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## **Hartmann's Epistemology Based on Ontology and Its Contributions**

### **Abstract**

Hartmann's claim that the problems which occur as a result of giving more importance to the subject than to the object on the assumption that knowledge is a product of a relation which is constituted between the subject and the object can be solved by the illumination of ontology is a significant contribution to both ontology and epistemology. In this study the issues concerning with what does it mean to look at epistemology from an ontological point of view, where do the subject and the object take place in an act of knowing and what contributes us noticing the epistemic relations differ in each strata of Being are discussed in the direction of presenting the new ontology's difference from the old ontologies.

### **Key Terms**

Knowledge, Subject, Object - Object of Knowledge, Ontology, Epistemology, Being Order – Epistemic Order, Reflective Thinking - Natural Attitude, Strata of Being, Sphere of Ideal Being -Sphere of Real Being.

## **Hartmann'ın Ontoloji Temelli Epistemolojisi ve Katkıları**

### **Özet**

Bilginin özne ile nesne arasında kurulan ilişkinin bir ürünü olduğu kabulünde, özneye nesneden daha fazla önem verilmesinin bir sonucu olarak ortaya çıkan problemlerin ontolojinin ışığında çözülebileceği iddiası, Hartmann'ın hem ontolojiye hem de epistemolojiye getirmiş olduğu önemli bir katkıdır. Bu makalede epistemolojiye ontolojik bakış açısıyla bakmanın ne anlama geldiği, özne ve nesnenin bilme edimindeki hakiki yerlerinin neresi olduğu ve epistemolojik ilişkilerin her varlık tabakasında farklılaştığının bilincine varılmasının bizlere katkısının ne olduğu konuları, yeni ontolojinin eski ontolojilerden farkını ortaya koyacak doğrultuda irdelenecektir.

### **Anahtar Terimler**

Bilgi, Özne, Nesne - Bilgi Nesnesi, Ontoloji, Epistemoloji, Varlık Düzeni - Bilgi Düzeni, Refleksiyonlu Tavır - Doğal Tavır, Varlık Tabakaları, İdeal Varlık Alanı - Real Varlık Alanı.

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Generally knowledge is seen as an accomplishment of the subjects. This is because of thinking ourselves at the center of the world and the other things around us. And according to many theories the objects become objects only when we experience them, so we make them an object of our knowledge. Maybe this is true, I don't want to deny that we are establishing our world; of course we are the most talented beings on the world and different from all the things around us. But I don't think this is a sufficient reason regarding the theory of knowledge. I find such a theory puts the subject at the center so narrow because of being so egoistic. Knowledge has to be something else which also regards the objects. We accept that knowledge is a relation or a product which is constituted between the subject and the object. But we don't think much about the objects while thinking about the subjects. So that's why we undervalue the objects sphere then.

Emphasizing on the subject's reason more than necessary, leads us overlooking the real epistemic relation and the original places of the subject and the object in a knowing act. I think we forgot that knowledge is related with beings also. Hence we should notice that ontology has a very important role in knowing. Epistemology without an ontological view stands deficient. It doesn't matter whether existing in ideal or real way, but the important thing is that things exist somehow before we make them objects of our knowledge. So a distinction has to be made between being an object in itself and being an object of knowledge.

If we don't pay attention to the objects sphere, and suppose knowledge as a product of the subject merely, it would lead to subjectivity and relativism. So I think Hartmann brings a good solution to this problem. And I find his theory as an important contribution to both ontology and epistemology.

For Hartmann, knowledge can not be explained by only the subject who knows. It also depends on the object which exists. We can't deny the object's place in knowledge because it is transcendent to subject. This means objects are indifferent to their being known by a subject. The object's existence can not be exhausted in its being an object of a subject who knows. Hence, the epistemic relation between knower and knowledge is really an ontic relation. So, this means, epistemological problems become ontological at the same time. Because both subject and object are ontologically homogeneous (W. Cerf 1967: 421-426).

If we give more attention to the subject who knows, than to the object which exists, it leads us to a relativism. There become differences between the subjects who make knowledge because the world appears to them in different ways. We are not alone in the world, quite the opposite we are in a broad system in which ontic relations are constituted. But when we think ourselves at the center of the world, we overlook these ontic relations and the existence of the subjects without their knowability.

