Introduction

While his analysis of human existence is celebrated as a work of genius, it is accepted as a truism that Martin Heidegger was philosophically ignorant when it came to human coexistence. Critics claim that the ontology of Dasein is monological and solipsistic (Buber 2002; Habermas 1987, 1989; Theunissen 1984), that it can be of absolutely no use in explaining what happens when we encounter another human being (Sartre 2003, 272), and that it fundamentally misconstrues intersubjectivity by subordinating our relationship with the other to our relationship to ourselves (Levinas 2012, 46). Even philosophers who are otherwise quite sympathetic to Heidegger's work seem to agree. For example, Hans-Georg Gadamer once remarked that Heidegger's claim that Dasein's being is always a *being-with* was 'a concession that he had to make, but one that he never really got behind' (Gadamer & Dottori 2006, 23).

In this book, I intend to rectify this popular misconception and show that Heidegger not only had a social ontology but also a social ontology of lasting value. My ambition is hence twofold. On the one hand, I wish to develop and defend a novel interpretation of Heidegger's texts that highlights the centrality of *being-with* for his philosophy of *being*, the centrality of social ontology for fundamental ontology. On the other hand, I wish to contribute to contemporary social ontology by using Heidegger's phenomenology to shed new light on how human beings understand each other, do things with each other, and form groups with each other.

The central idea is that Heidegger's famous analysis of the human mind and human agency in terms of being-in-the-world harbours within itself a promising but overlooked social ontology. I intend to show that Heidegger's fundamental ontology provides a sophisticated, holistic philosophy of mind according to which our distinctively human capacities necessarily depend on our relations to other people. I then argue that once we have identified and conceptualised this general holism, we are better equipped to analyse particular social phenomena such as interpersonal

understanding, shared action, and social normativity. The key to understanding these phenomena is, according to Heidegger, to see them as different types of practical and affective interaction in an inherently shared world.

0.1 Minds and Other Minds

Although he would be highly suspicious of the term, we might nonetheless say that Heidegger advocates a distinct *philosophy of mind*. More specifically, he endorses what we today recognise as a form of *externalism* according to which all our distinctively human capacities – our capacities for communicating, acting, and understanding – constitutively depend on our relations to the world.[1] The features of this externalism emerge clearly if we contrast it with the traditional Cartesian internalism. According to Cartesianism, our distinctively human capacities do *not* constitutively depend on our relations to the world as these are, in principle, available to the mind even if the world turns out to be a mere illusion. This view is supported by the assumption – summarised in Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* – that to be a mind is to be capable of introspection. Introspection is non-observational and non-inferential; it is the internal examination of one's own thoughts and mental processes. The capacity for introspection is, accordingly, a relation of the individual mind to itself. In this way, it remains radically independent not only of worldly but also social affairs. Cartesian internalism, therefore, comes with an in-built *atomism*.

Heidegger, on the contrary, takes the capacity for affective and practical engagement to be the defining feature of the mind. When I use a hammer, I do not *think* about what I am doing in any explicit or deliberate way. Instead, I pre-reflectively adjust the angle and the force of the hammer so that it fits with the particular hammer, the particular nail, and the particular surface that I try to drive the nail into. Rather than thinking, I simply respond to the solicitations of the environment in which I act. Heidegger argues that a sense of self is reflected back to us from these worldly solicitations, that in my dealing with the hammer, I get to understand myself as the one for whom hammering is significant (*GA24*, 227/159). This sense of self is non-inferential and as immediate as my practical engagement with the hammer. But *pace* Cartesian

[1] Chapter 3 discusses why Heidegger would be suspicious of the concept of the mind and of the internalist/externalist-distinction as well as why and in which sense we might nevertheless use these concepts to understand his position.

introspection, this type of self-awareness is not seen as something radically private, as the mind's relation to itself. The mind – or *Dasein* as we should call it to avoid some unfortunate internalist associations – is defined by its relation to the world. Dasein is, as Heidegger says, *being-in-the-world*.

