Chapter 5
Early Heidegger on Social Reality

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Abstract This book chapter shows how the early Heidegger’s philosophy around the period of Being and Time can address some central questions of contemporary social ontology. After sketching “non-summative constructionism”, which is arguably the generic framework that underlies all forms of contemporary analytic social ontology, I lay out early Heidegger’s conception of human social reality in terms of an extended argument. The Heidegger that shows up in light of this treatment is an acute phenomenologist of human social existence who emphasizes our engagement in norm-governed practices as the basis of social reality. I then defuse a common and understandable set of objections against invoking the early Heidegger as someone who can make any positive contribution to our understanding of social reality. Lastly, I explore the extent to which the early Heidegger’s philosophy provides insights regarding phenomena of collective intentionality by showing how the intelligibility of such phenomena traces back to individual agents’ common understanding of possible ways of understanding things and acting with one another. With the early Heidegger, I argue that this common understanding is the fundamental source and basis of collective intentionality, not the non-summativist constructionism on which contemporary analytic social ontology has sought to focus with much effort. The lesson about social ontology that we should learn from the early Heidegger is that there is a tight connection between the social constitution of the human individual and his or her capacity to perform actions or activities that instantiate collective intentionality.

Keywords (for SEO) Heidegger • Social reality • Social ontology • Collective intentionality • Social constitution of the human individual
5.1 Introduction: Three Dimensions of Social Ontology

One of the perennial questions of social philosophy concerns how we should understand the fundamental relationship between the human individual and the social environment in which he or she is embedded and participates. As a specific branch of social philosophy, social ontology investigates the nature, character, and structure of this relationship in all its multifaceted varieties and complications. Thanks especially to the ongoing work of Philip Pettit (1996: Part II and Postscript; 2002, 2014; Pettit and Schweikard 2006: 36), we can discern three dimensions of social ontology along which we can consider the relationship of the individual agent and the social entities, forces, structures, systems, or (last but not least) the manner in which this agent is thought to be socially constituted or ‘socially constructed’.

The first dimension or axis of social ontology is ‘vertical’ insofar as it examines the extent to which macro-level social forces, structures, or systems, etc., can coercively constrain and thereby quasi-deterministically restrict the autonomy (agency) of an individual, a group or population of individuals, or such individual(s) under the aspect of how they embody or fall under the ascriptions of occupying certain social identities or social positions (Pettit 1996: Ch. 3). It is important to note that the type of coercive constraint or limitation in question is not in the first instance political, but turns rather on whether and how social forces, structures, or systems, etc., can supposedly undermine (in Pettit’s terminology, ‘override’ or ‘outflank’) the intentional attitudes or agency of individuals as constitutive aspects of their individual autonomy. In terms of Pettit’s conceptual apparatus, this is the primary issue between individualism and collectivism, in his particular senses of these labels.

The second dimension or axis of social ontology is ‘horizontal’ insofar as it examines whether and how individual agents are necessarily socially constituted (or ‘socially constructed’), in the sense that some basic capacity or set of capacities that they exercise as intentional autonomous agents requires that they intrinsically coexist and engage with other people (Pettit 1996: Ch. 4, 2002). It is important to note that the sense of coexistence and engagement with others in question is not in the first instance factual, but turns rather on how the basic capacity or set of capacities under consideration depends non-causally or intrinsically on their relations and engagements with other people. In terms of Pettit’s conceptual apparatus, this is the primary issue between atomism and holism, in his particular senses of these labels.¹

Pettit has also recently noted a third distinctive dimension along which we can understand and investigate the relationship between individual agents and the larger social or collective entities of which they are parts or members (Pettit 2003, 2014; Pettit and Schweikard 2006). This dimension concerns the way in which it is

¹One of the major innovations of Pettit’s social ontology is his discernment of the crucial distinction between the issue that animates the disagreement between individualism and collectivism, and that about which atomism and holism are in opposition. He notes rightly that social theory and social ontology will continue to encounter intellectual impasses if they fail to distinguish the ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ issues in social ontology. For an instructive discussion of these matters, see Pettit 1996: 111–16.
legitimate (justified) to claim that there exist group or collective agents, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, actions, etc., in ways that are irreducible to the aggregations of the agency, beliefs, attitudes, intentions, actions, etc., of the singular individuals that compose these larger social or collective entities as their parts or members (cf. Schmitt 2003; Schmid 2009). We can describe this dimension as the primary issue about which ‘singularism’ (Gilbert 1989: 12) and ‘corporatism’ (i.e., the view that corporate persons or corporate agency are ontologically irreducible or at least explanatorily indispensable) are in dispute. It is clear that the emergence of analytic social ontology since the late 1980s – in particular, the literature concerning collective intentionality phenomena and how to analyze them satisfactorily – has tended overwhelmingly to focus on the philosophical issues and problems within this third dimension of social ontology.

I have briefly canvassed these three dimensions of social ontology in order to situate and set the stage for the main task of this book chapter: namely, to consider how Martin Heidegger’s early philosophy (from his so-called ‘phenomenological decade’ in the 1920s) can possibly contribute to our understanding of social reality as a specific branch of social ontology, broadly construed. At the most general level of this paper, I will argue that early Heidegger’s conception of human social existence and reality delivers philosophical insights that pertain not just to the above mentioned second and third dimensions of social ontology, but also show how there is a tight connection between these two dimensions. Now, the suggestion that Heidegger of all people can make a contribution to social ontology, especially analytic social ontology, might strike most readers who tend to move within conventional philosophical circles as very unlikely if not downright perverse. This is by no means an unreasonable assumption. For it is not obvious at first glance how early Heidegger’s philosophy can make any positive contribution to our understanding of social reality, even when one is generally sympathetic to the motivations and way of thinking of ‘continental’ philosophy, much less from the perspective of analytic philosophy. Nevertheless, the chief aim of this paper is to show how we can interpret and appropriate his early philosophy in order to better understand some key aspects of the basic character and structure of social reality. In an effort to bring early Heidegger’s

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2 According to Gilbert, who may be the first in analytic social ontology to coin this term, ‘singularism is the thesis that [collectivity] concepts are explicable solely in terms of the conceptual scheme of singular agency’ (ibid., emphasis in the original).


4 For a rare and notable exception, see the work of Schmid (2005: Ch. iv, 2009: Ch. 9). To some extent, this paper engages in an indirect dialogue with Schmid’s interpretation and appropriation of the early Heidegger’s philosophy for purposes of social ontology. Despite our apparent disagreements about a number of interpretive and philosophical issues, I am grateful to Schmid for stimulating discussions about them, as well as for pointing out to me in particular the significance of Heidegger’s 1928/29 lecture course, Einleitung in die Philosophie (Heidegger 1996), as an important resource for understanding Heidegger on social ontology.
conception of the social and analytic social ontology into dialogue, I will juxtapose his existential-phenomenological approach to the social with the set of guiding assumptions that influential analytic social ontologists such as Gilbert, Searle, and Tuomela (among others) typically take for granted. I will suggest at the end of the paper that these analytic social ontologists are not so much wrong, as far as they go, though I do think that some of their main arguments are unsound even on their own terms. Rather, analytic social ontology is flawed in my view because its proponents are under the illusion that they are giving us an adequate conceptual apparatus for understanding and explaining the fundamental nature of social reality, rather than, to be sure, just one important dimension of it as this is circumscribed by singularism and corporatism. What is at stake is this: Whereas analytic social ontologists are primarily concerned with the process or mechanism by means of which interacting individuals can construct social or collective entities (collective beliefs, intentions, actions, agents, institutions, etc.), early Heidegger’s crucial move emphasizes the conditions under which all entities, including social and collective ones, can make sense at all. When properly understood, this move has significant consequences by shifting the basic orientation according to which we should carry out investigations of social reality: Instead of beginning by specifying the conditions of adequacy for the construction of social or collective entities, early Heidegger emphasizes that we should first consider the necessary conditions of the intelligibility (Verständlichkeit) of such entities at all, if we are to succeed eventually in grasping the fundamental aspects and structures of social reality.

This book chapter is organized as follows. In Sect. 5.2, I first highlight three basic assumptions that analytic social ontologists like Gilbert, Searle, and Tuomela take for granted. I then briefly elaborate Tuomela’s account of social practices and its consequences for understanding social norms and social institutions. In Sect. 5.3, I lay out my interpretation of early Heidegger’s conception of being-with (Mitsein) and the ‘anyone’ (das Man) in Sein und Zeit (Being and Time), with the aim of showing why he is justified to hold that human existence is constitutively being-with-others in a common world. This interpretation shows where early Heidegger stands with regard to the second ‘horizontal’ dimension of social ontology. Not

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5 I argue for this elsewhere in ‘Problems of Circularity in Theories of Collective Intentionality’ (Koo 2011b).

6 I will explain the sense in which analytic social ontologists provide constructionist accounts of social or collective entities in the next section.

