

On Heideggerian Sense of Interpretation (I) ---- The As-Structure as Disclosure

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Abstract - Heidegger's sense of interpretation has a closely inherent relationship (kinship) with his sense of understanding, the former is founded by the latter, and the latter is presupposed by the former. Interpretation is a derivative mode of understanding and gets explicit understanding. The former is ontical and empirical, while the latter is ontological and transcendental. In order to make explicit the question of the meaning of interpretation and its kinship with understanding, let us start from an introduction.

Index Terms - Heidegger's sense of interpretation, understanding, interpretation

1. Introduction

We say that both understanding of being and state-of-mind are equiprimordial in the constituting of Dasein's basic state — the being-in-the-world; that the question of the meaning of Dasein is always answered by the various modes of Dasein's being; that an understanding is a mode of Dasein, and a state-of-mind is also a mode of Dasein. Judging from this, we know that it is redundant to say that understanding is equiprimordial with Dasein except for emphasis on the importance of understanding in the constituting of Dasein, and this is true of state-of-mind.

2. The As-structure

Dasein or the human being is like Protean who embraces all transfigurations of his own while keeping identical in his formal appellation; Dasein is like a root which gathers together all branches setting forth from it. That is why Lafont says, "... many interwoven threads can be traced back to the equally multifaceted distinctive status of Dasein" (HW, 22). State-of-mind is equiprimordial with understanding in constituting Dasein's being. Like understanding, state-of-mind is an ontological term for the various ontical moods: "[The states-of-mind are] the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood, our Being-attuned" (BT, 172); like understanding, state-of-mind in its own way of being discloses Dasein's being, discloses Dasein's being-there, because "**the primordial disclosure belongs to moods, in which Dasein is brought before its Being as 'there'**"¹ (BT, 173). That is, state-of-

mind reveals Dasein's being-there. Being-there is the fundamental state of Dasein's existence: to be, to become, to get possibilities for being. Why can state-of-mind, like understanding, be able to disclose Dasein or the human being as "being-there"? First of all, let us bearing in mind that " 'to disclose' never means anything like 'to obtain indirectly by inference' " (BT, 105), we may regard 'disclose' as "unveil", "lay open", "light up", and the like. This is because "**In having a mood, Dasein is always disclosed moodwise as *that entity* (italics added) to which it has been delivered over in its Being; and in this way it has been delivered over to the Being which, in existing, it has to be**" (BT, 173). For instance, when I have a mood whether merry or sad, I am so disclosed moodwise as a merry or a sad being (entity, man) to which I have been delivered over in my own being; and in this way I have been delivered over to the merry or the sad being which, in my existing, I have to be. Thinking in this way, Dasein, among others, can be characterized by its disclosedness. That is, being-disclosed, like understanding, like state-of-mind, like being-in-the-world, like existence, is another term to unhidden Dasein. "By its very nature, Dasein brings its 'there' along with it. If it lacks its 'there', it is not factually the entity which is essentially Dasein; indeed, it is not this entity at all. *Dasein is its disclosedness*" (BT, 171). Now, let us further our thinking along the quotation of "**In having a mood...**" once again: we will find that from the ontological state-of-mind to Dasein's ontical concretization (*that entity*) is an explanation of Heidegger's ontological difference (difference between "being" and "beings") and it is the difference that introduces the *as-structure* into Heidegger's every analysis. This is what we are seeking to comprehend the phenomenon of **terminology-pairs** in BT: being and beings; ontology and ontics; worldhood and world; the readiness-to-hand and the ready-to-hand; the presence-at-hand and the present-at-hand; reality and the real; involmentality and involvements; equipmentality and equipments; spatiality and space; temporality and time; understanding and interpretation; discourse and language; etc.

¹ "Being-there", besides being-in-the-world, is another name for Dasein. "Being-there" means being-possible, 'to be'. It is an existential-ontological term to describe Dasein or Dasein's being. In the translator's note in IM, the translator says, "[Dasein] is an everyday German word meaning 'existence'. But Heidegger breaks it down into its components, 'being' and 'there', and gives it a very particular meaning. I have rendered it throughout as 'being-there', because not only Heidegger's 'Da-sein' but his 'Dasein' as well has a

special definition and dignity that are lacking in the colorless 'existence' " (IM, ix). Heidegger says, "The entity which is essentially constituted by Being-in-the-world is itself in every case its 'there'. According to the familiar signification of the word, the 'there' points to a 'here' and a 'yonder'. There 'here' of 'I-here' is always understood in relation to a 'yonder' ready-to-hand, in the sense of a Being towards this 'yonder' — a Being which *is* de-severant, directional, and concerned" (BT, 171).