According to Hartmann, throughout the history of philosophy, the philosophers did the same by different ways. What they do is to confuse the being order with the epistemic order, and to give the main importance to the second one, but what they have to do is to begin with the first. Giving to ontology its main place, we abandon the attitude which is based on reflective thinking since it prevents to look epistemology in the natural attitude. Natural attitude gives us object's world in a direct way. But reflective thinking gives indirectly since it focuses on the acts of knowing, not on the

being. Structure of the world doesn't keep itself secret from the people who take place in it. But we can't have an entire view about it unless we stop looking it from the center of the world. Because we are not at the center, nor apart from it. We are just a piece of it. So we have to seek the being order by objective orientation which is inner to the natural attitude. This is where human differs from animal, not as an animal rational but as a being who has objective orientation. Animal behaviour belongs to instinct so it is the center of its world hence it is so narrow. Because central orientation is full of mistakes. That's why man makes knowledge and animal doesn't. Man regulates himself according to the world, not the world to himself (Hartmann 1968: 11-15).

Objective orientation is a turn from epistemic relation to the ontic relations. It means that our lives depend on so many conditions which are carried by the entire regulation of the world. This view is its superiority from the others since independence of man in the world begins with the consciousness of his dependence.

The worldviews based on reflective thinking examine the highest objects but do give us completely wrong thoughts about subject, world of thought and reason. This is our fault that we have a tendency to try to acquire the unity of the world immediately. Many of the metaphysical worldviews fall into this error and try to find a basic principle that is determined by *a priori* and supposed to be the only one. Since the world appears in structures that are different from each other ontologically, this basic principle was searched in below or above step that is, in other words either materialism or idealism (Hartmann 1968: 15-16). I mean the old ontologies always divided the world into two parts, but couldn't see it is more than two. According to this Hartmann makes a distinction between the two modes of existing; the real and the ideal way of existing. Then he divides the real being sphere into four parts: inorganic nature, organic nature, consciousness and the super individual culture (Walter Cerf 1967: 424).

Each stratum has its own categorial features. The stratas have a hierarchy in which one stratum's freedom that is its autonomy depends on the other's existence. We can think this like a building, how the third floor needs the first and the second; and the fourth needs three of them; this means each stratum needs the lower. Each stipulates the former and each has more independence according to the former. This means the autonomy and dependency occur at the same time. The lowest stratum is the strongest since it carries all of them. The highest is the weakest but it's the most independent one. Each of them has special laws that can't be moved to another which regulates the relationship between them.

The lower strata become mature easier than the uppers, and they carry the core of upper's to them. Not all, but some of the attributions of the former are carried to the upper. For instance all properties of the organic nature aren't involved in the inorganic nature, only the matter and its attributions are carried. Consciousness has both some attributions of organic and inorganic nature; movement and matter etc. But not all of them. The basic question has to be this "what is the newness which is carried to the upper stratum?" (Hartmann 1968: 22). Super individual culture involves language, ethics, politics, law, knowledge, art, history etc. We can give mathematics as an example of the ideal being sphere.

So the variety and speciality of strata of being's can not be understood by dividing the world into two parts. Ontology doesn't suspect the unity of the world as a

system but doesn't presuppose what it is and how it is established. Unity of the world needs to be searched in its order of interior structure, because structure exists in each phenomenal series of the world. The old ontology hasn't any idea of world's structure. It was trying to grasp entire world as form and matter, potential and actual or mind and body. So the world was divided into two parts in the middle.

Neither moving from the super individual culture, organism and the cosmos can be understood, nor from the matter, mental life and life of thought can be. Because carrying the categories and the laws one being sphere has, to another means going beyond the limits of this sphere. And categories which go beyond their limits lose their validity. Thus, ontology has to be separated from these subjective views and stay away from every kind of these extreme claims. Because these are always defective. Plato's distinction between the ideal and the phenomenal world again broke the world into two pieces as being doesn't hang on time and appearance hangs on occurrence. The former is not real; the later is lack of a character of being since the things in appearance are always in change. Although Aristotle's distinction between actual and potential explains occurrence and change, it presupposes a teleological view. Such a teleological schema is drawn according to human acts. Only the man is a being who aspires and aims to fulfill his potentials. But this is in contradiction with the determinism of the physical events run. There is no evidence about the world's teleological state. These are all anthropomorphic views because human has a tendency to think the world that the way he is (Hartmann 1968: 16-18).

The old theories saw the human as either natural or historical but always one of them. So the views remained single-sided. Human thinks that cosmos resembles to himself. *But if the cosmos would response to him, it would say "you don't resemble to me, you resemble the thought that you grasp"* (Hartmann 1968: 39).

