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Phenomenological Discoveries Concerning the ‘We’:

Mapping the Terrain

Thomas Szanto & Dermot Moran

“(…) I, we, and world belong together.”
(Husserl, *Ideen II*, 288)

“Even the Being-alone of Dasein is Being-with in the world.”
(Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 120)

“(…) the I is but a ‘part’ of the We, and the We an essential part of the I.”
(Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, 225)

I. From the second-person perspective to the first-person plural (and back)

What is it to belong to a ‘we’ or an ‘us’? What is the nature of interpersonal understanding, social interaction, and social participation? For instance, is sharing a common sociocultural environment, a common history, or a common life-world, prior to, or even a necessary condition for, such understanding, interaction or participation, or, rather, a result of them? How can *we* collectively—rather than just *you* and *me*, and *others*—constitute and share norms, experiences, or even emotions? Are there any other ‘proprietors’ of the social domain? Is social reality composed entirely of individuals, or are there also irreducibly plural subjects or ‘We’-agents?

Curiously, the nature of social and collective identity or plural agency has not been at the forefront of philosophy over the past hundred years, although it has been treated in sociology and in those social sciences inspired by Marxism and, in some more restricted circles, by Hegelianism. As a matter of fact, the issue

of collectivity has only relatively recently been given serious attention in analytic philosophy, especially in the work of Michael Bratman, Margaret Gilbert, Philip Pettit, Carol Rovane, John Searle, or Raimo Tuomela. There is an older tradition especially stemming from the work of Peter Winch or Georg Henrik von Wright, which was, in turn, inspired by Wittgenstein and Collingwood, but this tended towards the philosophical critique of sociological explanation rather than an examination of the nature and varieties of togetherness.

Arguably, however, when looking back over the last century of thinking about sociality, there seems to be no other single intellectual tradition within philosophy, or even in neighbouring disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, including sociology, other than phenomenology, that has endeavored to address the issue of interpersonal understanding, collectivity and togetherness with such rigour and detail. Phenomenology, from its very inception and for systematic reasons, was always synonymous with the phenomenology of sociality, the careful descriptive elucidation of the layers and strata of both social and collective life. Moreover, as the epigraphs of this article vividly illustrate, a great number of phenomenologists, even if certainly not all, would concur with the idea that sociality is not only a matter of *intersubjectivity*, of relations between subjects, in the sense of *you* and *me* appropriately interacting, but also of me, or me *and* you, relating to a *we*, or forming an *us* which may or may not be formed against a *them*. The different forms of ‘We’ may eventually be more or less rationally or normatively coherent, more or less emotionally cohesive, or more or less diachronically or institutionally robust, and may, in different contexts, be formed out of very different reasons, or pursue, as group agents, very different goals. To be sure, the very notion of an irreducible collective subject, or group agent, is controversial, and it is one of the themes explored in this book.

All the contributions of the present volume share the conviction that phenomenology is always a phenomenology of sociality. They also agree that phenomenologists of the social have to endorse, or at least critically confront, not only the second-person perspective but also the first-person perspective plural. Although phenomenology has always insisted on the first- as well as the second-person (singular) perspective regarding consciousness, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity, there is also a first- and indeed second-person plural. This recognition of the need of singularity, of alterity, as well as of plurality in the understanding of subjectivity is, incidentally, a perspective that Husserl famously invoked when he expressed the need for a methodological shift from the *ego cogito* to a *nos cogitamus* (Husserl 1959, 316; cf. Carr 1986). In fact—and contrary to still widespread prejudices—it is entirely wrong to conceive of phenomenology as practicing any form of methodological individualism, let alone solipsism. Rather, phenomenology has always recognized that humans come to develop their intentional, meaningful, and meaning-constituting lives always and only in the context of a given socio-historical context, a common background, or a set of shared habits, and embed-

ded in a world in which they participate, and which they possibly aim to individually or collectively transform. Thus, phenomenologists, however much they differ in degree and commitment, all agree on the basic idea that humans are intrinsically social beings, acting within specific historical and cultural contexts, and embedded in a shared life-world. Phenomenologists of all traditions and hues have sought to analyze the complex network of social relations and social acts, constitutive of values, norms, communities and social or institutional facts. Phenomenological conceptions of sociality, moreover, are expressed in a particularly rich range of notions. For example, virtually all phenomenologists, including above all Max Scheler, Edith Stein, Edmund Husserl, Alfred Schütz, or Maurice Merleau-Ponty, have elaborated on the core notion of the intersubjective encounter, ‘empathy’ (*Einfühlung*), while others have employed cognate conceptions of ‘being-with-others’ (Heidegger’s ‘Being-with’ or Sartre’s ‘Being-for-Others’). But, beyond this fairly well-known conceptual territory, most phenomenologists have also referred to vocabulary that points not only to *interpersonal* but to *collective* or genuinely *communal* engagements, such as ‘consociality’ (Schütz), ‘common minds’ and ‘higher order persons’, the ‘we-world’, ‘communalization’ and ‘socialization’ (Husserl), ‘communal persons’ (Scheler), or ‘Being-for-groups’ and ‘Being-in-groups’ (Sartre), to name just a few. Many of these concepts are explored in the contributions in this volume.