Now, let us come back to “**the primordial disclosure belongs to moods**” and “**In having a mood, Dasein is always disclosed moodwise as *that entity* (italics added) to which it has been delivered over in its Being” and “*Dasein is its disclosedness*”.**

Have we not discovered an inherent relationship (kinship) among them? “Disclosure”, “moods”, “being-there”, and “as that entity”, are the scenes playing on the lit-up stage prepared by Dasein, so much so that it looks as if “Dasein is the open space where beings reveal themselves in sundry ways, coming out of concealment into their truth and withdrawing again into obscurity” (BW, 20). But this is only one side of Dasein, the other side is that it is the “as-structure” that gets the so-called disclosure actualized. That is, abiding by the as-structure, a kind of mood discloses Dasein as that Dasein (as that entity) that lies in that particular mood (a particular being of Dasein in that mood). Recalling “Dasein is ontico-ontologically prior, ... [it] is ontically closest to itself and ontologically farthest” (BT, 37), such questions may turn up naturally: For what purpose does Dasein possess these two priorities (which in fact are the extreme poles with the characters ontically closest and ontologically farthest respectively) at the same time if these two priorities (poles) are so isolated that they do not have anything to do with each other? And what is more significantly, how does Dasein get through from one pole (ontological) to the other (ontical), or vice versa, if they have something to do with each other?

3. The As-structure and Interpretation

In so far as we know, Dasein’s most basic existence is its being-in-the-world, the meaning of being-in-the-world is no more than understanding of being in the world; the “world” in the expression of being-in-the-world, as disclosed, is no more than a system of Relations, a network of significance, it is full of relations of “for-which” and “towards-which” which are finally determined by the ultimate purpose of “for-the-sake-of-which” that Dasein *is*. In sum, the purpose of “‘for-the-sake-of-which’ that Dasein *is*” runs through Dasein’s being-in-the-world, and then the understanding of being, and then all the constitutive items of Dasein’s being-there or being-in-the-world. Since “Dasein is ontically closest and ontologically farthest” is given rise to only by virtue of being or understanding of being, the two poles must be unified in their source of being or understanding of being. As for the second question of “extremes to meet”, the answer also lies in being or understanding of being. Suppose if Dasein only ontologically stands over against entities (including Dasein itself) without any transcendence of understanding, then it will have no means of getting to know something about itself, because it is ontologically farthest from itself. But the fact is reverse. Dasein is ontically closest to itself; it always understands something about itself. How does Dasein get accessible from the ontological pole to the ontical pole, and accomplish its disclosedness, because “Dasein is its disclosedness”? This formula of “Dasein is its disclosedness” unmistakably tells us that the ontical Dasein is lit up only by virtue of its ontological

understanding of being which functions as the source of light. Now, let us put “Dasein’s priorities” and “Dasein’s disclosedness” together, can we come to such a conclusion that it is the transcendence of the ontological understanding of being that gets all the phenomena in question actualized as they are? From our relevant analysis above, such kind of transcendence (means surpassing, freeing, going beyond) of **the ontological understanding of being is none other than the interpretative as-structure in Dasein**. It is the structure that gets actualized the formula of “Dasein is its disclosedness”; it is the structure that we are seeking all the time. Accordingly, in place of transcendence, we can claim that *it is this interpretative or hermeneutic as-structure that bridges the gap between the two poles ontological and ontical*. If Dasein has a pre-theoretical ontological structure beforehand, then its ontical comporting in the interpretative form of “something as something” can serve as a point of departure or a clue by which the ontological structure of understanding of being can be traced back to.

