Tuning the World: A Conceptual History of the Term *Stimmung* Part Two

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Introduction

Despite a rich history of emotion research since Antiquity, the term *Stimmung* was only introduced into the German language during the eighteenth century. Moreover, the term *Stimmung* has no direct equivalent in other major European languages. Comparing it to the English language, *Stimmung* combines the semantic fields of mood, attunement, and atmosphere. *Stimmung* signifies a thought pattern that evades binary distinctions of objective and subjective, internal and external, mental and bodily. Studying the conceptual history of the term shows that *Stimmung* has undergone several semantic shifts.[1] Most importantly, those shifts have altered who or what is considered to possibly be in *Stimmung*: We will see that the term originally was not primarily applied to the minds of sentient beings, but rather to other entities as diverse as musical instruments, the nervous system, artworks, and ontologically more opaque matters like landscapes. Moreover, related notions from the same semantic field are even applicable to scientific models and engineering processes.

In an earlier paper, I reconstructed the rich conceptual history of the term from its inception in the eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century (Thonhauser 2020b). In this chapter, I summarize the main findings of this earlier paper, focusing on three stages: The initial period from the first usage via Kant's pivotal appropriation to Romanticism; the psychologization of the term towards the end of the nineteenth century that came along with the establishment of psychology as a scientific discipline; and contemporaneous counter tendencies opposing the mounting dominance of psychological explanations, most importantly within art history and life philosophy.

In this chapter, I focus on how this history culminated in Heidegger's account of *Stimmung*, which draws upon earlier accounts and transforms them into a unified framework in which *Stimmungen* are understood neither as subjective mental states nor as characteristics of objects, but as serving a world-disclosing function for our being-in-the-world as a whole. Before I

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[1] I speak of conceptual history in a rather colloquial sense and do not refer to the methodology of *Begriffsgeschichte* (Koselleck 2002).

reconstruct the core of Heidegger's account of *Stimmung*, I review the most obvious English translation of *Stimmung*: mood, attunement, and atmosphere. This will show how each of these terms captures one important aspect of the semantic field of *Stimmung* but leaves aside other aspects. In sum, this paper aims to show that the conceptual history of the term *Stimmung* contains as yet unexplored potentials for a relational and dynamic ontology.

The History of the Term Prior to the 20ᵗʰ Century

This section provides a brief summary of the history of the term *Stimmung* prior to Heidegger. The summary builds on my previous work on the conceptual history of *Stimmung* and I advise readers to refer to that previous work for longer explications and further references (Thonhauser 2020b).

From the First Usages to Romanticism

The term *Stimmung* was first used in the domain of music. The verb *stimmen* means *to tune* an instrument. When an instrument is tuned, it is *gestimmt*. But it can also be untuned, which is *verstimmt*. The noun *Stimmung* is derived from the verb *stimmen* (Grimm and Grimm 1998). In its original context, *Stimmung* refers to three related aspects of musical tuning. First, it can denote the *process* of tuning. Second, it can designate the *result* of the process, the state of being tuned. Third, it can describe the *disposition* that enables an entity, in this case a musical instrument, to be tuned (Wellbery 2003). As we will see, the English verb *to tune* is a direct equivalent to the German verb *stimmen* in the musical context, but otherwise relates to a different semantic field. The German verb *stimmen* is related to the noun *Stimme*, which designates the human voice. This term is derived from the Ancient Greek *stoma*, which means mouth (Kluge 2012).

A search in *Google Ngram Viewer* shows that whereas the verb *stimmen* (like the noun *Stimme*) can be found throughout the entire possible search range from 1500—2019, the use of the noun *Stimmung* only dates back to the second half of the eighteenth century. Since then, it has remained at a nearly constant level.[2] Towards the end of the eighteenth century, *Stimmung* quickly emerged as a term with very broad applications. I rely on the research by Caroline Welsh (2008; 2009a; 2009b) here, who has shown that during that period *Stimmung* can be found in diverse fields of knowledge such as physiology, psychology, psychiatry, and

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[2] I last conducted the search on April 6th, 2021. I used the corpus "German (2019)" and the years "1500 – 2019", searching for the words "Stimmung", "stimmen", and "Stimme".