In a remarkable historical turn, these very phenomenological notions can also be found re-expressed in somewhat different technical terms in contemporary analytic ‘social ontology’—indeed, it is notable that the very term ‘social ontology’ was first coined by Husserl more than a hundred years ago (Husserl 1973, 102; cf. also Salice 2013; Caminada 2011; Szanto forthcoming). Current social ontology studies collective practices, social institutions and cultural products that are, in some sense or another, dependent on what has been called collective intentionality, shared goals, collective agreements, or joint commitment. Searle, for example, claims that “social ontology is both created by human actions and attitudes but at the same time has an epistemically objective existence and is part of the natural world” (Searle 2006, 12). Phenomenology has long understood and analyzed such ‘creation’ as genuinely *social constitution*, without, to be sure, simply confusing the (social) constitution of social reality with the social construction of reality (cf. Berger/Luckmann 1966; Collin 1997, 110–121). Very few contemporary analytic social ontologists are familiar with the phenomenological tradition (e.g., Schmid 2009), and most simply ignore it. On the other hand, many phenomenologists offer powerful lines of argument that challenge the hitherto predominantly analytic discussions, which often all-too narrowly focus on team-reasoning, joint commitments, or shared agency. Current social ontology could greatly benefit from reintegrating the respective phenomenological insights concerning, for instance, the role of affectivity, habituality or embodiment in collective intentionality, as could, conversely, the phenomenology of sociality benefit

from such a contemporary reassessment. Thus, by setting its methods and vocabulary in the context of current research, this book aims to eventually transform the understanding and reception of social phenomenology as well as to contribute to the contemporary debates in social philosophy, social cognition and social ontology.

The same applies to social cognition as to social ontology: philosophical work on what is now the rapidly growing area of social cognition—our ability to interpret and understand others—is also in the process of ‘rediscovering’ core conceptions of the phenomenology of sociality, such as empathy (Stueber 2006), or the affective and embodied nature of socio-cognitive engagements, which were long emphasized and extensively studied by phenomenologists (cf. Taipale 2014; Jensen/Moran 2013). The essays of this book will discuss and develop these insights in articulating, for a new era, phenomenology’s contribution to the social cognition literature.

Let us now outline in more detail some of the main issues that have dominated the philosophy of sociality over the past two decades. In doing so, we will point to some important, but hitherto underexposed, connections between social cognition research, social ontology and social philosophy more broadly conceived, and notably to those desiderata that will be addressed in this volume.

Consider first interpersonal relations, which have been the object of much scrutiny lately within the social cognition paradigm. One of the core, and still largely unsettled, issues here is how to explain our psychological, epistemic, or emotional access to other minds. This debate has become known as the ‘theory of mind’ or the ‘mindreading’ debate (Davies/Stone 1995a, 1995b; Coplan/Goldie 2011; Decety 2012; Baron-Cohen et al. 2013, Stueber 2013; Michael 2014; Zahavi 2014). Is social cognition grounded in explicitly or non-inferentially simulating or imitating (e.g., Heal 1995; Goldman 2006; Stueber 2006; Gordon 2008) or sub-personally mirroring (Gallese 2001) others’ experiences in oneself, or in adapting others’ first-person perspective; or is it rather to be conceived of as engaging in a conceptual, inferential and interpretative activity of mindreading, by applying a folk-psychological theory of mind to oneself and others (Leslie 1987; Gopnik/Wellman 1992; Meltzoff/Gopnik 1993; Baron-Cohen 1995; Leslie et al. 2004), or, as yet others claim, by employing some so-called ‘hybrid’ strategy of simulating-*cum*-projecting mental models (Nichols/Stich 2003)?² Meanwhile, and as the debate between theory-theorists and simulation-theorists (and hybrid theorists) has already become somewhat deadlocked, phenomenologically inspired theorists have put much pressure on both camps, and argued for novel ways to conceptualize of what they would usually refer to as ‘empathy’ (*Einfühlung*). They argue that our ability to experience and understand others rests on a specific form of ‘direct perception’ of others’ expressions and their social context, or is a ‘*sui generis* experience’ of the embodied mind of others (Ratcliffe 2007; Gallagher

2008; Krueger/Overgaard 2012; cf. Jensen/Moran 2012, 2013, and, critically, Jacob 2011, and Zahavi 2014).

The social cognition debate is very active, but, curiously, it has not attended properly to what phenomenologists have long acknowledged as the passive, habitualized, affective or embodied nature of social interaction. The social cognition debate has also largely ignored the role of a common background of shared values, habits or perspectives, the role of social typification, or the role of a shared and essentially social life-world, sometimes called a ‘we-world’ (Husserl).

Furthermore, one of the fault lines in the discussion opens up around the question as to whether some form of sharing of experiences, and of affective states in particular, between an empathiser and the target subject is necessary for empathy to succeed and, if so, what this sharing precisely amounts to (Jacob 2011; Michael/Fardo 2014; Zahavi 2011, 2014).

The issue of ‘sharing’, and especially the sharing of mental properties or actions, has been recently addressed by a number of analytic philosophers of action working on collective intentionality and joint agency. They have investigated how it is possible for two or more individuals to intend to do something, or to cooperate in doing what they intend. Discussions in this area have typically focused on the question of whether collective intentions and agency are reducible to an aggregation of individual agents and, if not, whether we would then need to postulate some supra-individual bearer, some group mind, group person, or group agent, of the collective intentionality (cf. Huebner 2014; Szanto 2014). More specifically, philosophers of action dwelled upon the question of where to ‘tie in’, as it were, the ‘jointness’ in collective engagements: in the intentional object, or the ‘interlocking’ of interdependent intentional plans and shared goals (Bratman 1992, 1993, 2014), the ‘we-mode’ (e.g., Searle 1995, 2010; Tuomela 2007, 2013), the ‘plural subject’ (Gilbert 1989, 2013) of collective intentions, or some other form of ‘rational integration’ individuals (Rovane 1998, 2014; Pettit 2003; List/Pettit 2011).

