Yuze Ma

IHSS 1964-01

Short Paper #1

Due: September, 9th, 2016

Reading One:The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics excerpt

The first time I encountered “Metaphysics” I thought it was a subject highly related to physics, which mainly focuses on the motion of concrete objects. However, the prefix “meta” amazingly changed my initial impression of this impressive subject. “Meta” is a prefix derived from Greek, where western philosophy started. In Greek, “Meta” has the meaning of “after” or “beyond”. There is a theory that the reason why metaphysics has such a fancy name is because of its arrangement. It is said that the book is put behind physics. Because of this, the “meta” here refers to “after.” On the other hand, as far as I am concerned, especially with the term “attunement,” I prefer the meaning “beyond,” because it focuses more on the philosophy problem behind the simply physics. No matter how we define the meaning of the prefix here, the application of metaphysics in daily life is unavoidable, especially the idea of attunement, mentioned in the excerpt of *<<The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics>>.* Like the excerpt said, attunements are not side effects. Instead, attunements are the way in which people’s behaviours are being changed due to the environments. They are the way in which people thinks or works.

Based on my experience, though it is very limited, I would like to show how attunement is present in daily life with 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 statments 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, as for the temporarily ignored attunement, it could still be explained with the example of what happened during the class. It 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 people in white throw and catch the ball. When students are only focusing on counting the people in white, no one is paying attention to the strange black gorilla passed by till the instructor pointed out the fact. In this case, the attunements brought by the gorilla is totally missed. That is how attunements could be ignored, and there is another key word “temporary”. The other 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. It can be compared with swimming toward the opposite direction of river. It is quite easy at the beginning to swim towards the opposite direction, however, it gets harder and harder. Finally, swimmers will flow with the river.

As for the last theory, people in charge are capable of applying their atmosphere to people being charged. To be more specific, the attunements could even be done without any consciousness. The powerful don’t even need to pay extra attention on tuning the atmosphere into the patterns fit them. As for the people being charged, their way of thinking and working would be ignored. The attunements will forced on these non-powerful people to tune them into the pattern brought by people in charge. This theory could be used to explain a lot of phenomenon in the real world. It is especially perfectly applied on the famous cliche, “Like father, like son”. To be more specific, the lifestyle of parents will directly impact the lifestyle of the children who live with them. Again, take RPI as an example. In this famous engineer school, it is pretty common that the parents of an engineer student are very likely to be an engineer or have a job related to STEAM(science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics) education if the student has a great passion in STEAM related area. This theory could also be well illustrated with what happens in companies, especially the famous companies such as Apple, Google, Bain, which is known as the culture of a firm. The character of a group manager could directly tune the other group members into the way that how this manager do his work. In that way, the efficiency of the whole group could be largely increased to perform a professional team, which is known as leadership. The amount of attunement could be applied to the group members are usually related to the difference of power between people in charge and people being charged. For example, project manager can directly 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 way more complicated to assign the work to the vice project manager. Normally, the vice project manager would ask the chief project manager why they are spending resource on this task to make sure they are not wasting time. It 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.

However, there is an interesting question toward the third theory: what phenomenon would present when there are two or more equal people in charge with totally opposite tune? If we apply critical thinking here, we would get two opposite results:

In the first case, 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 largely slowed down due to the unpaired atmosphere brought by these powerful man.

However, if we look on the bright side, the opposite tune can help the whole group analyse the problem with multi angle of views, which is actually of great benefits to the project.

In conclusion, attunements are largely yet secretly applied in our daily life no matter if we ignore them or not. Tough 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>