

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL

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Despite a growing appreciation in recent decades for the significance of the social in many areas of philosophy, most philosophers today have not adequately examined their assumptions about how human beings are fundamentally social, in particular, how they are socially constituted. This dissertation argues that the human individual is socially constituted because her very capacity to be a self and agent must draw on a *shared public understanding* of the interwoven practices, norms, and roles that enables her to exercise this capacity in general.

In Part I of the dissertation, I explicate and adopt Philip Pettit's suggestion about how to define the thesis of the social constitution of the individual and the general form that the argument for this thesis should take, even though I find Pettit's own argument for this thesis to be wanting. I then consider how Martin Heidegger's conception of human social existence in *Being and Time* – when properly understood – can significantly improve Pettit's argument. I elaborate and defend the view that the human individual is socially constituted because she always initially and mostly shares a public understanding of the world, including of herself and her relations with others, that is (in the first instance) normalized.

In Part II of the dissertation, I make explicit and criticize the dominant understanding of human sociality in many strands of contemporary philosophy. This understanding assumes (roughly speaking) that the fundamental or primary way in which human beings are social consists in modes of *interpersonal interactions* (IPIA). I critically engage three varieties of IPIA in contemporary philosophy: (1) prominent theories of collective intentionality; (2) Donald Davidson's conception of social interaction in successful linguistic communication and of triangulation as a necessary condition of the objectivity of thought; and (3) accounts of normativity that stem from standard communalist readings of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. I argue that these versions of IPIA are problematic not only in their own terms, but also inadequate precisely because they fail to take into account the social constitution of the individual.

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Höher als die Wirklichkeit steht die Möglichkeit.
(Higher than actuality stands *possibility*.)

– Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §7

Dasein ist je das, was es sein kann und wie es seine Möglichkeit ist.
(Dasein [the human being] is in each case what it can be and how it is its possibility.)

– Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §31

Die für uns wichtigsten Aspekte der Dinge sind durch ihre Einfachheit und Alltäglichkeit verborgen. (Man kann es nicht bemerken, – weil man es immer vor Augen hat.) Die eigentlichen Grundlagen seiner Forschung fallen dem Menschen gar nicht auf. Es sei denn, daß ihm dies einmal aufgefallen ist. – Und das heißt: das, was, einmal gesehen, das Auffallendste und Stärkste ist, fällt uns nicht auf.

(The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One cannot notice this – because it is always before one's eyes.) The actual foundations of a human being's inquiry do not strike him or her at all. Unless *that* fact has at some point in time struck him or her. – And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful.)

– Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, §129

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are fundamentally social. So stated, this thought expresses a platitude with which no one would disagree. But matters quickly become less trite when we try to understand *how* precisely human beings are fundamentally social. For once we undertake an inquiry of this sort, the precise content of this thought is no longer so obvious or innocuous. Not surprisingly, much of the force of this claim turns on how one conceives the nature of the social and, in particular for the purposes of this dissertation, how one understands the thesis of the *social constitution of the human individual*. This dissertation aims to show that Martin Heidegger's conception of human social existence in *Being and Time* – when properly understood – provides the most penetrating and insightful account of this constitution.¹ Although this view itself is not new, the novel way in which this dissertation appropriates and puts Heidegger's thinking about the social to use for its purposes is philosophically interesting and fruitful, as I hope to show in the course of the dissertation. In what follows, I will make a few preparatory and broad remarks about the general shape of this project. This Introduction will end with a description of the specific contents of each chapter.

As a preliminary step towards understanding what the thesis of the social constitution of the human individual is, in the way in which this dissertation seeks to investigate it, it helps in the first instance to clarify what this thesis is *not* about.² Doing so will dispel the air of banality that can initially surround its assertion. First of all, the claim that human beings are fundamentally social is not a claim about how they depend *causally* and *materially* on one

¹ One of the enduring insights of Hubert Dreyfus's influential interpretation (especially of Division One) of *Being and Time* consists in showing this; see *Being-in-the-World*, esp. Ch. 8 and 13. He goes so far (in an essay) as to claim that "Heidegger's existential ontology is the best description of human social being that philosophers have yet offered, but it is totally abstract" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, "Can there be a Science of Existential Structure and Social Meaning?", p. 38). Please note that the claim is that Heidegger offers the best account of the *social constitution* of the human individual, no less no more. This is one aspect of how human beings are social, though its most fundamental one. Moreover, although many prominent twentieth-century philosophers in the German- and French-speaking world have strongly criticized Heidegger's conception of human social existence (for reasons that will be discussed in Ch. 2), the fact that they have done so indicates at least their recognition of its significance and challenge for their own accounts of this existence.

² I follow here the lead of Pettit; see *The Common Mind*, pp. 169f. and "Defining and Defending Social Holism", pp. 119-21.

another in the course of living out their lives. That is, the truth of this claim does not turn on the fact that we depend instrumentally, economically, politically, psychologically, emotionally, etc., on each other's activities or on the various products of those activities for our survival and well-being. It is undeniable that we do depend on one another in all these ways for our minimal flourishing. But if this is all that the claim that human beings are fundamentally social amounts to, this claim would be a platitude. In a similar vein, neither is it a simple *developmental* claim about the evidently social context in which infants and young children are raised by parents or others in the course of growing up.³ If this were the content of the thesis in question, it too would be a truism. Nor can this thesis be a *statistical* claim about the great degree to which individual human beings happen more often than not to exist and interact with one another rather than living solitary lives. Again, if this is what the thesis in question amounts to, it would be trivial. More generally, and perhaps provocatively, I submit that the claim that human beings are fundamentally social, i.e., that they are necessarily socially constituted, cannot be a *factual* or *empirical* claim if it is worthy of philosophical inquiry. To say so does not deny, of course, that the factual or empirical aspects of human social existence rightly figure in many ways in other areas of philosophy, much less deny that these aspects figure quite centrally in the human and social sciences as a whole. The present point is simply that these aspects cannot pertain to the social *constitution* of the human individual, in the sense that this dissertation aims to highlight and elucidate.

With this preliminary definition *ex negativo* of the thesis of the social constitution of the individual in place, we can take a first step towards understanding how the appropriation of Heidegger's conception of human social existence in *Being and Time* will be put to use in this dissertation. Our topic concerns how we should understand the social constitution of the human individual. To a first approximation, the understanding of this constitution that will be articulated and defended in Part I of this dissertation is this: The human individual is socially constituted because her exercise of some basic capacity that is central to her agency depends on her

³ For a compelling account of our social dependence on others in this sense, see Baier, "Doing Things with Others". That we are socially dependent on one another in this straightforward developmental sense does not imply, however, the social constitution of the human individual, in the way in which this constitution is conceived in this dissertation (see below).

understanding of how she exists with other people in the world.⁴ The key move will be to show how a human individual cannot be a distinctively human agent apart from sharing the world with others (in a sense that will be explicated and defended in Ch. 2).

In the analytic tradition, those who work on the metaphysics and explanation of social phenomena seem uncomfortable with talk about the social constitution of the individual.⁵ They prefer instead to talk about the *sociality* of intentional attitudes and actions. Sociality in this sense refers to the various ways in which an individual human being relates to or interacts with other human beings for achieving certain ends and purposes (e.g., for thinking and acting as members of groups or collectives); or else sociality serves as a necessary condition for how certain basic phenomena (e.g., successful linguistic communication) or basic aspects of our intentionality (e.g., its objective or normative character) can come to be. In this vein, some philosophers who work on these topics describe what they do as investigations in “the philosophy of sociality, taking it to include at least the study of collective intentionality, social ontology, and metaphysics, as well as social epistemology”.⁶ As such, they take it that the scope of the philosophy of sociality does not and need not include reflection on the social constitution of the individual, much less conceive and integrate it as a significant aspect of human nature. Indeed, they may think it is a serious mistake to address this topic.⁷ For these reasons, it can be said that philosophers of sociality (so understood) attempt to investigate or invoke the significance of the social independently of any consideration of the social constitution of the individual.

I believe that a certain set of assumptions underlies this prevalent way of understanding or invoking human sociality, ones that remain nearly invisible and hence rarely questioned. Because I will extensively criticize this set of assumptions in its various guises in the

⁴ Please note the qualification: *to a first approximation*. This very preliminary explication of the thesis of the social constitution of the individual will be clarified in Ch. 1 and significantly transformed in Ch. 2.

⁵ I speculate that there may be two reasons for this. First, they may think that this idea is “overly metaphysical” or even has “undemocratic” implications (cf. Popper’s polemic against the intellectual enemies of “the open society”). Second, this idea may be associated in their minds with the idea of social construction in a pejorative (postmodern?) sense; see Haslanger, “Social Construction: The ‘Debunking’ Project” and Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Social Practices*, Ch. 1.

⁶ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. viii. See also the work of Margaret Gilbert, “Concerning Sociality: The Plural Subject as Paradigm”; *Living Together*, Part II (“Sociality: Introducing Plural Subjects”); and *Sociality and Responsibility*, Ch. 1.

⁷ Hans Bernhard Schmid suggests that this view traces back to an unnuanced rejection of the idea of the group mind; see his *Plural Action*, Ch. 2. I will discuss this issue further in Ch. 3 of this dissertation.

dissertation, it is useful to give it a label. Call it *interpersonal interactionism* (IPIA). We can specify it generically as follows.⁸

The Assumptions of Interpersonal Interactionism (IPIA):

(I) There exists a prevalent mode of human sociality that is realized when (i) two or more individuals are present in some context (ii) who interact with one another in accordance with some implicit set of constraints that (should) govern in that context.

(II) This mode of human sociality *suffices* for understanding both the *fundamental* way in which human beings are social and *all* forms of sociality. Accordingly, any account or invocation of human sociality should begin with this mode of sociality as its key datum and point of departure.

Although most philosophers who can be seen as embracing IPIA readily acknowledge their commitment to (I), there is a striking lack of self-consciousness on their part about their adoption of (II), to such an extent that (II) is simply taken for granted with little or no argument. If it is right to construe IPIA as an argument (on a charitable construal of this argument), the inference from (I) to (II) appears to have the form of a well supported inductive argument. But given how most philosophers simply take (II) as self-evident, it seems doubtful that the appeal of IPIA rests on its persuasiveness as an argument. Rather, it seems more plausible to understand its appeal as resting on a certain set of intuitions. What this shows is that although some specific versions of IPIA seem to assume that (I) serves as argumentative support for (II), a minimal version of IPIA does not require this sort of support in order to be intuitively appealing.

What are the intuitions that make IPIA appealing? I suspect that one crucial intuition is that each of us readily experiences this mode of sociality simply in the course of living our lives. In fact, we experience it not only when we actually interact with one another, but already in the course of conceiving and planning our own possible actions and projects by taking into account the possible attitudes and actions of other people in connection with our own.⁹ It is undeniable that much of what we think and do in everyday life involves either the actual experience of this mode of sociality or attention to its possible realization and the attendant consequences thereof. Because we experience this mode of sociality so “vivaciously” (as Hume would put it), experiences of this sort impress themselves upon us in an especially vivid and concrete way. We are thus tempted by the “vivacity” of these impressions in our experience to think not only that

⁸ I am indebted to Bob Brandom and Ted Schatzki for sharpening the formulation of IPIA.

⁹ Cf. Weber’s influential definition of social action: “Action is ‘social’ insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of *others* and is thereby oriented in its course.” (*Economy and Society*, Vol. 1, p. 4, emphasis in the original German; cf. notes 1-4, pp. 22-4.)

interpersonal interactions constitute the fundamental basis of human sociality, but that all forms of human sociality must rest on this basis. A second intuition that strengthens the appeal of IPIA resonates especially with many philosophers. It turns on how assumption (II) of IPIA becomes a platitude once “wholism” and “collectivism” in social ontology are shown to be untenable.¹⁰ If the choice between versions of IPIA and those of “wholism” or “collectivism” is taken to be exhaustive, it becomes intelligible why many philosophers readily embrace IPIA once “wholism” and “collectivism” are eliminated as tenable positions in social ontology. Finally, a third and related intuition that increases the appeal of IPIA is a residual commitment to some form of individualism, even in cases of IPIA that reject or lessen the motivation for reductionism with regard to other philosophical issues.¹¹ In sum, although these remarks about why IPIA is intuitively appealing are exploratory, the attractiveness of IPIA for many philosophers cannot be denied. In the face of this appeal, one of the major aims of this dissertation is to show that IPIA, in particular assumption (II), is untenable once it undergoes critical scrutiny.

A query can arise at this point regarding the relevance of IPIA for the concerns of this dissertation.¹² It points out that even if IPIA were true, it implies next to nothing about the social constitution of the individual. For the topic of human sociality, at first glance, is concerned with how human individuals *relate to one another* in some shape or form, whereas that of the social constitution of the human individual is about how the human individual *herself* is so constituted in some non-trivial sense. It seems mistaken, therefore, to regard IPIA as a competing conception of this constitution; indeed, it is unclear whether IPIA is even relevant in this context. My response to this query is that it is true, strictly speaking, that the plausibility or possible truth of IPIA would have no implications for the social constitution of the individual. As I noted above, philosophers who implicitly take IPIA for granted in their conceptions of human sociality would actually find nothing wrong with this consequence; in fact, they may even embrace it with relief. One of the main aims of the dissertation, however, is to show that this understanding of human sociality in accordance with IPIA, especially assumption (II), is seriously flawed precisely because it ignores or fails to take fully into account the social constitution of the human individual. Although IPIA is not a competing conception of this constitution, it does not follow

¹⁰ For an extended discussion, see Ch. 1.

¹¹ See my examination of Pettit’s social holism in 1.3 and other forms of IPIA in Part II of this dissertation.

¹² It has been raised in conversation by John McDowell.

that scrutiny of IPIA is completely irrelevant for or disconnected from reflection on this constitution. Thus, even though accounts of or appeals to human sociality along the lines of IPIA, strictly speaking, do not explicitly involve the social constitution of the individual, the same cannot be said for the converse. One of the important aims of the dissertation, then, is to challenge philosophers of sociality (broadly construed) to take into account the social constitution of the individual, prior to giving their analyses of human sociality or invoking it in their work for their purposes. If the main line of argument of this dissertation is convincing, its upshot is that it is not optional for philosophers of sociality to consider and integrate the social constitution of the individual into their frameworks, if they wish to avoid certain intellectual blind spots or pitfalls in their work.

As it will be apparent in the course of this dissertation, then, one significant interest and fruitfulness of my appropriation of Heidegger's thinking about the social will consist in its confrontation with various versions of IPIA. Doing so will also show how deeply IPIA is entrenched not only in disparate areas of philosophy, but also in ways that cut across the divide between "analytic" and "continental" philosophy.¹³ To anticipate, a crucial point for which I will argue in this confrontation is that the social constitution of the individual is a necessary condition of the *intelligibility*, and thereby the possibility, of modes of interpersonal interaction. The claim will be that human beings are not fundamentally social by co-existing and interacting with others, but already in their very way of existing as human individuals in the world.¹⁴ I want in effect to turn the idea of interpersonal interactionism on its head: Interpersonal interactions cannot adequately explain how we humans are fundamentally social, but depend for their very intelligibility on how the *world* in which a human individual lives and acts (in a sense that will be elaborated in detail in Ch. 2) already bears on and structures his or her understanding and activities as an individual agent. If this is true, the social constitution of the individual is an

¹³ The view that interpersonal interactions are the fundamental or primary way in which human beings are (or ought to be) social is also clearly at work, in *some* version of it, in the "continental" philosophies, e.g., of Fichte, Hegel, Sartre, Buber, Levinas, Habermas, and Honneth (to mention only a few prominent thinkers in this tradition). Although these "continental" strands of thought receive less attention in this dissertation than those in the "analytic" tradition (see 2.3, though, for some engagement with the former), I want to emphasize that interpersonal interactionism is without doubt prevalent in the "continental" tradition as well. Note that I am using the expressions 'analytic philosophy' and 'continental philosophy' and their cognates loosely, not suggesting that they each pick out a single homogenous tradition by any means, much less subscribe to some common program or set of philosophical doctrines.

¹⁴ Although it is likely at this early juncture that the meaning of this claim is opaque, my hope is that its full import will become clear and appreciated by the end of the dissertation.

inherent aspect or dimension of his or her very way of understanding (knowing his or her way around in) the world as such.

Although Heidegger's conception of human social existence in *Being and Time* is clearly central to this dissertation, it is important to bear the following qualifications in mind regarding how I will interpret and appropriate this conception. As far as its scope is concerned, this dissertation cannot aim to survey and evaluate exhaustively various interpretations of Heidegger's conception of human social existence in *Being and Time*; it is not meant to be scholarly in this manner. Regarding its "method" of interpretation, although some exegesis of the relevant parts of *Being and Time* will be unavoidable, the *modus operandi* of this interpretation is not primarily explicative, but philosophical in the sense of working out the content of these insights in the form of an extended argument and then seeking to anticipate and rebut likely objections to it.¹⁵ More generally, this dissertation works deliberately at the intersection of analytic and continental philosophy and is intended to address readers who are not already familiar with the formidable philosophical vocabulary in which Heidegger's thinking is expressed.¹⁶ The philosophical fruitfulness of working at this intersection will depend on what the dissertation manages to show, not on one's prior assumptions or (dare I say) prejudices about the orientation or style of either philosophical tradition. In other words, this dissertation makes no apologies for being neither properly "continental" enough, even though Heidegger's thinking in *Being and Time* figures centrally in the project, nor properly "analytic" enough, despite the fact that a good many of the issues it addresses originate in literatures that are "analytic" in orientation. Taylor Carman's apt description of the hermeneutical attitude that shapes his insightful interpretation of the early Heidegger also holds for that of this dissertation:

The result is a reading of *Being and Time* that is, I hope, neither antiquarian nor anachronistic. I have focused on some problems at the expense of others, many of them fed by discussions in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy, though I have tried to deal with them within what strikes me as the conceptual horizons proper to Heidegger's thinking. The book is therefore neither a commentary on *Being and Time* nor simply a Heideggerian approach to some independently defined philosophical domain.¹⁷

One final remark about the general scope of this dissertation must be made. Given that its topic is the social constitution of the human individual, it may strike some readers as odd, if not

¹⁵ I do not mean to suggest that explication is not philosophical, nor that doing philosophy does not involve explication; these are not mutually exclusive. Nonetheless, a legitimate distinction remains between them.