When it comes to broader ontological issues concerning social reality, analytic social ontology also differs from earlier debates in the philosophy of the social sciences. Earlier debates have largely focused on the issue of methodological individualism versus holism understood as an explanatory programme (cf. O’Neill 1973; Udehn 2002; Zahle/Finn 2014), or on the issue of explanation vs. understanding (e.g., in the work of G. H. von Wright or Karl-Otto Apel, see *Richard Wolin’s* contribution in this volume). In contrast, current social ontology typically proceeds by reflecting on the related but different metaphysical and normative issues concerning the relation between individuals and social entities and the proper ontological status of the latter (cf. Ruben 1985). To get a fair idea of what is at stake here, consider three doctrines, which, in one form or another and even if sometimes under different headings, can be encountered in most contemporary social ontologies (e.g., Gilbert 1989; Pettit 1993, 2014):

Intentional-Psychological and Social Holism: The conditions of individuation of a subject S's conscious intentional states and its (objective and/or phenomenal) contents are fixed by (i.) the intra-subjective relations that those states have vis-à-vis other intentional states of S, and (ii.) by the inter-subjective and social relations that S bears to other subjects (S* ... S*n) (and their intentional states).

Socio-Ontological Anti-Singularism: Social reality comprises not only individuals but also social entities and collectives and, possibly, higher order or supra-individual entities/properties (possibly with their own laws and systemic, normative, etc. structures governing them), which are not reducible to, but may be founded, or supervene, upon, individuals.

Ontological and Normative Anti-Collectivism: Individual intentional psychology and personhood (including its ontological and moral properties, such as autonomous agency, volition, spontaneity, moral accountability, dignity, etc.) is in no way compromised, i.e., 'outflanked' or 'overridden' (Pettit 1993), by an individual's (membership-)relations to social collectives and the (intentional, normative, etc.) laws governing such collectives.

On the face of it, it seems as if these claims run counter to one another. In particular, the third doctrine, anti-collectivism, seems to be incompatible, or, at least, in serious tension, with the first two. As a number of contributions in this volume powerfully demonstrate, however, most phenomenological versions of social ontology can accommodate all three claims without encountering a contradiction (cf. esp. the articles of *Caminada*, *O'Madagain*, *Szanto*, and *Vendrell Ferran*).

It is surely the case that social cognition, social ontology and collective intentionality do not represent opposing lines of research, and that the respective issues should be dealt with side by side. This, however, is still far from the current situation. Only in very recent times can one witness a growing but still rather underdeveloped tendency to link the issues in social *cognition* to social *interaction*, sometimes referred to as 'interaction theory' (IT) (De Jaegher/Di Paolo 2007; De Jaegher et al. 2010; Gallagher/Varga 2013; Satne/Roepstorff 2015; cf., critically, Herschbach 2012; Michael/Overgaard 2013, Michael/Christensen/Overgaard 2014). Even less developed are recent attempts to discuss social cognition in relation to collective intentionality and shared agency (Butterfill 2013; Tomasello 2014; Zahavi 2014; cf. Szanto/Moran 2015 and *Felipe León's* contribution). Among the issues dealt with within this paradigm, the phenomenon of joint attention (Eilan et al. 2005; Seemann 2012; cf. Baron-Cohen 1995) figures predominantly. Given the crucial developmental role of this form of social cognition (Tomasello 2014), this is a little surprising. But, again, what is indeed surprising,

especially when viewed from a phenomenological perspective, is the almost complete ignorance within the collective intentionality debate of the single most basic form of social cognition, to wit, empathy.

This lacuna is all the more apparent given that, in sociology, social psychology, and the collective intentionality debate, there has recently been a very lively debate on shared affectivity and collective emotions (e.g., Parkinson et al. 2005; von Scheve/Salmela 2014; Stets/Turner 2014). Given that empathy is the primary access to emotions and affective states—though empathy is surely not restricted to such states—the absence of research on the matter is somewhat puzzling.

Social relations are, almost always, emotionally charged, and have some affective dimension. Sociality has not only its *ontology* and *epistemology*, therefore, but also its specific and often richly differentiated *phenomenology*. Other individuals and groups *matter* to us, or *concern* us; some matter to us more, some less. Accordingly, our empathic access, too, will vary, based, typically, on our social typification, identification and our social distinctions (cf. Eres/Molenberghs 2013). Social cognition is typically not *just* cognition but, rather, *affective* and *embodied interaction*. Similarly, collective intentionality and group agency involve not just coordination, team-reasoning or rational agency, but may also involve shared emotions and values. And some would even go so far as to attribute collective or corporate emotions to whole groups.

Within the collective intentionality debate, the focus has specifically been on the sense and feeling of sharedness, and their role in joint commitments and shared agency (Michael 2011), as well as on socially extended or distributed emotions (Krueger 2015) and genuinely collective or group-level emotions (Helm 2008, 2014; Schmid 2009, 2014; Konzelmann Ziv 2007, 2009; Huebner 2011; Salmela 2011, 2014; Gilbert 2002, 2014; Guerrero 2014; Schützeichel 2014).

Phenomenologists have long recognized affectivity and emotions as integral building blocks of social reality. As many of the contributions to this volume demonstrate, we can find the most elaborate analyses of shared affectivity and social emotions (such as grief, shame, etc.) in the work of the so-called ‘early’ or ‘realist’ phenomenologists from the Munich and Göttingen Circles, such as Max Scheler, Gerda Walther, Edith Stein, or Dietrich von Hildebrand, but such analyses may also be found in the work of such figures as Gurwitsch or Merleau-Ponty (see esp. the contributions in Part III and Part IV; cf. Szanto forthcoming b).

In this connection, phenomenologists have argued for the following claims, though with quite different emphases¹:

¹ Notice that these claims, which are left deliberately vague at some junctures so as to accommodate the different stances different phenomenologists would take on them, partly mirror the above-stated socio-ontological claims. For the different weighing and emphasis of each of these claims, see again the articles in Part III and Part IV, and especially Vendrell Ferran’s contribution.