aesthetics. *Stimmung* was a lively metaphor that circulated through various fields of knowledge. Researchers made used of different aspects of the musical meaning of *Stimmung* to develop new explanatory approaches to the phenomena they were investigating. Thus, *Stimmung* did not refer to a specific phenomenon, it rather offered a thought pattern that enabled new ways of theorizing and thereby created new knowledge. Generally speaking, *Stimmung* denoted a certain idea about the interplay between entities. Depending on the context, the focus could be on the *process* of tuning, the *state* resulting from that process, or the *disposition* to engage in such a process. Interestingly, unlike terms like resonance or harmony, which only refer to the process or state of being in sync, *Stimmung* can also refer to entities being out of sync (*Verstimmung*). Moreover, it allows to stress how tuning can change (*Umstimmung*). Thus, it offers a thought pattern to explain cases on the entire spectrum from felicitous to failed interactions. Finally, *Stimmung* allows to also capture the self-acting of any kind of organism or complex system, which can bring itself in and out of sync with itself or with its surrounding (*Einstimmung*). One might hypothesize that this provided a first glimpse of the idea of self-regulating dynamic systems, which was only much later theorized by cybernetics (Wiener 1948). It could also be related to the way in which bodies are considered to mutually affect each other explored by recent Affect Theory (Gregg and Seigworth 2010). Be that as it may, the core idea of the thought pattern provided by the metaphor of *Stimmung* was that the self-attunement (*Eigenstimmung*) of an entity can explain differences in its internal functioning as well as its interplay with its surrounding.

This idea of self-tuning is also at the core of Kant's aesthetic theory, which is the first major turning point in the history of the term *Stimmung*. The key question in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (2007) is how an aesthetic judgment can be both subjective and universal. Kant claims that aesthetic judgment cannot have the same objective validity as cognitive judgement. As judgments of taste, they cannot be settled by conceptual capacities. Nevertheless, they are not just relative to the observer, in the sense that there is no accounting for taste. Instead, Kant maintains that an aesthetic judgment about something involves the claim that others ought to judge it in the same way. So, the core issue is to explain how the universality of aesthetic judgments is possible. To solve this puzzle, Kant makes use of the above-explained metaphor of *Stimmung*. Kant explains that in an aesthetic judgment, the faculties of imagination and understanding are in appropriate accord or attunement (*Stimmung*) with each other. In other words, it is the self-tuning of the faculties of the mind that enables aesthetic judgments. Fully in line with the musical metaphor, the self-tuning of the mind does not imply that those

judgments are relative to each empirical subject, as the metaphor implies that it is possible to decide whether or not the mind is tuned in the right way so that it is in sync with itself. If the self-tuning of the mind is done in a proper way, the proportionality of the faculties ensures the universal validity of an aesthetic judgment, as any properly tuned mind will reach the same judgement, enabling universal communicability of those judgments.

Kant's account of an aesthetic judgment was immensely influential and established the term *Stimmung* as an aesthetic concept. However, the following history of aesthetic theory shows that the universality of aesthetic judgment became less and less important, as the idea of *Stimmung* as a dispositional state of the mind became the core theme. Most prominently, this theme can be traced in the works of Schiller and Schopenhauer. Schiller's core idea in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Schiller 1982) is almost incomprehensible without factoring in a pointer given by another peculiarity of the semantic field of *Stimmung*. The German word for determination, *Bestimmung*, is formed by adding the prefix *Be-* to the word *Stimmung*. Schiller plays with this connection when he understands the *Stimmung* of the mind as the state of being undetermined (*unbestimmt*) in the sense of being determinable (*bestimmbar*).

According to Schiller, aesthetic freedom is key in the education of human beings, and this freedom is achieved when the mind is neither solely determined by the senses nor by reason, but when both capacities are active and cancel each other out, thus leaving the mind in a state of determinability. Schiller calls this state of determinability the free *Stimmung* of the mind, which cannot be translated by a single word, but might be described as the disposition to be freely determined (Schiller 1982, 141). Schiller claims that the experience of beauty has the power to induce such a state of mind in us, thus serving a crucial educational function (Schiller 1982, 151). In comparison to Kant who emphasizes the self-tuning of the mind (*Stimmung* as process of tuning) and the resulting accord of the faculties (*Stimmung* as the state of being tuned), Schiller focuses on the determinability of the mind (*Stimmung* as a disposition to be tuned). Moreover, whereas Kant used *Stimmung* in a narrow role within his account of aesthetic judgment, for Schiller it became to designate something like a global disposition of the mind. This last aspect is also stressed by Schopenhauer in *The World as Will and Representation* (1972 [1819]). Schopenhauer understands the aesthetic state of mind as a state of pure contemplation, in which we are no longer bound to the principle of sufficient reason. Reaching such a state of mind requires the suspension of the will. This suspension can either be reached by an external cause, or it is achievable via a self-tuning of the mind. Schopenhauer considers

