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Short Paper #1

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Reading One:The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics excerpt

The first time I encountered “Metaphysics” I thought it was a subject closely related to physics, which mainly focuses on the motion of concrete objects. However, the prefix “meta” changed my initial impression of this impressive subject in amazing ways. “Meta” is a prefix derived from Greek, where western philosophy started. In Greek, “Meta” has the meaning of “after” or “beyond”.

The application of metaphysics in daily life is unavoidable, especially the idea of attunement, mentioned in the excerpt of *<<The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics>>.* In this excerpt, attunements are defined as the way in which people’s behaviors are being changed due to the environment rather than side effects. The definition of environment here can be culture, weather, or even the character of people around you; attunements are the way in which people think or work.

Attunement is present in daily life, as described by these three theories:

1. Attunements are everywhere, and they are mainly presented in terms of changing the atmosphere of a room like the beginning of the excerpt mentioned. However, attunement is not only limited in forms of changing the atmosphere of the room.
2. Attunements can be ignored if the audience pays more attention to something else.
3. Those in charge are capable of influencing people they are in charge of. In that case, the environment can be tuned to fit the powerful.

Here are the examples and statements that can support all these three theories:

As for the first theory, like the beginning of the excerpt from *<<The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics>>*said, “A human being who—as we say—is in good humour brings a lively atmosphere with them.” In other words, the atmosphere brought by people can be infectious. For instance, when the class clown comes into the room, the spirit of the room will definitely be delighted. However, if we let a businessman who is about to declare bankruptcy, the atmosphere will obviously be more downtrodden. This point can also be illustrated with what recently happened during our daily class. During the discussion, all classmates were enthusiastically proposing their own opinions no matter how funny those opinions were. However, when Dr. Eglash started to talk, the whole class tended to be more silent. Seldom did we dare present these “funny” ideas. Then the discussion became more scientific and academic rather than “Harambe-like.” That is how attunement is present in terms of the spirit of a discussion in a class. Dr. Eglash could have used some attunements to tune the discussion back on track. Attunements can also be present in a number of other forms.

Culture is also a classical way in which attunement is applied. In United States, there are people from different races. There are native Americans, Asians, Europeans, and even Africans here. However, all of these people are tuned into Americans. Take Chinese as an example. Known as ABC, American born Chinese children are more used to coke-cola, scrambled eggs, and, Xbox while traditional Chinese children are seen as tea drinkers, extremely good at math, and to think highly of their teachers. Even in the famous game “Cards Against Humanity,” there is a card known as “Asian not good at math”. That is how these Chinese people are tuned into different patterns to fit various living environments via non-identical attunements.

When it comes to the second theory, the temporarily ignored attunements can be explained with the example of what happened during the class. The second theory can also be well illustrated with the video we watched on the day of tuning the Hindu music instruments. At the beginning of that video, students are required to count the time that the people dressed in white throw and catch the ball. When students are only focusing on counting the people in white, no one was paying attention to the strange black gorilla that walked by until the instructor pointed the gorilla out . In this case, the attunements associated with the gorilla are ignored.

That is how attunements could be ignored, and there is another key word “temporary”.

In addition to attunements, the 2nd theory also present the concept of temporary attunements.

The key word “temporary” is of great importance here, because barely no one could focus on one thing all the time, and the moment they are not paying attention, they are being tuned into the main pattern of attunements. This concept can be compared with swimming upstream. It is quite easy at the beginning to swim in the opposite direction, however, it gets harder and harder. Finally,when it becomes too difficult, swimmers will flow with the river.

As for the last theory, people in charge are capable of influencing their subordinates. To be more specific, attunements could even be done without being aware. The powerful don’t even need to pay extra attention to tuning the atmosphere into the patterns that fit them. As for the subordinates, their way of thinking and working would be ignored. The attunements will be forced on these non-powerful people to tune them into the pattern specified by people in charge. This theory could be used to explain many phenomena in the real world. For example, consider the phrase“Like father, like son.” This phrase refers to the fact that the lifestyle of parents will directly impact the lifestyle of their children who live with them. Again, take RPI as an example. In this famous engineering school, it is common that the parents of an engineering student are very likely to be an engineer or have a job related to STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics). This theory could also be well illustrated with corporate culture, as seen in well-known companies such as Apple, Google, Bain. The character of a group manager could directly tune the other group members into the way this manager works. In that way, the efficiency of the whole group could be largely increased to perform as a professional team, which is known as leadership. The amount of attunement that could be applied to the group members is usually related to the difference of power between people in charge and their employees. For example, a project manager can simply ask his group member to work on a task without talking too much about why he would ask that member to do so, while it would be more difficult to assign the work to a peer.

This peer would question why the chief project manager would assign him the task to ensure he understands the task, and why he is doing it (so the whole team does not waste time).

This situation is like a physics problem. When the main force is closer the other force, the direction of the object will be changed a lot compared to the time when main force is way more stronger than the force on other directions.

Additionally, there is an interesting question toward the third theory: what would happen when there are two or more equal people in charge with totally opposite tune? There are two opposite results:

First, the opposite tune will directly lead to the split of the group. The attunement could not be done, and the working efficiency of the whole group is slowed down due to the unpaired atmosphere brought by these powerful men.

Second, the opposite tune will help the whole group analyse the problem with multiple points of view, which is actually of great benefits to the project.

According to these three theories described in the field of metaphysics, attunements are largely, yet secretly, applied in our daily life no matter if we ignore them or not. Though the result could be positive or negative, the truth that attunements are applied to us will not be changed.

Work Cited:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaphysics/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaphysics#Pre-Socratic_metaphysics_in_Greece>