In the foregoing paragraphs, we have only mentioned that “the primordial disclosure belongs to moods”; but, “understanding is never free-floating, but always goes with some state-of-mind” (BT, 1389), and “As a disclosure, understanding always pertains to the whole basic state of Being-in-the-world” (BT, 184). If we put the quotations together, will it be right to observe that “the primordial disclosure also belongs to understanding”? Heidegger, in the introduction to his *Being and Time*, distinctively stresses the three priorities of Dasein: ontical, ontological, and understanding: “But with equal primordially (*with ontical and ontological priorities*, italics added) Dasein also possesses — as constitutive for its understanding of existence — an understanding of the Being of all entities of a character other than its own. Dasein has therefore a third priority as providing the ontic-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies” (BT, 34); and in the body of BT, Heidegger explicitly claims, “The disclosedness of understanding, as the disclosedness of the ‘for-the-sake-of-which’ and of significance equiprimordially, pertains to the entirety of Being-in-the-world” (BT, 182). Judging from this, it will be right to say that understanding also primordially functions as disclosure. “‘There is’ (gift is) being only in the specific disclosedness that characterizes the understanding of being” (GP, 24-25; cited from HA, 17). Another evidence comes from Heidegger’s similar entitles: “Being-there as state-of-mind” and “Being-there as understanding” of Sections 29 and 32, Chapter V, Part I, BT. Now, if it is right to say that an understanding is a primordial disclosure, then *the disclosing as-structure which is assigned to state-of-mind can be fitly assigned to understanding, too*.

4. The Disclosure of Understanding and Interpretation

In fact, since understanding and state-of-mind are equiprimordial in constituting Dasein’s being or being-there, and Dasein is defined as its disclosedness, then the equiprimordial constituents — understanding and state-of-mind — should

reasonably share the function of disclosure. This point has been echoed by Heidegger's claim: "Disclosedness is constituted by state-of-mind, understanding, and discourse, and pertains equiprimordially to the world, to Being-in, and to the Self" (BT, 263).

Then understanding as disclosure, as has been discussed, should follow the form of as-structure in the very way in which state-of-mind functions as disclosure. If state-of-mind discloses Dasein's being-there by reification of it into various moods, then understanding discloses Dasein's being-there by its empirical interpretations. Now, it is time for the form of as-structure to be made clearer: *Dasein (the human being) understands something as something. This is a process which gets understanding explicit, we call this process an interpretation.* Obviously, the relationship between understanding and interpretation is not equiprimordial or co-original, but is derivative. Understanding is always prior to interpretation, and interpretation always follows the trail of the act of understanding in so far as there is the act of interpretation. In other words, understanding founds² interpretation, and interpretation is founded by understanding, but not vice versa. So, to explain Heideggerian sense of interpretation inevitably demands going back to his sense of understanding time and again.

So far the question of the meaning of the as-structure as disclosure or being disclosedness should have been made explicit: *understanding and state-of-mind are the equiprimordial modes of disclosing Dasein's being-there, in disclosing, they abide by the interpretative as-structure.* As has been discussed, disclosure means to **understand something as something**; it also means that, in the process of understanding of something as something, the ontological symbolic structure (the worldhood of the world), or the system of significance (the primary understanding of being), actualizes itself into particulars, and its function of guidance finds its way into what is sought rather than what is not sought. *In sum, the process of understanding of something as something is the process of disclosing the inherent relationships between being and a being, or beings.* Only through the interpretative as-structure as disclosure (disclosedness), can the understanding of being be reified through its beings, therefore beings can serve as a clue to trace back to their source of being which lets them come into their being as such.

5. Conclusion

Finally, the unfinished list of **terminology-pairs** at the end of the second paragraph (page 66) in this section can be illumined in the light of the as-structure as disclosure (disclosedness). The first term of each terminology-pairs signifies the entirety of a symbolic structure (the ontological understanding of being) which guidingly or understandingly

assigns or refers Dasein to beings, and the second term of each terminology-pairs indicates the ontical particulars of those beings upon which our understanding of being illumines. The former is always a sort of guidance for us to comport towards our being; the latter refers to the particular beings thus made or gained under the guidance of the former. The former is always already being there before our concrete doings. In this sense, the primary understanding is always already prior to an interpreting, and the interpreting is always undertaken under the guidance from its understanding. Such relations are remindful of Kant's famous saying "Intuition is blind without concepts, concepts without intuition are empty". In the following section, we are going to come near intuition in a way in which we try to let the meaning of "the as-structure of interpretation" show itself in itself.

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References

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- [2] Culler, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2004.
- [3] Gadamer, Gorg. *Truth and Method*. Garpett Barden & John Cimring (trans.) Beijing: China Social Sciences Publishing House Chengch Books Ltd., 1999.

² We say, "A founds B", this means that A provides the ground upon which B is set up; when we say, "B is founded by A", we mean that B is provided with a ground by A. A is original, B is derivative. In this sense, only A founds B, but not vice versa.