the latter option much more powerful, as it can induce this state of mind independent of external circumstances. Schopenhauer considers it the sign of an artistic mind to possess this ability to self-induce such a state of mind. Similar to Schiller, Schopenhauer uses the term *Stimmung* to denote this dispositional state (Schopenhauer 1972, 231). In contrast to Schiller, his focus is less on the dimension of determinability and more on the self-acting aspect of this determination (*Einstimmung* as *Selbstbestimmung*).

We can see, then, that for Kant, Schiller, and Schopenhauer the term *Stimmung* is used in the context of the mind. But contrary to today's common usage, it does not denote a specific mental state. Rather, it describes a tuning of the mind as a whole, very much in the same way as the tuning of a musical instrument.

Psychological Research

The nineteenth century saw the establishment of psychology as an independent discipline. As part of that development, aesthetics became to be seen as sub-field of psychology, which led to the assumption that aesthetic experience needs to be explained within a psychological framework. In line with this development, Hermann Lotze (1868, 65) praises Kant for emphasizing the subjective character of aesthetic judgment, but claims that we need to go beyond Kant in accounting for aesthetic experience in psychological terms. This stands in stark contrast to Kant's intention, as an explanation of aesthetic judgment in terms of subjective experiences leads to a relativistic understanding, according to which aesthetic judgments are a matter of individual taste. This is exactly what Kant wanted to avoid. The emerging psychological framework, however, had no room for transcendental considerations like Kant's. Within a psychological framework, it is obvious that *Stimmungen* need to be accounted for in terms of mental states. Indeed, this is so obvious that it does not require any clarification, let alone discussion (Lipps 1903; Witasek 1904; Volkelt 1905; also see the contribution by Íngrid Vendrell Ferran in this volume). As a consequence, the way in which Kant, Schiller, and Schopenhauer used the term *Stimmung* has become incomprehensible within such a framework. Within psychological discourse, *Stimmung* stopped being an explanatory pattern with universal applicability. Instead, it became synonymous with the common usage of the English term *mood*. Around 1800, the term *Stimmung* was still very much understood with reference to the tuning of instruments and the thought pattern obtained from this context allowed for innovative theorizing in various fields of knowledge. Almost everything could be in *Stimmung*, as long as it was sensible to say that it can be tuned to interact with itself and its surrounding in a

multiplicity of ways. Around 1900, in contrast, it was consensus among psychologists that only sentient beings could be in *Stimmung*. A consequence of this assumption is that any attribution of *Stimmung* to entities other than minds needed to be conceptualized in terms of a projection. This is the context in which the theory of empathy was developed (Lipps 1909, 223–31; Prandtl 1910; Geiger 1911). The German term for empathy, *Einfühlung*, literally means to feel something into something else. When someone experiences a meeting as tense or a foggy autumn day as gloomy, the psychological framework assumes that this must be explained in terms of a projection of a mental state into that entity. A specific mood might have its ground (in terms of causation, motivation, and justification) in the experience of an entity, but it has become non-sensical within psychological discourse to attribute *Stimmung* to anything else than a mind.

It is important to stress this psychological common sense, because it stands between us and the original meaning of the term *Stimmung*. We need to unlearn to immediately assume that *Stimmung* must be understood in terms of a mental state if we want to comprehend how this term was used in many fields of knowledge. We should also note that classical phenomenologists like Husserl, Scheler, Stein, or Reinach had close ties to the psychologists of their time, thus making them prone to assume the psychological common sense understanding of *Stimmung*. Even Hermann Schmitz, when developing his conceptualization of feelings as atmospheres (Schmitz 1969, 98–133), mainly refers to sources from early twentieth century psychology and classical phenomenology, sources that are fully committed to the psychological framework. The psychologization of our thinking has been so influential that it is almost impossible today to understand the term *Stimmung* as signifying anything else than the mental states commonly referred to as moods.