The term Dasein refers to 'the entities that, in their being, comport themselves towards their being' (*SZ*, 41/67). Heidegger expands upon this characteristic by noting that Dasein 'is in each case essentially its own possibility' (*SZ*, 42/68). This means that Dasein always faces a field of possibilities towards which it can never be totally indifferent. It *has* to navigate these possibilities (should I *do* this or that?) and the way in which it navigates these possibilities will come to define what or who it is (*am* I this or that?). Our conception of who we are is always at stake in and gives purpose to our way of responding to the possibilities offered to us by our social and physical environment. As a first approximation, we might think of Dasein as the entity that purposefully responds to solicitations.[2]

Importantly, solicitations are *not* independent of worldly affairs, nor are they, we might conjecture, independent of social affairs. A solicitation depends, as we will see, on a complex network or whole of relations between human and nonhuman entities, between ourselves, the environment, and other people. If this is correct, Heidegger's externalism does not simply say that a subject is inconceivable without an object, but states, more radically, that Dasein is inconceivable without a system of relations

[2] The concept of Dasein is notoriously difficult to pin down, and scholars disagree whether the term Dasein refers to individual human beings or to some kind of collective. The majority argues that Dasein is a term for 'concrete human particulars, that is, individual persons' (Carman 2007, 42) and that 'sociality is treated of only as a feature of individual life' (Schatzki 2007, 233). In contrast, John Haugeland has argued that '[D]asein is a way of living that embodies an understanding of being' (Haugeland 2013, 81f). A way of living is, he argues, irreducible to individual human beings, although it only exists by virtue of the individuals that embody it. For this reason, Haugeland uses the expression 'case of dasein' as a term for individual people (Haugeland 2013, 82).

Haugeland's collectivist interpretation of Dasein is, however, textually implausible. Heidegger says, for instance, that one must always use a personal pronoun when addressing Dasein (SZ, 41/68, cf. Carman 2007, 40). *Pace* Haugeland, we do not do this when we talk about a general way of living. Carman rightly points out that the passage in *SZ* mentions singular personal pronouns (*I* and *you*) and takes this to support his individualist reading. Yet, Carman does not discuss similar passages where Heidegger suggests that it is equally appropriate to address Dasein by saying *we* (e.g., *GA27*, 91; *GA38*, 38/35; *GA65*, 67/47, 320/225, 322/226). This hints that we cannot simply identify Dasein with concrete human individuals. I propose, instead, that Dasein 'is' a human particular in the sense that it *depends* on ontically identifiable individual human beings, although it is *ontologically distinct* from these. This is so because the term Dasein does not refer to individual minded bodies as such but to the disclosedness or the open realm of manifestation that lets entities show up as entities (which is, however, enabled by the individual minded bodies) (cf. Malpas 2006; Sheehan 2001). As I will argue in the following, this realm of manifestation can not only refer to the *I* or the *ego* of the individual but also the *you* of someone else and the *we* of a group.

which includes relations to oneself, the environment, and other people.[3] Heidegger's externalism becomes, then, a form of *holism.*[4]

To see the social ontological consequences of these different conceptions of the mind, let us consider what would happen if we were to place two Cartesian subjects in a room with each other. They would of course have observational access to each other's *bodies*. But since the Cartesian mind is defined as that which is revealed only by introspection, each Cartesian subject would only have access to its own mind. Each would hence need some kind of substitute – a special, as of yet unaccounted for, mental operation – to access the other *as a mind* rather than as a mere body.

We would get a very different picture if we were to substitute two Dasein for the two Cartesian subjects. Now, Dasein is what it is by virtue of responding to solicitations in the world. These solicitations can take many forms. An entity solicits one thing if I take it to be inert, and it solicits quite another thing if I take it to be responsive to solicitations like me. Moreover, inert entities solicit very different things from me if I am alone compared to if I am together with someone else. What is crucial is that, in this picture, the two Dasein need no substitute, no special mental operation, to make sense of each other. Dasein is what it is by virtue of its being-in-the-world; similarly, the other 'is appresented in his fellow Dasein [*Mitdasein*] by his world or by our common environment' (*GA20*, 331/240). Although the details are missing (e.g., what exactly does it mean to respond to an entity as a fellow Dasein rather than something inert?), the general suggestion is clear: The very same ingredients that explain our basic relation to ourselves can in principle also explain our basic relation to others. In Heidegger's words:

> It also becomes clear, already from the way in which everyone encounters himself by way of the world, that the experience of alien 'psychic life' [*fremden 'Seelenlebens'*] as well as my own does not first need a reflection on lived experience, taken in the traditional sense, in order to apprehend my own Dasein. Likewise, I do not understand the other in this artificial way, such that I would have to feel my way into another subject. I understand him from the world in which he is with me, a world which is discovered and understandable through the regard in being-with-one-another. (GA20, 335/243)

[3] On this point, my gloss on the concept of Dasein echoes Joanna Hodge's characterisation of Dasein as 'a form of self-relation which is systematically connected to others of the same kind, others of different kinds, and to the ground of possibility of there being such differences and otherness at all: to being' (Hodge 1995, 2).

