



Heidegger and the Problem of Other Minds

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Abstract

This paper consists of two main ideas of Heidegger; the concept of Dasein and Care and tries to solve the problem of other minds ontologically. By means of Dasein's Being-in-the-world Dasein is with other Daseins. And the concept of care is something that encompasses everyone into the common fold of humanity. It is in this manner I have tried to solve the problem from Heidegger's perspective.

Keywords: Heidegger, Dasein, Care, Being.

Introduction

Existential philosophers have solved the problem of other minds ontologically. They have in a way ignored the inferential arguments to the solutions of the problem of other minds. Hence, their solution of the problem occupies a unique position in our understanding of other minds. In the case of Heidegger the unique concepts like Dasein and the conception of care provides our solution to the problem of other minds. Thus, we will here analyse them and see how Heidegger solves the problem of other minds.

Concept of Dasein

Before we understand Heidegger's concept of Dasein, it is important to understand his concept of Being. Plato and Aristotle understood Being as something universal, something that can be universally applicable. Their understanding of Being was from the general perspective. It also referred to an individual existing thing as well as an aggregate of all the things that exist. Heidegger rejected this view and said that Being as such cannot be defined. For Heidegger, Being can neither be defined by higher concepts nor lower ones. Being however for him is self-evident which can be understood by all. So, Being according to Heidegger is neither universal nor the representation of the universal. Understanding of Being involves an understanding of ourselves. In other words, to question 'what is the meaning of Being?' involves the questioner or the one who asks question i.e. a human being, a man. But by way of asking at least, we have some understanding of Being which helps in our inquiry. Hence, it is to a man that the question of 'Being' should be asked and it is a man that Being discloses itself, because this man is distinct from other animals. The inquiry of Being for

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Heidegger, therefore, must start from human beings. And it is to the human being that Heidegger considers as Dasein.

Objects in this world are entities, and human beings are part of these entities. And so Dasein is not an entity of this world so that one would expect to understand the meaning of different entities through dasein. The fact of being ourselves and the way we understand ourselves and other entities enable us to understand the meaning of Being. And this Heidegger calls as Dasein. Dasein means: “Being there or being here or more strictly, something between the two. For the ‘Da’ in Dasein refers to this disclosedness of being.”¹ It is therefore, not a mistake if we consider Dasein as a human being or a man. It is concerned with its being, the way it is. Heidegger says: “Its being is such that it must choose the way it is, not *that* it is but *how* it is. In its being it has a relationship of being to this being. This means that Dasein understands itself in its being.”² ‘Dasein understanding itself in its being would mean, we try to understand Dasein’s existence from its different perspective. Thus, understanding of Dasein would mean understanding the world and its entities.

Understanding Dasein and Others as Being-in-the-world

Husserl takes up the subject, object, and the intentionality to understand consciousness but Heidegger rejected this view because of the psychological aspects involved in it. Heidegger, on the other hand, took up a different route as he tried to understand the concept of self or being from the ontological perspective. His basic assumption thus was: “I am in the world, and on that basis alone am I able to ask about the nature of the world (for me) about myself, and about the relationship between myself and the world.”³ Now, based on this Heidegger developed his concept of ‘Being-in-the-world.’

The existence of Dasein is known as Dasein’s Being-in-the-world. When we say that Dasein is ‘Being-in-the-world,’ it refers to a unitary phenomenon which is to be considered as a whole. We need to understand ‘Being-in-the-world,’ through ‘in-the-world.’ ‘In-the-world’ refers to the way the being is. It refers to the structural aspect of being. Structural aspect of being means how being is discloses itself to entities of the world.

Thus the ‘Being-in’ of Dasein refers to how Dasein relates with the world. The ‘in’ of ‘Being-in’ of Dasein doesn’t mean something to be in somewhere. Entities of the world that are present-at-hand are not contained in the world. They are like ready-to-hand. They are like ready-to-be-used by Dasein. It is in this sense Dasein discloses itself in the world. Dasein has a total involvement in the world. Dasein engages in all the activities of the world and it totally absorbed in the world. In the world of Dasein is like the world of objects is always available to Dasein and Dasein has access to all the things of this world available to him to use them in any manner it wants.

Dasein ‘in-the-world’ or ‘Being-in-the-world’ is something like ‘being along-side’ with one another. It is like a home where both Dasein and the world are comfortable with one another. It is a kind of mutual relationship between Dasein and the world where we can say that there is harmony between them. It’s been stated that: “Heidegger coins the term ‘sein-bie’ for this

relationship, a term that has been translated by Macquarrie and Robinson not very satisfactorily as 'Being-alongside.' it rather should have been *athomeness* which would refer to the intimate relationship between Dasein and world. So, what Heidegger has in mind in 'Being-in' of Dasein is that he is trying to bring Dasein and the world much closer to one another. It shows a kind of intimate relationship between Dasein and the world. The ontological meaning of Dasein is revealed when Dasein starts encountering entities that are within this world. By knowing other entities, Dasein realizes its Being-in-the world. By means of getting engaged in the world, the 'Being-in' of Dasein is manifested, or Dasein realizes its Being. In this manner, Dasein discloses itself in the world. Being concernfully getting engaged in the entities of the world it gets manifested in the world.