Art History and Life Philosophy

At the turn to the twentieth century, however, there were still voices that resisted the psychologization of the term *Stimmung*. Here, I briefly review two such movements. The first concerned the understanding of aesthetic experience. The art historian Alois Riegl (1929 [1899]) drew on the understanding of *Stimmung* which we have seen in Schiller and Schopenhauer when claiming that it is the task of modern art to enable an awareness of order and harmony in nature. Riegl calls this awareness *Stimmung*. Thus, *Stimmung* here denotes a disposition of the mind in which it can experience the entirety of nature as harmonious order. A similar use of the term Stimmung can be found in Georg Simmel's "Philosophy of landscape"

(2007). Simmel wonders about the ontological status of landscapes. What is the ground for demarcating a piece of nature as a landscape? Simmel states that "a landscape arises when a range of natural phenomena spread over the surface of the earth is comprehended by a particular kind of unity" (Simmel 2007, 26). According to Simmel, it is the *Stimmung* (maybe here best translated as atmosphere) of a landscape that provides this unity. By means of a specific *Stimmung*, various components are drawn into one unity, which constitutes a landscape. This *Stimmung* is not outside of the components, but it is more than the sum of its parts. The various components only are what they are because of how a *Stimmung* unifies them into a landscape. Another trail resisting the psychologization of *Stimmung* is life philosophy (Nietzsche 1994; Bergson 1911; Dilthey 1991). Here, *Stimmung* is understood as synonymous with vital feelings (*Lebensgefühle*) and closely relating to vital power (*Lebenskraft*). Those powers and feelings of life are understood as sub-conscious forces that function as *principium individuationis* for individuals and collectives. The core idea is that different vital feelings are the subsoil of life which allows to explain the emergence of different world views. Accordingly, changing a world view is considered to only be possible via a transformation of the underlying vital forces (Dilthey 1960).

Three Possible English Translations of *Stimmung*

The previous section prepares us to understand how Heidegger could draw on the rich conceptual history of the term *Stimmung* from Kant to Dilthey when developing his unique conceptualization of *Stimmung* as the ontic instantiation of *Befindlichkeit*. Moreover, it prepares us to take seriously that Heidegger's understanding of *Stimmung* is meant as an objection to the psychological common sense that was already firmly established at his time. But before we proceed to Heidegger, it is useful to prepare this discussion further by briefly reviewing three possible English translations of the term *Stimmung*.

Mood

Within a psychological framework, mood is the obvious translation of *Stimmung*. The term mood is from Germanic origin and a version of it can be found in all Germanic languages. The original meaning is "mind, thought, will" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2001).[3] Hence, mood is fully located in the semantic field of the mind and does not allow for ascriptions outside of a

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[3] The German version of the term is spelled *Mut* today and means courage. A derivation of *Mut* is *Gemüt*, formed by adding the prefix *Ge-* which indicates a collection or gathering. Thus, *Gemüt* means the unity or entirety of one's mental situation. The term *Gemüt* was frequently used by Kant and his successors.

mental context. Therefore, it is unsuitable to render any of the other connotations of the German *Stimmung*.

In current psychological and philosophical debate, the main issue is how moods are distinguished from emotions. Typically, three criteria are identified that might serve as specific differences(Stephan 2017): The first candidate is duration, with the assumption being that moods are typically of longer duration than emotions; the second candidate is the cause, with the idea being that emotions are caused by specific events, whereas moods lack such a specific cause; this relates to the third candidate, which is intentionality, where the idea is that emotions are about particular objects or events, whereas moods are considered as objectless states. However, whereas there is broad agreement about the general nature of emotions, all candidates for distinguishing moods from emotions are disputed. For the context of this paper, it is important to note that moods are unanimously considered to be affective mental states that rather closely resemble emotions. In today's German, *Stimmung* is commonly used as equivalent of mood, and thus, deprived of its rich history outside the confined reference to the affective mind.

Tuning and Attunement

By contrast, the semantic field of tuning shares the musical origin of *Stimmung*, and thus, is the obvious candidate to render this original sense of the term in English. This is the reason why I mostly employ tuning to translate *Stimmung*. In the context of a musical instrument, the verb *to tune* is the direct translation of *stimmen*, meaning to adjust the tone of an instrument to the standard of pitch. However, whereas the German *stimmen* stems from *Stimme*, signifying the human voice, such a relation to the human body is missing in the etymology of tuning. Most likely, *tune* (both verb and noun) is a variant of *tone* (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2001). Like the German *Ton*, it can be related back to the Latin and Ancient Greek *tonus*. Interestingly, *tonus* only figuratively means sound. The original meaning of the Ancient Greek term *tonus* is tension or stretch. The related Verb is *teinein*, meaning *to stretch*. It is only via a metonymy from the process of stretching or straining a string, that *tonus* also came to denote the tone or pitch of something. The original meaning of *tonus* as stretching and straining can still be found today, for example in the phrase muscle tone. Similarly, the German word for the tension of a muscle is *Muskeltonus*. However, if one wanted to use another German word to translate *Tonus*, it would be *Spannung*, with related verbs like *anspannen* (to tense up) and *entspannen* (to relax).