7 All page references in this book chapter will henceforth be to this work as ‘SZ (Heidegger 1993)’. The English translation by Macquarrie and Robinson of this text (Heidegger 1962) provides the German pagination on its margins. Note, however, that all translations of Sein und Zeit into English in this book chapter will be my own, not those of Macquarrie and Robinson. In this paper Heidegger’s concept of das Man will be rendered in English as the ‘anyone’, which works fairly well as a translation but fails unfortunately to capture the undertone of prescription expressed by many (though not all) uses of ‘man’ in German (e.g., ‘Das macht man nicht in der Öffentlichkeit’ [‘One doesn’t (shouldn’t) do that in public’]). But ‘anyone’ is slightly preferable for linguistically disambiguating reasons since there will be places in the book chapter where I use ‘one’ in its ordinary sense in English, not in the distinctive, loaded sense that Heidegger expresses in his uses of ‘das Man’ in Sein und Zeit. I also prefer not to capitalize ‘anyone’ in order to avoid any suggestion that it is some sort of reified, self-contained entity that exists over and above or apart from individual human beings.
surprisingly, the result is that he strongly rejects atomism and endorses a distinctive version of holism. Section 5.4 is a brief excursus that addresses or at least defuses a familiar set of criticisms against the evaluatively neutral interpretation that I give to early Heidegger’s conception of the ‘anyone’. This must be done in order to fend off understandable objections against such an interpretation, which, if left unaddressed, would obstruct the further consideration of what social-ontological consequences can follow from this interpretation. Finally in Sect. 5.5, I consider how this position can intervene in and make a contribution to the debate between singularism and corporatism in the third dimension of social ontology. Although it seems clear enough that he would reject orthodox singularism and thus become a potential ally of most analytic social ontologists in this particular respect, it is more interesting and instructive to understand how he can accomplish this in a considerably different way than how analytic social ontologists typically argue against singularism and thereby make room for corporatism. I conclude with a few brief remarks about some further consequences of this application of early Heidegger’s insights regarding human social existence for the scope of contemporary social ontology.

5.2 Non-summative Constructionism About the Nature of Social Reality

Despite their various specific disagreements, analytic social ontologists such as Gilbert, Searle, Tuomela (and others) are united to the extent that they hold what can be characterized as non-summative constructionism regarding the nature and basic features of social reality. That is, they typically argue that: (1) there is a large set of social phenomena (including collective and institutional ones) that cannot be reductively explained in terms of the mere summations (aggregations) of the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of single individuals; (2) the irreducible presence and efficacy of collective intentionality is what constitutes such phenomena as social or collective in the non-summative sense; and (3), at least in the case of Gilbert and Tuomela (but not Searle), we can account for the nature of collective intentionality in terms of some independent conceptual apparatus that shows how collective intentionality is actualized by being constructed (built up) and then non-summatively sustained through interacting individuals, without either reduction to methodological individualism or commitment to metaphysically dubious notions like group minds. Let us call (1) the non-summativism thesis, (2) the irreducibility of collective intentionality thesis, and (3) the constructionism thesis. (I should note in passing here that one fairly substantive difference between Gilbert and Tuomela, on the one hand, and Searle, on the other, concerns what gets constructed and non-summatively sustained: Gilbert and Tuomela hold that this is collective intentionality as such, whereas Searle treats the notion of collective intentionality as explanatorily primitive and uses it instead, plus other elements like the collective assignment of status functions, constitutive rules, and the Background, to construct institutional reality.)
Tuomela’s version of non-summative constructionism is probably the most detailed and sophisticated account of certain basic features of social reality on offer. I want to consider how he analyzes three such features according to his theory (as elaborated in his 2002, but cf. also 2007): namely, social practices, social norms, and social institutions. His analysis of social practices takes pride of place because it is the crucial conditio sine qua non for his subsequent analyses of social norms and social institutions. He defines what he calls ‘proper’ or ‘core’ social practices as repeated collective social actions performed for a shared social reason. There are four components in this definition of social practices: (i) most evidently, they are actions that must be repeatedly performed; (ii) they are collective actions in the sense that they are performed by multiple individuals; (iii) they are social actions in the sense that their performances take into account what other individuals think and do; and finally (iv) they are actions performed for a shared social reason in the sense that this reason displays possession of shared we-attitudes by these individuals.

Individual agents possess we-attitudes in and as a group just in case they share intentions, goals, beliefs, etc., in the sense that each individual who shares them not only holds an attitude A, but believes that others in the group also holds attitude A, and believes that others in the group know that each individual in this group holds the attitude A, and so on. In short, shared we-attitudes consist in particular individuals holding an attitude, believing that others hold this attitude, and lastly believing that there is mutual belief among these relevant others concerning this attitude. For Tuomela, collective intentionality consists in collective intentions plus mutual beliefs. What is noteworthy for our purposes is that it is the creation and maintenance of shared we-attitudes that initially generates collective intentionality. Collective intentionality, or shared we-attitudes, result thus from individuals’ interactions that are analyzable in terms of a certain sort of constructive procedure on the part of the individuals in question. To summarize, social practices on Tuomela’s view consist in the performance of collective social actions plus the possession of shared we-attitudes.

Now, what is the difference between an aggregation of individual intentions and actions and those jointly performed actions that display collective or, more precisely, shared intentionality on Tuomela’s view? It consists in the satisfaction of two further conditions: the so-called Collectivity Condition and that of collective commitment. It is best to illustrate these by means of a concrete example. What separates a group of disparate individuals dancing on a dance floor from a dance troop

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8Tuomela 2002: Ch. 4.
9Interestingly, Tuomela notes that we-attitudes can be shared in turn in the I-mode or the we-mode (ibid.: Ch. 2).
10In other words, shared we-attitudes satisfy the condition of ‘common knowledge’. The concept of common knowledge is a technical term and refers to the epistemic situation of individuals in relation to each other’s intentional attitudes. Its generic definition is as follows: For any two agents A and B, there exists common knowledge that p among A and B if and only if A knows that p, B knows that p, A knows that B knows that p, B knows that A knows that p, and so on. It is easy enough to see how this definition can be iteratively applied to more than two individuals; see Gilbert 1996: 36n4.
performing, *ex hypothesi*, the very same dance movements (cf. a random dance mob vs. a ‘flash mob’)? Obviously, it is that the intentions and performances of the members of the dance troop are coordinated *from a group’s perspective*, i.e., from the perspective of a corporate agent (thereby satisfying the Collectivity Condition); moreover, each member in this group has *some specific role or function to play over time* in the coordinated execution of some array of activities (thereby displaying their collective commitment to performing this array of activities over time from the corporate agent’s perspective).

So much for a quick sketch of Tuomela’s conception of social practices. Given his tendency to theorize in ‘building-block’ terms (at least until recently), it is not so difficult at this point to envisage what his conception of social norms and social institutions look like. In his vocabulary, ‘proper’ social norms, as opposed to authority-based social norms, are defined as mutual normative behavior expectations that apply either in a society-wide or group-specific manner. Tuomela notes plausibly that many of these are just learned in the course of our upbringing and become habitual; he also rightly notes that they are often not codified or even verbalized. Regarding the creation and maintenance of social institutions, these have several basic forms and are constructed on the basis of combining social practices, social norms (in Tuomela’s sense), and the collective acceptance and maintenance by multiple individuals of the combination of these practices and norms (‘collective acceptance basically is coming to hold and holding a relevant we-attitude’). To summarize, what constitutes a social institution, in the sense of what set of elements is required in order to construct and maintain it, is the continual performance of norm-governed social practices that satisfies the Collectivity Condition with collective commitment.

### 5.3 Early Heidegger on the Social Constitution of the Human Individual

Although I have only scratched the surface of Tuomela’s intricate account of social reality, I hope to have conveyed the *constructionist* spirit of some of its key elements and how they are meant to work together. Before elaborating Heidegger’s

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11 It seems that Tuomela’s view has become more anti-reductionist with age. One of his earliest papers on the nature of collective intentionality (Tuomela and Miller 1988) is clearly reductive in spirit; and he does not hesitate to use ‘building block’ talk by asserting in 2002 that, ‘We-attitudes of these kinds [i.e., we-intentions and we-beliefs] are the underlying building blocks of social practices, and they are also causally relevant to the initiation and maintenance of both social practices and social institutions.’ (2002: 3) By 2007, however, he writes that ‘the elements in my analysis [of collective intentionality] are not independently existing “building blocks” of joint intentions but are only analytically isolated parts that presuppose the whole of which they are parts’ (2007: 97).

12 Tuomela 2002: 165.


14 *Ibid.*: 127, emphasis in the original.
conception of the social, one can already raise two reservations about Tuomela’s account. (1) As Tuomela himself concedes in places in his more recent writings, his account of collective intentionality and social practices are given from the theorist’s perspective, with her particular explanatory assumptions and interests.\(^\text{15}\) But then it seems that Tuomela’s account of social or collective phenomena is of rather limited interest, for it is conceived and articulated, and judged to be satisfactory, solely from the perspective of the theorist given her assumptions and explanatory interests. As such, then, it does not aim to focus on aspects that actually motivate and guide how human beings think about and realize their sociality from within the purview of their own self-understanding. One wonders, therefore, whether this account is (as the later Wittgenstein puts it) like a revving engine that is idling.\(^\text{16}\) (2) More importantly, although a constructive approach like Tuomela’s shows nicely how mid-level macro entities and their properties can be built up from micro ones, it tacitly assumes that we already in some tacit sense understand how these elements hang together as a package. To put this in more Heideggerian terms (which I will explicate below), his account is intelligible and explanatory precisely because it takes for granted a prior background familiarity with other basic aspects or structures of human sociality. That is, his analysis of social practices already helps itself to our prior disclosure (vorgängige Erschlossenheit) and hence understanding of the contexts in which the various aspects or components that he analyzes fit together as a coherent whole.