[4] My interpretation is indebted to Jeff Malpas (1992, 2006, 2012) who argues that a distinct form of holism characterises the hermeneutic tradition. See also Chapter 3 below.

The Cartesian tradition construes mindedness on the basis of introspection ('the reflection on lived experience'), and this makes other minds an inherently mysterious phenomenon. By arguing that Dasein constitutively depends on relations to the environment and to other people, Heidegger believes that he can provide a much stronger foundation for social ontology. The problem with the problem of other minds is, in other words, that it presupposes a flawed conception of the mind – a conception of the mind that makes the idea of *other minds* inherently problematic. In contrast, Heidegger intends to show that a refined conception of the 'mind' ultimately dissolves the problem of 'other minds'.

0.2 Dyads and Triangles

The holist argument that a form of intersubjectivity is built into subjectivity itself – that 'the question of our fellow Dasein must be understood as a question of Dasein itself' (*GA20*, 335/243) – is controversial. In fact, it puts Heidegger at odds with most contemporary analytical social ontology as well as recent social phenomenology.

Contemporary analytical social ontology is dominated by what Max Weber (2019) named methodological individualism, namely, the view that although we often refer to group agents in everyday life (e.g., teams, corporations, and nations) these agents must ultimately be explained in terms of the interaction between distinct individuals. Our account of social life must end with the attitudes, obligations, and actions of individuals. In the contemporary landscape, this view is more or less accepted by all major theories of social cognition and collective intentionality.[5] It is, for instance, widely accepted that collective intentions are, simply, a special kind of individual intention or a special kind of interrelation between individual intentions.[6] Now, if the ultimate level of explanation is that of individuals – that is, individuals with no pre-existing relations between them – the most fundamental form of intersubjectivity must be what I'll call *the dyadic relation*, namely, the relation between two distinct individuals that each has the other individual as his or her intentional object. To take an influential example, Michael Bratman (1999, 2013) argues that in shared action I must intend that *I* partake in a shared action, and I must intend

[5] See Tollefson (2017) for an overview of the current debate on collective intentionality.
[6] Searle, controversially, defends not only a methodological individualism but also a methodological solipsism according to which 'all intentionality, whether collective or individual, could be had by a brain in a vat or by a set of brains in vats' (Searle 1990, 407). For discussions of Searle's solipsism, see Meijers (1994) and Schmid (2003).

that *you* partake in the shared action. Shared action is hence analysable in terms of individuals, their intentions, and their capacity for intending each other.[7]

Phenomenologists have recently questioned the intellectualism prevalent in contemporary debates on social cognition by revitalising the concept of empathy first developed by Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, and Max Scheler. Against the idea that we need some kind of folk-psychological theory or an internal simulation to understand others as minded creatures, they argue that empathy is a kind of *direct perception* in which we experience bodily behaviour as already minded and intentional. Thus, rather than seeing a facial expression that must subsequently be interpreted as an expression of pain, it is argued that what we see simply *is* pain. There are of course more cognitively demanding types of intersubjectivity – e.g., trying to figure out the other's hidden agenda – but this line of thought maintains that the subject's immediate and perceptual directedness to another subject is the most basic form of intersubjectivity because it alone enables us to understand the other body as a *minded* body.

In contrast, much post-war French phenomenology amounts to what we might call an *alterity theory*. Like empathy theory, alterity theory holds that the face-to-face relationship is the most foundational form of intersubjectivity, but rather than emphasising the subject's capacity to emphatically understand the other, alterity theory suggests that the face-to-face relation involves a confrontation with the other that radically eludes my grasp. It is thus argued that the real significance of intersubjectivity lies in the fact that the other is *transcendent* and *radically other* than me. Sartre, for instance, argues that any attempt to understand the other based on an a priori determination of my own being-in-the-world is bound to fail, because then 'I find in things only what I have put into them' (Sartre 2003, 273). Likewise, for Levinas, 'the other does not affect us as what must be surmounted, enveloped, dominated, but as other, independent of us: behind every relation we could sustain with him' (Levinas 2012, 89). On this view, the primary form of intersubjectivity is, hence, not a matter of understanding the other but a way in which I myself am put into question by the other.