Socio-Normative Embeddedness of Emotions: A subject's emotional directedness towards objects and persons, i.e., his 'affective intentionality', is deeply embedded in our social environment, and our shared (aesthetic and moral) norms and values.

Social Holism regarding Emotions: Given the socio-normative embeddedness of emotions, but also moving beyond that, a subject's experience, expression and/or regulation of her (social or non-social) emotions is socially modulated or co-constituted by her interpersonal relationships, her social identity, or her membership in certain groups.

Anti-Singularism regarding Emotions: Emotions, or some aspects of emotions (e.g., their expression or regulation), are not, as it were, bound to their typical phenomenal locus of instantiation, namely individuals. Rather, under certain conditions, in certain types of communities, and in some sense or another (e.g., in terms of 'joint ownership', synchronous 'entrainment', 'social appraisal'), emotions can be shared among or across individuals, or may even be attributed to collectives as such, which can then be said to have an emotional life of their own.

Notice that, if these claims go through, they will not only hold for distinctively social, or other-directed emotions, such as resentment, betrayal, or grief, but rather quite generally for all kinds of affective states and emotions. Given that there has been quite some confusion about this (cf. Darwall 1998; Zahavi 2014, 2015), it is also worth mentioning that none of these claims entails any equivalence between empathy and shared emotions. Since, phenomenologically viewed at least, empathy is neither necessarily an affective state, nor presupposes any interpersonal similarity between the affective states of empathizer and target (cf. Jacob 2011 *versus* Zahavi 2011), the fact that virtually all phenomenologists stress the relevance of empathy for interpersonal engagements has nothing to do with any of their arguments for the above three claims. Quite the contrary, phenomenologists from the outset have been adamant in emphasizing the difference between empathy and emotional sharing. For a striking example, just think of Scheler's (1926) fine-grained conceptual distinctions that disambiguate between 'empathy' (*Nachfühlen*), 'feeling-with' (*Mitfühlen, Sympathie*), or joint and shared feelings (*Einsfühlung, Miteinanderfühlen*) (see also Stein 1917, 1920, or Walther 1923; Konzelman Ziv 2007; Zahavi 2015).

There are two further reasons why phenomenological accounts can contribute to moving towards a more adequate and more comprehensive theory of shared affectivity: (1) first, phenomenological accounts may help to circumvent problems associated with both phenomenal token-identity construal of shared emotions, on the one hand, and cognitivist-*cum*-normativist accounts, on the oth-

er hand. According to the phenomenalist account, collective emotions entail a “phenomenological fusion” of emotions, such that “there is one token affective state in which many individuals take part”, and which has its own “phenomenological subject” (Schmid 2014, 9; cf. Schmid 2009); meanwhile, according to cognitivist-*cum*-normativist accounts, collective emotions are a matter of ‘joint commitments to feel’ (Gilbert 2002, 2014; cf. Helm 2014). From a phenomenological point of view, both accounts are, however, seriously limited (see the contributions in *Part IV*; cf. Salmela 2012; and Szanto forthcoming b). (2) Secondly, phenomenological accounts of emotions emphasize the intentional (object-related), cognitive, evaluative and normative, but also the passive, affective, and embodied, aspects of emotions (Vendrell Ferran 2008). And since, arguably, both cognitive and non-cognitive components are at play in sharing emotions, the phenomenological approach is best suited to addressing this issue.

Beyond the discussion on shared and collective emotions, phenomenologists offer uniquely rich ways to address distinctively other-directed, or social, emotions, such as shame or grief (see esp. the contributions of *Steven Crowell*, *Matthew Ratcliffe* and *Christian Skirke*; cf. also Léon 2013; Zahavi 2014). Moreover, given many phenomenologists’ insistence on the intrinsic relation between emotions and (shared) norms and values—think of the theory of ‘value-ception’ (*Wertnehmen*) in Scheler, Stein or Husserl—phenomenologists are particularly well prepared to contribute to the moral psychology of social emotions such as guilt or forgiveness (Rinofner-Kreidl 2013, 2014; Steinbock 2014).

Finally, this brings us to yet another important avenue upon which phenomenologists and their ‘offspring’ have embarked in elucidating social reality—an avenue, for one, that has been endorsed only by strikingly few authors within contemporary social phenomenology, or even social philosophy in general: namely the moral, normative and especially the political dimensions of the ‘We’.

Phenomenologists are generally not only opposed to any form of solipsism and individualism but, moreover—and in stark contrast to the much more restricted focus of standard contemporary social ontology (cf., however, Pettit 1997 and Gilbert 2006)—their contribution to the analysis of social reality was never purely an ontological, epistemological, or, for that matter, purely philosophical or *phenomenological*, enterprise. Thus, from Husserl, to Scheler, Stein, and Schütz, or Arendt, and from Merleau-Ponty to Sartre, virtually all thinkers of the phenomenological movement were deeply interested in contemporary sociological, social and political thought, and many typically also engaged directly in concrete social movements, of their times: these included educational reform (e.g., Stein), the Catholic ‘communitarism’ *avant-la-lettre* of the interwar period (e.g., Scheler, Stein, or Hildebrand), postwar Marxism (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Paci or Tr n Duc Thao), or postwar anti-(Soviet)-Communism (Merleau-Ponty or Pato ka), just to name a few (cf. Waldenfels et al. 1977ff.). Thus, we fully endorse Michael Gubser’s recent corrective to this narrative:

When future historians chronicle the twentieth century, they will see phenomenology as one of the preeminent social and ethical philosophies of its age. (...) Central to the tradition from the start (...) was a preoccupation with ethics and social renewal—at times overt, often implicit—that inspired not only second-generation phenomenologists *engagé*, but also the founders. (Gubser 2014, 1)

Consequently, the book shall also contribute to restoring and recasting certain normative conceptions of sociality as discussed in postwar and post-Frankfurt-School moral, social, and political philosophy, and especially in the work of authors like Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Axel Honneth, and Stephen Darwall.