This is the juncture at which early Heidegger’s conception of being-in-the-world in general, and of being-with (Mitsein) and the anyone (das Man) as enabling constraints of the human being’s distinctive way of existing in particular, can effect the basic shift in orientation from specifying the conditions of adequacy of the construction of social or collective entities to revealing the necessary conditions of the intelligibility of social and collective entities in general. Consequently, those who appropriate early Heidegger’s thinking here should show how the conditions of the intelligibility of social and collective entities are prior in the order of understanding to their conditions of construction. This shift in orientation turns on supporting the extended argument that I see early Heidegger as making in *Sein und Zeit*, which aims to show how human beings always already (i.e., constitutively, intrinsically) coexist with others in a common world. Although some interpretation of *Sein und Zeit* will be unavoidable in what follows in this section, I do so with the sole aim of working out the argument for the social constitution of the individual that I discern as present in that text.

To begin with, Heidegger leaves no doubt in his view that the fundamental way in which the human being (Dasein) exists – i.e., understands things and acts in the world – always already presupposes or involves being-with-others in a common world in a distinctive sense:

The phenomenological assertion that Dasein is essentially being-with [Mitsein] has an existential-ontological import. It does not aim to establish ontically that I am not factically

\(^\text{15}\) Cf. the quotation cited above from Tuomela’s more recent work (2007: 97) that disavows the need for reduction in adequately explaining collective intentionality phenomena.

alone in a present-at-hand [vorhanden] way, or even that others with my mode of being occur. … Being-with determines Dasein existentially even when another [Dasein] is not factically present-at-hand and perceived. Even the aloneness of Dasein is being-with in the world. … Thus, being-with and the facticity of being-with-others [Miteinanderseins] is not grounded in a co-occurrence of several ‘subjects’…. Being-with is a characteristic of one’s own Dasein in each case [Mitsein ist eine Bestimmtheit des je eigenen Daseins]. (SZ 120f., emphases added)

This rather dense passage makes the following strong and initially counterintuitive assertion: The most basic way in which any human individual is social (i.e., coexists with others) does not depend on the factual presence of, much less interactions with, other people in that individual’s activities. Rather, the fundamentally social dimension of human existence is constitutive of (i.e., has an ‘existential-ontological’ status or import concerning) his or her very capacity to be an individual at all, regardless of whether others are present with whom an individual can possibly interact or go on to construct social or collective entities. This assertion pertains thus to the social constitution of the individual as such, not just to the different ways in which she can coexist factually with other people. It pertains, therefore, to the above mentioned second dimension in social ontology; furthermore, it endorses holism (in Pettit’s sense) by insisting that our intrinsic (i.e., non-factual) coexistence with and relatedness to others is a necessary condition of being an individual agent at all (‘Being-with is a characteristic of one’s own Dasein in each case’ [SZ 121]). How can this strong claim be made intelligible and justified?

As I interpret it, the argument for it can be summarized in the following steps:

1. Being a human individual presupposes understanding the world always in terms of some referential nexus of significance (Verweisungszusammenhang der Bedeutsamkeit).
2. Understanding the world as such a context is required for understanding how people (including we ourselves) make sense in terms of what people do.
3. Making sense of what people do requires understanding (‘disclosing’) the situational possibilities that are intelligible to them in their engagements with entities and with one another.
4. The intelligibility of situational possibilities, and hence the intelligibility of people and the entities that people understand, is normatively constrained.
5. The normative intelligibility of situational possibilities is socially constituted because this intelligibility conditions the understanding and activities of a multitude of people (including our own) as individual and collective agents.
6. An individual cannot help but draw on this intelligibility in understanding (‘disclosing’) the typical range and types of actions that he or she can perform in a situation. More strongly put, neither an individual’s activities, nor his or her interpersonal interactions, can spontaneously generate this intelligibility, for such activities and interactions presuppose the prior understanding of this intelligibility in order for such activities and interactions to make sense and hence be possible at all.

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7. Therefore, an individual is socially constituted because the normative intelligibility of situational possibilities that enables the exercise of his or her capacity to be an individual at all is itself socially constituted.

The conjunction of 1, 2, and 3 shows that it is a fundamental mistake to understand human sociality apart from the distinctive way in which the human individual exists in the world in general, for such an understanding always presupposes our prior familiarity with the world as its starting point. The conjunction of 4, 5, and 6 argues that the human individual can only be a self or agent by drawing necessarily on the sort of shared public understanding of the practices, norms, and roles that enables her to be a self or agent at all. When these two intermediate conclusions are combined into a single line of argument, its overall conclusion is that the human individual is necessarily socially constituted by sharing a common world with others, in the sense of sharing a public understanding of the norms, practices, and roles that others also understand in their lived experience and activities. This distinctive way of coexisting with others is a necessary enabling condition of any human individual’s ability to be a self and agent at all. And these commitments show how early Heidegger is a thoroughgoing holist as far as the second ‘horizontal’ dimension in social ontology is concerned.

For want of space, I must quickly explicate (1)–(3) and then focus our attention on (4), (5), and (6). To begin with, it is undeniable that the world that we engage in our lived experience – the world in its worldliness (Weltlichkeit [SZ 65ff.]) – is fundamentally a space of intelligibility in which entities and, more generally, the phenomena through which entities show themselves, make sense. This space has the following basic constituents and structure: (1) a set of entities that show up as ‘ready-to-hand’ (zuhandene) equipment, each of which is used for performing some specific task; (2) more encompassing short-term and medium-term goals which are accomplished by the execution of these tasks; and (3) the self-interpretations for the sake of which (Worum-willen [SZ 84, 86, 123]) individual human beings make sense of who they are and thereupon seek to actualize themselves in some contexts by

17 Although Heidegger does not speak explicitly of roles in Sein und Zeit, it is fairly clear that he thinks other people typically show up and make sense in terms of what they do (’[die Anderen] sind das, was sie betreiben [SZ 126]), insofar as they occupy and enact public roles of which others can also make sense in accordance with the normalized intelligibility that the ‘anyone’ supplies and maintains (SZ 127). For example, others show up at work (SZ 120) as craftsmen, the producers or deliverers of products or services, bookshop keepers, sailors (SZ 117f.), commuters of public transportation, or newspaper readers (SZ 126). In the 1925 lecture course that is published as History of the Concept of Time, which served as the penultimate draft of Sein und Zeit, Heidegger writes: ‘One [Man] is what one [man] does. The everyday interpretation of Dasein takes its horizon of interpretation and naming from what is of concern in each particular instance. One [Man] is a shoemaker, tailor, teacher, banker.’ (Heidegger 1992: 244, emphases in the German original). These are just a few examples of the average everyday way in which Dasein unhathematically falls into or else assigns itself an unexceptional range of ‘for-the-sake-of-whics’ (Worum-willen [SZ 84]). It ought to be generally speaking uncontroversial to understand and accept, as a simple matter of observation and brief reflection on how we encounter others in everyday life, that they and we ourselves primarily and mostly (zunächst und zumeist) show up and make sense in terms of the roles or positions that they and we each occupy and enact. I will elaborate this more below.
engaging in certain activities that accomplish certain short-term and medium-term goals within those contexts. What is significant is not so much that we exhibit a primarily practical orientation toward the world, which is obviously true, but that this orientation presupposes that the world is already minimally understood as a whole in terms of these three structural components. Thus, in order to know, e.g., what a store, a product, a customer or store employee, buying and selling practices, and so on are, we must be already familiar with how each of these items relate to one another and play the particular roles that they do within some practically significant complex. When we understand the world as exhibiting this practical intelligibility, this shows that the world that concerns us in lived experience makes sense as a referential nexus of significance (Verweisungszusammenhang der Bedeutsamkeit [SZ §18]), i.e., an interrelated complex of equipment, tasks, short- and longer-term goals and ends, all of which in turn relate to and thereby make sense for the sake of enacting some ongoing self-interpretations on our part. Not only this: This understanding of the world also enables us at the same time to have a working sense of how other people make sense in terms of how they fit and act within a referential nexus of significance, i.e., how they show up as what they do (SZ 126; cf. Heidegger 1992: 240, 244).

In being-with as the existential for-the-sake-of-others [dem existenzialen Worumwillen Anderer], others are already disclosed in their Dasein. This disclosedness of others, which is constituted in advance [vorgängig] with being-with, accordingly also co-constitutes significance, i.e., worldliness, as that which is put into place [festgemacht] by the existential for-the-sake-of-which. The worldliness of the world that is so constituted, in which Dasein essentially in each case already is, lets thus ready-to-hand entities show up in an intra-worldly way such that the co-Dasein of others shows up together with ready-to-hand entities as circumspectively concerned [entities]. (Da)hern lässt die so konstituierte Weltlichkeit der Welt, in der das Dasein wesenhaft je schon ist, das unweltlich Zuhandene so begegnen, dass in eins mit ihm als umsichtig Besorgtgem das Mitdasein Anderer begegnen. (SZ 123)

Lastly, it should be obvious that the basic character or way of being of entities that make sense in terms of their belongingness to some referential nexus of significance is, in the first instance, their practical holism.