¹⁶ Remarks addressed to those who are already familiar with his vocabulary and way of thinking will be mostly confined to the footnotes.

¹⁷ Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic*, p. 1.

downright neglectful, that I have chosen not to delve into the recently burgeoning literature on the theme of *recognition* (*Anerkennung*). Although this theme stems originally from Fichte's and especially Hegel's reflections on the significance of intersubjectivity for their respective philosophical projects,¹⁸ it has become *mutatis mutandis* fruitful again for theorizing about various issues in contemporary theoretical and practical philosophy.¹⁹ I am inclined to think that a comprehensive treatment of the topic of the social constitution of the individual would have to consider and integrate this theme at some point. Nevertheless, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to take its significance into account for the simple reason that doing so would have distracted from the specific concerns of this dissertation or entailed writing quite a different and even longer one altogether. Whether this decision turns out to be a serious lacuna or mistake is a question that is best answered at the end of the dissertation.

This dissertation divides into two main parts. Part I is concerned with how we should understand and defend the thesis of the social constitution of the human individual; it is composed of Ch. 1 and 2. Part II consists of the critique of various versions of interpersonal interactionism (IPIA); it is composed of Ch. 3, 4, and 5.

The specific content of each chapter in the dissertation is as follows. In Ch. 1 I scrutinize Philip Pettit's social ontology. Doing so is worthwhile for the following reasons. First, Pettit helpfully introduces a much needed meta-distinction in social ontology, for he distinguishes the distinction between individualism and collectivism on the one hand from the distinction between atomism and holism on the other. Equipped with this meta-distinction, we can eliminate much of the confusion that underlies the supposed opposition between "individualism and holism" in social ontology. Second, Pettit holds that there is a systematic connection between issues in social ontology and certain themes in the philosophy of mind and language. Since this connection will also figure in this dissertation, it is useful to examine Pettit's conception of how these two sets of issues are related. Third, while I will argue that Pettit's argument for social

¹⁸ For an illuminating discussion of this, see R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other*.

¹⁹ For some examples, see Brandom, "Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel's Idealism" and "The Structure of Desire and Recognition". He discerns a clear connection between his inferentialist approach in contemporary philosophy of language and mind and Hegel's conception of determinate negation and self-consciousness (as the latter is interdependent with mutual recognition in Hegel's sense). Brandom's self-consciousness about this connection is expressed in *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, Introduction, pp. 12-5 and Ch. 3. See also Taylor's "The Politics of Recognition" and the responses to it in Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism*. See also Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition* and Fraser and Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition?*. Their work on the philosophical significance of recognition in its different aspects has in turn generated considerable secondary literature.

holism (according to his understanding of that position) is ultimately unconvincing, it is instructive to understand precisely why it is unpersuasive in anticipation of the position that I seek to develop and defend in the rest of the dissertation regarding how we should understand the social constitution of the human individual.

In Ch. 2 I articulate, in the form of an extended explication and argument, the thesis of the social constitution of the human individual. As mentioned, this is done by way of an interpretation of Heidegger's conception of human social existence in *Being and Time*. In so doing, I appropriate and defend his insight that human beings are fundamentally social by existing and acting predominantly (as he puts it) in the mode of the *one* (*das Man*) in the course of living their lives. In other words, the social constitution of the individual is shown to be an inherent and fundamental aspect of our typically *normalized* way of understanding and dealing with things (entities, phenomena) in the world, including ourselves and other people. As we will see, the explanation of what this involves is quite complicated; along the way, a common misunderstanding of Heidegger's conception of human social existence will also have to be addressed and put into the right context. Accordingly, this chapter will end by anticipating and rebutting some likely objections against my interpretation and appropriation of Heidegger's conception of human social existence.

With my interpretive appropriation of this conception in place, I begin the critique of various versions of interpersonal interactionism (IPIA) in Part II by assessing in Ch. 3 a currently fashionable instance of it, namely, theories of collective intentionality. Toward this end I sketch and then criticize what are likely the three most prominent theories of collective intentionality on offer, namely, those of Margaret Gilbert, Raimo Tuomela, and John Searle. My criticisms of these theories will not be general, but tailored specifically to the concerns of this dissertation.

In Ch. 4 I continue the critique of IPIA by evaluating the version of it that informs Donald Davidson's appeal to social interaction for his philosophical purposes. Davidson tries to use the conceptual resources of social interaction (of a certain sort) to account for the occurrence of successful linguistic communication and the possibility of propositional thought. I argue that his appeal to social interaction is problematic upon examination, in ways that derive from his implicit commitment to IPIA.

In Ch. 5 I tie up some loose ends that linger from the previous chapters, ones that center on the significance of normativity in the social constitution of the human individual. I address

this topic initially by elaborating the standard opposition between individualist and communalist conceptions of rule-following that stem from Wittgenstein's treatment of this issue in his *Philosophical Investigations*. In this connection I take up and partially endorse Michael Luntley's position concerning this issue. His interpretation of Wittgenstein's thinking about rule-following is provocative and worth examining. He argues forcefully that individualist and communalist treatments of rule-following both fail to get at Wittgenstein's actual insights about the nature of normativity, in the first instance concerning the normativity of meaning. I show that while Luntley's unorthodox and nuanced individualism regarding the nature of normativity is convincing when seen in light of the standard opposition mentioned above, it is nevertheless one-sided unless it integrates some of Meredith Williams's insights about the connection between normativity and the social that her interpretation of Wittgenstein (at its best) makes available. As it will turn out, these insights coalesce readily with the Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the human individual that I work out in Ch. 2. By the same token, I also argue that the Heideggerian conception is misleading unless it is understood in connection with the aspects of normativity to which Luntley and Williams draw our attention.

**PART I. DEFINING AND DEFENDING THE THESIS OF THE SOCIAL
CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL**

1.0 PETTIT'S SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

Social philosophy in general examines the multidimensional and complicated ways in which human beings relate to the social environment in which they exist. Traditionally, social philosophy has been divided into two main branches: a metaphysical-explanatory branch and an evaluative branch. The former branch is primarily concerned with the philosophical investigation of the ontological status and basic characteristics of social phenomena, along with their attendant modes of explanation, while the latter branch extends into political philosophy by entering into the evaluation of the legitimacy of various social policies and political arrangements. Although these two branches are no doubt related, they can be examined, at least in the first instance, as fairly distinct areas of philosophical inquiry.¹ This dissertation will seek to articulate and defend a conception of the social constitution of the human individual that is situated within the confines of the metaphysical and explanatory branch of social philosophy, which I shall understand as *social ontology* in a broad sense.

In *The Common Mind: An Essay on Psychology, Society, and Politics*, Philip Pettit articulates and defends (among much else) a novel social ontology.² Because it has not been as familiar and widely received as I think it should be, I provide extensive explications of it in my treatment below. Although I will eventually argue that his arguments for the position that he conceives as social holism are not ultimately persuasive (see 1.3), I want to emphasize in the first two sections of this chapter (1.1 and 1.2) why his social ontology is worthy of scrutiny. My critique of Pettit's social ontology in 1.3, then, is a mark of respect for it, and the spirit in which I will criticize it is constructive. The sections in this chapter concern the following issues. In 1.1, I explain a meta-distinction that Pettit presents, one that I think ought to be crucial for social ontology. In 1.2, I sketch and endorse, in some detail but not exhaustively, Pettit's defense of

¹ I do not intend with this statement to preclude the approach to social philosophy that a family of critical social theories have put forward, e.g., broadly "social constructionist" conceptions of race, gender, etc., as well as those associated with the so-called Frankfurt School. Theorists in these traditions have sought to challenge the strict demarcation of epistemological, metaphysical, or explanatory issues from evaluative ones as these concern human beings.

² The basic framework of Pettit's social ontology had already been developed, albeit in somewhat different terms, in his earlier book with Graham Macdonald in *Semantics and Social Science*.

individualism against collectivism. My aim in this section is to address and resolve, hopefully once and for all, the debate between “individualism and holism” that has often bedeviled social philosophy and the philosophy of social science. Finally in 1.3, I lay out and present criticisms of Pettit’s conception and defense of social holism, seeking to appropriate the basic insights of that position while also expressing some dissatisfactions with the assumptions that underlie his specific arguments for it. I conclude by announcing what I take to be the positive contribution of Pettit’s conception of social holism for the purposes of this dissertation in 1.4.

1.1 A CRUCIAL DISTINCTION IN SOCIAL ONTOLOGY

First and foremost, Pettit helpfully distinguishes issues that have been constantly and systematically run together in the long-standing debate between “individualism and holism” in social ontology.³ He urges that we must distinguish between the issue that separates *individualism* from *collectivism* and the issue that separates *atomism* from *holism* (111-6, 172f.). According to his terminological regimentation, the main issue that properly divides individualism and collectivism is whether there are social regularities or social forces that compromise our capacity to be autonomous intentional agents. This issue in social ontology is of a “vertical” character, in that collectivists argue that such social regularities or forces operate at a level that is “higher” than that of ordinary intentional psychology; moreover, these supposedly “higher-level” regularities or forces causally determine the “lower-level” behavior and attitudes of individual agents in ways that undermine their autonomy. Consider some examples of such effects of social regularities or forces:

1. Increased employment in a society leads to lesser hostility toward members of ethnic minorities who live in it.
2. Capitalism destroys the norms and structure of traditional communities.
3. Gender and racial identity is to a large extent a result of the psychological internalization of a system of beliefs, practices, and institutions of a society.

³ All references in the text of this chapter are henceforth to Pettit, *The Common Mind*.

Such social-structural processes give at least the appearance that social regularities or social forces shape the behavior of individual agents in ways that do not take place *prima facie* at the level of intentional psychology or individual agency. Collectivism affirms the existence and causal efficacy of such social-structural regularities or forces and holds that they significantly restrict the autonomy of individual agents. In opposition, individualism denies that intentional psychology and individual agency can be compromised in the ways that collectivism maintains.⁴

By contrast, the central issue according to Pettit that properly divides atomism and holism in social ontology concerns the “horizontal” relations among such agents themselves, not the “vertical” relation between social-structural regularities or forces and the intentional behavior of individual agents. The horizontal issue concerns what sort of significance we should attribute to the social relations that human beings experience in their constitution as thinking intentional agents.⁵ Put differently, the issue between atomism and holism turns on the extent to which social relations among individual human beings transform them in some fundamental way so that, absent the occurrence and enjoyment of such relations, certain distinctive human capacities could not be actualized. Social atomism in this sense denies that a human being’s relations with others are necessary except in instrumental terms and holds open the possibility that a human being can in principle exercise all the capacities that are characteristic of being a thinking intentional agent in total isolation from other human beings. Thus, it assumes that the idea of a “pre-social” individual agent is in principle intelligible. In opposition, social holism rejects this possibility and emphasizes the non-instrumental significance of other people as a necessary condition of being such an agent at all. It contends that one’s relations and interactions with other human beings are not secondary to, but rather partly constitutive of, one’s very capacity to be a thinking intentional creature at all. (Terminologically speaking, then, the terms of Latin origin pick out what Pettit identifies as the “vertical” issue in social ontology, and the terms of Greek origin the “horizontal” issue therein.)

Once we are equipped with this meta-distinction between individualism/collectivism and atomism/holism, we put ourselves in the position of breaking the traditional association of individualism with atomism and collectivism with holism. What results now as a viable and

⁴ It is important to point out, even at this early juncture, that a commitment to individualism in Pettit’s sense does not entail a commitment to reductive methodological individualism (see 1.2).

⁵ In Pettit’s framework, intentional agents who can think are fundamentally different from merely intentional systems; thus the expression ‘thinking intentional subject’ has a distinctive meaning in his framework (see 1.3).

attractive conceptual possibility is the position of *holistic individualism*, which is the one that Pettit defends and I broadly endorse. This is the view that there is no incompatibility between holding that the existence and causal relevance of social regularities or social forces do not compromise intentional psychology and individual agency, and also maintaining that individual agents' social relations with one another are partly constitutive of their very capacity to be thinking intentional agents. In short, holistic individualism is the view that individual human beings are socially constituted without the implication that they are thereby under the control of social-structural regularities or forces in ways that threaten their autonomy.

There may be those, however, who are skeptical of whether there really is a sustainable conceptual independence between individualism/collectivism and atomism/holism. It is thus instructive to rehearse Pettit's argument for this and, in particular, his remarks on why they have so often been conflated with each other (172-5). To begin with, since it is taken for granted by all sides that there is no inconsistency in the "pure" positions of atomistic individualism (e.g., Hobbes's conception of human nature, reductive individualist explanations of collective behavior, etc.), and holistic collectivism (e.g., crudely Hegelian and Marxian social theories, Durkheimian functionalism and structuralism in the social sciences, etc.), the question of whether the two sides are truly conceptually independent turns on whether there is any inconsistency in the "mixed" positions of atomistic collectivism and holistic individualism.

Although it is hard to conceive, there does not appear to be anything obviously inconsistent in atomistic collectivism. I think that the best illustration of this possibility is not one that Pettit himself explicitly considers, but one that is clearly compatible with the spirit of his way of thinking. For what qualifies someone as a collectivist, in the broadest sense, is her belief that there are regularities or forces that *vertically* undermine or at least seriously compromise intentional psychology or individual agency. This broadest construal of collectivism, then, makes room for the possibility that there may be such regularities or forces that can come not only "from above" the level of intentional psychology, but also "from below" the latter. Put differently, collectivism as a conceptual possibility envisages not only that there are *suprapersonal* regularities or forces at work that compromise individual agency, but could also countenance the possibility that there may be (to borrow a distinction from contemporary philosophy of mind) *subpersonal* regularities or forces that can *collectively* shape the intentional psychology of individual agents. For some examples, consider intellectual movements such as

Freudian psychoanalysis or research programs in the social sciences like sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, each of which seems to be committed to collectivism in this broadest sense. What is relevant is precisely that they can each be understood as *atomistic* and yet also *collectivist* in Pettit's sense. For they hold at once that there are regularities or forces at work in a human individual that strongly constrain her intentional psychology or behavior, which then have significant consequences for the various features of her collective existence; and yet insist that the source of these collective effects originates *atomistically* (*subpersonally*). That is, these effects originate from beneath the body surface of any human individual agent and thus occur in isolation from any individual's relations with other agents (though not in isolation from the actual environment in which an individual lives). In Pettit's terminology, these sub-personal regularities or forces "outflank" the ones operating at the level of intentional psychology in the sense of having been selected by the process of natural selection (156f.). This is clearly the guiding idea of research programs like sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. But perhaps the most dramatic example of the consistency of atomistic collectivism is expressed by the thought of the later Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Freud posits in that book an analogy between the internal drives that affect the libidinal economy of a human individual and the societal forces that shape the collective evolution of civilization. He argues that such drives strongly shape the behavior of individual human beings, behavior that in turn affects the nature of their collective existence. The point here is not to settle the question about the plausibility and explanatory power of such intellectual movements or research programs for human social behavior, but rather to give some evidence that atomistic collectivism, broadly construed, is not obviously inconsistent.

What about the consistency of holistic individualism, which is far more plausible than atomistic collectivism? Given how Pettit regimented the terminology, there is no obvious way in which holistic individualism is inconsistent short of begging his question (173). But since terminological stipulation is rather unsatisfactory as a way of settling matters, consider the very idea of holistic individualism by reference to two of its more specific exemplifications. Take first our capacity to understand and speak a natural language. Once we learn to do so with competence, we come to express ourselves in relation to our environment and other people by largely conforming to the linguistic and non-linguistic constraints involved in speaking such a

language.⁶ We come in particular to realize *expressive* freedom, in the sense of a freedom whose actualization consists precisely in the sort of implicit and dynamic conformity to norms that enables the speakers of a language to have novel intentional states, novel desires, and other novel motivational propensities, as well as to perform novel actions.⁷ There is no incompatibility here between being constrained by norms implicit in the linguistic and non-linguistic practices of a community (holism) and being self-determining (individualism).

Consider also the example of becoming acculturated into the practices of a community. Once we learn to understand a culture, we begin to anticipate what a member of that culture is supposed to do in given situations. For example, being American will tend to render obvious and natural certain self-understandings of individuals in relation to the world and others; being raised as an American, one simply finds oneself with a certain determinate range of such self-understandings and their attendant significance. This way of being constrained by the culture(s) in which one has been brought up (holism) does not undermine one's autonomy, but is what gives it its concrete expression (individualism). The idea that one can simply choose who one is or can be, from a standpoint that conceives the possibility and desirability of totally detaching oneself from one's sociocultural heritage, is a hyper-individualistic conceit.⁸

It does not seem, therefore, that there is anything obviously inconsistent in the position of holistic individualism; indeed, it seems *prima facie* to be the most plausible among the four possible options in social ontology. But perhaps the best way to reject the skepticism about the true independence of the issues that separate individualism from collectivism and atomism from holism is to consider why these two issues have been continually and systematically run together. Pettit gives three reasons for this conflation (173-5), and it is instructive to elaborate them.

⁶ I put this thought for now in vague terms in order to postpone addressing the question of how, or even whether, we need to conform to the linguistic and non-linguistic constraints involved in speaking a language. Someone like Davidson argues that there are no such constraints. I will examine his views at length in Ch. 4.

⁷ Brandom, "Freedom and Constraint by Norms", esp. pp. 185-9; see also Taylor, "Language and Human Nature" and "Theories of Meaning".

⁸ The existentialism of the early Sartre is susceptible to being construed as a sort of hyper-individualism; see esp. "The Humanism of Existentialism". The belief that I can unconditionally choose my identity would be equivalent to the delusion of my choosing this among indefinitely many possibilities: "Should I be a contemporary American, a 10th century Chinese of the Sung dynasty, a Roman gladiator, a pre-Columbus Aztec, ...?" Without any prior acculturation, there can be no sensible basis for choice at all. For a convincing argument for this point, see Taylor, "What is Human Agency?".

First, there has been the tendency in social philosophy to think of individuals and society on the model of *parts and whole*. This tendency has seduced us into a certain picture of the relation between individuals and society.⁹

If we think in the part-whole way of individuals and society, then we will see the holist as saying that individuals are changed through becoming parts of the whole. If we see him as saying that, then we will easily take his thesis to be that the whole is greater than the parts. And if we take the thesis in that way, we will easily confuse it with the collectivist thesis, since this lends itself to expression in just those terms: the whole is greater than the parts in the sense that the parts are affected in some sense from above. (173)

This slide occurs when we move, unjustifiably, from the thought that the individual is changed through becoming a part of the whole to the belief that the individual is thereby less causally efficacious or significant than the whole, i.e., that the whole (society) is, therefore, in some sense greater or more coercive than its constituent parts (individual agents). But the latter thought does not follow from the former: There is no logical implication from the plausible thought that the individual is changed by undergoing socialization to the conclusion that she thereby becomes subordinate (ontologically or causally speaking) to the society of which she has become a member.