So which is needed to clarify is the stratas' dependence and independence from each other. The lowest stratum's categories are time and space, occurrence, substance, state, causation etc. Going from lower stratas to uppers, dependence increases. The metaphysical views which want to derive everything from the world of thought turn inside out the direction of dependence and see the top categories as the most powerful and the most independent. The other metaphysical views which want to derive everything from the matter, though see the right direction of dependence, overlook the autonomy of the upper stratum's since they form the direction of dependence into an entire dependence. Both of them overlook the variety of the strata of Being and make the world homogeneous and monotonous. Such as these views do narrow the world. And new ontology's task is to give its greatness back to itself (Hartmann 1968: 35).

If we look from this perspective to knowledge, the problems like source of knowledge, how it is constituted, its truth or certainty are solved according to Hartmann. He criticizes the epistemological views which give central point to the subject and see knowledge as an achievement of the subject, overlook the transcendental character of the act of knowing like Kant and Husserl. For him it is impossible to exhaust knowledge with analyzing the conscious. It is ontology's task to save phenomenology from its transcendental single-sided (Hartman 1998: 5-7). And this is what Hartmann tries to do with his new ontology. The thing he wants to do is to establish an epistemology based on ontology. He shows that epistemic relations are

ontic also. Knowledge is one of the relations which the conscious establishes with the real world as acting, demanding, hoping like these. And it is not the first or the only relation, it is merely one of them. Knowledge is not either a product or a creation of the subject. Object is indifferent from the subject and its being grasped by human.

Object doesn't come to existence when its being has been known by us. A being is made an object of knowledge for the first time when it becomes issue of an act of knowing but this doesn't mean it exists by this way for the first time. The notion of object and being object of knowledge is different from each other and this assumption is the moving point of Hartmann. The theories which appeared in 19th century have the same mistake that they confuse the object with being an object of knowledge. They thought that those are same but they are entirely different from each other. And this difference can only be understood by looking to it from an ontological perspective. Object of knowledge is an image which the subject constitutes so this means that the image of something can be changed by us all the time. Because its existence is in the subject's mind. So it is not the object which is the thing in itself.

After all it is clear that if we want to grasp the whole dimensions of knowledge, we have to understand that knowing act exceeds the subject and the object has an existence beyond the subject. Dividing the world in many stratum means that knowledge differs in each stratum. We can't know everything the way we know the others. What contributes us is that each strata of Being has different truth and certainty values. Knowledge differs according to the correspondence of the categories of knowledge and the categories of being. So the place of the object determines its being known. The place where both these categories getting closer is inorganic nature. But in the organic nature and consciousness these categories depart from each other. And then again getting closer begins in the super individual culture. So we don't have the same degree of knowledge, we can't wait the same truth and certainty values for each stratum. It is only possible for us to express a perfect correspondence of the categories of being and knowledge, in mathematics that is the strata of ideal being. Because this being sphere is only known by *a priori*. But the real being sphere is known by both *a priori* and *a posteriori*. It is a fallacy that looking for a certainty in the place where the categories do not get closer (Hartmann 1998: 24-34).

Ideal being sphere involves mathematics, esthetics, essence, values etc. It is only known by *a priori* because there is no experience in here. Concerning with the objects' different mode of being, their truth also differ too. We think as a result of confusing the object with being object of knowledge, that knowledge is true when its image corresponds with the object itself. But this is also the result of putting the subject at the center and overlooking the object's reality. An ontological analysis brings to light both the disparity of the object out of conscious and the transcendent character of epistemic relation. The thing which is right or wrong is not the thing in itself, it's just its knowledge.

The relativism of the truth is a problem of regarding knowledge as an achievement of the subject merely, a phenomenon of conscious. This is the result of overlooking the strata of Being. This problem can only be illuminated by the ontological analysis of knowledge.

As an object of the theory of knowledge, knowledge itself has its original place only when we look it with the ontological point of view. So we can find our original place too by this way. If we know the world's system as strata of Being, and the categories belongs each stratum, we don't wait for the same truth value for everything. When we are talking we should regard the stratum and its properties which we are talking about. I mean it is a fallacy to wait the same truth value in real sphere as in the ideal. They are different and we should notice their differences, we should know where we are standing when we are talking in our daily lives. I think by this way, misunderstandings can be avoided because each stratum has its own laws and if we know which stratum our speech belongs we act appropriate to it. So we give our speech its due, when we know the structure of the stratums. I think the main philosophical problems arise because of not understanding the same meaning from the same term and putting the same concept into different categories. So by knowing the real contents of the words by knowing their place in the stratums, I think we can learn to make right speeches and we can stay away from the misunderstandings.

In conclusion, I find Hartmann's new ontology's contribution to epistemology is also a contribution to our daily lives in communication. Only thing we have to do is to know what we are talking about is related to which strata of Being. It will be useful for each of us to think about this contribution to our daily lives.

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