Next, in understanding the world in its worldliness, what an individual understands – i.e., projectively discloses (entwerfend erschliesst) – in a particular situation is the range of possible actions that make sense to her to conceive and carry out, given her involvement in a particular referential nexus of significance (world). An individual’s familiarity with this range conditions the intelligibility of what she understands and does in a particular situation. The projective disclosure of this range need not be something of which individuals are consciously aware. To use the example of shopping again, my self-interpretation as a shopper in a store projects the typical range of possible actions available for me to conceive and perform in that setting (e.g., browse or buy things, get information from or make requests of a salesperson, get a refund for a prior purchase of something, etc.). My familiarity with some typical range of possible actions constitutes, therefore, my situational leeway or room for maneuver (Spielraum [SZ 145]), i.e., the concrete field of possible experiences
and actions that make sense to me on that occasion. My understanding of some situational room for maneuver is what enables me to find my activities in some context intelligible by precisely opening up the relevant range of possible actions that I can conceive and perform therein; this grasp of a situational room for maneuver also constrains such actions by closing off other ones as not sensible on that occasion (e.g., actually living in the store as my home, etc.). In short, the projective disclosure of some determinate situational room for maneuver for an individual is prior, not temporally speaking but in the order of understanding, to her actual performance of a particular action. It is the necessary condition of the intelligibility of this performance.

So much for my quick explication of claims (1)–(3). Now, a pressing question can arise at this juncture. Suppose it is true that being an individual agent requires an understanding of the world as a practical holistic context; that is, suppose that this understanding necessarily involves the projective disclosure of situational possibilities (situational rooms for maneuver) that enables an individual agent to make sense of her world in lived experience, including herself and other people in her world. It remains as yet unclear, however, why these points amount to the social constitution of the individual, rather than just the distinctive way in which a human individual engages with the world.

In response, it should be noted that my discussion of the projective-disclosive character of understanding above has focused solely for analytical purposes on what must be involved in the activity of understanding the world, i.e., how we engage with the world, without paying sufficient attention to what it is we engage with in this understanding. But what an individual understands in her engagement with the world cannot be ignored in the final analysis. On my interpretation, one of the main, but also often overlooked, aims of Heidegger’s discussion of the significance of the anyone\(^{19}\) (das Man \([SZ \S 27]\)) addresses this important issue.

What is the anyone? To begin with, it specifies who we are primarily and mostly (zunächst und zumeist) in our everyday existence.\(^{20}\) Who we are usually makes sense, as starting-points, in terms of the roles and self-interpretations, both mundane and significant, for the sake of which we are what we do over time (e.g., commuter,

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\(^{18}\)Dreyfus 1991: 189–91. Understanding ‘projects the being of Dasein on the basis of its for-the-sake-of-which [i.e., its self-interpretations] just as primordially as on the basis of significance qua the worldliness of its current world. … Projection is the existential ontological makeup of the room for maneuver \([Spielraum]\) of [Dasein’s] factual ability-to-be.’ (SZ 145)

\(^{19}\)In what follows, whenever I italicize ‘anyone’, I am using it in Heidegger’s loaded use of this word that also expresses prescriptive undertones. When I do not italicize it, I am using it as this is standardly done in English. My interpretation of Heidegger’s conception of das Man has learned much from and builds upon (among others) the interpretations of Dreyfus 1991: Ch. 8 and 13; Boekeker 2001; Schatzki 1992, 2005; Carman 2003: Ch. 3.

\(^{20}\)The expression “everydayness” means … a definite how of existence that predominates Dasein.…. We have often used in the present analysis the expression “initially and mostly” [“zunächst und zumeist”). “Initially” means: the way in which Dasein is “manifest” [i.e., shows up as making sense] in the with-one-another of publicness …. “Mostly” means: the way in which Dasein, not always but “as a rule”, shows him- or herself for anyone [Jedermann].’ (SZ 370)
customer, consumer, practitioner of a certain occupation, co-worker, partner, spouse, lover, parent, friend, etc.). But the *anyone* does not ultimately refer to any particular individual, group, or population of individuals, or even the sum of all individuals in a community or society (SZ 128f.). Indeed, the *anyone* does not refer to any entity (*Seiendes*) at all, but more generally highlights the mostly inconspicuous but pervasive normative (in the first instance normalized) intelligibility of the world as a whole that permeates the background against which human individuals initially and mostly understand anything and act. The claim is that the basic way in which we exist in the world is necessarily intelligible in terms of our grasp of and tacit conformity to the sociocultural norms that the *anyone* supplies. Despite the disparaging rhetoric that Heidegger uses to describe the superficial but insidious ‘dictatorship’ of the *anyone* over our everyday lives (SZ 126–8), it is a serious mistake to understand the *anyone* merely as his label for the factual tendency of human beings to desire and strive for social conformism. Rather, the *anyone*, or more precisely an individual’s being in the mode of the *anyone* as his or her predominant way of existing in the world, is an enabling aspect of human existence in general, not something that is optional for any human being.

What does an individual’s understanding of the normative intelligibility that informs her familiarity with the world have to do with her ability to share a common world with others, and thereby how she is fundamentally socially constituted? This turns on the public (öffentlich) character of norms in two senses. First and more familiarly, it is always a multitude of people who find norms intelligible; the contents of such norms are impersonal in the sense that they are not initially and mostly the unique inventions or exclusive possessions of particular individuals. Rather, they can be understood by *anyone* who is familiar with them on the basis of his or her sociocultural heritage (SZ 126f.). Second and more importantly, the public character of the *anyone* expresses the normativity – in the first instance, the *normalization* – that is

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21 ‘The anyone is an existential and belongs as originary phenomenon to the positive makeup of Dasein…. Self-ownership [Das eigentliche Selbstsein] does not rest on an exceptional condition of the subject that is detached from the *anyone*, but is an existentiell modification of the anyone as *one of its essential existentials.*’ (SZ 129f., emphases in the German original) The ‘its’ at the end of the last sentence refers to human existence in general (Dasein or being-in-the-world), not to the *anyone*. As Heidegger also writes in his discussion of the existential of ‘falling’ (Verfallen): ‘What matters in falling concerns nothing else than the ability-to-be-in-the-world [In-der-Welt-sein-können], even when in the mode of undistinguishedness/unownedness [Indifferenz/ Uneigentlichkeit]. Dasein can only fall, because what is at issue for it is its understanding-affective [verstehend-befindliche] being-in-the-world. Conversely, owned [eigentliche] existence is not anything that hovers above falling everydayness, but existentially only a modified seizure [Ergreifen] of the latter. … Falling reveals an essential ontological structure of Dasein itself …’ (SZ 179, all emphases in the original; cf. SZ 383) I will explain the subtle distinction between ‘undistinguishedness’ (Indifferenz) and ‘unownedness’ (Uneigentlichkeit), both at the levels of textual interpretation and philosophical significance, in the next section.

22 Dreyfus 1991: Ch. 8 and 13.
involved in our dealings with entities in the world, including ourselves and other people. Heidegger chooses the term ‘das Man’ to capture the impersonal and normative (normalized) aspects of our everyday existence in general. It should be clear how roles and self-interpretations are normalized. The adoption by or ascription to an individual of a role or self-interpretation straightforwardly implies that he or she is supposed to act in certain normal or acceptable ways tied to that role or self-interpretation. Not just this: it also normalizes (or standardizes) the entire referential nexus of significance that makes intelligible the role or self-interpretation in question. To generalize, we take for granted without self-consciousness in our lived experience, as our ‘default’ way of dealing with entities in the world, that there are normal ways for entities, including people, to be what and how they are. The normativity in play is mostly inconspicuous unless there is some type of breakdown or violation of the way things or people are supposed to be (i.e., behave or act). It is thus important to understand that the normativity that entities exhibit is not primarily instrumental, prudential, or morally prescriptive, but figures as a constitutive aspect of their very intelligibility. What is crucial to understand is that any individual must already draw on the normative intelligibility of the world if she is to make sense of things by projectively disclosing some typical situational room for maneuver, regardless of whether an individual in fact conforms to some norm or not on some particular occasion.

When human individuals take over roles and self-interpretations in this manner, they interpret themselves and act on the basis of the public norms that are supplied by the anyone. When they do so, they understand themselves as anyone-selves (Man-selbst), i.e., as what anyone is supposed to do on given occasions, once they adopt or simply fall into the occupation of roles and self-interpretations (for-the-sake-of-whichs) that are public in the sense explicated above (SZ 129f.). In everyday life, we primarily and mostly exist as anyone-selves. Understanding oneself and acting primarily and mostly in accordance with the normative intelligibility that the anyone supplies is what ensures that individuals by and large share a common world (Mitwelt [SZ 117–23; cf. 176, 179]): a common starting-point or frame of reference – a common way of knowing one’s way around in the world – in relation to which both agreements and disagreements can determinately emerge. As Heidegger writes in a passage tracing back to a now published lecture course that served for him effectively as a draft of the first part of Sein und Zeit:

The anyone as that which forms the everyday being-with-one-another … constitutes what we call the public in the strict sense of the word. It implies that the world is always already primarily given as the common world. It is not the case that on the one hand there are first individual subjects which at any given time have their own world; and that the task would then arise of putting together, by virtue of some sort of an arrangement, the various particular worlds of the individuals and of agreeing how one would have a common world. This is how philosophers imagine these things when they ask about the constitution of the intersub-

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23 I note in passing here that normativity and normalization are related but distinct phenomena. I examine their relationship at length in Koo 2011a: Ch. 5.
jective world. We say instead that the first thing that is given is the common world – the anyone – the world in which Dasein is absorbed.\(^{25}\)

Lest there is any misunderstanding, the necessity of our constitutive conformity to the norms supplied by the anyone does not at all imply that individuals can never act in ways that violate such norms. But in order for this non-conformity itself to be significant, it must occur against the background of some ongoing understanding of what the normal or acceptable way of understanding things and acting are in given situations, even if individuals reject this understanding in the end. Indeed, conformity to the normative intelligibility of the anyone does not preclude, but actually makes possible and significant, the standing potential for resistance to and rejection of the normalization of phenomena that is maintained by our immersion in the anyone.