We hope, then, to have made a clear enough case why phenomenology is a most suitable candidate for making an impact on the contemporary landscape in regard to social ontology, social cognition and the philosophical study of sociality generally. But, surely, one might still wonder whether we need *another* phenomenologically oriented collection of essays on this topic. If we look at the English, German, or French contemporary literature on the subject, though, we take the answer to be clearly positive. For one, notwithstanding lively debates and an ever-growing interest in phenomenology in the English-speaking world, which is also reflected in an increasing number of edited volumes, companions and handbooks (Moran 2000; Dreyfus/Wrathall 2009; Luft/Overgaard 2012; Zahavi 2012), somewhat surprisingly, there is yet no single comparable account of the phenomenology of sociality available. To be sure, in recent years, a fair number of monographs have been devoted to ‘second-person phenomenology’, or the phenomenology of interpersonal relations and intersubjectivity (Theunissen 1965; Waldenfels 1971; Haney 1994; Steinbock 1995; Zahavi 2001, 2014; Schmid 2001). However, with very few exceptions (McMullin 2013; Theunissen 1965), they have typically restricted their focus to Husserl or broadly Husserlian phenomenology. Moreover, ‘discovering the “We”’ means, as we have seen, essentially moving beyond the merely interpersonal domain, and incorporating investigations of the first-person plural, or ‘we-mode’ (Tuomela 2007), as well as the broader socio-normative contexts arising from such we-intentionality (cf. Chelstrom 2013). This is the distinctively novel focus of the present volume.²

In addition, phenomenological contributions to the philosophy of the social sciences and sociology have more often than not been restricted to work on Schütz’s (and Luckmann’s; e.g. Schütz/Luckmann 2003), arguably seminal, analysis of social reality. Thus, Schützian sociology of knowledge and interpretative

² Here it should not go unnoticed that there are in fact a number of more specific, and almost exclusively Husserlian, works focused on elaborating on a phenomenological social ontology, often with quite domain-specific analyses (e.g., pertaining to the specific types of collectives, the state, etc.) (e.g., Toulemon 1962, Schuhmann 1988, Perreau 2013); for an interesting, Husserlian inspired, but highly original, recent account of social ontology, see also Hart 1992; for more literature regarding this line of research, see also Szanto forthcoming a.

sociology (the so-called *Wissenssoziologie*, or *Verstehende Soziologie*) have hitherto either been the dominant paradigms for phenomenology's contribution to the philosophy of the social sciences (Natanson 1970, 1973; Barber/Dreher 2014; cf. Collin 1997)³, or else were confined between the covers of editions entitled *Phenomenology and Marxism* (Waldenfels et al. 1977ff.), however valuable those collections indeed were for the reception of a phenomenology of sociality.⁴ However, we believe that this view is in many ways limited (see also *Vendrell Ferran's* contribution). We contend that there is a whole series of other positions, in particular within the so-called 'early,' or 'realist,' phenomenological movement, but also within the work of the movement's founding fathers, Husserl or Scheler, and its French or American (e.g., Gurwitsch) avenues and crossings, to be rediscovered for social philosophy—as well as for, it's fair to say, most social *phenomenologists* working today. Accordingly, in contrast to standard accounts, one of the special features of the volume is that a number of essays will critically engage with lesser-known but still important authors of the phenomenological movement. Thus, the volume will focus not only on the work of the most influential German and post-war French phenomenologists of sociality (notably Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Max Scheler, Alfred Schütz, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, or Emmanuel Levinas), but will also cover relevant topics in the highly sophisticated social ontologies of such lesser-known figures as Adolf Reinach, Edith Stein, Gerda Walther, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Karl Löwith or Aron Gurwitsch. Furthermore, a number of essays will deal with prominent philosophers who, though not part of the phenomenological movement strictly speaking, have sympathetically or critically engaged with or have been strongly influenced by phenomenological thought, viz. Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt, or Jean-François Lyotard.⁵

In summary, then, the ambition of the volume is to reevaluate, critically and in contemporary terms, the unprecedentedly rich phenomenological resources regarding social reality on the level of interpersonal, collective and communal engagements. In doing so, the book pursues three objectives: first, it aims to systematically explore all the key phenomenological aspects of social reality, ranging from its cognitive, intentional, agential, and affective to its normative and political dimensions; secondly, to offer novel assessments of central but also less well-

³ Introductory textbooks or collected volumes on (again mostly Schützian) *phenomenological sociology* abound, to be sure; see, e.g., Wagner 1983; Grathoff 1995; Benoist/Karstenti 2001; Ferguson 2006; Bühl 2007; Fischer 2012.

⁴ Think also of the by now largely forgotten, but at the time highly influential, works of Trần Duc Thao (esp. 1951), or Enzo Paci (esp. 1963).

⁵ Three even lesser known figures of the early phenomenological movement are Tomoo Otaka, Felix Kaufmann, and Kurt Stavenhagen, who have each contributed highly intriguing work to the phenomenology of sociality and collectivity (Otaka 1932; Stavenhagen 1933; Kaufmann 1945). Though they are not explicitly dealt with within this volume, they should certainly not go missing from this list. Incidentally, both Otaka and Kaufmann had an intensive critical exchange with Schütz.

known proponents of the phenomenology of sociality; and, finally, to contextualize this elaborate body of work within contemporary trends in social philosophy, including social cognition research and the ever-growing literature on analytic social ontology, as well as the philosophy of emotions and embodiment and the broader spectrum of contemporary social and political philosophy.