Second, another way in which we are led to miss the meta-distinction between individualism/collectivism and atomism/holism is by conflating the claim that there is a *shared stock of concepts or tradition of thought* with the claim that there is a *shared mind, group consciousness, collectivity, or spirit* in some crude sense.

Holists say that there is a common fund of concepts, a shared body of thought, on which individual thinkers rely; atomists deny this. But what holists say is easily confused with the claim that there is a common center of consciousness, a shared state of thinking, operative in social life. (174)

This slide occurs in moving from the fact that there is a common source of thinkable contents to the fallacy of thinking that there must therefore be, as a necessary condition of this sort of sharing, a common mind, consciousness, collectivity, or spirit that enables such sharing to take place. But the former idea does not presuppose the latter. People belonging to different cultures can and do think, mostly, the same thoughts, or at least widely overlapping thoughts, if they can individuate the determinate content of a particular thought at all, whether the thought in question shows up as familiar or strange.¹⁰ But it would be ludicrous to believe, on that account, that they must – literally – share a common mind, consciousness, collectivity, or spirit in order to

⁹ Cf. the approach to social ontology undertaken by Quinton in “Social Objects” and Ruben in *The Metaphysics of the Social World*.

¹⁰ Davidson, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme”.

individuate the same thoughts at all. The latter belief reveals an illegitimate reification of the capacity to think in general, let alone to think the same thoughts.

Third and finally, the preferred metaphors through which individualists and collectivists, as well as atomists and holists, express themselves tempt us into thinking in terms of certain confused associations.

The received individualist metaphor is mechanical, with the working of a society being compared to the working of a clock or whatever. The standard collectivist metaphor ... tends to be organic, with society being cast as an organism, often as an organism that displays characteristic patterns of growth and decline, perhaps even of recurrence. But the mechanical metaphor not only emphasizes the desired individualist point, that the origin of social movement is in the micro-structure, among the individuals depicted in intentional psychology; it also suggests, in atomist vein, that the elements of that structure are as detachable without remainder as the bits of the clock. Thus the individualism it expresses gets to be confused with atomism. On the other side the organic metaphor not only highlights the collectivist view of society as involving regularities that compromise individual psychology from above; it also serves to express the holist view that individuals depend on one another for significant properties, in the distinctive way in which the parts of a living organism depend on one another. Thus the collectivism expressed by this metaphor equally gets to be confused with holism. (174f.)

The temptation for the individualist, then, is to infer from the belief that we can understand how individual decisions and actions can produce and affect social phenomena to the false conclusion that the constituents of such phenomena can fully remain what they are apart from the social contexts in which they are embedded. Similarly, the temptation for the collectivist is to infer, from the (questionable) belief that supra- or sub-personal regularities or forces override intentional ones, to the (holist) conclusion that individuals depend organically on one another for their very standing as thinking and autonomous beings. But the inferences from one position in social ontology on the vertical issue to another on the horizontal issue, and vice versa, are actually optional, albeit tempting, as Pettit shows well.

In sum, we not only do well in our efforts to investigate social phenomena to keep these issues distinct, but also to envisage the plausibility of holistic individualism as a viable and attractive position in social ontology.

1.2 PETTIT'S NON-REDUCTIVE INDIVIDUALISM

Because much ink has been spilled over the issue of whether individualism or collectivism is correct, I will give somewhat short shrift to it.¹¹ I will focus instead on highlighting Pettit's conception of *non-reductive individualism* in social philosophy. My aim in this section is not to defend it against all possible objections, but merely to present it as arguably a conclusive resolution of the long-standing debate in social ontology and the philosophy of social explanation about whether individualism or collectivism is correct.

It is useful to begin by mentioning some important historical events in the transition from the late Middle Ages to the modern era that motivated collectivist thought. During this transition people in the West began to encounter a whole range of social entities on a much larger scale. Among other factors, the rise of the nation-state along with the operation of its various administrative institutions, corporate persons such as the East and West Indian trading companies, the emergence of global trade, and the explosion in population in Europe all contributed to the growing sense that there were larger, anonymous social forces at work that were much more involved in people's daily lives than before (126-8). Studies of the non-Western world (e.g., those by Herder and the Humboldt brothers) also provided an appreciation for the diversity of cultures, traditions, customs, and nations. They encouraged the attempt to isolate the "essential" characteristics of peoples as collective entities; later on in the nineteenth century, the development of organicist ways of thinking about social life reinforced this tendency.

Given this societal and intellectual background, it is not hard to see why people came to believe in the plausibility and truth of collectivism. As I see it, there are two main arguments for collectivism in social thought.¹² The first "argument" is really just the assertion that individual

¹¹ For just a sample, see the essays collected in Martin and MacIntyre (eds.), *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, Part VI. This issue is discussed in every introductory text in the philosophy of social science. In my examination of Pettit's views in this and the next section, I will abide by his terminological regimentation of terms in social ontology (as explicated at the beginning of the previous section). Readers should keep this in mind as I proceed.

¹² A third argument has also recently emerged in light of the explanatory ambitions of evolutionary psychology. In Pettit's terminology, if evolutionary psychological accounts of human social existence are correct, they would "outflank" our understanding of ourselves as intentional agents by invoking subpersonal causes for our beliefs, actions, and norms (see *The Common Mind*, pp. 134f., 155-63). Because this family of arguments for collectivism is less plausible, however, or at any rate has a far more limited scope than the two more familiar arguments for it that I discuss in this section, I shall ignore this family of arguments and let Pettit speak for himself on this issue.

agents are merely the vehicles or medium through which collective agents like the community (e.g., the *Volksgeist*, *conscience collective*, the *Wesenswille* of the *Gemeinschaft*, social structure, the social system, etc.) operate and exert their will on the individuals who are its members.¹³ On such a view, individual agents have little to no significance in shaping their lives through their actions, serving merely instead to embody and carry out, whether intentionally or not, the dictates of such collective agents, which are supposedly primary in existence and causally efficacious in relation to individual agents. The strongest proponent of this form of collectivism is probably Emile Durkheim, as best seen in his introduction and use of the concept of “social facts”.¹⁴ According to Durkheim, such facts purport to describe

types of conduct or thought [that] are not only external to the individual but are, moreover, endowed with coercive powers, by virtue of which they impose themselves upon him, independent of his will. ... These ways of thinking and acting [i.e., social facts in Durkheim’s sense] therefore constitute the proper domain of sociology. It is true that, when we define them with this word ‘constraint’, we risk shocking the zealous partisans of absolute individualism. For those who profess the complete autonomy of the individual, man’s dignity is diminished whenever he is made to feel that he is not completely self-determining.¹⁵

Sociological method as we practice it rests wholly on the basic principle that social facts must be studied as things, that is, as realities external to the individual. ... *It is not realized that there can be no sociology unless societies exist, and that societies cannot exist if there are only individuals.*¹⁶

Social facts, then, claim to describe social phenomena at a level that is at once external to and coercive of individual agency; furthermore, Durkheim alleges that such phenomena exist above and beyond the level at which individual agents exist.¹⁷

In light of Pettit’s cautions about how we should do social ontology, however, this “argument” for collectivism is utterly unconvincing because it illegitimately *hypostasizes* and *personifies* the community in its relation to the individuals who are its members.¹⁸ More specifically, it mistakenly runs together the *nomological conception of causation* and the idea of

¹³ For an instructive and critical examination of this tendency in the history of German social thought, see Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*.

¹⁴ Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 1-13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

¹⁶ Durkheim, *Suicide*, Preface, p. 37f, emphasis in the original. (Did Margaret Thatcher read Durkheim once upon a time? She once said provocatively: “There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families.” [Passage from a speech of Thatcher that is quoted in Guignon, *On Being Authentic*, p. 34.]

¹⁷ I will explain this talk of “levels” in due course.

¹⁸ For rather devastating criticisms of Durkheim on this score, see, e.g., Lukes, *Emile Durkheim*, Introduction; Schatzki, “A New Societist Social Ontology”, pp. 185-8. This tendency also exists in a sense in contemporary philosophy of language and mind, even if it does not miss the distinction between causation and normative constraint in the same way that Durkheim does. Brandom rightly criticizes this reified conception of a community in these areas of philosophy, which he characterizes as invoking an illegitimate “I-we” sort of sociality, in *Making It Explicit*, pp. 37-40 and 593-601.

enabling normative constraints, which ought to be kept apart if we are to understand properly how a human agent's membership in a community influences her attitudes and behavior. Indeed, Durkheim himself can be seen as unwittingly blurring just this distinction:

A social fact is to be recognized by the power of external coercion which it exercises or is capable of exercising over individuals, and the presence of this power may be recognized in its turn by the existence of some specific sanction or by the resistance offered against every individual effort that tends to violate it.¹⁹

But once it is clear that this understanding of the nature of the community as a relatively self-contained collective agent with autonomous causal powers is mistaken, this particular "argument" for collectivism becomes unmotivated, let alone persuasive. Although a human agent's participation in a community does indeed constrain her behavior, it is a mistake to believe that the nature of the constraint in question lies in her capacity to be directly causally affected by social entities thought to exist at a level that is "higher" than the level of individual agency.

A second argument for collectivism is *prima facie* more plausible. It stems from the growing use of the systematic collection of social statistics since the nineteenth century. The examination of such statistics enables social scientists to discern large-scale aggregate social regularities and social forces. What is striking is that these regularities and forces seem to display relatively invariant patterns despite undergoing changes in their constituents, i.e., in the individuals instantiating such patterns, or in their attitudes and behavior over time and place.²⁰ The examination of such patterns has led some less cautious social scientists to endorse a sort of statistical determinism that encourages the idea of discovering laws in the social sciences and in human history on a par with those revealed in the natural sciences. Once again, Durkheim, in particular in his study of suicide as a societal phenomenon, can be viewed as giving a paradigmatic statement of this sort of collectivism. As he writes:

If ... the suicides committed in a given society during a given period of time are taken as a whole, it appears that this total is not simply a sum of independent units, a collective total, but is itself a new fact *sui generis*, with its own unity, individuality and consequently its own nature – a nature, furthermore, dominantly social.²¹ ... Each society is predisposed to contribute a definite quota of voluntary suicide.²²

Some prominent French thinkers of the last century, perhaps influenced indirectly by Durkheim, have given even more extreme expressions of this sort of collectivism. Consider this passage

¹⁹ Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 10.

²⁰ See the beginning of the previous section for a few examples.

²¹ Durkheim, *Suicide*, p. 46.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

from the structural Marxist Louis Althusser, who emphasizes the explanatory power of social forces as opposed to aggregate social regularities:

The structure of the relations of production determines the *places* and *functions* occupied and adopted by the agents of production. ... The true “subjects” (in the sense of constitutive agents of production) are therefore not these occupants or functionaries, are not, despite all the appearances, ... “concrete individuals”, “real men” – *but the definition and distribution of these places and functions. The true “subjects” are these definers and distributors: the relations of production* (and political and ideological social relations).²³

In strong opposition to this form of collectivism, many critics of the thought of Althusser, and to a lesser extent, of Claude Lévi-Strauss (the father of structuralism in the social sciences) and Talcott Parsons (the father of sociological functionalism), have rightly criticized this unduly passive view of individual agents. Such critics object that individual agents in their theories are unjustifiably treated as “mere social dopes” who cannot help but conform to the regularities and forces exerted by large-scale social structures unknown to themselves (133). They argue that it is a gross falsification of actual human social life to claim that individual agents act in the robotic ways that such collectivists envisage.²⁴

Pettit’s position on this issue displays much sympathy with these criticisms of collectivism. In Pettit’s terminology, if collectivism is true, then social regularities or social forces “override” individual agency and intentional psychology (132). The overriding thesis concerns the relation between two supposedly distinct levels of causal powers, namely, the social-structural and the intentional. The collectivist argues that higher-level causal powers trump those that operate at the level of individual agency when conflicts between them take place, at which point such agency is either undermined or compromised. And the source of the causal powers at the higher level is supposed to consist either in the subsumption of individual agents’ activities under some social-statistical law, or in their governance in accordance with the structural constraints that some social system imposes upon them. In other words, if the behavior of individual agents is explainable in terms of its subsumption under such a law or its realization within such a system, these social facts about them compel them to perform certain actions against their will.

²³ This passage is quoted from Pettit, *The Common Mind*, p. 133, emphasis in the original.

²⁴ For a strong backlash against this “objectivizing” tendency from within the French intellectual tradition, see Bourdieu, *Outlines of a Theory of Practice* and *The Logic of Practice*. For criticism of sociological functionalism, see Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. For summary criticisms, respectively, of functionalism and structuralism in the social sciences, see Giddens, *Studies in Social and Political Theory*, Ch. 2, pp. 7-10, and *Central Problems in Social Theory*, Ch. 1.

These certainly seem to be the views of the thinkers cited above. But is the overriding thesis of collectivism true? Pettit makes a convincing case that it is not. The strategy is to undermine the collectivist assumption about the possibility of conflict between two supposedly distinct levels of causal powers. Once it can be seen how there can be no actual conflict in this sense, the claim about the causal impact of social-structural properties on intentional ones becomes moot (148-52). This can be done by arguing for the thesis of the *supervenience* of the higher-level causal properties on the lower-level ones. On a standard understanding of the idea of supervenience, higher-level properties are supervenient on lower-level ones just in case there can be no difference of properties at the higher level without there also being a difference of properties at the lower one.²⁵ If true, the endorsement of this doctrine amounts to a commitment to some form of *causal fundamentalism* about the level at which causal powers actually operate (151). In social ontology, such a causal fundamentalism entails that there can be no social causation that takes place except at the level of individual agency. There can be no “social action at a distance”, and groups, organizations, institutions, social structures, or social systems cannot exercise causal powers independently of the intentional states and actions of individual agents.

Now, the endorsement of this doctrine of causal fundamentalism in social ontology has traditionally entailed methodological individualism.²⁶ But Pettit’s conclusion that individualism triumphs over collectivism does not have such an entailment. For he argues that it does not follow from the truth of individualism that higher-level properties or states are thereby causally irrelevant, which is a conclusion that proponents of methodological individualism typically wish

²⁵ Pettit’s conception of supervenience seems to hold that properties and states of items at the supervenient level are token- but not type-identical to those at the subvenient level; his distinction between higher-level role states and lower-level realizer states as specifications, respectively, of the status of mental and physical states reveals his commitment to some version of the token-identity thesis (24-32). His view is similar to Davidson’s regarding the irreducible character of intentional states; see Davidson, “Mental Events”. Haugeland has forcefully criticized this understanding of supervenience in terms of the token-identity thesis; see his “Weak Supervenience”. Because what is significant for my aims, however, is the view that supervenience without reductionism is plausible and true, a view that both the token-identity thesis and global supervenience endorse, I do not need to settle the question of which account of supervenience is correct here.

²⁶ Or at least in its strong, reductive version: Strong methodological individualism holds that finished or “rock-bottom” explanations in the social sciences must always be *strict* individualist explanations, i.e., refer *only* to individuals, their properties and actions. For explication of this position, see Zahle, “Holism and Supervenience”, esp. p. 316. As far as I can tell, Pettit’s individualism is compatible with what Zahle characterizes as moderate methodological individualism (*ibid.*), i.e., the view that social-scientific explanations must always be *non-strictly* individualist, i.e., always include but presumably not necessarily reduce its *explananda* to the properties and activities of individuals, etc. If this is what “methodological individualism” means, then Pettit could be understood to endorse it. This is a matter of terminology more than anything else.

to draw. After much stage-setting (32-42, 144-9), Pettit's key move is to apply his "program model" of causal relevance to the vertical issue in social ontology. According to such a model, higher-level properties or states are *causally relevant* just in case they "program" for the instantiation of lower-level properties or states by ensuring, or at least by making highly probable, that there are always more causally basic, and hence lower-level, properties or states that are causally efficacious whenever higher-level properties or states are indeed causally relevant (149-55).

Now, what constitutes a *level* of organization, description, and explanation involves three conditions (147f.). (1) There is the basic assumption that each level is characterized in terms of the properties and states that occur there, as well as the range of phenomena made possible by means of the instantiation of those properties or states. For example, intentional phenomena and their explanation are made possible by the use of intentional vocabulary, one in which (as Davidson puts it) the constitutive ideal of rationality plays an enabling and constraining role.²⁷ (2) If properties, states, and their associated phenomena belong to the same level, they are causally congruent, whereas those belonging to different levels are not so. For example, two properties will belong to the same level "if that means that the factors they constitute always relate as parts of the same causal whole or as stages (or parts of stages) in the same causal chain. Otherwise they will belong to different levels" (147). Finally, (3) what makes a level "higher" or "lower" than another depends on whether a level is more causally basic than another. A level is more causally basic than another just in case there can be no causation at a higher level without there also being causation at a lower level, but *not* vice versa. If a level is more causally basic, then, it is the lower level on which the higher level supervenes.