Thus, tuning has a semantic overlap with *Stimmung* in the domain of music, but otherwise relates to a different semantic field.

Besides its use in music, tuning has mostly technical applications. For instance, radio transmission requires a receiver to tune into a frequency, which led to the idiom that one *tunes in* and *out* of radio or TV channels. In engineering, tuning means to adjust the parameters of a system in order for it to achieve certain objectives. For instance, one might want to tune a combustion engine to enhance power output, or to reduce emissions, or to increase durability, or a combination of these and other goals. In the natural science, tuning describes the process in which the parameters of a model are adjusted to better fit the observed data. Around 1800, it would have been reasonable to translate tuning in these contexts with *Stimmung*. Today, however, *Stimmung* is so obviously related to sentient beings that it would sound strange to use it in the context of such technical applications.

In Heidegger scholarship, *attunement* has become the standard translation of *Stimmung*. Given the history of the term tuning, I agree with this being the best choice. Most importantly, I consider it highly misleading to translate Heidegger's *Stimmung* as mood. Such a translation completely subverts that it was Heidegger's specific aim to oppose the psychological understanding of *Stimmung*. When translating Heidegger's *Stimmung* as attunement, however, we should note that whereas *to attune* means bringing into accord or harmony (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2001), Heidegger uses *Stimmung* to refer to the entire spectrum of tuning. According to Heidegger, we are always in *Stimmung*, not just when being in tune, but also in cases of being off-tune (*verstimmt*) or supposedly without tune (*ungestimmt*); these are all modalities of being tuned.

Atmosphere

Finally, let me briefly discuss the term atmosphere. Atmosphere is a neologism dating back to the seventeenth century which was built from the Greek terms *atmos* (vapor) and *sphaira* (sphere). It was originally used in a cosmological context, referring to "the spheroidal gaseous envelope surrounding any of the heavenly bodies", and as a special case of that, "the mass of aeriform fluid surrounding the earth" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2001). Friedling Riedel (2019) has shown that beginning in the eighteenth century—hence around the same time in which *Stimmung* became a broadly used thought pattern—atmosphere did not only refer to celestial bodies, but allowed for much broader applications, at least in German and French. It

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had the general meaning of "corporeal effluvia", designating any kind of vapor stemming from a body. In this sense, it could be applied to the human body, but also to other bodies, for example signifying the magnetic field surrounding an electrical body. This shows that while the traditional concepts of *Stimmung* and atmosphere developed around the same time, they signify very different thought patterns, with the first building on the semantic field of tuning, the latter on the semantic field of evaporation.

Thus, based on etymology and history, atmosphere is quite far removed from *Stimmung*. So, whereas tuning is best suited to render the original meaning of *Stimmung* in English, and mood is equivalent to the psychological notion of *Stimmung*, atmosphere does not fit any of these bills. On the other hand, atmosphere has been used in recent discourse to describe phenomena that might also be accounted for in terms of *Stimmung*. The current rise of research interest around the term atmosphere is mostly driven by English translations of Gernot Böhme (2017) and the work of Tonino Griffero (2014; 2017; and his contribution in this volume). Both build on but also crucially dissent from the work of Herrmann Schmitz (1969), who introduced an understanding of feelings as atmospheres. According to Schmitz, feelings should not be understood as bound to individuals' minds, but as spatially extended atmospheres that affect individual bodies (Landweer 2020). As I mentioned earlier, it strikes me that Schmitz does not make use of Heidegger's conceptualization of *Stimmung*, but mostly refers to other classic phenomenologists and early twentieth century psychologist. Moreover, Schmitz, Böhme and Griffero, at least to my knowledge, do not make use of the conceptual history of *Stimmung* before and beyond the psychological framework. Hence, there is unexplored potential in linking current research on atmospheres with old work on *Stimmung*, as both drive towards subverting binary distinctions between mental and bodily, subjective and objective, inner and outer.