II. An Overview of the Volume

The volume is divided into five variously interconnected parts. All center on systematic and thematic rather than purely historical or methodological considerations. To be sure, however, one cannot go about (re-)discovering collectivity in phenomenological thought and by means of phenomenological analysis in ignorance of the socio-historical context, and without dwelling upon the key methodological, meta-theoretical, or foundational issues of such an endeavor. After all, and in a rather obvious sense, neither early nor post-Husserlian phenomenologists devised their conceptions of sociality in a conceptual or sociocultural void. Setting the historical and methodological stage, then, and elaborating on the most salient normative aspects, ethical motives, and the broader political-philosophical background is the task of the opening part of the volume.

Part I: Historical and Methodological Issues

A central question in the phenomenology of sociality is whether I-Thou relations, i.e. dyadic, interpersonal relations between subjects who directly address one another, are to be given priority over the standpoint of individuals.

In the opening paper, *James Risser* addresses this issue from a historical perspective. The essay follows the complex trail of thinking about the relation between I and Thou from such diverse, early phenomenological voices as Stein, Buber and Löwith up to Gadamer's hermeneutical version of being- and speaking-with-one-another and Heidegger's being-with.

Closely related to the issue of the priority of I-Thou relations over the individual's first-person perspective, is what *Steven Crowell* calls 'second-person phenomenology', i.e. the reflection on experiencing oneself 'in the accusative'. Crowell asks whether such experience is constitutive of a shared world, and of such essentially normative concepts as responsibility, accountability, self-identity, and rationality. Following a broadly Levinasian path, and critically examining Stephen Darwall's contemporary construal of the second-person perspective, Crowell argues that this is indeed so. Moreover, he shows that the second-person perspective, in turn, is not a constituted stance, to wit, not constituted by empathy, but precisely a constitutive phenomenon. In particular, it constitutes both the other, understood as another rational and normatively responsive being, and, at the

same time, via the experience of a feeling of obligation towards those others, one's own responsiveness to others' normative claims.

Beyond such foundational issues, *Part I* also probes phenomenology's contribution to pre- and post-war (and post-Marxist), as well as contemporary social and political, philosophy.

Accordingly, *Richard Wolin's* essay investigates the status of phenomenology vis-à-vis the hermeneutical analysis of the lifeworld and sociality, and in particular against the debate on explanation versus understanding in the philosophy of the social sciences. Furthermore, the essay elaborates, critically, on Habermas's communicative and normative re-appropriation of the transcendental-phenomenological idea of a social lifeworld.

Sophie Loidolt reexamines the work of one of the eminent figures of post-war social and political thought, Hannah Arendt, a thinker who is often sidelined in phenomenological scholarship, to be sure, unjustly so. In her paper, Loidolt focuses on Arendt's phenomenologically inspired conception of 'actualized plurality', and reconstructs this notion as a specific form of being and living together, that is, as a practical enactment of we-intentionality that is not purpose-bound. Importantly, the paper demonstrates how Arendt's social ontology is essentially political, without necessarily converging to standard notions of politics.

Part II: Intersubjectivity, the 'We-World' and Objectivity

A central issue of any phenomenology of sociality is the question of the priority of I-Thou relations over sharedness and collectivity, or the priority of the second-person singular over the first-person plural perspective. This issue is canvassed under a historical and meta-theoretical angle in *Part I*, and is taken up again and expanded on by the contributions in *Part II*. This part, then, revolves around the conceptual trias of intersubjectivity, the notion of a 'we-world', and objectivity.

The first essay in this section, by *Jo-Jo Koo*, addresses the foundational issue of the commonality of the life-world versus dyadic encounters head-on. Koo argues—siding with the early Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, and in opposition to phenomenologists such as Buber, Sartre, Theunissen, or Levinas—that an adequate phenomenology of social reality should grant primacy to the explanation of our already sharing a common world. At the same time, he maintains that we should not lose sight of the importance of our embodied, inter-personal encounters with one-another as a crucial explanandum of any phenomenology of sociality worth its salt.

Taking up this lead, *Dermot Moran* elaborates in more detail on the role that embodiment, mutual recognition and the interpenetration of subjective consciousnesses play in the constitution of the intrinsically social life-world. Specifically, Moran traces the relations between embodied self-experience, experience of others, and experience of the world in Merleau-Ponty and in the later Husserl,

and explores their notions of ‘we-world’, ‘inter-corporeality’ and ‘interpenetration’ (*Ineinandersein*).

Finally, in his essay on the intersubjective constitution of objectivity, *Cathal O’Madagain* argues that combining Husserl’s intersubjective theory of the constitution of intentional objects with Davidson’s theory of the triangulation of subjectivity, objectivity and intersubjectivity yields a novel argument to the effect that our very concept of a mind-independent objectivity depends on our interaction with others. In doing so, the essay forcefully shows how one may productively bridge the gap between analytic and phenomenological thought on sociality, instead of engaging in mere turf wars.

Social interaction, including social cognition, not only amounts to specific intentional, epistemic, or agential relations between intrinsically embodied agents, but is typically an emotional affair; and, often enough, collective intentionality and agency, too, are laden with affectivity. This is the issue that the following two, thematically interlinked, sections of the volume address. Accordingly, the contributions in *Part IV* and *V* are devoted to the complex web of embodied, affective and emotional underpinnings of social interaction, social cognition and collective intentionality. Articles here resume and reformulate, yet again, the question of whether dyadic or collective forms of social relations are constituents of our social reality. Thus, a number of essays deal with social emotions and social typification in the context of social cognition and collective intentionality (see esp. the contributions of *Christian Skirke*, *Matthew Ratcliffe*, *Eric Chelstrom*, and *Joona Taipale*), as well as with the hitherto largely missing link between research on social cognition and collective intentionality (*Felipe León*). Importantly, the topics covered in these two parts straddle a number of philosophical sub-disciplines and neighbouring fields of empirical research, such as social, developmental and moral psychology (esp. *Joel Krueger*, *Joona Taipale*), moral phenomenology (*Alessandro Salice*, *Vendrell Ferran*), the philosophy of psychiatry (esp. *Matthew Ratcliffe*), and health care (*Havi Carel*).