[7] Margaret Gilbert's (1990, 2013) plural subject theory claims to differ from Bratman's account by being non-reductive. Although she argues that collective intentionality presupposes a plural subject in which individuals are *jointly committed* to espouse a goal as a single body, she also admits that a joint commitment only obtains when two or more individuals express their readiness to undertake a joint commitment. It seems then that also Gilbert's plural subject theory relies on ontologically separate individuals. I discuss Bratman's and Gilbert's accounts in detail in Chapter 5.

I discuss some of the differences that separate the analytical and the phenomenological approaches to intersubjectivity in Chapters 4 and 5, but here I want to emphasise a point of agreement between these three proposals: they all take the dyadic relation – the thematic or intentional relation between two subjects – to be foundational for social life.

But does the dyadic relation really *establish* intersubjectivity? If so, what makes a self capable of intending another self, what provides the 'ontological bridge from one's own subject, which is initially given by itself, to the other subject, which is initially quite inaccessible' (*SZ*, 124/162)? Or is it rather the case that the dyadic relation uncovers or modifies an explanatorily prior form of intersubjectivity? Heidegger defends the latter option by arguing that *the shared world* is a presupposition for our intentional directedness towards others. More specifically, he argues that I can only make sense of the other as a minded agent if I understand him as responding to the same world of publicly available things that I respond to. Rather than conceiving coexistence as a dyad, Heidegger proposes that there is a fundamental interdependence between self, world, and others so that each of these three elements is inconceivable without, although irreducible to, the two others.

Borrowing a term from Donald Davidson, we might say that Heidegger juxtaposes the dyadic relation prominent in analytical social ontology and recent phenomenology with a form of *triangulation*. Dasein understands *itself* by virtue of its relation to the world, and since the world is shared, this includes both environmental objects and other people, e.g., those who are physically there, those with whom Dasein shares a personal history, and the anonymous others who are 'present' in social norms. Dasein understands *others* by correlating their behaviour to the environmental objects and to the interpretative models that it inherits from its history, culture, and society. Finally, Dasein typically understands environmental *objects* in terms of socially inflected standards so that a given tool is understood in terms of its proper use. Indeed, Heidegger even argues that when such socially inflected interpretative standards fail, we still understand environmental objects as inherently shared with others:

> Every being along something present – also that which is solitary – includes in itself a being-with-one-another. All uncoveredness of something present must by its essence be something in which Dasein shares itself with others; the uncoveredness is therefore such that Dasein never keeps it locked up for itself as if it were its enclosed possession. All uncoveredness of something present must essentially already be *as shared with*. . . (GA27, 127)

Rather than confining being-with to our intentional relations to others, the model of triangulation suggests that all intentional relations take place against a holistic background of relations between ourselves, the world, and others. In my opinion, the first task of social ontology is to account for this a priori interdependence. The second task is to use this ontological framework to examine the nature of various social phenomena such as social cognition, shared action, and group formation.

0.3 World, Solicitude, and Conventions: Locating Heidegger's Social Ontology

There have been a great number of studies on the relation between Heidegger's ontology and politics as well as ethics,[8] but very few focus directly on his social ontology. Those that do tend to focus either on Heidegger's few remarks on the dyadic relation (what he calls 'solicitude' [*Fürsorge*]) or on his account of anonymous social norms (what he calls 'the Anyone' [*das Man*]).[9]

Those who focus on the concept of the Anyone argue that the shared world is made of shared norms, conventions, and social practices and that all intentional relations take place against this anonymous and pre-established background structure (Carman 1994; e.g., Dreyfus 1991; Koo 2015, 2016; Okrent 1991; Schatzki 2007). In Hubert Dreyfus' summary,

> Public skills and for-the-sake-of-whichs must be taken over (presumably by imitation) before there can be any Dasein with thoughts and activities at all. Society is the ontological source of the familiarity and readiness that makes the ontical discovering of entities, of others, and even of myself possible. (Dreyfus 1991, 145)

[8] Many interpretations of Heidegger's politics are directly motivated by his affiliation with Nazism, for example, de Beistegui (1998), Derrida (1989), Duff (2015), Elden (2006), Fried (2000), Lacoue-Labarthe (1990), and Young (2008). On Heidegger's ethics, see Hatab (2000), Hodge (1995), Lewis (2014), Nancy (2002), and Webb (2011).