Pettit uses the following example to illustrate the significance of these conditions as they figure in the program model of causal relevance. The elasticity of an eraser is causally relevant to its disposition to bend because it ensures that there exists a certain configuration of molecules in the eraser, with the appropriate molecular structure, that is so constituted so as to cause the eraser to bend when sufficient pressure is applied to it. The invocation of its elasticity is causally relevant and genuinely explanatory, not empty (i.e., elasticity is not a "dormitive virtue" of the eraser), because this invocation *guarantees* that there is some more causally basic (lower-level)

²⁷ Davidson, "Mental Events".

configuration of its constituents whose state disposes the eraser to bend. It is not explanatorily relevant that it is any *particular* configuration of molecules that does so in a given situation; what is required is only that there be *some* such configuration that is disposed to bend when the triggering circumstances obtain for it to do so.²⁸ In this sense the higher-level property of elasticity supervenes on the lower-level chemical properties of a configuration of molecules of a certain kind. Thus, while the elasticity does not in a strict sense directly cause the eraser to bend, it is causally relevant to its bending precisely by ensuring or at least making highly probable – i.e., by “programming for” – the existence of some configuration of molecules with the right structure for the eraser to bend when the triggering circumstances of its bending obtain. The objection that the elasticity of the eraser is causally irrelevant to its actual bending, and thus that the invocation of its elasticity is explanatorily empty, is mistaken because it unduly restricts causal *relevance* to information about *factual* causation, i.e., about what actually causes the eraser to bend in a particular situation. Although such information is indeed explanatory, there can also be revealing and useful information that does not serve merely as a placeholder account for some other one that is supposedly better by providing more “fine-grained” information about the factual causal history for the occurrence of an event or condition. How can this be so? The higher-level explanation works by using a certain vocabulary (a certain “material” logic) that lets investigators perceive *patterns* of causal relevance that range over particular events and conditions, because such patterns are made intelligible in the first place through the use of this vocabulary.²⁹

Consider now the following example as an illustration in terms of social phenomena. Why does someone like David, who lives in the US and is self-employed, choose not to have health care coverage? Well, the lower-level explanation for his choice is just that he could not afford the cost of the health insurance policies offered to him by some health insurance representative. But there is, *ceteris paribus*, a higher-level explanation available for why he makes this choice. It has to do with how the health insurance industry in the US operates mostly in connection with businesses or organizations that offer health insurance as a significant benefit to their employees. In this context, the primary aim of the US health insurance industry is to

²⁸ In terms of quantificational logic, this claim expresses an existential, not a universal, statement. More generally, Pettit’s argument here is quite similar to that made by Putnam in “Reductionism and the Nature of Psychology”, pp. 428-33.

²⁹ See Dennett, “Real Patterns”.

maximize profit and find as many legal ways as possible to reduce their reimbursements for individuals' health care expenses. Given such interests, it is not cost-effective for them to offer health care coverage to single individuals, regardless of their actual health, when it is much more profitable to offer such coverage to particular populations of people and much more cost-effective for them to cover them when some individuals from these populations require expensive medical treatment. These interests are thus causally relevant to the explanation of the choice that David makes in his circumstance by "programming for" the particular set of incentives and disincentives that he is faced with when he considers his health insurance options. It is this set of incentives and disincentives that, *ceteris paribus*, makes it highly probable that David and individuals in similar socioeconomic positions prefer to go without health insurance. This is an example not only of how conditions at a higher explanatory level provide more information than those at the lower level with regard to the occurrence of some particular event of a certain type; such conditions at the higher level also make highly probable ("program for") the occurrence of that event at the lower level by circumscribing the range of choices, incentives, and disincentives that individuals face at the lower level.

Many other examples of this sort of social explanation can be easily given. For present purposes, what is relevant here is that this account of supervenience does *not* advocate the desirability or requirement of inter-level reduction between the supervenient (higher) and subvenient (lower) levels of organization with regard to their causal relevance. There can be revealing and useful information provided at a macro-level of organization and description that remains invisible at the level of individual agency. Social or collective entities can thus be characterized as being *expressively but not ontologically or causally autonomous*.³⁰ Although they are not ontologically self-subsisting, our reference to social and collective entities – more generally, our intentional attitudes containing the use of concepts that make sense in relation to them – enable us to dramatically increase our expressive resources in our understanding and experience of human reality.³¹

³⁰ Although I have some important disagreement with John Searle's conception of social reality (see 3.2), he makes a similar point in terms of his distinction between the ontological subjectivity but epistemic objectivity of social entities; see Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, esp. Ch. 1.

³¹ For an elaboration of how Pettit's individualism is distinguishable from five other questions that have often been run together with the debate between "individualism and holism", see Appendix A of this dissertation. See also *The Common Mind*, Ch. 5, on how he combines his holistic individualism in social ontology with explanatory pluralism in the philosophy of social explanation.

Pettit's program model and its commitment to causal fundamentalism apply thus straightforwardly to the vertical issue in social ontology. On this view, higher-level properties or states like rate of suicide, unemployment, poverty, capitalism, gender or racial identity, etc. – in short, all social-structural properties or states – are causally relevant and thereby genuinely explanatory by ensuring or at least making highly probable the existence of some lower-level properties or states that are realized and causally efficacious at the level of the agency of *individual* human beings. Collective agents like communities, organizations, groups, institutions, etc., and collective entities like social regularities and forces, do not exist except insofar as they are embodied and expressed through the intentional attitudes and behavior of individual human beings. This position avoids the collectivist temptation to reify social phenomena, along with the misguided view that there can be direct, inter-level causation between the social-structural and the intentional. But it does not thereby follow from this conclusion that collective agents and entities cannot influence and constrain individual agency. Quite to the contrary, they do so by circumscribing – by “programming for” – a complex of norms, explicit rules, attitudes, incentives, opportunities, and sanctions for the individuals who understand themselves as immersed in and engaging with the range of phenomena that make sense within such a complex.

Daniel Little has recently articulated a convergent account of non-reductive individualism in social ontology. His label for the sort of individualism that he defends is “methodological localism” (ML). This position is meant to supersede the traditional opposition between “individualism and holism” by capturing the grain of truth in both. Here is a summary statement of Little's position, which can also serve as a relatively succinct statement of Pettit's non-reductive individualism:

[ML] affirms that there are large social structures and facts that influence social outcomes, but it insists that these structures are only possible insofar as they are embodied in the actions and states of socially constructed individuals. With individualism, the moderate position [of ML] embraces the point that individuals are the bearers of social structures and causes. There is no such thing as an autonomous social force; rather, all social properties and effects are conveyed through the individuals who constitute a population at a time. Against individualism, however, methodological localism affirms the “social-ness” of social actors. ML denies the possibility or desirability of characterizing the individual pre-socially. Instead, the individual is understood as a socially constituted actor, affected by large current social facts such as value systems, social structures, extended social networks, and the like. In other words, ML denies the possibility of reductionism from the level of the social to the level of a population of non-social individuals; rather, the individual is constituted by social facts, and the social facts are constituted by the current characteristics of the persons who make them up. Furthermore, ML affirms the existence of social constructs beyond the purview of the individual actor or group. ... [I]nstitutions have real effects on

individual behavior and on social processes and outcomes – always mediated through the structured circumstances of agency of the myriad participants in these institutions and the affected society.³²

As can be seen, Little’s methodological localism insists on the expressive autonomy but ontological and causal dependence of collective entities on individual agency. In particular, Little is especially good at showing how the causal relevance and powers of such entities should be understood in terms of their structuring of the “leeway” or “room for maneuver” (cf. the German word ‘*Spielraum*’) on the basis of which individual agents understand themselves and act in the world. Specifically, collective agents and entities affect individual attitudes and behavior by shaping the “incentives, preference-formation, belief-acquisition, or powers and opportunities” that make determinate sense to individual agents.³³ This is the proper way to understand how collective agents and entities at once enable and constrain – but cannot externally coerce in Durkheim’s sense – individual agency. Barring certain circumstances, individual agents in general have the capacity to choose (or not to choose) to act in various ways in given situations. What they cannot choose to do is to revise, at least not entirely or at once, the background complex of incentives, opportunities, etc., that makes sense to them and circumscribes their choices in the first place.

Following Little, we can distinguish a number of entities, patterns, and levels of organization and explanation that constitute the social world and understand how they are connected with one another.³⁴ First, there is the level of the social in its most immediate concretion: the level of the *socially constituted individual* whose behavior is paradigmatically understood in terms of intentional psychology and individual agency. This level includes the social development of and interactions among distinct individual agents. Both Pettit and Little insist on the ontological and causal primacy of this level. Second, there is the level of the social that supervenes on that of individual agency: namely, that of *groups, organizations, and institutions*. These entities can be characterized either concretely, in terms of the individuals who

³² Little, “Levels of the Social”, p. 346.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 351. Note that this talk of the “social world” need not be understood as talk of a realm that is distinguishable from the natural world to such an extent that a *dualism* is generated between the “social” and the “natural” world. This remark is meant to deflect the charge made by Rouse that any talk of the “social world” already implies such a strong separation between the two and is hence, if his arguments are sound, ultimately untenable; see Rouse, *Knowledge and Power*, Ch. 6 and *How Scientific Practices Matter*, Ch. 2. One can still maintain a *distinction*, however, between the two without letting it *eo ipso* become a *dualism*, although Rouse is right to argue that certain philosophers (e.g., Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor) often treat this distinction as establishing a dualism between the social and natural world.

constitute them and act within the local settings that make sense to them, or abstractly, in terms of the explicit rules, practices, roles, and institutional functioning of such entities themselves. Third, there is the level of the social at an even higher level of organization that itself supervenes on the level of groups, organizations, and institutions. The entities, norms, or patterns of behavior constituted at this level are often characterized in terms of *social identities* (e.g., race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ethnic identity, etc.), *social structures* (e.g., education, bureaucracy, nation-state, etc.), or *social systems* (e.g., economic and political systems, globalization, etc.) that coordinate and constrain the behavior of entities at the second and first levels. Lastly, there is also a level of the social that is discernable in terms of *statistical patterns that characterize populations of people*.

As long as we abide by the basic commitment that all of these levels supervene ultimately, i.e., ontologically and causally, on the level of socially constituted individuals, there need not be any strict reduction of the entities, patterns, and phenomena at the other levels to the level of individual agency or intentional psychology. By the same token, the acknowledgment of the social constitution of the individual implies that we can and, indeed, in some cases must explain social phenomena without reducing such explanations to ones that apply only at the level of intentional psychology and individual agency.³⁵ For the contexts within which individual agency is exercised are themselves socially structured with reference to entities, processes, and patterns that are only discernible and intelligible at the other higher levels of the social. The social world, then, it goes without saying, is a large and tangled web. Pettit and Little have performed yeoman's service by showing how the inextricable complexity of this web does not threaten our self-understanding as individual agents who exercise autonomy under socially structured circumstances.

³⁵ Pettit, *The Common Mind*, Ch. 5.

1.3 PETTIT'S ARGUMENT FOR SOCIAL HOLISM

Having explicated Pettit's understanding and defense of individualism against collectivism, we turn now to the evaluation of his extended arguments for social holism against social atomism. Like the vertical issue concerning individualism and collectivism, the horizontal issue concerning atomism and holism arose in a particular historical context in Western thought. Familiarly, holism was a reaction against the atomistic way in which early modern political philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, and their contractarian descendants conceive the basic existence of the human individual as capable of being in principle solitary.³⁶ Social holists object that social atomists seriously underestimate the extent to which human beings are shaped by their social environment, in ways that are not merely instrumental to the attainment of the ends of loosely associated individual agents. In opposition, social holists argue that "an individual can realize his or her humanity only in community with others: that there is a sense in which community comes first, individual human beings second".³⁷

As Pettit notes, however, this thesis, so formulated, is rather vague. We need first to define more clearly what the holist thesis is regarding the social constitution of the human individual. Following the lead of Charles Taylor,³⁸ Pettit formulates the thesis of holism as follows:

Individual human beings are not entirely self-sufficient. (1) They must depend upon one another for the possession and exercise of some basic capacity that is central to the flourishing of the human being. (2) Furthermore, no one can come to possess and exercise this basic capacity – no one can be properly human – except by interacting with other human beings.³⁹

As already emphasized in the Introduction to this dissertation, this thesis must not be understood in a causal, instrumental, developmental, or statistical way – indeed, in general, in a factual or

³⁶ See Taylor, "Atomism".

³⁷ Pettit, "Defining and Defending Social Holism", p. 116.

³⁸ Taylor, "Atomism", p. 191: "The claim is that living in society is a necessary condition of the development of rationality, in some sense of this property, or of becoming a moral agent in the full sense of the term, or of becoming a fully responsible, autonomous being. ... [The holist contention is] that outside society, or in some variants outside certain kinds of society, our distinctively human capacities could not develop."

³⁹ Pettit, "Defining and Defending Social Holism", p. 117, passage somewhat modified. Since Pettit regards this later essay as a refinement of the initial argument for social holism that he presents in *The Common Mind*, I will treat his position in this paper as more definitive. Nevertheless, as far as I can tell, there are no significant differences between them in terms of Pettit's argument for social holism; rather, their main differences concern how precisely to formulate the thesis of social holism.

empirical way – if it is not to express a mere platitude. Its formulation deserves thus some explication before we assess Pettit’s arguments for it. In particular, we must clarify its content if it is to be non-trivial and worthy of philosophical consideration. Moreover, these determinations will be directly relevant for the conception of the social constitution of the human individual that this dissertation presents and defends in later chapters.

Pettit helpfully specifies the content of social holism in terms of his answers to three questions that he raises about its content.⁴⁰ First, what is the sort of basic capacity that is claimed to be central to the flourishing of the human being, such that its possession and exercise depend essentially on the enjoyment of social relations? Second, what is the nature of the dependence in question upon social relations: Is it causal or rather non-causal dependence? Third, what is it exactly that an individual depends on for the exercise of the relevant basic capacity: Does it depend on the mere existence of others, or rather on her interactions with them?

To begin with the answer to the first question, the sort of basic capacity that is distinctive of a flourishing human being cannot be fully explained in terms of some biological characteristic such as the possession of a specific genetic makeup (namely, human DNA) or set of bodily abilities (e.g., the ability to be bipedal or use tools). Neither can it suffice to understand the sort of capacity in question in terms of what is required for the continuous bodily survival of a human individual. The obvious reason is that none of these characteristics or abilities requires the sustained robust enjoyment of social relations in order to persist. Rather, the sort of basic capacity in question must be one whose exercise puts individual agents in the position to be *self-determining*: not in the sense, of course, that they can unconditionally determine all the circumstances under which they think and act, but in the sense that a certain range of beliefs or courses of action are open to them as possibilities that they can reflectively consider, and for which they can be held responsible when they act upon them or not.⁴¹ Paradigmatically, human beings determine themselves in the relevant sense when they can consider and provide *reasons*, when prompted, for what they believe and do, as opposed to reacting merely instinctively to the impacts of the environment in which they are situated. Self-determination in this sense is

⁴⁰ Pettit, “Defining and Defending Social Holism”, pp. 117-21.

⁴¹ Taylor’s invocation of the ideas of rationality, moral agency, and autonomy in the passage cited certainly suggests this. I do not wish to wade here into the traditional debate between determinism and free will. I will assume that the sense of self-determination in question is sufficiently intelligible and plausible so as not to require further elaboration.

fundamentally connected with the capacity for reflection and deliberation. What basic capacity of the human being can play this important role?

Pettit submits that the obvious candidate is the *capacity to think* (169). He argues that a thinker must be able (1) to engage in what he characterizes as intentional ascent and (2) to follow rules, above and beyond just interacting with its environment in ways that display intentionality. Very briefly, the ability to engage in intentional ascent consists in an intentional agent's capacity to *reflect upon* its responses to its environment and what it can or should do (54-64, 69-76). As Pettit puts it, this capacity is the requirement that

an intentional system should not only have intentional states with contents – states like the belief that p, the desire that p, and so on – it should also have intentional states that are about such contents. It should not only have attitudes that bear contents, it should also have attitudes towards contents. (60)

We [thinking beings] are not just creatures who form beliefs and desires – more or less rationally – and proceed under favorable conditions to act in the way that they rationalize. We are also creatures who understand what it is for those states to be rational – albeit our understanding is marked by the images and resources of a particular culture and tradition – and who have a care for the attainment of that rationality. (57f.)

According to Pettit's terminological regimentation, what distinguishes the thinking intentional agent from the non-thinking intentional system is that the former can evaluate the overall rationality and, more generally, the qualitative worth, of its engagement with its environment, whereas the non-thinking intentional system cannot do so (55). This is what fundamentally constitutes thinking intentional agents as *persons*, i.e., beings who have *selves*; human beings who are so constituted are not only purposive and intentional creatures, but *care* about the quality of their engagements with their environment as expressions of their self-understanding and self-worth.⁴² This capacity for intentional ascent captures, then, the age-old philosophical conviction that what distinguishes human beings from other animals is their rationality: their ability to subject their first-order beliefs and desires, attitudes and intentions, to high-order standards of evaluation regarding their correctness and value, standards that themselves may be subject from time to time to critical assessment and alteration.⁴³ As interesting and important as

⁴² See Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" and Taylor, "What is Human Agency?" Pettit's conception of the capacity to think clearly resonates to the conception of personhood (selfhood) articulated by Frankfurt and Taylor.

⁴³ Note that it is not required that a thinker be always explicitly aware that he is reflecting up or taking attitudes toward contents; it is only required that he be *able* in principle to perform, at least some of the time, intentional ascent in relation to such contents. This echoes Kant's thought that the "I think" must *be able* to accompany all my representations, not that it actually, at all times, has to do so.

Pettit's conception of intentional ascent is, however, it is tangential to his argument for social holism and will thus not be further discussed here. On the other hand, because his argument for social holism depends heavily on his conception of the possibility of rule-following, we will need to understand the latter before we can assess the former.

Having isolated the capacity to think as central to the flourishing of any human being, Pettit next argues that a human being cannot exercise it absent the enjoyment of social relations. The claim is that this capacity depends necessarily on other human beings in order to be realized. What is the nature of this dependence? Does social holism hold that the capacity to think depends causally or non-causally on the enjoyment of social relations? Furthermore, does its exercise depend merely on the existence of others, or rather on the interactions with them?

Pettit argues that the dependence in question cannot be causal if it is to justify social holism. The argument that he gives for this conclusion is indirect (169-71): Social holism would be trivially true were it to claim that individual agents must causally depend in a variety of ways on either the existence of or interaction with others.⁴⁴ Thus, the dependence on others must be of a non-causal sort. What can this mean? The dependence in question must require the enjoyment of social relations in a *constitutive* sense: The activity of thinking thoughts must depend on social relations with others in the sense that its very structure already involves a social aspect.⁴⁵ Intuitively, we can for now make sense of the idea of the constitutive dependence of *X* on *Y* as follows. Consider the bearing by *X* of various properties such as status, power, and so on. Status and power are such that their very possession and exercise intrinsically involve social relations. One could not, in the relevant sense, acquire status and exercise power unless other people adopted certain attitudes and behaved in certain ways toward the bearer of status or power. Thus, if *X* and *Y* are individual agents, then *X*'s possession and exercise of status, power, etc., cannot be actualized apart from *Y*'s ascription in practice of such social-relational properties to *X*. The bearing by *X* of such properties cannot be logically distinct from *Y*'s attitude of taking *X* to have

⁴⁴ Pettit, "Defining and Defending Social Holism", p. 120f.