Part III: Social Cognition, Embodiment and Social Emotions

Against the backdrop of these historical, methodological, and conceptual foundations, *Part III* develops the phenomenology of *interpersonal* encounters. Here, contributions lay particular stress on the pathological and non-pathological aspects of empathy and embodied social interaction. Thus, a number of essays from quite different perspectives elaborate on the core phenomenological concept of social cognition, or empathy. Unlike standard accounts, however, these essays deal with empathy not only within the context of ordinary dyadic encounters but also in the context of non-dyadic, collective, or social interaction, social emotions (esp.

shame and grief), or non-ordinary interpersonal relations, for instance, in our relations to the dead, or the chronically ill.

Joona Taipale examines the extent to which we always build on assumptions concerning general typicalities when experiencing others. He argues that, in empathic encounters, we never meet some wholly unknown, or ‘mysterious’ others, but already take others as often predictable representatives of more or less distinct social groups. Such tacit assumptions point to what Taipale describes as ‘empathic typification’. Specifically, Taipale shows how empathy is initially ‘type-oriented’, and only gradually develops into a ‘token-oriented’ experience of concrete others. It is worth pointing out in this connection that this issue of social typification represents a central desideratum for both contemporary social ontology and social philosophy, and notably one that a number of classical phenomenologists have long tackled successfully. Incidentally, this is also shown in *Eric Chelstrom’s* contribution, which deals, among others, with this very concept of typification in Gurwitsch.

Felipe León, too, addresses the question of how to best conceive of social cognition. León concentrates on the most recent trend in social cognition research, in which social cognition is viewed as a specific form of embodied interaction. Drawing on a paradigmatic experimental setting (the ‘perceptual crossing’ paradigm), he argues that this theory of social cognition, viz. ‘interaction theory’, is best understood as a theory of distinctively *shared* cognition—without, to be sure, eliminating any self/other differentiation, which, rather, is necessary for any *interpersonal* understanding. Consequently, the paper suggests that interaction theory provides interesting insights for current discussions of collective intentionality.

Christian Skirke’s contribution presents another angle on the phenomenological concept of empathy, by relating the issue of social emotions to social cognition. Skirke argues for a strong parallelism, or structural isomorphism, between shame and empathic fellow feeling. He claims that both are intentionally directed at, or present, experiences of others that are not originally experienced, or ‘lived through’, by the subject of those social experiences. (For a related but different analysis of shame, see also the contribution of *Steven Crowell*).

Matthew Ratcliffe starts from the critical observation that works on social cognition, and specifically those relying on standard belief-desire psychology, restrict their focus to interpersonal relations with the living, and, hence tend to overlook our often deeply charged emotional relations with the dead. Against this, and drawing on both empirical and literary descriptions of the phenomenon, Ratcliffe directly addresses the phenomenology of experiences of grief. In an original take, Ratcliffe proposes to view grief as a genuinely second-personal experience of absence, rather than as the absence of a second-person experience. Consequently, he claims that this stance is firmly embedded in the social life-world

and dynamically intermeshed with our other, more ‘ordinary’, interpersonal relations.

Finally, *Havi Carel* confronts another form of the disruption of ordinary embodied interaction by engaging in a phenomenological analysis of the social experience of illness and its normative implications. She argues that, with the impediment or breakdown of our embodied social encounters, i.e., our ‘bodily empathy’, in illness, a certain distance or asymmetry between the being-in-the-world of the ill person and that of her healthy counterparts is established. Carel then shows that what ultimately gets reconfigured, and often truncated, in illness is not only the ill person’s relationship to her environment but also the social norms that usually underpin such a relationship.

Part IV: Collective Intentionality and Affectivity

What role do emotional and affective components, or a ‘sense of togetherness,’ play in collective intentionality, especially—though certainly not exclusively—in such highly cohesive or ‘fused’ I-Thou relations as love, friendship, or infant-caretaker relationships? What effect do social roles, types and functions have for such relations? What is the role of emotions in empathy, sympathy and emotional contagion, and what role do they play for the understanding of intersubjectivity, and for participation in the social world? Are early, so-called ‘realist’, phenomenological accounts of social emotions better geared to explaining social reality than, for example, Schützian phenomenological sociology? And how is (the sociality of) affectivity related to normativity and values?

In the first, programmatic, essay of this part, *Ingrid Vendrell Ferran* pleads for an alternative construal of a phenomenological sociology, one that puts feelings, emotions, sentiments and values, or so-called ‘affective intentionality,’ center stage. By bringing into play the resources offered by key representatives of the early phenomenological movement of the Munich and Göttingen Circles (and esp. Scheler, Stein, Walther, and Hildebrand), she argues that we need to distinguish between different ways of being-together, according essentially to different levels and dimensions of emotional bonding, as well as different possibilities of grasping and sharing values.

Alessandro Salice’s contribution can be seen as a prime example of precisely such an alternative approach, as he is homing in on early phenomenology’s contributions to a social phenomenology of emotions. In particular, Salice dwells upon the similarities and differences between the epistemology and phenomenology of genuine ‘social acts’ (Reinach), such as promises or orders, on the one hand, and affective or emotional ‘social stances’ (Hildebrand), such as romantic love or Scheler’s ‘vicarious feeling’ (*Nachfühlen*), on the other. By doing so, the article, again, successfully testifies that early phenomenologists have the most

sophisticated resources to analyze both the normative as well as the affective ‘glue’ that binds individuals together.