We are now finally in the position to understand the social constitution of the human individual. Because such an individual understands the everyday world in lived experience as an anyone-self, she cannot help but initially and mostly projectively disclose situational possibilities of experience and action that are public, as this occurs by and large in accordance with the normative (normalized) intelligibility that the anyone supplies. Her predominant existence in the mode of the anyone, which both enables but also constrains her ability to be a situated concrete agent at all, is the fundamental way in which the human individual is socially constituted, i.e., being-with-others in a common world. For such an individual cannot help but draw on the normative intelligibility informing the general significance of the world that the anyone provides in virtue of her familiarity with and general conformity to the public norms that the anyone makes available. No single individual can spontaneously generate and fully control the normative intelligibility that the anyone supplies, for this intelligibility already constrains the activities of a multitude of individuals by opening up and delimiting the possible roles or self-interpretations that these individuals can take up, an intelligibility that in turn structures how they deal with one another and non-human entities from occasion to occasion.\(^{26}\)

It is this line of argument that actually justifies his claim that Dasein is always already being-with-others:

On the basis of this communal [my rendering of Heidegger’s German neologism ‘mithaften’ – JJK] being-in-the-world, the world is in each case always already one that I share with others [die ich mit Anderen teile]. The world of Dasein is [the] common world [Mitwelt]. Being-in is being-with others [Mitsein mit Anderen]. The intraworldly being-in-itself of others is co-Dasein [Mitdasein]. (Ibid., all emphases in the German original) (SZ 118).\(^{27}\)

\(^{25}\)Heidegger 1992: 246, emphasis in the original. It is noteworthy that Heidegger’s elaboration of the phenomenon of publicness (Öffentlichkeit) in this lecture course, as well as in a later one (Heidegger 1996), both of which serve, as it were, as the historical ‘bookends’ of Sein und Zeit, are significantly more positive, evaluatively speaking, than his elaboration of the same in Sein und Zeit.

\(^{26}\)It is in this precise sense that ‘the anyone-self, for the sake for which Dasein is in everyday life, articulates the referential nexus of significance’ (SZ 129).

\(^{27}\)On my reading and reconstruction of his argument, he can only adequately support this strong claim by the end of his discussion in SZ §27 about the ambivalent significance of our everyday existence in the mode of the anyone in our lives.
In more familiar terms, coexistence in a common world is just what is involved for individuals to be socialized into norms, practices, and traditions and then going on to live primarily and mostly by them. This socialization does not simply condition and affect how we interact with other people, but always presupposes an individual’s socialization into a *world* that is *common*. The normative intelligibility that the *anyone* articulates, then, serves as the reservoir of possibilities that gives typical content to the self-interpretations that make sense to any human individual in her dealings with the world on some particular occasion. Although her activity of projectively disclosing situational possibilities is numerically distinct from those of others, the content (i.e., the range of possibilities and types of actions) that they each project contains wide-ranging commonalities insofar they understand themselves in the mode of the *anyone*. In summary, different individuals share a common world by initially and mostly projectively disclosing situational possibilities that are common among them because such possibilities are normalized by their existence as *anyone*-selves. It is in this sense that we should understand how the human individual is fundamentally (constitutively) being-with-others in a common world.  

### 5.4 Criticisms and Replies

It is important at this juncture to directly address an interpretive dispute, in a brief excursus with much at stake, about how we should understand and evaluate early Heidegger’s conception of the *anyone*. This is an issue that has been hanging over the evaluatively neutral interpretation of the significance of the *anyone* in the previous section, especially for those who emphasize Heidegger’s existentialist strain above all others in *Sein und Zeit*. This strain is undeniable and comes extensively to the foreground in the first half of Division Two of this text. It is important to address it directly in order to make room for what I discern as early Heidegger’s position.

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28 I have chosen in this paper, for both practical and philosophical reasons, to omit any discussion of the connection between Heidegger’s conception of human social existence and historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) in Ch. 5 of Division Two of *Sein und Zeit*. The practical reason is simply that doing so would have added to the already considerable length of this paper. The more important philosophical reason is my sense that Heidegger’s very brief discussion of that connection especially in §74 is rather underdeveloped or else needs to be carefully interpreted in light of his conception of ownedness (‘authenticity’) as forerunning resoluteness, owned (‘authentic’) temporality, and owned (‘authentic’) historicity. We should thus be wary of thinking that we can easily understand what he means by ‘destiny’ (*Geschick*), which according to him is ‘the happening of the community, of the people’ (*das Geschehen der Gemeinschaft, des Volkes*) (SZ 384), or more generally any hint (for that is all there is) about what the nature of ‘authentic community’ can be (SZ 384f.). For instructive remarks about this issue, see especially Schatzki 1992: 90 and 2005: 242–44; and Richardson 2012: 191–97. Despite Heidegger’s use of notorious and politically loaded language in §74, much more would need to be said in my view if the account on offer there is meant to be informative for social ontology. I leave it to the informed reader to determine whether my omission here is a mistake.
regarding the third dimension of social ontology, for the persuasiveness of this position is closely connected with my construal of him as a holist regarding the second dimension of social ontology.

There exists a familiar and understandable set of objections against early Heidegger’s conception of human social existence in Sein und Zeit. In summary form, these are that this conception of human social existence, despite Heidegger’s assertions to the contrary (SZ 118, 121, 125), seriously distorts the nature of this existence by still ultimately construing other people as ready-to-hand things, not sui generis beings with a special ontological and ethical standing who (should) encounter us in their genuine distinctiveness. This is alleged to be so because the Heideggerian conception of being-with renders other people significant only by way of their involvement in the projective understanding of a single individual. This supposedly monadic or monological conception of the individual is flawed because it fails to recognize and appreciate how genuine dialogue and engagement with other people can be the source of mutuality and solidarity, let alone the ethical dimension of human coexistence. According to this reading of Sein und Zeit, early Heidegger’s conception of human social existence, because of its existentialism, is blind to how other people can make a positive impact on the significance of an individual’s existence. For it conceives human social existence as mostly shallow because it is oriented toward the attempt to conform to social pressures that cater to the banal whims and tastes of the masses. On this reading, in the face of this negative indictment of the value of human social existence, the Heideggerian view cannot help but be drawn to a Kierkegaardian conception of radical freedom as the attempt on the individual’s part to detach herself as much as possible from her social environment in order to actualize her possibility of becoming an ‘authentic’ (eigentliches) individual. As Thomas Rentsch puts it succinctly, ‘The moment [i.e., dimension] of the interexistential constitution of a human world is not structurally examined in Heidegger’s description of the form of all human practice in terms of the existential [framework] of care.’

Let us begin by making explicit some common ground that a defender of Heidegger’s conception of the social shares with critics who raise this set of objections. First, despite his repeated denials in the text (SZ 42f., 167, 175f.), it is certainly true that the rhetoric of Heidegger’s discussion of the social cannot help but evince a disdain for human social existence, at least with regard to its impact on an individual’s possibility of realizing his or her genuine individuality (‘authenticity’ [Eigentlichkeit]). Given that we exist predominantly in the mode of the anyone, his

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30 Many critics of Heidegger also locate this negative view of the social as the root cause of Heidegger’s official support of Nazism in the early to mid-1930s and, even worse, his reprehensible failure to take moral responsibility for this support after World War II; see Habermas 1992. This is a charged and complicated issue that I cannot go into here.

31 Rentsch 2000: 37, my translation.
emphasis on our tendency to concern ourselves with how we measure up in comparison with others (the pressure and concern for social conformism, averageness, and ‘leveling down’, etc.) drips with contempt for the shallowness of ordinary human social existence (SZ §27). Furthermore, there can also be no doubt that he seriously underdevelops the positive aspects of this existence. In particular, he does not discuss ways of being-with-others, e.g., ways of coexisting with and caring for others (Fürsorge: e.g., the care of dependents like children, love, friendship, being an engaged citizen of a community, etc.), that need not be perniciously subject to the social pressures exerted by others. And even when he does explicitly discuss specific ways of caring for others, he does so in terms of two extreme ways that only matter from an existentialist perspective (SZ 122). Lastly, given Heidegger’s aim of articulating his ‘fundamental ontology’ (his analysis of human existence as being-in-the-world), he completely ignores the multifaceted ways in which macro-level social structures affect, for better or worse, the life conditions of the human individual, often in ways that systematically obstruct genuine human liberation and autonomy.

These charges, if true, would be pretty damning. But even when one acknowledges that they are legitimate, it does not simply follow that early Heidegger’s conception of the social in Sein und Zeit must be committed to a negative and distorted understanding of human social existence as such. Indeed, I think this conception is quite compatible with the criticisms mentioned above. On the interpretation presented below, this conception not only does not rule out any positive understanding of human social existence, but actually makes room for the latter, even if Heidegger himself chose not to examine this topic in his own philosophical project.