Heidegger's Befindlichkeit

The previous sections allow us to contextualize Heidegger's account of *Stimmung*. More specifically, the earlier sections enable us to notice how Heidegger could built on previous usages of the term *Stimmung*, especially the understandings encountered in traditional aesthetics and life philosophy. Moreover, it helps us to emphasize that Heidegger's main aim is to subvert the psychological framework in his conceptualization of *Stimmung*. In addition, the prevision sections contextualize Heidegger's envisioned understand of *Stimmung* within current debates centering around possible English translations. Moreover, it explains the choice

of translating Heidegger's *Stimmung* as attunement. In this section, I discuss Heidegger's account of *Befindlichkeit* and *Stimmung*.[4]

Befindlichkeit and Stimmung: The Basics

Let me begin with providing a gist of Heidegger's account of *Befindlichkeit*. Following Haugeland (2013) I prefer translating *Befindlichkeit* as *findingness*, but there are other viable options like *disposedness*, or looser but nevertheless useful translations like *situatedness* or *affectivity*. Findingness is one of the four characteristics through which Heidegger in chapter 5 of Division 1 of *Being and Time* describes the specific way in which Dasein is in the world. The other are understanding (*Verstehen*), discourse (*Rede*) and falling (*Verfallen*). Heidegger emphasizes that these characteristics are equiprimordial, that is, they cannot be reduced to each other and they are what they are only in their interplay. Thus, we would need to explore how they together characterize the way in which Dasein discloses a world. In this chapter, I will not explicitly talk about understanding, discourse and falling, but I will contextualize Heidegger's account of findingness within his overall project.

When Heidegger describes Dasein as being-in-the-world, he makes clear that Dasein's being-in cannot be understood along the same lines as water is in a jar or as a fish is in the water. The world is not a container in which we find Dasein among other things. Rather, Dasein's being-in-the-world means that it is always already engaged with the world, that it always already finds its way around the world one way or the other. Chapter 5 of *Being and Time* is meant to further elaborate what it means to be *in* the world in this specific sense. In this context, Heidegger uses the term findingness to refer to the fact that we always already experience a meaningful world within which things are relevant to us. As soon and as long as we exist, we cannot avoid encountering entities as meaningful and mattering to us. Borrowing a phrase from John Haugeland, we are beings that just cannot stop giving a damn (Adams and Browning 2016). Findingness is Heidegger's term for the facticity of relevance, for the fact that our existence implies a meaningful world within which things matter to us, in which we encounter them as relevant.

Thus, findingness denotes a fundamental ontological structure of Dasein. By contrast, *Stimmungen* (attunements) signify the ontic instantiations of this ontological structure. In other

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[4] This section builds on my previous work on Heidegger's account of Befindlichkeit (Thonhauser 2017; Slaby and Thonhauser 2019; Thonhauser 2020a; 2020c).

words, whereas findingness refers to the fact *that* things matter to us, attunements allow us to account for *what* matters to us and *how* it matters to us. Our being-in-the-world is always tuned one way or the other. If we want to formulate this idea in a way that is closer to psychological parlance, we can say that attunements disclose at once the relevance of a situation and how it is for me to be in that situation. Attunements serve a world- and self-disclosing function (Slaby and Stephan 2008). Heidegger uses attunement as a generic term to cover a broad spectrum of such world- and self-disclosing dynamics. However, it might have been helpful had Heidegger distinguished different layers of attunement.

First, what Heidegger describes as fear in §30 of *Being and Time* seems to refer to phenomena that are commonly understood as emotions. It does not seem difficult to translate Heidegger's description into today's philosophical parlance: First, fear is based on the encounter with a specific entity (in today's terminology: an emotion's target). Second, fear discloses that entity as fearsome (an emotion's formal object). At the same time, it discloses me or something that is important to me as threatened (an emotion's focus). Finally, fear is of rather short duration as it depends on the felt presence of something fearsome and quickly vanishes once its source is gone. However, in contrast to the standard understanding of emotion shared by most emotion researchers today, Heidegger's terminology of attunement allows him to emphasize that an emotion like fear is only possible because being-in-the-world can be tuned in such a way that it is enabled do discover entities as fearsome or in danger. To play a bit more with the word tuning: Fear is only possible for an entity that is tuneable so that it can experience specific entities as threatened and/or threatening. It is important to note, however, that attunement does not only refer to Dasein being affectable in general, but that Dasein's affectability is always modulated in a specific way.