⁴⁵ Although he uses both expressions, Pettit tends to put the issue in terms of supervenient, rather than constitutive, dependence. I find, however, that framing the issue in terms of supervenient dependence distracts, rather than helps, as the way to clarify the issues here, so I will avoid this way of talking unless necessary.

them; the ascription by other *Y*'s to *X* of such properties is a constitutive aspect of *X* bearing those social-relational properties.⁴⁶

In order for the argument for social holism to be compelling, then, the social holist must argue that the capacity to think depends constitutively, not causally, on the enjoyment of social relations with others. The analogy with properties like status and power also answers straightaway the third question about the content of social holism. The mere co-existence of others is clearly insufficient to generate the status, power, or other social-relational properties that an individual possesses. Rather, other people must take and treat her as having that status or power. Analogously, a social holist like Pettit argues that what an individual constitutively depends upon, in her exercise of the capacity to think, are her *interactions* with others, not merely her passive co-existence with them:

Social holism means that if it is fixed that I have a certain thought, then it will be simultaneously fixed that other people have certain thoughts too; no act of thinking, at least as things stand with human beings, without an interactive context of thinking subjects. (172)

In sum, social holism according to Pettit is the view that any human individual must depend non-causally on interactions with other individuals in order to possess and exercise his or her capacity to think.

With these elaborations in place, we can now lay out and evaluate Pettit's argument for social holism. Schematically, it has the following inferential structure (181):

1. The interactive thesis: A human being can follow a rule only on the basis of interpersonal or intertemporal interaction.
2. The commonability thesis: The rules followed by a human thinker are commonable; they are rules that another can claim as a common possession.
3. A negative claim: If a human being follows a rule on the basis only of intertemporal interaction with herself, then that rule is not commonable.

Conclusion: The rules followed by a human thinker are not followed on the basis of such intrapersonal interaction alone; they must be followed on a basis that involves interaction with others.

Although the argument is formally valid by disjunctive syllogism, I aim to show below that it is unsound.

⁴⁶ This does not imply that the ascription of others of social-relational properties like status and power is on its own sufficient for the actualization of the latter; such ascription forms at most a necessary condition. For one thing, there needs to be a prior understanding of the social and institutional structure on the basis of which status and power can show up and be significant at all.

On Pettit's view, the bulk of the work of the argument for social holism depends on showing the truth, or at least the overwhelming plausibility, of the commonability thesis and the attendant negative claim. He takes the interactive thesis as something that he has already established elsewhere (in Ch. 2 of *The Common Mind*). Let us for the moment grant that the interactive thesis has been established and examine his arguments for the commonability thesis and the negative claim. The commonability thesis is simply his label for what is more standardly characterized as the *publicity* condition; clearly the use of 'commonability' is intended to bring out the *accessibility by others* of the contents of a thinker's thoughts, insofar as such contents are constrained by rules. On Pettit's view, rules are normative constraints that apply in an indefinite variety of types of situations (65, 81). Given this understanding of what rules are, the commonability condition is the condition that

one human being can knowledgeably identify, as such, the rules followed by another and identify them as rules that she can follow herself: in particular, that one human being can knowledgeably identify the propositions and propositional elements that another targets in her thought. (180)

The commonability condition in question must itself satisfy two requirements in order to be robust (182). First, an observer's identification of the rules that a thinker follows cannot occur through conjectural luck (presumably this stipulation is meant to rule out Gettier-style counterexamples). She must instead identify the rules in question "knowledgeably" by doing so in a "sufficiently privileged or reliable manner" that does not consist in making informed guesses about what the operative rules are (*ibid.*). Second, in order for the observer to count as knowledgeably identifying the rules that a thinker follows, it must be the case that the observer herself can come to follow them in the same manner. In this sense the identification of the rules that are followed must not be achieved in an "oblique or parasitic" way; that is, the observer of the rule-follower must also be able in principle to let the rule in view guide her own potential rule-following activities (182f.).

If the commonability thesis is so understood, what arguments does Pettit give in its favor? First, he argues that "all the evidence suggests *as a matter of fact* that the rules that people follow in thinking are commonable" in the sense just specified (183, emphasis added). The claim is apparently that because we take it for granted in ordinary life that the contents of a thinker's thoughts are in principle accessible to us in our observations and dealings with her, the truth of the commonability thesis is our working default assumption: "We take it as axiomatic that if the person is a thinker at all, then she is a scrutable thinker: that if she is a thinker at all, then we can

know which rules she is following and recognize them as rules that we might follow ourselves.” (183) Second, Pettit argues that it is generally in our interest to follow rules that are accessible to others, for doing so tends not only to promote the instrumental success of our activities, but serves indeed as a practical requirement of what it is to be a thinker at all, for it “would be a sure sign of psychological derangement – or perhaps warped philosophical motive – for any one of us to seek out purely private rules to follow. It is part of showing oneself to be sane that one does not seek the refuge of a thought-world that is epistemically sealed against the comprehension of others.” (189) In sum, the reasons that Pettit provides for justifying the commonability thesis are factual and grounded in common sense.

Having invoked common sense as his way of defending the truth, or at least the overwhelming plausibility, of the commonability thesis, Pettit tries next to argue for the negative claim that rules cannot be commonable solely on the basis of intertemporal intrapersonal interactions, i.e., the sort of interactions that a person has solely with her past and future selves regarding the correctness of her rule-following activities. In essence, Pettit’s argument in this context rehearses the familiar scenario, prominent especially in light of Kripke’s reading of the later Wittgenstein on rule-following, that any finite set of examples of a supposed rule can hypothetically instantiate an indefinite number of different rules.⁴⁷ The relevant point here is the following: If it were really true that someone could follow rules solely on the basis of her intertemporal but intrapersonal interactions with herself, then the best that an observer of her behavior could ever do is to hypothesize about the contents of the rules that she actually follows. How so? Because the best epistemic position that such an observer could occupy would always be one that is “left on the outside” of the rule-following activities of the person observed:

When I observe you following a rule that is fixed solely by reference to your own habits and practices, then I am in the impossible position of someone who is trying to identify an indefinitely relevant rule by the consideration of a finite number of cases. I am stymied by the oldest problem in the induction game. The problem will not stop me from conjecturing about the rule that you are following. And it will not prevent me from later falsifying a given conjecture, as I find that you do not respond as the rule that I postulated earlier would require. But it will make it impossible for me to know which rule you are following, in the sense in which I am supposed to know this for commonable rules. (186)

In other words, even if I were able provisionally to identify some rule that you are following, nothing would guarantee that my working identification of the rule in question would ensure that I would be able to follow it in the same way that you do; and this possibility would lead me to

⁴⁷ Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Ch. 2.

think that I have not really knowledgeably identified the rule in question after all. Pettit's move here is to treat these implications as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the possibility of a thinker who interacts only intrapersonally with herself over time concerning her rule-following (184-6). He must think, in light of the two reasons he gives for the truth or overwhelming plausibility of the commonability thesis, that the cost of not endorsing it would be too great. He concludes, therefore, that we are justified in endorsing social holism in light of his defense of the premises of the argument for it.

Would a resolute skeptic about the reality of rule-following, however, feel satisfied by this argument? I think clearly not. For such a skeptic would dispute both the requirement that commonability is a necessary condition of rule-following and Pettit's claim that he has shown that rule-following cannot occur in principle solely on the basis of a thinker's intertemporal but intrapersonal interactions with herself. From the perspective of the skeptic, Pettit's emphasis that we assume, as a matter of fact in ordinary life, that rules are commonable *begs the question* of the skeptic about why rules must be so in the first place. The reason is simple. It is a commonplace in the literature concerning epistemological skepticism that invocation of common sense and how things actually are will not be persuasive from the skeptic's perspective. For he insists that we must be able to *rule out*, not just as a matter of fact but as a *mere possibility*, that we may be deceived (e.g., by a malicious demon or by our condition as brains-in-a-vat, etc.) in believing that we successfully represent the way things really are. But Pettit plainly fails to establish this stronger conclusion with regard to our assumption that the rules in question must be commonable. Indeed, the skeptic here could seize upon the moves of Kripke's Wittgenstein in laying out the "skeptical paradox" of rule-following and draw instead the opposing conclusion from the one that Pettit himself draws: The skeptic can insist that Pettit's rehearsal of the worries of Kripke's Wittgenstein in this context does not amount to a *reductio* of the skeptic's view, but rather actually supports his very skepticism about the necessity of commonability for rule-following. The skeptic thinks the proper lesson to be learned is that we cannot help but always be "left on the outside" concerning the discovery of the rules that someone follows.

Now, Pettit actually acknowledges that his argument so far cannot placate this sort of skepticism about the necessity of the commonability of rule-following. But he brushes it off by replying, in effect in a Humean spirit, that no reasonable people in the course of ordinary life

could *live out* their lives on the basis of the belief that the commonability thesis is false.⁴⁸ As he writes in brief response, skeptics

deprive us of the ordinary notion of knowledge itself, refusing to countenance the regular paradigms of what it is to know something. And the important point is that, short of scepticism, it is very difficult to reject the assumption that one person can non-parasitically know which rule another is following. (184)

Pettit, then, effectively concedes that skepticism about the necessity of the commonability of rules is viable. But this dismissive response on his part is rather odd. For one thing, he takes skepticism about rule-following seriously elsewhere and repeatedly emphasizes how it must be rebutted in order for thought and meaning to be possible (64-9, 76-86).⁴⁹ Given this commitment, it is curious that Pettit thinks he can simply shrug off skepticism about whether rules must be commonable as a necessary aspect of rule-following.

But the unpersuasive character of Pettit's argument here does not really depend in my view on his dismissal of skepticism about rule-following. Rather, it stems from the unfortunate way in which he has cast the skeptical challenge in terms of an *epistemological* orientation in general. For Pettit has in effect transformed the thesis of social holism, by my lights unjustifiably, into a putative solution to the problem of other minds. Through his treatment this thesis comes to be understood in terms of how we in our role as observers can come to *know* – in his terms, to “identify knowledgeably” – the rules that a thinker is following.⁵⁰ But how does a question concerning the social constitution of the human individual come to be equated with one about our entitlement to know the rules that another thinker follows? Is this what is really involved and at stake in properly understanding the nature of our social constitution? Has Pettit not in fact changed the subject? Even if we grant that understanding our reasons for believing that other people follow rules as we do – that other people have minds much like our own – is important, does showing this possibility *exhaust* the nature of our basic social constitution as

⁴⁸ I mean Hume as he expresses himself in the final section of Book I of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, esp. p. 269.

⁴⁹ See Pettit, “The Reality of Rule-Following”, p. 31: “If speech and thought involve rule-following, then the magnitude of the [skeptical challenge about its reality] can hardly be overstated. Deny that there are such things as rules, deny that there is anything that counts strictly as rule-following, and you put in jeopardy some of our most central notions about ourselves. More than that, you also put in jeopardy our notion of the world as requiring us, given our words and concepts, to describe it this way rather than that; you undermine our conception of objective characterization. There is no extant philosophical challenge that compares on the scale of iconoclasm with the skeptical challenge to rule-following.”

⁵⁰ Cf. Hyslop, “Other Minds”. This does not imply that I agree with the underlying philosophical assumptions that make the problem of other minds seem pressing, let alone with those of Hyslop. In fact, I find these assumptions highly questionable and optional. But I will not go into this here.

human individuals? I think not. For one thing, it accepts too readily the problematic assumption that there is a basic epistemic gap between the inner mind of the thinker and her outer behavior, an assumption that renders the problem of other minds seemingly pressing in the first place. But this view fails to acknowledge that an individual's "outer" behavior is sometimes simply constitutive of the "inner" life of that individual. Except when one finds oneself in special circumstances (e.g., watching actors in performances, etc.), the occurrence of avowals, facial expressions, and bodily gestures often provides non-inferential information and revealing insight into the mind of the person who exhibits them.

More importantly, it ought to be uncontroversial to hold that an individual's attitudes in general are deeply conditioned by the culture of the communities in which she is brought up, even when she chooses to reject these attitudes. For an individual's culture serves as the expressive reservoir in relation to which she in the first instance understands and determines herself. In this sense the self-understanding of the individual is fundamentally constituted by her sociocultural heritage. But this is an *ontological*, not an epistemological, aspect of her constitution as an individual. That is, the constitution in question does not depend on whether other people can knowledgeably identify the specific rules to which an individual conforms, but rather on the *way of being* of a socially constituted creature in general. The pertinent question ought to be how an individual grasps a determinate range of *possibilities* of understanding things and acting upon them as *intelligible* at all, not how some observer can discover the rules that this individual follows in a way that puts him in a position to follow them himself.⁵¹

Consider as illustration the mundane example of someone who waits at a bus stop for a bus. What makes this action for an agent so much as *intelligible* as a possible course of action, i.e., as something that so much as makes sense to her as something that she could do, let alone as something that she actually does? Here is a preliminary answer to this question (one that will be further elaborated in Ch. 2). In order for this agent, let alone for some observer, to make sense of her behavior, she must already understand how this action of hers *hangs together* with the host of other practices in relation to which this action makes sense. In this case, she must already understand what buses and bus-related paraphernalia are in relation to other vehicles, the role of bus drivers and fellow passengers, traffic patterns, how this action makes sense in relation to her

⁵¹ I will discuss the relevant concept of possibilities and its connection with intelligibility in Ch. 2.

immediate, intermediate, and long-term goals, etc. To be sure, this practical understanding of herself in performing this action may be assessed, singly or even severally, in terms of the correctness of her conformity to the relevant norms that govern bus-waiting behavior. But it would be unintelligible, let alone impossible, for there to be a *simultaneous* assessment of the correctness of the *entire* pattern of practices that renders this behavior so much as intelligible. One can, of course, assess the correctness of individual performances of a practice at one time. But doing so already relies on understanding of how this practice hangs together with other related practices. If, as Pettit argues, the social constitution of the individual consists in the commonability of rule-following, this claim in the final analysis must itself rest on the prior practical understanding of the entire nexus of practices that makes intelligible the doings of agents as possible actions they can perform at all on given occasions. Thus, the commonability of rules and its significance for rule-following cannot ultimately explain the fundamental way in which human individuals are socially constituted. Understanding the social constitution of the human individual should be concerned, in the first instance, with how the range of possible actions that an agent can perform can be so much as intelligible at all to him or her, not with whether the rule she follows is commonable.

Finally, the social constitution of the individual not only makes intelligible and hence enables any individual to be a person with a determinate set of life-attitudes, projects, and aspirations, but can also serve, for better or worse, as the ideological foundation for them. That is, this constitution can subtly shape, in often subconscious ways, the meaningful range of life-attitudes and aspirations that an individual finds to be live or dead possibilities of understanding and acting.⁵² An individual's social constitution must be regarded, therefore, as both enabling and constraining the agency of the individual. Whether an observer of a thinker can knowledgeably identify the rules at work is, to be sure, an aspect of this constitution, but it cannot be the only way in which individual agents are fundamentally socially constituted. As far as Pettit's transposition of the thesis of social holism is concerned, then, it is curiously silent about these basic aspects of the social constitution of the individual. Even if he need not concern himself explicitly with these aspects, it is at least unclear how his transformation of the thesis of

⁵² Critical social theories often focus their analyses on exposing these subconscious and subtle ways in which our sociocultural constitution embodies hidden differential power relations that cause unjust social relations among individual persons. For a clear and sophisticated discussion of these phenomena, see Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?"

social holism into an apparent solution to the problem of other minds could be significant for them.

I submit, therefore, that Pettit's argument for social holism as it stands so far is not persuasive. But he also deploys another argument for it in this context that is *prima facie* more compelling: He tries to show how interpersonal interactions can provide the basis of rule-following rather than how solely intrapersonal interactions with oneself over time cannot. According to this positive argument, Pettit's basic contention is that "if there is truly a rule you are trying to follow, then I can know which rule it is" (187). He tries to support this conclusion by arguing two points:

First, that under this scenario [of interpersonal interactions] there is a rule that you are trying to follow only if there is a negotiable convergence in our responses. And second, that if there is a negotiable convergence in our responses, then I am able to know which rule you are following, and in non-parasitic mode. (*Ibid.*)

The scenario envisaged is the following. Assume that you and I are thinking intentional subjects who interact with each other. The difference from the intertemporally but intrapersonally interactive situation is that in the interpersonal case you are no longer just an individual whose ostensible rule-following activities I merely observe "from the outside". Rather, I am intrinsically involved in determining the normativity of the rule that you follow because "you take pause and seek out discounting factors whenever you find that there is, by your lights, an intrapersonal discrepancy of response or a discrepancy across your response and mine" (187). The key move here is the claim that you as a rule-follower no longer exercise *exclusive control* over the correctness of your rule-following activities.

You view a discrepancy in our responses with just the same degree of seriousness as a discrepancy in your own responses over time. You give my responses the same presumptive relevance and authority as you give your own responses, so that I am as intimately involved in your rule-following intentions and project as your other selves. (188)

Why should this be the case? According to Pettit, the reason is that the *fallibility* requirement of what it is to follow rules cannot be satisfied as a matter of fact in the absence of interpersonal interactions. Briefly, on Pettit's account of the nature of rule-following, someone counts as a rule-follower if and only if she can (1) identify the rule in question independently, (2) apply it directly, and (3) be fallible nonetheless about the correctness of her application of it (86-97).⁵³ Rules must be independently identifiable because a finite set of cases should not be

⁵³ See also Pettit, "The Reality of Rule-Following".

regarded merely as instances of a rule (as Kripke's Wittgenstein would have us see them), but rather as *exemplars* of the rule in question *to some subject* (the subjective activity of the rule-follower in relation to the rule matters). Furthermore, rules must be *directly* applicable, i.e., be applied without further guidance from another rule, so as to avoid the problem of infinite regress that plagues intellectualist conceptions of rule-following (cf. Wittgenstein's rejection of the need for what he calls "interpretations" [*Deutungen*] for rule-following).⁵⁴ Independent identifiability and direct applicability are aspects of what Pettit calls the *extrapolative inclinations* of a rule-follower. But as he himself acknowledges, when these two aspects of rule-following are taken by themselves,

there is going to be an a priori connection between the rule *r* and the inclination in virtue of which certain cases exemplify the rule. The rule, *r*, is just that rule which corresponds case by case with the responses the inclination prompts the subject to make, in extrapolating from the original examples. Thus it is a priori knowable that as the inclination goes, so goes the rule. ... The inclination will be definitive of how the rule should go in every new case. It will not represent an attempt to divine how the rule should go; it will be itself the determinant of how the rule should go. (91)

If this is so, there will not be any difference (to recall a point that the later Wittgenstein makes) between believing that one has correctly followed a rule and actually having done so.⁵⁵ The normativity of rule-following would be illusory in this case, for then we would start to lose our grip on the idea of *actually* getting things right and wrong.