At the interpretive level, my strongest disagreement with critics who make the above-mentioned set of objections is that they too readily accept the common but simplistic reading of the early Heidegger as an existentialist, roughly in the vein of the early Sartre in Being and Nothingness. While there is no doubt that one of the central themes of Being and Time concerns what it is involved in achieving self-ownership (eigentliches Selbstsein), it is reductive to assume that this is the overarching theme in terms of which all other themes in Being and Time must be understood. But this is exactly what the critics in question assume without hesitation. On their reading, our absorption in the anyone cannot help but entail that human social existence is a mostly banal and negative state of affairs. By taking Heidegger’s disparaging rhetoric about the impact of that mode of existence on the individual at face value, this existentialist reading of the text thereby closes off any

32 From this perspective, one can care for an individual by either ‘leaping in’ for her and thereby obscuring her possibility of coming to ‘own’ herself (the einspringend-beherrschende Fürsorge), or by ‘leaping ahead of’ that individual and thereby putting her in the position to achieve possible self-ownership (the vorspringend-befreiende Fürsorge).

33 According to Habermas 1992, this is the major critique of Heidegger that critical theorists like Lukacs, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas himself make of Heidegger.

34 Here I have benefited from Carman’s lucid and instructive discussion of this issue; see Carman 2003: Ch. 6.

35 This is often misleadingly translated into English (and French) as ‘authenticity’. Boedeker gives a convincing argument for why ‘self-ownership’ is the better translation; see his 2001: 96n35.
positive contribution that our social existence could make to our personal and collective flourishing.

Admittedly, the fact that this is a common reading of Sein und Zeit is to a large extent Heidegger’s own fault. The problem is that he often writes as if an individual can only relate to the sociality of her existence in terms of a mutually exclusive difference, namely, that between ‘unownedness’ (Uneigentlichkeit) and ‘ownedness’ (Eigentlichkeit). Here are two prominent examples:

The self of everyday Dasein is the anyone-self [Man-selbst], which we distinguish from the owned self, i.e., from the self that takes hold of itself as its own [eigens ergriffenen]. As the anyone-self, Dasein is in each case dispersed into the anyone and must then [erst] find itself. (SZ 129)

Later on in Sein und Zeit he characterizes the everyday self in terms of the idea of the necessity but also the negative impact of its ‘falling’ (Verfallen) into the world:

[The term ‘falling’], which does not express any negative evaluation, signifies that Dasein is initially and mostly in the midst [bei] of the world that concerns it. This ‘absorption in …’ [Aufgehen bei …] has mostly the character of being lost in the publicness of the anyone. Dasein, as an ability-to-be-a-self [Selbstseinkönnen] that can own itself, has initially always already fallen away from itself and fallen into the world. This fallenness into the world signifies our absorption in being-with-one-another, insofar as this is guided by anonymous talk [Gerede], curiosity, and ambiguity. (SZ 175)

The rhetoric in these passages expresses a stark distinction that clearly valorizes one of its poles (ownedness) to the detriment of the other (unownedness). Without entering into great details, the suggestion is that being an unowned, fallen self is not just something bad, but fails to live up to what any self can be, namely, an entity for whom, in its very being, its own being is a standing issue; in so doing, it does not ‘own’ its particular way of existing by taking responsibility for it (Jemeinigkeit).

The existentialist reading understandably feeds off the Kierkegaardian pathos of these remarks and cannot help but deem any entanglements with others (das Man) as impediments to one’s possibility of achieving genuine individual freedom.

But this reading unjustifiably ignores Heidegger’s assertions at important junc-
tures in Sein und Zeit that there are actually three basic modes of human existence, not just two. In addition to ownedness and unownedness, there is also the ‘modally undistinguished’ or evaluatively neutral way in which an individual exists. Heidegger characterizes this mode of existence as the undistinguishedness (Indifferenz) of everyday life:

Dasein should be interpreted at the outset of the analysis precisely not in [terms of] the difference of a determinate way of existing, but uncovered in its undistinguished ‘primarily and mostly’ [in seinem indifferenten Zunächst und Zumeist]. This undistinguishedness of everydayness [Indifferenz der Alltäglichkeit] of Dasein is not nothing, but a positive phenomenal character of this entity. All existing [of Dasein], as how it is, emerges from this mode of being and returns back to it [Aus dieser Seinsart heraus und in sie zurück ist alles Existierens, wie es ist]. We call this everyday undistinguishedness of Dasein ‘averageness’ [diese alltägliche Indifferenz des Daseins Durchschnittlichkeit]. (SZ 43, emphases in the German original; cf. 12)

‘Indifferenz’ (along with its cognates) is more perspicuously translated in my view as ‘undistinguishedness’, rather than ‘indifference’ or ‘undifferentiatedness’ and their
cognates (which is how Macquarrie and Robinson render it in English in their translation). The reason for this translation preference is that everyday average Dasein is certainly not undifferentiated (i.e., undetermined) in terms of its factual involvement in the world, paradigmatically through its ongoing occupation of a set of specific sociocultural roles and the typical concerns and activities that pertain to these roles.

The averageness of Dasein’s everyday life, then, is quite differentiated in all sorts of ways; it is just that such differentiation does not mark out any particular Dasein as distinguished from others. As Heidegger writes, other people ‘are rather those from whom one [man] mostly does not distinguish [unterscheidet] oneself, among whom one also is’ (SZ 118, emphasis in the original German). Moreover, in this undistinguished mode of human existence, neither is everyday average Dasein indifferent to, in the ordinary sense of not caring about, the entities (e.g., the events, other people, or aspects of the world) that encounter and matter to it in the course of its lived experience. As Heidegger writes, notoriously, ‘In this inconspicuous and amorphous way, the anyone exerts its actual dictatorship. We take pleasure in and enjoy what anyone enjoys; we read, see, and make judgments about literature and art as anyone sees and judges; we also pull back, however, from the “great masses” as anyone pulls back; we find “outrageous” what anyone finds outrageous.’ (SZ 126f.) Consequently, everyday average Dasein is not indifferent to the way the world is and how this matters to it, but is affected by the world, again, in ways that does not distinguish it from how others are affected by the world, too. Consider, e.g., the emotions that one feels when the sports teams that one supports win or lose, or how we feel, individually and collectively, in the aftermath of the occurrences of extraordinary events in the world such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks, wars, the death of one’s loved ones, or even the significance of one’s impending death in its ordinary sense (cf. SZ §§51-2). Everyday average Dasein is not indifferent to these events, at least not normally, but neither do the individual or collective emotions that it feels in response to these events distinguish it from how others who are similarly affected feel in such circumstances: ‘The domination of the public way of interpreting the world [öffentliche Ausgelegtheit] has even determined the possibilities of attunement [Gestimmtseins], i.e., the basic ways in which Dasein lets the world matter to it. The anyone prescribes our affectivity [Befindlichkeit]; it determines what and how anyone “sees”‘. (SZ 169f.)

In light of this explication of undistinguishedness, Heidegger importantly clarifies its place and status at the beginning of Division Two of Sein und Zeit:

We have determined the idea of existence as understanding ability-to-be [verstehendes Seinskönnen], for which its own being is an issue. … But this ability-to-be, as something that is in each case mine, is free for ownedness, unownedness, or their modal undistinguishedness [Eigentlichkeit oder Uneigentlichkeit oder die modale Indifferenz ihrer]. Thus far, the Interpretation [of Dasein’s way of existing in Division One of Sein und Zeit] has restricted itself, through its account of average everydayness, to the analysis of the undistinguished or unowned way of existing [indifferenten bzw. uneigentlichen Existierens]. (SZ 232)36

36Heidegger notes in passing that his phenomenological analysis of being-in-the-world in Division One examines Dasein’s understanding of the world insofar as this understanding is unowned (uneigentlich) and, indeed (zwar), genuine (echt) (SZ 146, 148; cf. already 12). This remark should receive more attention than it has gotten in most interpretations of Sein und Zeit because it reveals how we need to have a more nuanced understanding of ownedness and unownedness. (Dreyfus’s reading is one of the few exceptions here [1991: 192–4].) It is further textual evidence that we
Why does this matter? The reason is that drawing the distinction between undistinguishedness and unownedness makes clear that human social existence not only need not be something deserving condemnation on existentialist grounds, but can be a dimension of human existence of which one can elaborate positive or at least evaluatively neutral forms. More specifically, a tenable distinction between undistinguishedness and unownedness can be established as follows. An undistinguished individual, in virtue of his familiarity with and absorption in the normativity of the anyone, projects the public normalized roles and self-interpretations (for-the-sake-of-whichs) that make his existence and activities significant. As just suggested, this mode of selfhood is neutral with regard to the assessment of the value of these identities, for it concerns the basic way in which we are human at all (as Dasein). By contrast, an unowned individual is presumably not only absorbed in the world, but exists furthermore in such a way that the entire content of his self-interpretation is exhausted by the possibilities and requirements that flow from the adoption of these identities. In other words, the apparent problem with being an unowned rather than just an undistinguished self is that the former lives in a wholly socially informed and prescribed way that obscures his possibility of achieving genuine autonomy.

Unfortunately, Heidegger does not carefully differentiate undistinguishedness from unownedness in Sein und Zeit, or rather, he uses ‘unowned’ and its cognates in a persistently ambiguous way so that it sometimes describes the undistinguishedness of average everyday human life, while at other times it clearly devalues and disparages this mode of existence by emphasizing how living an unowned life lifts the true burden of existing from the individual (SZ §§27, 38).