Second, the "undisturbed equanimity" or the "inhibited discontent" (Heidegger 1953, 134)[5] which Heidegger mentions at the beginning of §29, seem to form a second layer of attunement. This layer seems to refer to phenomena that are usually described as moods. Here, it is not a specific entity in a particular situation that is disclosed as such and such. Rather it is a short duration of time that is tuned in such a way that all our comportment is coloured in a specific way, making certain experience more likely and certain actions more feasible than others. For

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[5] As is common practice in Heidegger scholarship, I refer to the page numbers of the German edition of *Being and Time* published by Niemeyer. These page numbers can be found in all English translations of *Being and Time* as well as in volume 2 of the *Gesamtausgabe*.

instance, in distress being-in-the-world is tuned in a way that makes everything seem difficult, burdensome and hopeless; activities, that in a different tuning would be easily handled, seem unachievable; situation that a different tuning would reveal to be joyful appear unbearable.

Hence, the first two layers reconstructed from Heidegger's examples of attunements appear to be easily relatable to psychological common sense. However, those are not the kind of attunements Heidegger is interested in. Heidegger's main concern are those attunements that affect being-in-the-world in a more profound and encompassing way. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger only mentions *Angst* as such an attunement.[6] In other writings, however, it becomes clear that Heidegger considers *Angst* as only one of several such attunements (Heidegger 1998; 1999). What are those attunements and how do they tune being-in-the-world in the most profound way?

The Example of Boredom

A good starting point for exploring this issue further are Heidegger's remarks on boredom in the lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Heidegger 1995). Heidegger distinguishes three forms of boredom, which align with my attempt to relate Heidegger's examples of attunements to a psychological understanding of emotions and moods. In the first form of boredom, one is bored by a specific entity or event. Heidegger uses the example of missing a connecting train and having to wait at a shabby train station. Here boredom discloses something about how it is for an individual to be in a specific situation. An individual is bored about being stuck at a boring train station.

The second form of boredom is more complex. Heidegger's example is an individual who attends a dinner party and appears to participate in a lively fashion. On a surface level, that individual might even experience her own participation in the party as entertaining. But at the same time, the individual is haunted by the intrusive feeling that the dinner party is a dumb activity full of void conversations and that she was bored throughout. In this case, boredom discloses a situation, which on the surface level might seem like a joyful pastime, as deprived of meaning. One might come to ask: What is the sense of dinner parties anyway? Could there be a better way to spend my time?

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[6] What Heidegger describes as *Angst* is different from what is usually discussed as anxiety in emotion research. For that reason, I prefer to leave *Angst* untranslated to emphasize its difference from the psychological understanding of anxiety.

Finally, in the last form of boredom, one experiences the entire world as deprived of meaningful activity. The world as a whole becomes indifferent, there is just nothing in the world that seems worth pursuing. If one wanted to understand what Heidegger describes here within a psychological framework, one would likely need to come to the conclusion that we are dealing with a case of clinical depression. However, Heidegger maintains that this deepest form of boredom bears profound ontological insight. How is that the case?

The Methodological Role of Basic Attunements

Heidegger takes boredom, like *Angst*, to serve a decisive methodological function. To understand how this is the case, we need to understand Heidegger's overall project. In short, Heidegger aims at understanding how and why we come to raise ontological issue. This meta-reflection on how ontology is possible is what Heidegger calls *fundamental ontology* (Heidegger 1953, 13). *Dasein* is Heidegger's name for the kind of entity that is capable of doing ontology, that is ask ontological questions and conceiving answers to them.

In Division 1 of *Being and Time* Heidegger shows that Dasein usually takes the world for granted. Everyday Dasein just does not care about ontological issues, because there is no reason to be troubled about the basic structure of the world. However, Heidegger uncovers that Dasein's mundane comportment is made possible by a specific attunement, which might be described as the attunement of familiarity and being-at-home. This attunement discloses the world as a familiar place where one fits in and easily finds one's way around. One is acquainted with the texture of the world in such a way that it does not present major obstacles hindering one's beknown ways of comportment. The world does not provide major puzzles, so there is no reason to be troubled by ontological issues.