Dasein gets involved in the world in such a manner that it forgets its Being. It is in this sense that it would misunderstand itself as one of the entities of the world because of its so-called concernful involvement. But it recognizes its own being only after coming out of its thoughtful engagement and just looking. In this manner, it realizes its uniqueness. The realization of the being of Dasein is possible only after Dasein's engagement with the world and meeting with other entities. Hence, two things here are important; one is the realization of Dasein by being absorbed in the world and secondly, by means of Dasein's being absorbed it can meet other entities of the world.

The other Dasein, for example, are not present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. They are Daseins like myself, I as Dasein am with other Daseins. For example, whenever a craftsman makes something it also refers to people who make use of it. It is in this manner Dasein exists with another Dasein. Or a person strolling around a greenery lawn in front of his house refers that it belongs to him, who properly takes care of it and so on. A sailing boat, for example, refers to someone who knows how to sail, and maintains it and so on. So, the entities of Dasein are to be understood by understanding the entities of the world. Secondly, The World in the 'being-in-the-world' does not refer to entities like a house, chair, table and so on, it rather refers to being. It is manifesting of those entities that are 'present-at-hand-in-the-world'. Ontologically, we don't understand the world through Dasein to which Dasein is not. It is rather the explanation of Dasein itself. For Heidegger, the world is the totality of entities. World doesn't merely refer to the entities of the world rather ontologically speaking the world is for Dasein to live in. hence the being of Dasein is being in the world and being with one another.

The world in 'Being-in-the-world' is not an entity itself rather it makes the encounter of other entities possible. Heidegger says: "Dasein's world lets it encounter not only entities whose mode of being is either readiness-to-hand or present-at-hand but entities whose mode of being is the same as its own; 'Being-in-the-world.' The other is encountered as within-the-world but at the same time as 'in-the-world.' 'Being-in-the-world' is being-with-others."⁴ 'Being-in-the-world' of Dasein is thus being-with-others. It is thus a shared world, where Dasein is able to meet other Daseins. It is a 'with-world' where the very existence of Dasein is manifested by means of other Daseins.

Concept of Care

The existential structure of Dasein is Being in the world and being with others and so the being of Dasein is understood as care. Care refers to the essential structure of Dasein's being. This essential structure Heidegger calls it as 'projection, thrownness, and concern.' He says: "In projecting itself onto possibilities of 'Being-in-the-world' Dasein is 'ahead of itself.' As thrown Dasein is already in-the-world. As already in-the-world it is *bei* entities within-the-world. It dwells with entities within-the-world, is absorbed by them."⁵ When we say that 'Dasein is ahead of itself' it means Dasein has the potentiality to actualize its Being. The 'itself' here again refers to the self which is also understood as they-self. Hence, Dasein is a being with-in the world. Thrownness does not mean that I am thrown into any world but into a particular world which is a 'this world.' Thus, I am already there in this particular world where I find other entities. I am always along-side the world. It is thus our world. Projection is the different possibilities of Daseins which are understood in terms of authentic and inauthentic existence and in which Dasein exists as *das Man* (the one or the they).

Care refers to being-with which encounters entities that are Being-in-the-world. The conception of care is defined by Heidegger in many different ways like, "Being-ahead-of itself, being already in the world, being alongside, (entities encountered within the world)."⁶ For Heidegger, if we say that the world of Dasein is necessarily Dasein's being in the world, then it's being towards the world would necessarily be care or concern. The care of Dasein is to be understood as a concern when Dasein engages itself within-the-world. Dasein is always understood in terms of specific mode to which it relates itself to the world. That means Dasein's being as care is expressed in multifarious ways. In its specific mode, the being of Dasein is characterized as a concern which is like producing, considering and so on. These are the different ways Dasein's care is expressed in the world, and this is where Heidegger gives the example of shoes and hammer. The facticity of Dasein is the manner Dasein relates itself with other Daseins. One may feel the tendency to define care in terms of wish or addiction or will but can't be replaced by care because it is care which is their basis.

There is an important thing said about care. "Among the four existent natures (trees, beasts, man, and God), the latter two, which alone are endowed with reason, are distinguished, in that God is immortal while the man is mortal. Now, when it comes to these, the good of the one, namely God, is fulfilled by his Nature; but that of the other, man is fulfilled by *care*."⁷ One can easily ask a question like what is good of God and good of man. But when we try to understand human being from the perspective of care then the goodness of man may be perfectly understood. Care therefore brings all the Daseins together into the fold of common humanity.

Conclusion

The whole concept of understanding of other minds in Heidegger revolves around his understanding of the Being of Dasein. The Being of Dasein is as we have seen 'Being-in-the-world'. So, in our attempt to understand 'Being-in-the-world' we understand other Daseins. The being of Dasein is 'Being-in' the world, or 'Being-within-the world,' and the Being of Dasein is manifested not in solitude but with other Daseins. Thus, Heidegger proves that the

Being of Dasein is 'Being-with-others'. It is a shared world where Dasein is at home with other Daseins. The Being of Dasein is thus understood as care. Hence, when we understand Dasein, we understand the care and understanding of care, therefore, leads to the solution of the problem of other minds by Heidegger.

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End Notes

¹Gorner, Paul, *Heidegger's Being and Time; An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, p. 23.

²Ibid, pp. 23-24.

³Waterhouse, Roger, *A Heidegger Critique: A Critical Examination of the Existential Phenomenology of Martin Heidegger*, Harvester Press, University of Michigan, 1981, p. 68.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid, p. 92.

⁶Ibid, p. 52.

⁷Ibid, p. 243.