[9] Hans Bernhard Schmid (2005, 2009) is a notable exception. He argues, on the one hand, that the conventionalist emphasis of the Anyone is insufficient to account for the constitution of the shared world and, on the other hand, that our manifold non-thematic relations to each other means that we cannot rely on an analysis of the dyadic relation alone. Schmid thus takes Heidegger to develop a notion of 'common disclosure and common concern' that must be understood as an irreducible, relational, and often non-thematic structure (Schmid 2005, 294). I am sympathetic to Schmid's approach but discuss some limitations and problems in Section 5.2 and footnote 6 in Chapter 3 below.

In short, we understand others in terms of the social roles, norms, and practices that constitute our shared world.

Conversely, those who focus on solicitude agree with Sartre (2003, 268ff) that if there is nothing more to say about being-with than that which is contained in the analysis of the Anyone, Dasein is unable to encounter *concrete others* (McMullin 2013; O'Brien 2014; Olafson 1998). As Irene McMullin puts it, the overemphasis on the Anyone suggests that

> one can only ever encounter other persons as representative types able to trigger particular preexisting categories – be they ontic social categories or the overarching ontological category *Mitsein*. Individual persons do not play a role in constituting or developing these categories, but are interchangeable instances whose uniqueness is subsumed to the category by which one knows them. (McMullin 2013, 7)

Her alternative is to develop a more nuanced and distinctly Heideggerian account of the dyadic relation. In her view, the otherness of the other 'is rooted in the finitude and uniqueness of its originary temporality' in such a way that the other 'makes itself known in a past that I can never fully access and a future that I can never entirely predict' (McMullin 2013, 161).

Compared to these, my approach is quite untraditional. I believe that Heidegger's main contribution to social ontology lies neither in his remarks on solicitude nor analysis of the Anyone, at least not directly. It lies, rather, in his analysis of the phenomenon of the world. Seen from this perspective, the respective analyses of interpersonal understanding and anonymous social normativity are two (however important) pieces of a larger social ontological puzzle. The crucial and overarching question is: *What does it mean to share the world?*

I answer this question by reconstructing, expanding upon, and at times criticising the social ontology found in Heidegger's published text, lecture courses, and private notes. My main focus will be the period from 1924 to 1930 in which Heidegger worked most extensively on the transcendental issue of the world, although I will on occasion use texts from beyond this period either as a foil or as a supplement to this line of inquiry.

In contrast to many other interpreters, I argue that Heidegger's point is not simply the quasi-Wittgensteinian point that typified social practices underlie our ways of acting and judging. Rather, I show that the notion of the shared world extends far beyond the background familiarity afforded to an individual by its community, society, tradition, or language game. Rather, its non-thematic and triangular relatedness to others render

Dasein constitutively responsive to the behaviour of others – whether or not they share beliefs, intentions, conventions, or languages. In short, I share the world with you if and only if we are capable of intending the same entities or range of entities, and if my way of intending entities is responsive to your behaviour. Or, less technically, I share the world with you if your behaviour has a stake, however small, in how I understand the world that occupies us both.

This is a very minimal type of intersubjectivity. Indeed, as I will argue, our constitutive openness or responsiveness to others is a transcendental condition of possibility of Dasein's intentionality. As such, it characterises human mindedness and agency whether or not anyone is actually present: 'Being-with is an existential characteristic of Dasein even when factically no other is occurrent or perceived. Even Dasein's being-alone is being-with in the world' (*SZ*, 120/156f). Being-in-the-shared-world or being-with is a minimal and necessary form of intersubjectivity. This is not to say, of course, that nothing more can be said about sociality. Rather, being-with makes other social phenomena like solicitude and anonymous social normativity possible. A systematic social ontology must show what unites these various forms of intersubjectivity and what distinguishes them from each other.

