Attunement, Deprivation, and Drive

Heidegger and Animality

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With the German *Stimmung*, which can be translated as “mood,” or, better, as “attunement,”¹ Heidegger describes the being of the human being as “being-there” (*Dasein*). This *Dasein* is always in a mood or attunement. For it can be (not) in the mood for something; it can be in one of its moods; it can be moody; or, *Dasein* can be in a bad or a happy mood. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that, because of our moods, our world is “never the same from day to day.”² Even scientific research does not know reality in an absolute manner, since the attunement of the researcher opens up the world it investigates: “even the purest θεωρία [theory] has not left all moods behind it.”³ Although this perhaps appears as a limitation, our attunements, in fact, make the world accessible in the first place: they open up the world to us.⁴

In his 1929–30 lecture course, the *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*,⁵ Heidegger describes the opening up of the world through our being attuned, in opposition to the poverty in world that, according to Heidegger, characterizes the being of the (non-human) animal. While our constant *attunement* constitutes our very accessibility to the world, the animal, in contrast, is poor in world, as it can only *behave towards* the objects that it encounters. Put simply, it lacks the kind of opening up of the world that is made possible through our – specifically human – attunements.⁶

In this essay, I discuss the poverty in world of the (non-human) animal, as analyzed by Heidegger. Interestingly, Heidegger himself admits that this is a somewhat obscure statement, and that it only seems to have meaning in relation to the *Dasein* of the human animal: the animal is poor in world, yet it is not completely deprived of world.⁷ Although Heidegger’s analysis in his lecture-course pertains primarily to the concept of world, he does provide an interesting analysis of the difference between the human and non-human animal, particularly in that he does not simply describe the human being as an animal with logos, or as an animal with rationality, nor does he describe humans as political animals, as is often done within the tradition. Alternatively, it is precisely the *ability to be attuned* that constitutes the particularity of human existence, according to Heidegger.
In his lecture course, Heidegger discusses three different forms of poverty and deprivation: the above mentioned poverty in world of the non-human animal, second, the poverty in being of contemporary Dasein, and, third, the deprivation of world in the fundamental attunement of profound boredom. In what follows, I will discuss these three forms of poverty or deprivation, where the goal is to offer a preliminary analysis of Heidegger’s distinction between the human and the non-human animal.

I. Poverty in World: The Being of the Animal

In the second chapter of his lecture course, Heidegger draws his well-known distinction between the human being (Dasein), the animal, and the stone, on the basis of their respective having and not having of world. Heidegger states that the stone is “worldless,” that the animal is “poor in world,” and that the human being is “world forming.” The thesis that the animal is poor in world is the “point of departure” for Heidegger’s analysis, and results in a comparison between, on the one hand, the stone and the animal, and, on the other hand, the animal and the human being. The animal’s existence is said to lie between the stone and the human being. But what does it mean to be “between” them? What does “poverty in world” mean? The poverty in the world of animality is, as Heidegger indicates, the most obscure of these three theses, and – as we will see – has a meaning only in comparison with the other two.

Heidegger starts his analysis with a comparison between animal and man, which he characterizes as a comparison between poverty and wealth. He claims that the animal possesses “less in respect of what is accessible to it, of whatever as an animal it can deal with, of whatever it can be affected by as an animal, of whatever it can relate to as a living being.” The world of the animal is limited: the bee’s world, for example, is limited to its hive, blossom, and other bees. But it is not only that the domain of the animal is quite small, rather, “the extent and manner in which an animal is able to penetrate whatever is accessible to it is also limited.” This means that the animal is not able “to know” things around it. The human animal, instead, has a world that is much richer: it is greater in range, and it is able to extend this range. Human animals can explore new areas, while the bee will only busy itself with its hive, blossom, and other bees. We are also able to penetrate much deeper in our world than the animal can. This difference in depth can be found, for example, in the idea that the bee “does not know the stamens of these blossoms as stamens, it knows nothing about the roots of the plant and it cannot know anything about the number of stamens or leaves...” These examples of possible relations to being fall outside the range of possibilities for the bee, especially as it falls outside the possibilities of animality to have access to beings as such. The human being, in contrast, can penetrate into the range of the “as such:” we can experience beings as beings. The human