enable Da-sein's understanding toward death. Even with several ideas about death while "falling prey", Da-sein can't really understand its own death.[7] Facing death is to let Da-sein face its own limitation, and only when Da-sein truly realize the limitation that is hanging over, and realize that life can not be infinitely prolonged, does Da-sein truly understand the meaning of death, and in this moment dose conscience call out Da-sein's authenticity. The call of conscience calls out the inevitability of Da-sein's death and awakens the infinite possibilities of freedom.

The call of conscience does not occur at a specific moment or space, it is random, and the moment that Da-sein realize its own death, conscience begins to call Da-sein to unfold its own possibilities. It

is the moment when Da-sein facing its own death and unfold the potentiality-of-being that Da-sein truly begin its existence.

3.2. Resoluteness

After listening to the call of conscience, Da-sein decides to find its true self and start existing, so Da-sein makes a decision. Da-sein responds to the call of conscience by making a decision, the call of conscience awakens it and makes it face up to its lack of authenticity, calling it to break away from “falling prey” and to make up for its avoidance of its true nature, which is to make it face up to its own guilt. In the face of the call of conscience and Da-sein’s own guilt, resoluteness begins to emerge and Da-sein makes a decision.

Heidegger calls such a decision a silent self-planning, a project, a self-planning towards the most inherently being-guilty. [2] Guilt is a lack toward Da-sein’s authenticity, not sin in the sense of normal morality. Heidegger believes that human existence is inherently guilty, but this is not to say that he believes that human nature is evil. In his view, such guilt precedes the distinction between good and evil.[8] Da-sein needs to know that this guilt will not perish, that this guilt is toward Da-sein’s own authenticity. It is only by accepting the guilt, accepting the lack and the “angst”, and forcing out the decision, that Da-sein begins this silent self-planning toward the authenticity.

Being-guilty belongs to the being of Da-sein itself, which was defined primarily as potentiality-of-being. [2] Da-sein’s guilt is understood to be potentiality-for-being-guilty(schuldigseinkönnen), and guilt has already exists in a original possibility. Da-sein’s resoluteness is indeed the project toward the most inherent being-guilty, and it stays in it authentically when resoluteness is primordially what it tends to be.[2] Da-sein’s potetiality-of-being projection is demonstrated upon Da-sein’s death, and this being-toward-death as an anticipation demonstrate that resoluteness becomes a primordial being toward the own-most potentiality-of-being of Da-sein only as anticipatory.[2] Resoluteness understands the “can” of its potentiality-for-being-guilty only when it “qualities” itself as being-toward-death.[2] This means that only when resoluteness is understood as the possibility of death and incorporates the limitation of Da-sein into its true potentiality-of-being does the resoluteness truly and unsurpassed comprehend Da-sein’s potentiality-for-being-guilty.

Thus, Da-sein resolves to realize its guilt and resolves to bring authenticity back. In the presence of the primordial truth of existence, potentiality-of-being of Da-sein is in its own existence, and to see Da-sein’s existence as a whole, resoluteness as anticipatory reveals death and guilt, under which Da-sein grasps all the possibilities of itself, and the true whole potentiality-of being is revealed.

4. Conclusion

There has been much of criticism of Heidegger's philosophical thought amongst later philosophers, accusing Heidegger of not giving a common ethical code. Ethics is the science of social and moral issues, which takes human moral problems as its object of study and aims to provide a moral code for everyday life. Heidegger's ethics does not speak in terms of the moral mores of the society and does not provide a moral system for the society to provide guidance for everyday life, which goes against the universal concepts and tenets of ethics. For Heidegger, ethics is built from the perspective of the ready-made, established being, and Heidegger refused to base his study on a ready-made system of morality, he stood for an existential perspective to save people from ready-made existence. [9]

Heidegger's ethics is different from traditional virtue ethics or original ethics, yet it contains a unique ethical essence, which can be realized as a dynamic morality and ethics.[9] Heidegger starts from Da-sein, he calls upon human beings to be concerned with the meaning of their own existence and to take responsibility for their own existence. Heidegger criticizes that the traditional norms of ethical regulation is incapable of being truly binding on human beings, and that it is necessary to start

from the Da-sein itself and combine traditional ethical norms with the existential concerns of Da-sein, and for this reason to shape more existential possibilities in Da-sein.[10] Conscience summons Da-sein to face up to guilt and to plan for existence, and Da-sein take responsibility for its own existence, the contemplation of which is a original ethics. Thus, the significance of Heidegger's original ethics is revealed.[11] Starting from the inner self, Heidegger's original ethics also greatly broadens the traditional ethical understanding of morality by its acceptance of the true self.

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