0.4 A Note on Heidegger's Politics

I admit that this book draws lessons on social life from a very unlikely source. Heidegger was not simply a political fool but an unrepentant Nazi. It seems almost paradoxical to earnestly suggest that someone so politically ignorant should also possess an unprecedented grasp of the inner workings of human social life. Yet this is exactly what I argue.

In reply to this worry, one might try to draw a line between Heidegger *as a person* and Heidegger *as a philosopher* and claim that politics befalls the former while social ontology befalls the latter. But the recent publication of what is commonly known as the *Black Notebooks* makes this reply unconvincing since Heidegger in these private notes attempts to *philosophically* justify his political engagement as well as his antisemitism.

I will show that there is indeed a crucial connection between Heidegger's views on social life and his conception of politics. But the connection is more complex than one might think, and the impulse to reject Heidegger's philosophy *tout court* is both rash and profoundly unphilosophical. As I see it, an *Auseinandersetzung* with Heidegger's politics requires that we, first, try to understand how Heidegger himself saw

the connection between his philosophy and politics and, second, show exactly where he erred. Heidegger's social ontology is crucial for this endeavour since it not only reveals his basic assumptions about social life in general but also calls attention to the way in which his politics betrayed some of his own best insights. In due course, I will identify several ways in which his attempted justification of his political engagement is not just accidental to but outright incompatible with his social ontology. But it goes without saying that this critical analysis presupposes a firm grasp of what Heidegger's social ontology actually is. For this reason, my discussion of Heidegger's politics is found in the last part of the book.

0.5 Outline

Part I of the book examines the relation between Heidegger's general conception of ontology, his philosophy of mind, and his conception of social life. Chapter 1 outlines and situates Heidegger's transcendental phenomenological approach to social ontology in the contemporary landscape by discussing what he takes to be the scope and the appropriate method of social ontology. Chapter 2 compares Heidegger's transcendental social ontology to Husserl's and argues that although both take 'the world' or 'transcendence' to constitute the most basic form of intersubjectivity, Heidegger ultimately understands this in affective and practical rather than theoretical terms. Chapter 3 then argues that Heidegger's transcendental social ontology entails a commitment to the holist thesis that intentional states depend on relations to both environmental objects and other people and discusses whether this amounts to a vicious relativism.

Part II analyses a range of concrete social phenomena central to both classical and contemporary social ontology. Chapter 4 focuses on Heidegger's ambiguous and polemical discussion of social cognition. I first identify six different and seemingly incoherent objections raised by Heidegger against theories of social cognition, before I set out to reconstruct a positive, Heideggerian account of interpersonal understanding. Chapter 5 turns from the *you* of face-to-face interaction to the *we* of shared action. I argue, first, that we should approach shared action in pre-reflective terms, namely, as responses to environmental solicitations, and, second, that Heidegger's reflections on plural selfhood can help us understand pre-reflective shared action by showing how responses to solicitations can be joint. Chapter 6 considers the large-scale and temporally prolonged interaction of social normativity. Drawing on Heidegger's analysis of the

Anyone and of historicity, I argue that there are two distinct types of social normativity: *anonymous social normativity*, which comes with only a minimal awareness of its own nature, extent, and origin, and *historical social normativity*, which implies a historical awareness in which social norms are disclosed *as historical* and hence as fragile and contestable.

Part III discusses the controversial issues of Heidegger's politics and his account of authenticity. Chapter 7 outlines Heidegger's political philosophy paying special attention to how he conceives of community, state, and education. I then go on to show that Heidegger in the *Black Notebooks* attempts to justify his political engagement *philosophically* in a way that rests on assumptions and inferences – philosophical mistakes, if you will – that contradict his earlier and much more convincing social ontology. Chapter 8 discusses Heidegger's notion of authenticity and his conception of the self. I argue that authenticity requires us to ontically understand our own nature by adopting a set of ontologically transparent second-order attitudes on our own lives. I then show how these second-order attitudes solve two problems inherent to Heidegger's conception of the self, namely, that it lacks constancy (in the sense of the capacity of the self to remain itself through changing situations) and that it lacks autonomy (in the sense of the capacity to commit to some possibilities rather than others). Finally, I consider (1) what the demand for authenticity entails for Heidegger's conception of face-to-face relations and his conception of historical communities and (2) how it differs from moral obligations.