Because this situation is intolerable, any account of rule-following, on pain of embracing some sort of skeptical solution to it, must make room for the possibility that rule-followers can indeed be fallible (176f.). On Pettit's view, the way to ensure that the fallibility requirement is satisfied depends on determining whether a rule is applied under *favorable or unfavorable circumstances* (91-7). We need not enter into all the specific details of Pettit's account of favorable circumstances here.⁵⁶ What is relevant for our purposes is that he argues that a rule-follower *has to care* about the discrepancies in her rule-following across time and among persons, for it is only by attending to and dealing with these discrepancies that we come to establish what the favorable circumstances are that set the normative standard by reference to

⁵⁴ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §201. I think that these conditions of rule-following, as they figure here, are uncontroversial in light of the overwhelming empirical evidence, especially, of how babies and toddlers learn how to do and say things. Although I will not elaborate them further in this chapter, they will become significant when I discuss the normativity of rule-following in Ch. 5. Because the way in which I wish to do so there will be situated in a different philosophical landscape, I will postpone my treatment of that topic until that chapter.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, §202.

⁵⁶ See Pettit, "A Theory of Normal and Ideal Conditions".

which we judge whether a rule has been followed correctly or not (95). First and most importantly, the rule-follower must be disturbed by the appearance of discrepancies in her rule-following activities, either intrapersonally over time or interpersonally across the relevant persons. On this view, something is amiss if she finds, by her own lights, that she follows a rule in different ways at different times without any justifiable alteration in her collateral commitments in beliefs or actions; something is also wrong if she and other rule-followers are inclined to make different judgments in their attempt to follow ostensibly the same rule. Second, she must try to maintain the intrapersonal and interpersonal constancy of her rule-following by seeking out various factors that can discount the intrapersonal or interpersonal discrepancies in following the rule in question so as to resolve the apparent dissonance across time and persons. Pettit's view is that once this process of recognizing and discounting perturbing factors that lead to discrepancies in one's rule-following gets going, we succeed in establishing the normativity of a rule because the rule that emerges will be one that can survive interpersonal negotiation about the normal and ideal circumstances of its bindingness. Once we can come to an agreement about the favorable circumstances under which rules are to be binding, then it should be obvious and straightforward, so Pettit argues, how I can also knowledgeably identify, and hence follow, the rule that you are following. For we are now equally "on the inside" as fellow participants in determining the normativity of the rule and its favorable circumstances of application.

My own habit of response, and my own practice of negotiation, are involved in fixing the identity of the rule, if there is one, on which you are targeted. Otherwise put, the success conditions for your project of rule-following involve me intrinsically. ... [W]e must form community with one another, each recognizing the other as equally criterial for whether there are rules that either of us follows; we must invest one another with authority on what the rules are. ... No reliable interpretation, as things stand, without social interaction. No interpretation without incorporation [into a community of interpreters]. (188f.)

How compelling, though, is Pettit's account of the interpersonal interactive source of the normativity of rule-following? First of all, since it is intended as a partially empirical account, it is clearly quite an idealization of ordinary human psychology. But it does not take great effort to see that most people in ordinary life do not pay attention to, let alone try to discount, the discrepancies they may encounter in the course of their rule-following unless they are compelled to do so by their factual circumstances. Furthermore, even if they acknowledge that they encounter such discrepancies, either intrapersonally or interpersonally, it seems even more idealized to hold that most people actively seek to maintain constancy in the correctness of their rule-following. People have to be quite reasonable and self-critical if they are to negotiate with

one another about the favorable circumstances under which the rules they have in view are correctly discerned and applied.

Second and more importantly, it is not obvious why the addition of other people interacting with a thinker can ensure the satisfaction of the fallibility condition required, and hence show the soundness of Pettit's argument for social holism.⁵⁷ Why should an individual person be so disabled regarding the correctness of her rule-following in comparison with the addition of other people on the scene? Suppose, for the sake of Pettit's argument, that an individual's rule-following is so hampered. What is it about the addition of other people's assessments, in themselves, that could constitute normativity here? Why can't other people, either individually or collectively, be just as wrong in their assessments of the correctness of their own rule-following or that of others? I suspect that the intuitive idea motivating Pettit's interpersonally interactive conception of the social constitution of the individual is our common experience that we can each be sanctioned for the correctness of our rule-following by other people. This idea as it stands is innocuous and less censorious than it can seem, for disciplinary actions by other people that correct our rule-following can just as well lead to a gain in the understanding of the world and in one's self-understanding; there can be no doubt that the addition of multiple perspectives of other people regarding the correctness of one's conformity to norms is useful. We can characterize this process as the interpersonal and interactionist *articulation* of the favorable and unfavorable conditions under which norms become binding for a thinking individual. Because human individuals are not omniscient, other people can often illuminate and help us achieve greater clarity about the contents and appropriateness of our intentional attitudes, as well as what intended or unintended consequences can follow from the performance of our actions.

But if other people discern unclear or problematic aspects of our thinking and doing, the suggestions or criticisms that emerge from this process of evaluation cannot consist *solely* in the fact that it is others who have made them rather than we ourselves as single individuals. The reason should be plain upon reflection: *Other people's evaluations are telling only if such evaluations themselves answer to some relevant normative standard that is independent of other people in the sense of not being fully under their control.* Consider the example of a teacher who

⁵⁷ My remarks in what follows are partially indebted to Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, Ch. 4, esp. pp. 113-5. They anticipate my fuller treatment of Luntley's view in 5.3.

corrects a student in the course of instructing him. The normative force of her corrections does not really derive from the fact that she is another individual vis-à-vis her student, but rather from her presumed expertise in whatever it is that she teaches. Of course, given the extensive training and experience that she has accumulated in what she teaches, the student rightly defers to her expertise. But this is accepted practice not because she is another individual with a different perspective on the matter at hand, but only because of her expertise, which itself must answer to some independent normative standard that constrains her own understanding of what she teaches. Otherwise, if her expertise itself depended *wholly* on the fact that others (presumably, fellow experts in her field of expertise) certify her as possessing it, an infinite regress of such judgments would ensue regarding the normative authority to which such expertise appeals. Now, this regress is typically halted in ordinary life when some appropriate sanctioning body grants to candidates the relevant social status that certifies their acquisition of the expertise in question (e.g., by way of finishing the relevant training and receiving the attendant degree, etc.). This is all well and good, but it can make it seem as if it is the constituent members – so, other individuals – of this sanctioning body who possess the normative authority to determine what the relevant normative standard is and how it should be applied. We should not run together, however, the factual institutional circumstances that certify what individuals must be able to do in order to be entitled to claim relevant expertise in a field with the philosophical point that the possession and evaluation of this expertise must itself answer to some independent normative standard that is not fully under the control of other people, not even those who are the acknowledged experts in the field and members of the sanctioning body. In the case where two or more individuals are equally experts in the same field, it is all the more clear that the normative authority deriving from possession of the expertise is insufficient *on its own* to conclusively settle disputes about what the normative standard is or how it should be applied.

In short, the normativity of other people's evaluations of one's thoughts and actions derives from the responsiveness of these evaluations itself to some independent normative standard not fully controlled by the participants themselves, not solely from the fact that it is other people who assess the rule-following of some single individual. For this reason Pettit's argument that the normativity of rules consists in interpersonal negotiations about the favorable circumstances governing its bindingness highlights at best the *process* according to which the normativity of rules is established. But this cannot be the *whole* account about how rules or

norms actually bind individuals. To be sure, we should reject Platonism about the normativity of standards and aim to see how they are inherent aspects of our actual practices.⁵⁸ But it remains an open question how we should precisely understand the nature of practices so as to incorporate a satisfactory account of normativity. The foregoing remarks suggest at least that interpersonal interactions cannot *constitute* the sole basis of normativity, even though such interactions are undeniably one of its important modes of *articulation*.⁵⁹

To conclude this section, I have argued that the epistemological orientation that Pettit has given to social holism and his argument for the interactive thesis are both questionable upon examination. It is apparent that what really motivates his particular conception and defense of social holism is the assumption that an individual's engagements with the *world* cannot as such be fallible. Because the world on this conception is assumed to be *normatively inert*, the bindingness of rules or norms must accordingly come from somewhere else apart from these engagements, namely, from interpersonal interactions *qua* a conceptually isolated realm of activity that is abstracted from the world. It is this underlying assumption that motivates and makes at least plausible Pettit's interpersonally interactionist conception of the social constitution of the individual. In my view, the problems it faces stem from his specific definition and defense of the thesis of social holism, not from its generic definition, which Pettit has helpfully clarified. The examination of these problems is instructive because they point *ex negativo* toward an alternative understanding of the social constitution of the individual that is more adequate, one according to which the world we live in and engage with is *not* normatively inert. If we can make sense of this thought, doing so opens up the possibility of understanding the social constitution of the individual *as an intrinsic aspect of her very way of being in the world*, not only via her interpersonal interactions with others. It will be one of the main tasks of the next chapter to show how our engagements with the world already enable the thoughts and actions of individual thinkers to be norm-governed.

⁵⁸ M. Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning*, pp. 164-7, 172-7; Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, p. 9f.

⁵⁹ What an adequate account requires is complicated. I tackle this topic in Ch. 5.

1.4 OVERVIEW AND PREVIEW

It is time to take stock and put my scrutiny of Pettit's social ontology in this chapter into context. I have tried to register two reservations about its content and underlying motivation. The first concerns his restriction of the content of social holism. This restriction transposes what is at issue in this position into a version of the problem of other minds, cast now in terms of the issue of rule-following. I argued that this restriction, while understandable in light of Pettit's other commitments, misses the essential point of inquiring about the social constitution of the human individual. In order properly to understand this constitution, what we want and need is an account of how the possible range of actions that agents can perform is so much as intelligible at all, as opposed to the commonability of their thoughts. The latter consideration presupposes the intelligibility of the former, and thus cannot explain the basic way in which the human individual is socially constituted. Second, I also argued that the underlying motivation for Pettit's conception of social holism is his assumption that normativity must be generated from somewhere else apart from one's engagements with the world. He locates this source of normativity in the interpersonal interactions of thinkers with one another. In response, I suggested that this assumption is questionable if we wish to understand not just the social *articulation*, but rather the social *constitution*, of the human individual.

Despite these criticisms of Pettit's conception and defense of social holism, I wish to emphasize that he has done us a great service by clearly elaborating the general content and argumentative structure of social holism. By successfully disambiguating the constant confusion in traditional social theory and social ontology between individualism and collectivism on the one hand, and atomism and holism on the other, Pettit shows how affirming the social constitution of the individual does not threaten individual autonomy, but actually serves as a condition of the possibility of the latter. With this result, one can consequently defend social holism without being committed to the mistaken view of collectivism. Holism now becomes a thesis about the enabling conditions of exercising individual autonomy, not the way in which the individual is somehow subservient to and dominated by collective entities ("wholism"). Recall Pettit's formulation of the thesis of social holism:

Individual human beings are not entirely self-sufficient. (1) They must depend on one another for the possession and exercise of some basic capacity – namely, the capacity to think – that is central to the

flourishing of the human being. (2) Furthermore, no one can come to possess and exercise this basic capacity – no one can be properly human – except by interacting with other human beings.

In my view this articulation expresses the correct understanding of the general shape of how one should go about defining and defending social holism. Where Pettit goes wrong, however, is that he inserts the wrong capacity into this structure. As I will argue in the next chapter, on the basis of an appropriation of Heidegger's philosophy in *Being and Time*, the basic capacity that is central to the flourishing of the human being ought to be what Heidegger characterizes as *being-in-the-world*, not just the capacity to think as Pettit would have it. Strictly speaking, although being-in-the-world is the basic constitution, not just a capacity, of being human, it will become clear that for Heidegger this constitution is not something a human being can possess apart from his or her ongoing capacity to understand the world. Thus, it is not wrong to urge that we substitute the idea of being-in-the-world as the proper element in the argumentative structure of social holism for Pettit's conception of the capacity to think. Consequently, when we adapt Pettit's formulation of the thesis of social holism from the Heideggerian perspective of providing an existential description and analysis of the human being, it now comes to this:

Individual human beings are not entirely self-sufficient. (1) They must depend upon one another for the possession and exercise of some basic capacity – namely, the capacity to *be-in-the-world* (*In-der-Welt-sein*) – that is central to the flourishing of the human being. (2) Furthermore, no one can come to possess and exercise this basic capacity – no one can be properly human – except by *sharing the world, not primarily by interacting with other human beings*.

As we will see, it will take quite a bit of work to unpack and make sense of this Heideggerian understanding of the thesis and significance of social holism. This is the main task of the next chapter.

2.0 THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL

In this chapter I present my argument for how we should understand the thesis of social holism. Given its definition at the end of the previous chapter, this argument amounts to a defense of the thesis of the *social constitution of the human individual*. Contrary to Pettit's argument that this constitution consists in the commonability of thoughts on the basis of interpersonal interactions, I will argue that human beings are already socially constituted in virtue of their particular way of existing in the world, which (as I will show) is analytically distinct from their interactions with others. This argument consists primarily in appropriating the insights concerning this constitution that Heidegger provides in *Being and Time*. Although Heidegger's method in that work is phenomenological (in his own sense of that term [SZ §7]¹) and seems at first glance to eschew arguments, I think it is fruitful and at times necessary to articulate the insights of his thinking in argumentative form.² Given this approach, I will adapt and explicate Heidegger's argument concerning the social constitution of the individual for my purposes. Although some interpretation of *Being and Time* will be unavoidable, I do so with the sole aim of extracting the argument for the social constitution of the individual that I discern as available in that text.

This chapter is organized as follows. In 2.1, I provide an interpretive appropriation of Heidegger's conception of this constitution. In 2.2, I indicate how my appropriation of Heidegger's thinking converges with the "site" social ontology that Theodore Schatzki has recently worked out in great detail. This sets me up to address a possible specific objection that Schatzki could raise regarding my understanding of the *one (das Man)* as underwriting the fundamental nature of human social existence. In 2.3, I reply to some likely objections to my appropriation of Heidegger's conception of the social.

¹ For a succinct explanation of Heidegger's understanding of the method of phenomenology, see Blattner, *Heidegger's Being and Time*, pp. 27-33. Henceforth all references in the text of this chapter are to Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (cited as *SZ*); Macquarrie and Robinson's English translation of this work has the German pagination on its margins. All translations of passages from *Sein und Zeit* are my own; emphases are in the original German unless otherwise indicated. In Appendix B of this dissertation, I provide a brief explication of some of Heidegger's terminology that is relevant for this dissertation.

² Lest there is any misunderstanding, I am not suggesting that his phenomenological method is somehow deficient or flawed unless it is cast in such form. To my mind philosophy at its best requires both the use of arguments and perspicuous description; these should not be thought to be mutually exclusive.

2.1 HEIDEGGER'S CONCEPTION OF THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

As noted in Ch. 1, in order to justify the thesis of the social constitution of the individual, what must be shown is how some basic capacities distinctive of what it is to be a human individual must be socially constituted. For simplicity's sake, I focus here on one basic capacity, namely, human *understanding*, in an important sense to be explicated below.³ The argument that I adapt from Heidegger's conception of human social existence in *Being and Time* can be summarized in the following steps:⁴

1. Being a human individual presupposes understanding the world as a practical holistic context.
2. Understanding the world as such a context is required for understanding how people (including oneself) make sense in terms of what they do.
3. Making sense of what people do requires understanding ("projecting") the situational possibilities that are intelligible to people 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 as individual agents.
6. An individual cannot help but draw on this intelligibility in understanding ("projecting") 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 generate this intelligibility on their own, 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.
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 a human individual at all is itself socially constituted.

Each of these claims will require explication and justification.

³ Other basic capacities are embodiment and language, but these in a way that is interdependent with understanding.

⁴ I have benefited in general from the following interpretations of Heidegger's early philosophy, even when I have some specific disagreements or differences of emphasis with them: Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*; Haugeland, "Heidegger on Being a Person", "Dasein's Disclosedness", "Truth and Rule-Following", and "Letting Be"; Brandom, "Heidegger's Categories in *Sein und Zeit*" and "Dasein, the Being that Thematises"; Okrent, *Heidegger's Pragmatism*; Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism* and *Heidegger's Being and Time*; Carman, "On Being Social" and *Heidegger's Analytic*; Schatzki, "Early Heidegger on Being, the Clearing, and Realism" and "Early Heidegger on Sociality"; and Boedeker, "Individual and Community in Early Heidegger".

To begin with, unless one is inclined to find solipsism compelling, it should be a platitude to accept that being a human individual requires at a minimum the capacity to do things in the world. It is not trivial, however, to reflect on what enables any individual in general to be an agent prior to the particular exercises of his or her agency. I submit that it is his or her ability to understand the world as a practical holistic context. It is important at the outset to emphasize that the understanding in question is not intellectualistic, but primarily practical (SZ 143). Understanding something in this sense is dealing (using, coping) with it skillfully or competently in a situation. It includes, but also extends beyond, the understanding of utterances that express intentional attitudes; as such, it proceeds without needing to formulate, much less consult, some set of rules that explicitly specifies what counts as skillful or competent performance.⁵ Clearly much of what we do exhibits this sort of understanding, with bodily activities as paradigmatic expressions of competent practice. What I want to bring out now is how being a human individual who understands things in this sense presupposes engagement with the world as a practical holistic context and what doing so involves.

Toward this end, it is first crucial to understand the nature of the *world* in the way considered here. One of Heidegger's most significant achievements in *Being and Time* consists in illuminating our unreflective understanding of the world by drawing attention to four different senses of 'the world' (SZ §14). In his framework, 'the world' in the first ("ontic-categorical") sense refers to the totality of entities that can be "present-at-hand" (*vorhanden*) within it (SZ 64). 'The world' in this sense is the universe, i.e., the totality of entities that exist independently of our understanding of them.⁶ 'The world' in the second ("ontological-categorical") sense is something that has exercised metaphysicians past and present. It refers to the set of basic categories that determine entities as what they essentially are, such that these entities can be seen as belonging to a certain domain or region of being (SZ 64f.). Categories in this sense specify the constitutive standard or ontological framework that "lets entities be" physical, biological, functional, mental, psychological, mathematical, abstract, etc., in general by specifying the

⁵ See Ryle on the distinction between knowing how and knowing that in *The Concept of Mind*, Ch. 2.