By taking seriously, however, the distinction between undistinguishedness and unownedness (even if Heidegger himself fails to do so consistently), we can mitigate the objection that Heidegger possesses an irretrievably negative conception of human social existence. Although it is certainly true that he himself does not elaborate what evaluatively neutral forms of being-with-others can look like, this choice does not rule out any positive account of human social existence within the framework of Sein und Zeit. Furthermore, if Heidegger were so contemptuous of human social existence, why does he nevertheless insist (in his terminology) that the anyone is an ‘existential’ (SZ 44), i.e., a necessary enabling condition of Dasein’s basic way of existing that ‘articulates the referential nexus of significance’ (SZ 129); and that self-ownership cannot consist in an individual’s radical detachment from the anyone, but only in an ‘existentiell’ modification of it (SZ 130, 179, 383; cf. 144–6)? In short, although

should keep separate for analytical purposes Dasein’s undistinguished understanding of the world from its unowned understanding of it.

In fact, he notes (unfortunately only) in passing that besides the two extreme forms of caring for others that concern him, there exist many other mixed forms of sociality that go beyond the scope of his investigation (SZ 122).

Consider, e.g., the self-understanding of the café waiter that Sartre describes in Being and Nothingness or the ‘selfless’ housewife that Betty Friedan describes in The Feminine Mystique.

Rentsch’s work (1999) is interesting by working out what these positive forms of being-with-others are (among other consequences) from within a broadly Heideggerian framework. It is an exemplary case of how to ‘think with Heidegger against Heidegger’.
one can rightly criticize Heidegger for the *incompleteness* of his account of the positive significance of human social existence, it is mistaken as a simple matter of textual interpretation to conclude that his conception of the social *categorically precludes* this significance. Consequently, critics who raise the set of objections that we have been concerned with here are wrong in drawing this implication.\textsuperscript{40}

5.5 Early Heidegger’s Insights for Contemporary Social Ontology

Early Heidegger’s conception of human social existence and reality certainly makes room, then, for an evaluative neutral (in his vocabulary, ‘undistinguished’) and thereby potentially positive account of human sociality and social reality. In light of Heidegger’s distinctive conception of the social constitution of the human individual, he is clearly a thoroughgoing *holist* with regard to the second ‘horizontal’ dimension of social ontology. Be that as it may, are there any significant implications between his holism in this dimension and his possible position in the third dimension of social ontology?

As a matter of sheer logical compatibility, it seems that endorsing holism in the second dimension does not commit one, strictly speaking, to either singularism or corporatism in the third dimension.\textsuperscript{41} In fact, if one takes into account Heidegger’s existentialist strain in the first half of Division Two of *Sein und Zeit*, one can make the argument that the most important ‘practical’ goal of his conception of Dasein’s possibility of realizing its ‘ability-to-be-a-whole’, and thereby of achieving ‘self-ownership’, is precisely to show his readers what ‘existentiell’ stance they must adopt in order to become truly unique and thereby *singular* individuals. According to the early Heidegger, it is the adoption of this stance (of ‘forerunning resoluteness’ [\textit{vorlaufende Entschlossenheit} [*SZ* §§62, 64]) that enables someone to \textit{truly} individualize – more precisely, \textit{singularize} – him- or herself as a unique individual.\textsuperscript{42} To be sure, this is a highly unusual, existentialist conception of singularism, but it is nevertheless a legitimate (though peculiar) form of it, provided that one understands how this process of individualization \textit{qua} singularization is supposed to happen. On the other hand, it is also not too difficult to conceive how this unusual form of singularism is compatible with a certain sort of corporatism (e.g., attempting to be a unique singular individual (say) by becoming the Rector of a University or the...

\textsuperscript{40} Limitation of space here prevents me from saying more about the philosophical consequences of this important issue; see Koo 2011a: 40–8.

\textsuperscript{41} It is crucial to keep in mind how these positions are exactly defined by Pettit; see my brief explanation of them above at the beginning of Sect. 5.1.

\textsuperscript{42} ‘Dasein owns itself in the originary individualization of the resoluteness that is reticent and expects/demands anxiety for itself. [\textit{Das Dasein} ist eigentlich selbst in der ursprünglichen Vereinzelung der verschwiegene, sich Angst zumutenden Entschlossenheit.]’ (\textit{SZ} 322, emphasis in the original German)
leader of an intellectual movement). The neutrality of holism vis-à-vis singularism or corporatism can be seen in the work of some (but not all) analytic social ontologists. For they typically do not challenge the paradigm of singular agency as such, but aim rather to show how it fails to satisfactorily explain collective intentionality phenomena. Thus, while holists like Pettit (1996: Ch. 4; 2002) and to a lesser extent Tuomela (cf. his invocation of the importance of ethos for collective intentionality [2007: 16; cf. 5, 35–42]) acknowledge the social constitution of the individual agent and also defend the legitimacy of corporatism regarding collective intentionality phenomena, neither of them challenge the correctness of singularism as such for explaining phenomena that fall within its purview.

That said, it is as a matter of fact more likely that a social ontologist who endorses holism will be more sympathetic to corporatism (or anti-singularism) about collective intentionality phenomena (Pettit 2014; Tuomela 2003). This is also true of the view of the early Heidegger, insofar as one can situate his position in the third dimension of social ontology. Not just this: In light of his conception of the social constitution of the human being, there is a tight connection between his version of holism and (rudimentary) corporatism in his social ontology. Making sense of this tight connection depends on making sense of the following claims: (1) Being-with-others amidst entities in the world is sharing in the unconcealment (originary truth) of entities (‘Miteinandersein bei ... ist ein Sichteilen in die Unverborgenheit (Wahrheit) des Vorhandenen.’). More specifically, sharing in the unconcealment of entities amounts to sharing an understanding of what we can possibly do with them, i.e., sharing an understanding of the possible ways for entities to be (in short, sharing possibilities); the shared understanding of commonalities among possibilities is what we fundamentally share in common (das Gemeinsame) between us. The sharing in the unconcealment of entities is sharing something essentially public; this sort of sharing can never belong to any particular individual as a private possession. What do these claims mean and how are they justified?

To begin with, what does it mean to share in the unconcealment (originary truth) of entities? In light our explication in Sect. 5.3 above of Heidegger’s conception of the world in its worldliness, i.e., of the world as a referential nexus of significance (Verweisungszusammenhang der Bedeutsamkeit), it is actually relatively easy to

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43 In Heidegger’s own life, these idiosyncratic commitments had ethically and politically disturbing consequences, to say the least.

44 Heidegger 1996: 106; cf. 101–10. All translations of this text into English are mine. In this text Heidegger, unlike in SZ, does not carefully distinguish between present-at-hand (vorhandene) and ready-to-hand (zuhandene) entities. In 1996 he tends to talk much more about our sharing in the unconcealment (truth) of the present-at-hand. But I think that since all his examples in this stretch of the text are of equipment (e.g., a piece of chalk, a sponge, a blackboard, chairs and tables, the lectern, the lecture hall, etc.), he has in view, generally speaking, our sharing in the unconcealment of entities (Seiendes) in general and of the ready-to-hand in particular (see 1996: 74–7). In any case, as far as I can tell, nothing philosophical turns on this loose use of his terminology in this stretch of the text.


46 Ibid.: 129f., 133.
make sense, first, of the idea of the unconcealment of entities. Basically, entities are unconcealed in this sense when we understand their place, role, or function within some referential nexus of significance (i.e., some factical world in its worldliness). To use Heidegger’s examples in his lecture course, we make sense of equipment like pieces of chalk, sponges, blackboards, lecterns, lecture halls, chairs and tables in the lecture hall, lecturing and listening activities, higher education goals and practices, lecturers, students, and building maintenance staff, etc., by understanding how each of them makes sense by referring to and hanging together with other items within a complex whole. It is the understanding of this complex whole that enables us to understand each entity that is caught up and makes sense within it, including other people who occupy certain roles within it. In this sense the understanding of the whole is prior to that of its constituent parts. In Heidegger’s vocabulary (SZ 220), to understand some complex whole (i.e., some current factical world) is to ‘disclose’ (erschliessen) that on the basis of which the entities embedded and making sense within this complex whole (this factical world) in turn make sense specifically (i.e., that on the basis of which they are ‘discovered’ [entdeckt]). Consequently, to understand the ‘unconcealment’ of entities is to understand how particular entities fit into and thereby make sense as what and how they are on the basis of the complex wholes pertaining to them. Regimenting the terminology, it is always a complex whole or, more broadly, some current factical world that is ‘disclosed’ or ‘unconcealed’, whereas it is always specific entities that are ‘discovered’.  

Now, two or more people coexist with one another when they share in the unconcealment or disclosedness of entities in the manner just explained. This is the fundamental way in which they share a common space of intelligibility, i.e., a common world in its worldliness, a common referential nexus of significance: When ‘a Dasein steps next to another Dasein, the former steps into the space of significance [Raum der Offenbarkeit] of the other; more precisely, their being amidst [entities] moves in the same environing field of significance [bewegt sich in demselben Umkreis der Offenbarkeit]’. In short, what they have in common (gemeinsam) at this basic level is a common way of making sense of entities, including other people.