How, then, can we be bothered by issues pertaining to the ontological structure of the world? Heidegger claims that we become perplexed about our being-in-the-world if we are seized by attunements that push us out of sync. Heidegger introduces *Angst* and boredom as examples for such attunements that have the power to break our being-at-home in the world, and thus, force us to stop taking the world for granted. The deepest form of boredom achieves this by rendering the entire world deprived of meaningful activities. There is just nothing in the world that matters enough to make engaging with it worthwhile. This might lead one to ask: How is it that meaning comes about in the first place? And suddenly, one is puzzled and perplexed about the fact that

we usually are situated in a meaningful world. Similarly, but maybe even more profoundly, *Angst* (as Heidegger understands it) confronts us with the possibility that there could be no meaningful world at all: Why is there a world we encounter as meaningful? Why does anything matter at all? Wouldn't it be just as reasonable to assume that nothing really matters? Based on these examples, we understand Heidegger's claim that we can never be free of attunement and that an attunement can only be overcome by another attunement (Heidegger 1953, 136). This claim is exemplified by how our being-at-home in the world which makes possible everyday comportment becomes interrupted by a retuning (*Umstimmung*) that puts us out of sync.

Stimmung as world-disclosure

The previous section provided an idea of how attunements are at the heart of Dasein's world disclosure. In and through being tuned, Dasein finds itself situated within a meaningful world. In line with the thought pattern which we have identified in the original musical context of *Stimmung*, we might say that attunements tune the world and Dasein in their reciprocal dependence. Attunements tune world and Dasein in such a way that makes meaningful comportment possible. In this sense, Heidegger can say that we need to "leave the primary discovery of the world" to attunements (Heidegger 1953, 138). This also makes comprehensible that attunements are neither subjective nor objective, neither inner nor outer. Rather, they tune being-in-the-world as a whole.

Against this background, we can appreciate that the ontological depth of Heidegger's analysis does not lie in any "deep layers" of existence, but in the ability to be perplexed about our mundane existence. The world-disclosing function of attunements is related to our everyday comportment in all its modalities. At the same time, world-disclosure cannot be reduced to individual capacities within our mundane comportment. What Heidegger describes as world-disclosing attunements is not a conceptual capacity; one does not need to have any propositional attitude to disclose the world in a specific way. World-disclosing attunements are also not reducible to identifiable emotions or moods. The world-disclosure of attunements cannot be reduced to individual mental states. Rather it denotes the tuning of Dasein and world that makes individual mental states possible.

However, attunements do not signify an openness devoid of specific content. Being-in-the-world is always tuned in a specific way. Our attunements confront us with our situatedness in a specific surrounding and against the background of a concrete past. In and through

attunements, we come to encounter the world here and now, in that specific situation with all its historical weight (Slaby 2017). Basic attunements fundamentally shape our being-in-the-world. Their gravity goes beyond what can be registered in conscious experience. At the same time, they manifest in the socio-material shape of the world and our most mundane modes of comportment. For instance, Schuetze and von Maur (2021) explored how a rationalistic attunement fundamentally shapes the way in which modern Western societies go about things, tuning all socio-material and affective dynamics within those societies. In a nutshell, the rationalistic attunement shapes our being-in-the-world in such a way that what matter is reduced to what can be quantified. In other words, the rationalistic attunement drives the assumption that every issue needs to be settled by reference to quantifiable parameters. Think about how language proficiency is measured by test scores or how the achievements of scientists are evaluated by publication metrics. These are small examples of how the entire world is tuned towards rationalistic disclosure.

This glimpse at the world-disclosing function of attunements shows that Heidegger's understanding of attunements goes far beyond usual conceptualizations of emotions and modes. Attunements are inscribed into the basic texture of the world, shaping what can come to matter and how it can come to matter.

Conclusion

A closer look into the conceptual history of the term *Stimmung* reveals that this term was originally used as a universally applicable thought pattern enabling analyses of the (self-)tuning of all kinds of entities in various fields of knowledge. By contrast, the semantic field of *Stimmung* today has become identical to that of mood. Through this semantic shift, the notion of *Stimmung* has not only been enclosed in a narrow semantic field but has also become ontologically trivialized. Heidegger might have been the last one who employed the term *Stimmung* in an anti-mentalistic fashion. Heidegger's *Stimmungen* go far beyond what can be captured in (affective) mental states. He uses this term to account for how our radical situatedness in the world forms the subsoil against the background of which all our conscious engagements take shape. Understood in such a way, *Stimmung* pertains to a radically dynamic and relational understanding of ontology. If we were to follow this alternative concept of *Stimmung*, it would suggest analysing how the world is dynamically shaped, not just abstractly, but always in a specific way. Following this guideline urges us to investigate the tuning of the

world on all level, from the micro level of particular entities and their interactions, via the meso level of socio-material practices and institutions to large-scale socio-cultural dynamics.

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