⁶ The word 'exist' is used in its ordinary sense here. In Heidegger's vocabulary, only Dasein can "exist", i.e., be-in-the-world, whereas entities that are not Dasein do not "exist" in this stipulated sense. This does not mean, of course, that such entities do not exist in the ordinary sense.

necessary conditions that entities must satisfy in order to be entities of a basic kind at all.⁷ It is important to emphasize that such a standard or framework does not constitute entities by *causally* bringing them into existence. Rather, it constitutes them by determining their *basic makeup* in the sense of specifying a set of necessary conditions that must be satisfied if an entity is to *be* of a certain basic kind at all; the satisfaction of these conditions is prior in the order of explanation to any questions regarding the existence and properties of specific entities. For example, location in space and time is constitutive in this sense of what it is to be a physical entity at all; nothing can be physical unless it satisfies this necessary condition (among others) of being physical.⁸

Philosophers have overwhelmingly concentrated their efforts on articulating these two senses of what the world is, though obviously in different terms. Against this backdrop, Heidegger emphasizes the significance of the third and especially the fourth senses of ‘the world’ that most philosophers have in his view overlooked. ‘The world’ in the third (“ontic-existential”) sense refers to the concrete context in which a human being lives as an engaged agent rather than a detached spectator. It is the *lifeworld* that a human being understands and in terms of which she acts in the course of living her life (SZ 65).⁹ The world in this sense cannot exist independently of human understanding, norms, and practices. Correspondingly, the fourth (“ontological-existential”) sense of ‘the world’ refers to the ontological framework that constitutes a complex of items as belonging to any lifeworld at all.¹⁰ Heidegger calls this entire framework the *worldliness* (*Weltlichkeit*) of the world (SZ esp. §18). It articulates the constitutive standard that lets the items in question be worldly at all (SZ 65, 85). Given this terminology, it is worth noting in passing that physical entities are not as such worldly, but only so insofar as they are constituted as aspects of some lifeworld. As I understand it, the key to understanding the worldliness of the world is at least twofold: The structure of the world is what Heidegger calls the *referential nexus of significance* (*Verweisungszusammenhang der Bedeutsamkeit*), and the

⁷ Haugeland, “Truth and Rule-Following”, pp. 320-7 and esp. “Letting Be”; Blattner, *Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism*, p. 4f. I will further elaborate the important concept of letting be below.

⁸ In Heidegger’s terminology, a constitutive standard or ontological framework is called the “being” (*Sein*) of an entity because the latter’s “being” is *that which determines it basically as* the (kind of) entity that it is. Thus, a constitutive aspect of the being of physical entities is their necessary spatiotemporality. See Appendix B for further explication.

⁹ I mean “lifeworld” in Heidegger’s sense: “that ‘wherein’ a factual Dasein as such ‘lives’” (SZ 65), not as this term figures, insofar as it means something different, in the thoughts of other philosophers (e.g., the later Husserl, Schütz, or Habermas).

¹⁰ I will discuss what these items are below.

basic character or way of being of the world is *normative practical holism*. As we will see, the structure and basic character of the world *qua* worldly are interdependent; we can only make sense of them in the final analysis as a unitary phenomenon. Because understanding the world in its worldliness will have significant implications for how we should understand the social constitution of the individual, it is important first to illustrate the worldliness of the world.¹¹

Consider the following mundane example. When I want to buy something in a store, my conscious attention is focused on whether the store offers what I want or need. This intention makes sense, however, only insofar as it draws on my prior understanding of how a particular complex of items already relate to one another as an organized whole that structures and gives sense to my activities within this complex. Thus, for those who are familiar with shopping practices, it is utterly obvious that: e.g., stores are places where one can buy things or services; the people showing up in that setting are understood in terms of the typical roles that they occupy (e.g., as store employees, customers, etc.); one usually must pay some form of money in return for buying something or paying for some service, etc. All of these mundane expectations about how things, people, and actions make sense in that context, as well as what further phenomena are opened up against the background of those expectations (e.g., the item desired is missing or defective; the salesperson acts in an odd or rude way; I forgot to bring some form of money to pay for the item, etc.), must already interrelate and be in place as an organized complex if the intention of buying something is to be intelligible at all. Although agents need not be consciously aware that they rely on this background understanding in the course of acting in the world, it must be in place as a necessary condition of the intelligibility of the intentions and actions that they conceive and carry out in the world.

This mundane example (and it would be very easy to imagine countless others) illustrates how the world with which we engage is fundamentally a *space of intelligibility* in which entities and, more generally, the phenomena through which entities show themselves, *make sense*.¹² This space has the following basic constituents and structure: (1) a totality 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 performing these tasks; and (3) the self-interpretations for the sake of which (*Worum-willen* [*SZ*

¹¹ Unless otherwise indicated, I will henceforth use ‘world’ in the third sense explicated above.

¹² Cf. Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 111.

84, 86, 123]) individual human beings realize (enact) who they are in some context by using relevant equipment to accomplish certain short-term and medium-term goals within that context. For example, I buy some groceries at a store (encounter and deal with some nexus of equipment) in order to prepare and cook meals (accomplish a short-term goal) for the purpose of feeding my family (accomplish a medium-term goal), which is ultimately for the sake of realizing my ongoing self-interpretation as a parent who takes care of my family. Any functioning human agent is utterly familiar with the world in this primarily practical way, as long as he or she has already learned the relevant practices.¹³ 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 the three structural elements mentioned. Thus, in order to know, e.g., what a store, a product, a customer or store employee, buying and selling practices, etc., 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 pragmatic intelligibility, this shows that the world that concerns us makes sense as a *referential nexus of significance*, 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 self-interpretations on our part. The central point is that the world does not show up, in the normal course of living our lives, as a collection of disparate, present-at-hand things to which we are indifferent, but rather as a practically significant whole in which our self-interpretations are already involved as a basic constituent. It should be evident, furthermore, 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*.

It only takes a moment's reflection to see that the worldliness of the world is not some exceptional condition in which human beings happen on occasion to be, but pervasive as the basic condition of being a human individual (barring some sort of significant bodily, psychological, or developmental impairment). The possibility of contemplation, i.e., adopting the

¹³ This is primarily, but not completely, practical because the self-interpretations for the sake of which we do things do not serve as means toward the accomplishment of any further end, but realize and express who we are in significant spheres of our lives: "The primary 'for-what' [*Wozu*] is a for-the-sake-of-which [*Worum-willen*]. The 'for-the-sake-of-which' always concerns, however, the being of *Dasein*, for which, in its being, this being itself is essentially *an issue* [*dem es in seinem Sein wesentlich um dieses Sein selbst geht*]." (SZ 84; cf. 12)

theoretical stance of deliberately not engaging with entities in the world, is not a counterexample because it always derives from our basic condition of dealing with things in the world in their worldliness, not one that can ground (justify and sustain) the latter. For our purposes, drawing attention to the world in its worldliness matters for understanding human social existence and activities because people typically make sense in terms of what they *do*, i.e., how they understand things and act against the background of our familiarity with some referential nexus of significance (SZ 117-9).¹⁴ Once we grasp the ongoing self-interpretations that individuals live out in particular contexts, which are typically intelligible in terms of the various *roles* that they enact therein, we have a working sense of who they are and thereby how we can possibly interact with them (if we do so).¹⁵ These roles range from the utterly mundane (e.g., customer, consumer, car driver, commuter, pedestrian, etc.) to ones that matter much more to the self-interpretations of any individual in important spheres of human life (paradigmatically, his or her life at work, at home, in relation to loved ones and friends, in leisure, etc.).¹⁶ This does not, of course, imply that people's identities are reducible to such roles, nor that they are disabled, let alone forbidden, from doing things or engaging with others in ways that diverge from or challenge the typical expectations about what people do in the course of occupying such roles. Neither is it the case that an individual can only inhabit one or a few roles at a time, quite the contrary in fact.¹⁷ Nevertheless, what merits emphasis here is that this working sense of how we understand and possibly interact with people is itself only intelligible on the basis of our prior familiarity with the referential nexus of significance (the world) in which people's mundane and more meaningful self-interpretations play a constitutive role.

¹⁴ Other people "show up in terms of the *world* [*begegnen aus der Welt her*] within which concerned-circumspective Dasein essentially dwells" (SZ 119). "The world does not only let [*gibt*] the ready-to-hand be [*frei*] as entities that show up in an intraworldly way, but also Dasein, the others in their co-Dasein." (SZ 123)

¹⁵ I do not mean "role" in the overly passive sense in which some influential sociologists (e.g., Parsons and Goffman) conceive it. It means rather what Anthony Giddens has characterized as a social position: "A social position can be regarded as a social identity that carries with it a certain range (however diffusely specified) of prerogatives and obligations that an actor who is accorded that identity (or is an 'incumbent' of that position) may activate or carry out: these prerogatives and obligations constitute the role-prescriptions associated with that position." (Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, p. 84) As long as this is clear, the use of 'role' is harmless. I retain it because it can be applied to both things and people.

¹⁶ Heidegger also argues that being a self, in the sense of the possibility of coming to "own" oneself by taking responsibility for who one is, cannot ultimately be exhausted in the uncritical acceptance of the roles and self-interpretations which we primarily and mostly adopt or simply fall into. But we need not consider this issue in detail for our purposes here.

¹⁷ Schatzki, "Early Heidegger on Sociality", p. 245.

At first glance, this point should be uncontroversial and can seem to amount merely to an experiential claim about how an individual encounters and makes sense of others in ordinary life. In particular, it seems to leave untouched the idea of the individual as an agent who can do things apart from her possible encounters and interactions with others. Heidegger, however, wants to make a more radical claim about how we are *fundamentally* social (in his terminology, “being-with-one-another” [*Miteinandersein*] or more simply “being-with [*Mitsein*]), beyond how other people show up to us as intelligible aspects of the world. As he writes:

The phenomenological assertion that Dasein is essentially being-with has an existential-ontological meaning. It does not want to establish ontically that I am not factually alone in a present-at-hand way, or even that others with my mode of being occur. ... *Being-with determines Dasein existentially even when an other is not factually present-at-hand and perceived.* Even the aloneness of Dasein is being-with in the world. ... Thus, being-with ... is not grounded in a co-occurrence of several “subjects”. ... *Being-with is a determination in each case of one’s own Dasein* (SZ 120f., emphases added)

This passage makes the following strong and initially counterintuitive claim: The most basic way in which any human individual is social does not depend on the presence of, much less interactions with, other people in that individual’s activities. Rather, the social nature of human existence is *constitutive* of (i.e., has an “existential-ontological” status 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. In terms of the distinction drawn in the Introduction to this dissertation, this claim thus pertains to the *social constitution* of the individual, not just to the different ways in which she can coexist with other people. How can this strong claim be justified?

In answering this question, it is important first to clarify how understanding is fundamentally “projective” (*entwerfend* [SZ 145f.]). Emphasizing this aspect of understanding does not add anything new to our understanding of things, but makes explicit what has been implicitly operative all along regarding our basic way of existing in the world. In understanding the world, what an individual projects in a particular situation is not the totality of logically possible ways in which she can understand things and act, but the *range of possible actions* that make sense to her as sensible to 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 he or she understands and does in a particular situation. Again, the projection 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 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 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.¹⁸ My understanding of some situational room for maneuver is what enables me to find my activities in some context meaningful by 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 casting other ones as not sensible on that occasion (e.g., actually living in the store as my home, etc.). In short, the projection of some determinate situational room for maneuver for an individual is prior, not temporally speaking but in the order of logical dependence, to her actual performance of a particular action; it is the latter's necessary condition of intelligibility.¹⁹

This point should be perspicuous enough as it stands, but one can also give an indirect argument for its truth in the following way. Suppose an individual has a particular intention and acts in some way to carry it out. Does it ever make sense to think that this individual can *only* have that *single* intention in mind and act to carry it out without already projecting (i.e., understanding) the set of other possible actions that are related to (enmeshed with) the action in question? Clearly not, for we would not consider someone who can only perform one single action to be an agent at all, but rather a primitive robot. Being a competent agent requires the capacity to consider a number of diverse intentions and to do a variety of things that are interrelated in terms of the pragmatic intelligibility discussed above. But in order to do so, an agent must be able to project the relevant situational room for maneuver that in turn structures the intelligibility of specific intentions and actions.

A few further remarks about understanding as projection are in order. First, the situational room for maneuver projected by an individual also forms the space of intelligibility

¹⁸ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, pp. 189-91. Understanding “projects the being of Dasein on the basis of its for-the-sake-of-which [i.e., its roles and self-interpretations] just as primordialily 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 Here I disagree with Blattner, who argues that projection as pressing forward into some particular possibility is primary to projection as situational room for maneuver; see *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism*, pp. 40-2. I think this gets the order of explanation exactly backwards. Although Blattner is clearly aware of this issue, I remain unpersuaded by his effort to show that his reading is correct.

against which *atypical* intentions and actions become significant. For example, a person in a store can refuse to pay for products or services; a salesperson can actively discourage customers from buying anything in the store; a robber can steal things from the store; an artist can create an artwork that alludes to or plays with, in some aesthetically interesting way, our typical experience or activity in the store; etc. The atypical character of these intentions and actions is clearly parasitic on a prior understanding of how they can be typical. The point is that while such atypical actions clearly make sense as possible actions, which is distinct from the question of whether they should be performed, their atypical character derives from actions that are understood to be typical. Second, understanding as projection does not just concern the self-interpretations of an individual. It also opens up the possible ways for non-human entities to be what and how they are (e.g., as products that can be bought, used, or consumed, enjoyed, etc.). This is just the point that the functional properties that ready-to-hand entities and other people exhibit cannot exist absent people's understanding of them.²⁰ This shows how the self-interpretation projected by an individual's understanding is not something that is separable in the final analysis from the world (the referential nexus of significance) with which it is engaged (SZ 123, 143-5). Third, it should be clear that projection in this fundamental sense is not the conception of an overall goal or plan of action to be achieved, nor the prediction of how things will be in the future given certain actual or hypothetical conditions. These narrower understandings of the idea of projection presuppose, and thus cannot explain, how understanding is projective in the more basic sense, for these understandings are only intelligible once the world as a referential nexus of significance is already understood as a whole and in place. Lastly, it is important to mention that the projective nature of understanding must not be understood in a Humean sense as the compulsion to impose our "inner" mental states and values onto a meaning- and value-free "outer" world. The Humean view is problematic (among other reasons) because it takes the idea of *projective purport* for granted: It assumes that one does not need to explain how the mind can *globally* project properties onto what is supposedly "outside" itself, regardless of whether its projection onto the "external" world actually "hits its target" or not (see esp. SZ 62, 149f.; cf. §§43-4). Unless the possibility of projective purport is first explained as a general

²⁰ "The world as such is not only disclosed as possible significance, but the letting-be [*Freigabe*] of intraworldly entities itself lets such entities be in terms of *their* possibilities. The ready-to-hand is as such uncovered in its serviceability, useability, possibility of being worn down [*Abträglichkeit*]." (SZ 144)

capacity of being human, however, there is no reason to suppose we should take the Humean conception of projection as the basic (global), as opposed to being merely a derivative (local), way in which human beings comport themselves toward the world.²¹

I have shown thus far that being an individual requires the ability to project ranges of situationally possible experiences and actions (some situational room for maneuver) on a particular occasion, the projecting of which is what in turn enables the individual to conceive specific actions as intelligible at all and thereby possibly to perform them. Although the example of shopping that I have used to illustrate how an individual engages with the world is inherently projective, I have not exploited the fact that this example happens to involve the presence of and/or interactions with other people in order to justify the social constitution of the individual. Rather, what I have argued is that the projecting of situational possibilities is a necessary condition for what it is to be a human individual in general. It is worth noting that if this is true, even the performance of what can be called “individual” actions or practices must also require the projecting of situational rooms for maneuver. Thus, the performance of any “individual” actions, in the sense that one can carry them out alone (e.g., brushing one’s teeth, cooking for oneself, encountering sign-posts while driving or going for a walk in the woods alone, etc.), must still involve the prior projection of some relevant situational room for maneuver in order to be so much as intelligible and thus really possible. In this regard there is no substantive difference between individual and collective actions. What matters is not the singularity or collectivity of the agency, but the fact that both modes of agency can only engage the world by first projecting situational rooms for maneuver.

A pressing question can now arise. Suppose it is true that the exercise of agency requires an understanding of the world as a holistic practical context; that is, suppose that this understanding necessarily involves the projection of the situational possibilities (situational rooms for maneuver) concerning the entities they deal with, including those that make sense of oneself and other people. As just noted, it remains as yet unclear why these two 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 Heidegger’s account of human social existence, he moves

²¹ In a nutshell, the Humean conception of projection is mistaken because it is committed to subject-object dualism. To spell out the argument in detail, however, for why it is seriously flawed would effectively require discussion of the whole of Division One of *Being and Time*, something that I need not do here.

rather quickly from the thought that an individual must project typical ranges of situational possibilities that structure the intelligibility of actions (e.g., the craftsman in the workshop, the provider of goods and services in a store, etc. [SZ 117f.]) to the stronger claim that he or she *always already shares a common world with other people*. As Heidegger writes:

On the basis of this *with-like* [*mithaften*] being-in-the-world, the world is in each case always already one that I share with others. The world of Dasein is the *common world* [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is *being-with* [or *co-existence*] with others [*Mitsein mit Anderen*]. The intraworldly being-in-itself of these others is *co-Dasein* [*Mitdasein*]. (SZ 118)

But what ensures that people do indeed share the world with one another, since it is *individual* human beings who understand the world?²² Putting this question in the terms developed above, what ensures that the situational room for maneuver that an individual projects on some occasion is the same as or meshes coherently with the ones that others project? Unless this can be shown, it is hard to see how the claim that a human being “always already lives in a common world” can be convincingly justified. In effect, what I argued above regarding the projective character of understanding 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 that we engage with on the basis of this understanding. But what an individual understands in her engagement with the world cannot be ignored in the final analysis. On my reading, Heidegger’s discussion of the significance of the *one*²³ (*das Man* [SZ §27]) addresses this important issue (among other things).