In a similar vein, *Eric Chelstrom* also takes up the challenge of contributing to a novel phenomenological sociology, and traces the development of a theory of shared emotions in Aron Gurwitsch, an eminent social phenomenologist who has, however, hitherto been overshadowed by his colleague and close friend, Alfred Schütz, the founding father of phenomenological sociology. Critically, and with respect to current treatments of collective intentionality (esp. by Gilbert and Bratman), Chelstrom fleshes out the intricate distinctions that Gurwitsch draws between different types of social connections (i.e., societal, or instrumental, ‘partnerships’, membership-based affective communities, and still more affectively charged interpersonal and collective bonds, so-called ‘fusions’). In particular, he discusses the different functions that affectivity plays in those social relationships, which, in turn, largely depend on the symmetrical or asymmetric distribution of the participants’ social roles.

In the last paper of this part, while still investigating the nature and structure of emotional sharing, *Joel Krueger* suggests looking more closely at the way emotions may be jointly regulated by two or more subjects, in order to get a grip on the idea that, numerically, the same emotions can be given or experienced by more than one subject. Building on both phenomenology as well as developmental and social psychology, Krueger then argues that the very phenomenology of (shared) emotions is modulated by embodied processes of emotion regulation, processes, that is, that may indeed be distributed across subjects. This, as Krueger demonstrates, happens essentially through the ‘co-regulation’ of emotions by ‘off-loading’ self-regulative processes to others, as is characteristic, for example, in infant-caretaker situations, or parental grieving, or by means of mutual affective ‘entrainment’, for instance, jointly attending to music.

Part V: Collective Agency, and Group Personhood

The articles in the final part of the volume pick up the main issues of the debate on collective intentionality discussed from the perspective of affectivity and emotions in *Part IV*. Here, the contributors focus more on agential, practical, and normative aspects, and embark on reassessing three major figures of phenomenological social ontology. The three essays in this section are tightly interconnected, though each deals with thinkers of the phenomenological movement who could hardly be more different in philosophical, but also socio-political, temperament (Sartre, Scheler, and Husserl). While the first article examines in more general ontological terms the emergence or genetic constitution of social groupings (*Emanuele Caminada*), and the second article engages in a structural as well as a normative evaluation of the issue of collectivism in phenomenology, the third and

final essay concentrates, from a socio-political and moral-philosophical angle, on practical ‘groups-in-action’, as it were (*Nicolas de Warren*).

The main questions guiding these spotlights on the ontological and normative fabric of social reality can be summarized as followed: what individuates different types of social formations, or ‘groupings’ of individuals? Put differently: what kinds of ‘forms of togetherness’ correspond to various levels of robustness of collective intentionality (e.g., ‘fused groups’, ‘serialized collectives’, ‘communal persons’, ‘plural agents’, etc.)? What is the phenomenological structure of practical and theoretical forms of collective intentionality, or collective agency, and how do they emerge genetically, or come to be constituted? What is the role of habit and habituality in collective engagements? Do we need to postulate some supra-individual ‘bearer’ of collective intentionality? In particular, can and *should* we posit any group persons in our social ontology?

Emanuele Caminada addresses these questions by couching Husserl’s ‘intentional’ or ‘transcendental sociology’ within the framework set by contemporary social ontology. He focuses, specifically, on the structural and genetic elements in the constitution of always and already ‘socialized’ individuals as well as of ‘higher-order’, or ‘supra-individual’, socialities (e.g., the role of embodied or communal habitualities, or shared background beliefs). In doing so, Caminada critically launches a two-fold challenge: the challenge that ‘discovering the We’ poses for the classical transcendental-phenomenological project, and, conversely, the challenge that phenomenologically, and genetically, ‘enriched’ forms of the ‘We’ might pose for those social ontologists who typically abstract from the concrete life-world in which such communities are embedded.

Expounding the discussion of higher-order persons, which is briefly discussed in the previous article, *Thomas Szanto* tackles the question whether there are, in the face of contemporary metaphysical and normative accounts of group personhood (e.g., by Philip Pettit or Carol Rovane), any viable, i.e., non-collectivist, conceptions of group personhood in phenomenological thought. Along the lines of a critical, yet ultimately favorable, reassessment of Scheler’s notoriously ambiguous conception of communal persons (*Gesamtpersonen*), Szanto investigates the normative, rational and phenomenological properties of corporate persons. In order to safeguard this conception from normative distortions, he then suggests distinguishing different versions of collectivist claims, and argues that Scheler can, in fact, accommodate these distinctions.

In the final essay of this volume, *Nicolas de Warren* touches on the political dimensions of the ‘We’ by reintroducing a highly intriguing but much-neglected major work in phenomenological social ontology, namely the late Sartre’s *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, to contemporary readership. This seems all the more pertinent as ignorance of this work, even among otherwise avid readers of Sartre, is prevailing, which is, arguably, due to the work’s unflinching adherence to a radical form of (Soviet) Marxism. The article revolves around the Sartrean notion of ‘fraterni-

ty’, and its group-membership-based distortion in acts of terror against traitors. The group paradigm, here, is comprised of such highly cohesive and essentially ‘practical’ groups that emerge out of, often implicit, ‘pledges’ (*le serments*, which are notably, Sartre’s version of what, in Margaret Gilbert’s influential terminology, would today be labeled ‘joint commitments’). In elucidating these notions, *de Warren* unearths Sartre’s distinctively political version of social ontology, and hence demonstrates how it is amenable to current discourses on terrorism, social identity, or political movements.

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