Being-with-others manifests itself in the behavior of a plurality of people toward the same [zum Selbigen]. The sense of sameness here for a plurality of people is commonality [Gemeinsamkeit], having something in common, sharing in unconcealment. Being-with-others amidst entities is sharing in the unconcealment (truth) of relevant entities [Miteindersein bei Seiendem ist Sichteilen in die Unverborgenheit (Wahrheit) des betreffenden Seienden].

More specifically, what they share as a common space of intelligibility in this sense is a shared understanding of what they can possibly do, or how they can possibly relate or interact, with them. What they share, then, is a common understand-

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48 Ibid.: 134; cf. 137.
49 Ibid.: 106.
ing of *possibilities*, the possible ways in which entities can be (e.g., show up, make sense, behave, act, happen, relate to other entities, etc.).

That we share in the use of the chalk is only possible when this chalk is available ([*zur Verfügung steht*] to us all, i.e., is lying there, as something left to us, ready for its possible and legitimate use. To make use of it encompasses the fact that it is significant [*offenbar*] to us for this purpose, that we with one another are already occupied with it, that it is something common in and for our being amidst … [*Sein bei* …], even when our way of being occupied with it is not explicit. In order for us … to be able to share in the use of the chalk, it must in advance already be, in a more originary [*ursprünglicheren*] sense, something common; we must in advance already share in this common thing so that it is available to us, regardless of whether we make use of it or not.²⁰

The more originary sense of sharing something in common is precisely sharing the unconcealment (hence *originary* truth) of entities, the space of intelligibility or the world in its worldliness of the entities that belong to it.

Finally, Heidegger claims that the unconcealment of entities can never be the private possession of an individual, but must be something public (*öffentlich*): ‘Unconcealment never belongs to an individual as such. It is available as something common, so to speak, to everyone [*jedermann*]; it must therefore be essentially accessible to each Dasein.’²¹ Unlike the claims above, however, Heidegger makes this assertion without argument in this stretch of the text. In light of the interpretation of the significance of the anyone given above in Sect. 5.3, which argues that his claim that Dasein always already lives in a common world and must exist essentially as being-with is only justified by recourse to the ambivalent but crucial functions of the anyone, it is telling, I think, that the absence of the anyone in *Einleitung in die Philosophie* accompanies a lack of argumentative or even phenomenological support for the claim that the unconcealment of entities must always be public. But if the interpretation above of Heidegger’s conception of human social existence and reality in *Sein und Zeit* is convincing, Heidegger is not entitled to assert in *Einleitung in die Philosophie* that the unconcealment in question must be public. In this respect the account he provides of being-with and the anyone in *Sein und Zeit* is in my view more adequate and hence more convincing.

How does his account of being-with-others in *Einleitung in die Philosophie* express his possible position regarding the third dimension of social ontology? It does so by making explicit how shared or collective intentionality (anti-singularism or corporatism) not just has to be closely connected with the sharing of a common world (a common referential nexus of significance), but, indeed, how the former must rest on the latter.²² That is, he suggests in effect that if we want to adequately investigate group or collective intentionality phenomena, we need first to understand how such phenomena *make sense at all as possible* ways for entities, includ-

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²¹ *Ibid*.: 130; cf. 129, 133.
²² The example he uses of two individuals engaged in shared cooperative activity of doing various things at their shared cottage that nevertheless aim at accomplishing the same goal is suggestive (*ibid*.: 92), if the thought expressed there is explicitly connected with the issues treated in this section.
ing individual agents, to be, before we go on to examine how they can interact in ways that non-summatively construct group or collective phenomena: ‘Human community and society in its different variations, levels, and degrees of genuineness and lack of genuineness, persistence and brevity, is possible only because each Dasein as such is fundamentally … a being-with, i.e., [being-]with-others.’ In other words, his suggestion, to the extent that he has one that applies to what is at issue between singularism and corporatism, concerns the proper order of understanding and explanation between the items in question. As Hans Bernhard Schmid puts it well:

Joint action implies a form of disclosedness of the surrounding world …. [It] is about our shared possibilities, and these are not merely a sum or aggregate of the individual possibilities of the participating individuals. There is no way of accounting for shared possibilities in terms of individual possibilities. The reason is not that individuals do not have individual possibilities when acting jointly, but that, in most cases, the individual possibilities they have are based on the shared possibility [sic], and not the other way around. To quote [sic] a trivial example, it’s only within the shared practice of an election that individuals can cast their votes. The possibilities that shape our shared being are the base and frame of many of the possibilities we have as individuals. As observed by Heidegger, possibility is what Dasein basically is [i.e., what it projects and lives out], the very being of Dasein is not only my own being, but our common being. Dasein is not – or not exclusively – the being of an individual, as the individualistic setting of Being and Time makes us believe.

Heidegger’s claim in this context is that understanding how social or collective entities and their characteristics are in general intelligible, and hence possible, is explanatorily and phenomenologically prior to investigating how these entities and their characteristics can count as being independent of their constituents by way of their non-summative construction. This thought is what distinguishes Heidegger’s (admittedly rudimentary) version of corporatism from those articulated and defended by most analytic social ontologists. Although the ultimate anti-singularist position that is chosen and defended may be more or less the same, how he and they go about getting there is quite different in the regard just mentioned.

Now, what further consequences does showing that human individuals are always already being-with-others in a common world have for social ontology? If we mean ‘social ontology’ in its broadest sense as the study of all aspects, structures, or processes concerning the way of being of social or collective entities, early Heidegger’s approach is in my view crucial to and fruitful for understanding and explaining how these entities are real (exist). Such a broad understanding of social ontology includes theories of intersubjectivity, dialogical encounters, recognition, and alterity; philosophical reflections on the social reality of race, gender, class, and other social/collective notions; the philosophy of the social sciences (e.g., the relation between agency and structure, social causation); and philosophically minded sociology and social theory. Why so many different areas or disciplines? Because it strikes me that early Heidegger’s approach shows well how the social can be in (i.e., subtly condition and affect) the individual, for better or worse, as well as how the


54 Schmid 2009: 171, all emphases in the original. Except for the description of *Being and Time* as being individualistic, I agree wholeheartedly with this important point.
individual is in (i.e., enacts or performs) the social in the sense that it can engage
with and alter the social. The key insight is to shift from thinking in an overly nar-
row ontological or mereological approach to social ontology – e.g., inquire about
the set of necessary and sufficient conditions that something has to satisfy if it is to
count as a social or collective entity, or else ask what its identity (persistence) condi-
tions are, etc. – to an approach that emphasizes practices, norms, and roles in a
holistic and dynamic way as the basic site of the social, where social or collective
entities are intelligible, come into being, and persist in the complicated and ambigu-
ous ways that they do. In fact, there are other kinds of social ontology on offer in
contemporary philosophy that take their inspiration partially from the philosophy of
the early Heidegger (e.g., site social ontology, practice theory, etc.). Such social
ontologies are united precisely in arguing that a proper understanding and explana-
tion of social reality should begin by first examining the context or site in which
social or collective entities are intelligible and persist, i.e., more specifically, the
nexus of practices, norms, roles, material arrangements, etc., that compose and con-
stitute the meaningfulness of the contexts in question, rather than begin their inves-
tigations with the sort of questions that analytic social ontology tend to have in view.

Now, it seems to me that Tuomela’s approach does quite a good job if one con-
fines oneself to doing social ontology in a classically analytic fashion (not that there
is anything wrong with that, as far as it goes). But this approach at best only inves-
tigates and defends anti-singularism in a rather limited and arguably one-sided way
by effectively holding that non-summative constructionism is the paradigm of
investigating the social ontology of social or collective entities. But this may not be
the most penetrating and fruitful approach in social ontology. More importantly,
with the notable exception of Pettit’s and to a lesser extent Tuomela’s work, it is
quite puzzling why most approaches in analytic social ontology almost totally
ignore the social constitution of the human individual as such, and yet think it
unproblematic to help themselves to the resources that this very constitution makes
available as unexplained explainers in their accounts of social or collective notions.
In this regard analytic social ontology still remains deeply atomistic in the sense that
it takes for granted that individual agents are the given ‘atoms’ of social entities
even when it aims to defend corporatism. This assumption succumbs, so to speak,
to the Myth of the Socially Given, even if it can at its best countenance and defend,
contra methodological individualism, the irreducibility of social and collective enti-
ties (beliefs, attitudes, intentions, actions, etc.). If analytic social ontology aims not
to isolate itself as a self-contained program of philosophical research that works on
a self-chosen island, it is imperative that it reflects on whether it has the conceptual
tools at its disposal to account for the social constitution of the human individual as
such, that is, the way in which the human individual always already coexists with
others in a common world.

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56 Consider the title of Gilbert 2003.
57 I thank Thomas Szanto, Alessandro Salice, and Hans Bernhard Schmid, the organizers of the
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March 2013), for inviting me to be a presenter at it. This workshop certainly lived up to its billing by providing me with an opportunity both to think initially about my topic and subsequently getting numerous critical and constructive comments from the audience about many of its ideas as they were presented then. The final version of this paper has altered in a number of significant ways from its initial presentation at this workshop in light of those comments, for which I thank the audience. I thank especially Bernhard Schmid for his critical questions at my session and also in a number of periodic informal conversations on other occasions. Lastly, I also thank two anonymous reviewers of the penultimate draft of this paper for thoughtful comments and suggestions.