What is the *one*? To begin with, it specifies *who* we are initially and mostly (*zunächst und zumeist*), or primarily and usually, in our everyday existence.²⁴ Our identities make sense usually in terms of the *roles* and *self-interpretations*, both mundane and significant, for the sakes of which we are what we do over time (e.g., commuter, customer, consumer, practitioner of a certain occupation, co-worker, partner, spouse, parent, friend, etc.). It is clearly our sociocultural

²² This is Olafson’s objection to Heidegger’s conception of being-with; see *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind*, p. 146f. For direct rebuttals of this objection, see Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, Ch. 8; Carman, “On Being Social”; Schatzki, “Early Heidegger on Being, the Clearing, and Realism” and “Early Heidegger on Sociality”; and Boedeker, “Individual and Community in Early Heidegger”.

²³ In what follows, whenever I italicize ‘one’, I am using it in Heidegger’s loaded sense of this word. When I do not italicize it, I am using it as this is standardly done (as *one* does!) in English.

²⁴ “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.” (SZ 370)

heritage (i.e., the *one*) that provides the initial contents of these roles and self-interpretations, which at once makes available and delimits the typical range of situational possibilities that make sense for individuals in their actual lives.²⁵ But the *one* 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 *one* does not refer to any entity (*Seiendes*) at all, but more generally highlights the mostly inconspicuous but pervasive *normative intelligibility of the world as a whole* that forms the background against which human individuals initially and mostly understand anything and act.²⁶ 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 *one* supplies. Despite the tendentious rhetoric that Heidegger uses to describe the superficial but insidious “dictatorship” of the *one* over our everyday lives (SZ 126-8), it would be a mistake to understand the *one* as merely his label for the factual tendency of human beings to desire and strive for social conformism. Rather, the *one*, or more precisely an individual’s being in the mode of the *one* as his or her predominant way of existing in the world, is a necessary aspect or structure of human existence in general, not something that is optional for any human being.²⁷ We do well, therefore, to distinguish carefully between the factual tendency of human beings (for better or worse) to pursue social conformism and their structural conformity to the *one* as one of the constitutive characteristics of their being in the world.²⁸

We now need to explain what an individual’s understanding of the normative intelligibility that informs her familiarity with the world has to do with her ability to share a common world with others, and thereby how she is most basically socially constituted. This turns on the *public* character of norms in two senses. First and more familiarly, it is always a *multitude* or *plurality* 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

²⁵ Obviously, a multicultural individual embodies more than just one sociocultural heritage.

²⁶ “Everyday Dasein draws the preontological interpretation of its being from the familiar [*nächsten*] mode of being of the *one*.” (SZ 130; cf. 169)

²⁷ “The *one* 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 *one*, but is an existentiell modification of the *one* as one of its essential existentials.” (SZ 129f.) The ‘its’ at the end of the last sentence refers to human existence in general (Dasein or being-in-the-world), not to the *one*.

²⁸ As mentioned in the Introduction, one of the key insights of Dreyfus’s interpretation of *Being and Time* is his use of this important distinction to clear up what appears at first glance to be Heidegger’s confusion about the status and significance of *das Man*; see esp. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, Ch. 8 and 13.

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.). This should be obvious just by reflecting upon the nature of roles and self-interpretations in general. Second and more importantly, the public character of the *one* expresses the *normativity* – in the first instance, the *normalization* – involved in our dealings with entities in the world, including with ourselves and other people.²⁹ Heidegger chooses the term ‘*das Man*’ to capture the impersonal and normative (normalized) aspects of our everyday existence in general. Linguistically speaking, this neologism stems from the German impersonal pronoun ‘*man*’, which figures (when translated into English) in utterances like, e.g., “One can get to the airport from the university by taking the 28X bus” or “One shouldn’t talk during a movie screening”, etc. In colloquial English, we do not usually use ‘one’ (because it sounds stilted), but rather words like ‘you’ or ‘people’ (“This is how you drive a car with a stick shift”, “That’s what people do at interviews”, etc.).

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 that are tied to that role or self-interpretation. But as pointed out above, the occupation of a role or self-interpretation does not only normalize and thereby make intelligible one’s typical identity on an occasion. It also normalizes the equipment, the tasks accomplished with it, and the various goals and ends that are pertinent to its occupation (SZ 123). That is, the occupation of a role or self-interpretation normalizes (or standardizes) the relevant referential nexus of significance tied to this role or self-interpretation on that occasion. For example, being a customer or a salesperson requires that products for sale are supposed to come with some price; a store is supposed to be a place where items are made available for purchase; customers are supposed to pay for things they want to buy, etc.³⁰ Unless an individual is already familiar with how things are *normally* understood and done in terms of that referential nexus of significance, none of the situational possibilities of

²⁹ I note for now that normativity as such is not identical to normalization, but concerns a broader set of phenomena and issues. I will discuss this point in Ch. 5, when I will relate the line of thought set out in this chapter to the debate concerning the nature of rule-following. It is important for my purposes, however, to show how the theme of normativity (leaving unspecified what it is exactly for the moment) shows up to us, in the first instance, under the guise of how phenomena are normalized. This will become clearer in what follows below.

³⁰ “The ready-to-hand has in all cases proprieties and improprieties [*Geeignetheiten und Ungeeignetheiten*], and its ‘properties’ are, as it were, still bound up in these proprieties and improprieties, just like how the present-at-hand, as [a] possible mode of being of something ready-to-hand, [is bound up] in readiness-to-hand.” (SZ 83)

experience and action that are typically open to him in the context of shopping will be intelligible. To generalize, we take for granted without self-consciousness in our everyday existence, as our “default” way of dealing with entities in the world, that there are *normal* (typical, standard) 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 are supposed to be (used, occur, behave, act, etc.). It is 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 when she makes sense of things or co-exists with others by projecting some relevant situational room for maneuver, regardless of whether she in fact conforms to some norm or not on some particular occasion.³¹

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 *one*. When they do so, they understand themselves as *one*-selves (*Man-selbst*), i.e., as what *one* is supposed to do on given occasions once one adopts or, more often, simply falls into the occupation of roles and self-interpretations (for-the-sakes-of-which) that are public in the sense explicated above. In everyday life, we initially and mostly exist as *one*-selves.

The self of everyday Dasein is the *one-self* [*das Man-selbst*]. ... When Dasein is familiar to itself as the *one-self*, this means at the same time that the *one* prescribes the initial interpretation of the world and of being-in-the-world. The *one-self*, for the sake of which Dasein is in everyday life, articulates the referential nexus of significance. The world of Dasein renders intelligible entities that show up in terms of an involvement-whole [i.e., a situational room for maneuver] that is familiar to the *one* and within the limits that have been established through the averageness of the *one*. *Initially*, factual Dasein is in the common world that has been discovered in an average way. *Initially*, it is not “I” who “am” my own self [Zunächst “bin” nicht “ich” im Sinne des eigenen Selbst], but the others in the way of the *one*. ... *Initially*, Dasein is the *one* and mostly remains so. (SZ 129)

By now it should not be hard to see how the practical holism of the world discussed above coalesces with the normativity (normalization) of the world in virtue of our largely inconspicuous but ubiquitous conformity to the norms provided by the *one*. For example, entities

³¹ I will elaborate this point below. For the time being, this remark responds to the objection that people often do not in fact act in ways that conform to norms; see MacIntyre, “The Idea of a Social Science”. This objection misunderstands the fundamental way in which norms govern our activities by assuming, mistakenly, that there can be no conformity to norms unless people *actually* conform to them all or most of the time. But the point is that they cannot so much as actually conform to norms (or not) unless they first understand the intelligibility of the world in which they find themselves, an intelligibility that is already normative.

like products, price tags, shelves, cash registers, customers, store employees, etc., can only make sense by playing their *normal* roles in our understanding of ourselves and others in a referential nexus of significance. Absent a shared understanding of what it is for them to behave normally, no practically intelligible nexus can be sustained as an interrelated complex that a multitude or plurality of individuals understand in common. The normativity (normalization) maintained by our predominant existence in the mode of the *one* is thus constitutive of our basic comportment toward the world by constraining our typical understanding of some relevant nexus of practically meaningful items (tasks, nested ends, self-interpretations). What normalized comportment makes intelligible and governs is *how* such items are “referred” or “assigned” (*verwiesen* [SZ 83f., 123]) to one another, i.e., how they *hang together as a complex whole* within some practically intelligible nexus. In short, *normative practical holism* is the basic and full character of the worldliness of the world.

Understanding oneself and acting primarily and mostly in accordance with the normative intelligibility that the *one* supplies, then, is what ensures that individuals by and large share a common world. As Heidegger writes in a lecture course that served as an earlier draft of *Being and Time*:

The *one* 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 intersubjective world. We say instead that the first thing that is given is the common world – the *one* – the world in which Dasein is absorbed³²

Note that what is shared by different individuals in belonging to a common world is not rigid conformity to a set of norms concerning how one should think or behave, but 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. Lest there be any misunderstanding, the necessity of our structural conformity to the norms supplied by the *one* does not 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

³² Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, p. 246. This earlier account of the social constitution of the human being is in a number of ways clearer and more comprehensive than the compressed one offered in *Being and Time*.

is on given occasions, even if individuals reject this understanding in the end. Indeed, conformity to the normative intelligibility of the *one* does not preclude, but actually makes possible, the standing potential for resistance to the averageness maintained by our immersion in the *one*.³³

We are now finally in the position to understand the social constitution of the human individual. Because such an individual understands the everyday world as *one*-self, she cannot help but initially and mostly project situational possibilities of experience and action that are *public*, as this occurs by and large in accordance with the normative (normalized) intelligibility that the *one* supplies. Her predominant existence in the mode of the *one*, 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. For such an individual cannot help but draw on the normative intelligibility informing the overall significance of the world that the *one* provides by way of her familiarity with and general conformity to the public norms that the *one* makes available. No single individual can generate and fully control the normative intelligibility that the *one* supplies, for this intelligibility already constrains the activities of a multitude or plurality 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 in some situation.³⁴ In more familiar terms, this is just what is involved for individuals to be “socialized” into customs, practices, and traditions. 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 *one* 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 projecting situational possibilities is numerically distinct from those of others, the content (i.e., the range of possibilities and types of actions) that

³³ “Dasein is never capable of extricating itself from how things are interpreted in everyday life because it grows up initially in the midst of the latter. All genuine [acts of] understanding, interpreting and communicating, rediscovering, and novel appropriating comes about in the midst of, from, and against how things are interpreted in everyday life.” (SZ 169; cf. 153)

³⁴ It is in this precise sense that “the *one*-self, for the sake for which Dasein is in everyday life, articulates the referential nexus of significance” (SZ 129).

they each project contains wide-ranging commonalities that are normalized, insofar they understand themselves in the mode of the *one*.³⁵

A final question can arise about the nature of the *one*: Does the *one* merely circumscribe the typical possibilities that a human individual projects and lives out, or does it rather exhaust his possibilities in general, whether these are typical or not?³⁶ This question concerns whether our predominant existence as *one*-selves in everyday life makes sufficient room for the *diversity* of human existence, in the sense that different individuals can project and actualize possibilities that differ from those envisaged by the *one*. Now, it cannot be the case that the *one*, *qua* the normative intelligibility of the world, exhausts the full range of possible experiences and actions that a human individual projects and lives out. For one thing, if this were so, a community or society could never change over the course of its history, which is obviously false. For another, it is not by accident that Heidegger repeatedly emphasizes the important qualification that the *one* – initially and mostly (*zunächst und zumeist*), or primarily and usually – determines what we understand and do in our lives. This qualification implies that there are indeed possible experiences and actions that do not fall under the purview of the *one*. Indeed, the lengthy discussion in Division Two of *Being and Time* of what it takes for a human being to genuinely individualize herself and thereby achieve self-ownership (*eigentliches Selbstsein, Eigentlichkeit*) examines the possible experiences and actions of an individual that emphatically do *not* conform to the public norms of the *one*. In a less existentialist vein, we can well imagine how events can occur in individuals' lives (e.g., in extreme circumstances such as the experience of war, political oppression, natural disasters, economic hardships, severe health problems, personal tragedies, etc.) that can dramatically condition the particular self-interpretations that they have; these events can readily alter their projects and commitments in ways that diverge from or challenge

³⁵ This conclusion agrees in substance with Schatzki's, which he puts in more Heideggerian terms: "... [D]ifferent Daseins are thrown into the single publicness of the One [*Man*] and ... each [Dasein] projects and presses forward into the possibilities composing this publicness. There is one space [of intelligibility] but multiple happenings of being thrown into and projecting it; one there [i.e., one common *Da* in *Da*-sein (literally: being-there), insofar as Dasein understands itself and acts in light of the public norms of the *one*], but multiple lives carrying on in its terms." (Schatzki, "Early Heidegger on Sociality", p. 241)

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

received social norms.³⁷ It is thus clearly the case that the *one* only circumscribes the typical (normal) possible experiences and actions that make sense to us in daily life.

The question we are left with, then, is how our predominant existence in the mode of the *one* at once normalizes situational possibilities and yet enables novel ones to arise and become feasible. The beginnings of an adequate response to this question will be given in 2.3 below, a response that will be further developed at length in the discussion of the nature of rule-following in Ch. 5. For the moment, I think we do well to keep in mind that the normative intelligibility of the everyday world that the *one* supplies should be understood to serve as an *enabling* condition of novelty and creativity, not as something statically restrictive and in relation to which individual human beings are wholly passive (cf. *SZ* 153, 179, 382-6, 391f.)³⁸ Once we come to see how there is no tension between the normalization that the *one* effects and the possibility of novelty or resistance given this normalization, this should defuse the worry that the human individual's predominant existence in the mode of the *one* precludes the possibility that she can conceive and undertake projects that break with or challenge those circumscribed by the *one*.

To conclude this section, I have argued that different individuals share a common world by primarily and mostly projecting situational possibilities that are common among them because such possibilities are normalized by their predominant existence in the mode of the *one*. With this conclusion established, we have now justified my proposal at the end of the last chapter regarding how Pettit's formulation of the thesis of social holism (the social constitution of the human individual) should be modified:

Individual human beings are not entirely self-sufficient. (1) They must depend upon one another for the possession and exercise of some basic capacity – namely, the capacity to *be-in-the-world* (*In-der-Welt-sein*) – that is central to the flourishing of the human being. (2) Furthermore, no one can come to possess and exercise this basic capacity – no one can be properly human – except by *sharing the world, not primarily by interacting with other human beings*.

It is in this precise manner that the human individual is socially constituted.

³⁷ Note that if these conditions persist long enough in people's lives, they may well become aspects of the normative (normalized) intelligibility of the *one* ("the new normal"). As I have been emphasizing, we should not understand this intelligibility in a static way, but as something dynamic and capable of evolution.

³⁸ "The One [*Man*] is a space of *acceptable* possibilities. Anyone thrown into it differs from everyone else so thrown by way of realizing a different combination of the acceptable ways of proceeding and thinking. Hence, there is plenty of room for different deeds and words. The existence of a single pool of anonymous possibilities does not negate significant plurality. Given, moreover, that One spaces are parceled out at least one per generation, there exists a plurality of One spaces (in any tradition) and across them." (Schatzki, "Early Heidegger on Sociality", p. 244, emphasis in the original)

2.2 THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS A SITE

The conception of the social constitution of the individual for which I have just argued agrees considerably in sympathy and outlook with the “site” social ontology (or “site ontology” in short) that Theodore Schatzki has recently articulated in great detail, so much so that it is appropriate to call the former a “site” conception of this constitution.³⁹ Although it is clear that one of the major sources of Schatzki’s site ontology is Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, he deploys his own terminology and makes Heidegger’s conception of the social more concrete by abstracting site ontology from the wider concerns of Heidegger’s “fundamental ontology” (i.e., his account of human existence as being-in-the-world).

Schatzki’s most general claim is that the nature of human social life is best understood by way of seeing how this life is rooted in and transpires at “the site of the social”, conceived as the specific context of human coexistence. A site in this sense goes beyond its more familiar understanding as either an area of sheer physical space or, more broadly, a context in which things are arranged in ways that enable the performance of certain activities (e.g., a store, a classroom, an office, an airport, a website, etc.).⁴⁰ Strictly speaking, a context qualifies as a *site* in Schatzki’s stipulated sense of this term if and only if (at least) some subset of the phenomena or activities occurring in it do so as *intrinsic* parts or aspects of such a site. This implies that these phenomena or activities cannot be intelligible and exist apart from their embeddedness in a site. More precisely, he determines a site in this sense as a *mesh of practices and material arrangements*.⁴¹ Practices are defined as temporally evolving, open-ended sets of doings and sayings linked by practical understandings, rules, and teleoaffective structures,⁴² while material arrangements are composed of configurations of entities (i.e., people, artifacts, organisms, and natural things) with which practices are closely interwoven. Practices and material arrangements

³⁹ Schatzki, “A New Societist Social Ontology” and *The Site of the Social*; cf. also his *Social Practices*.

⁴⁰ Schatzki, “A New Societist Social Ontology”, p. 176f.; *The Site of the Social*, pp. 63-5.

⁴¹ Schatzki, “A New Societist Social Ontology”, p. 194f.

⁴² Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 87. Schatzki actually adds a fourth component of practices, namely, what he calls “general understandings” (*ibid.*, p. 86). They pertain to the sense of community (“common enterprise, concern, and fate” [*ibid.*]) that permeates the doings and sayings bound up with a given array of practical understandings, explicit rules, and teleoaffective structures. It strikes me, however, that general understandings in this sense, unlike the case with the other three components of practices, are not always present whenever an individual or a plurality of individuals engage(s) in practices. For want of space, I choose to omit it without argument in my sketch of Schatzki’s conception of practices.

are meshed because they pervasively implicate each other and do not just “interface” at discrete points of contact.⁴³

It is helpful to explicate this conception of practices not just because of its inherent interest, but because it will be invoked and put implicitly to use in this dissertation. To begin with, a practice, at a bare minimum, is a doing or saying (utterance), or a set of doings or sayings, that people *perform over an extended period of time*.⁴⁴ Thus, a doing or saying does not count as a practice unless it is repeatedly performed over time. This determination has the virtue of capturing the ordinary understanding of what a practice is and its distinction from an action. But not any action or utterance that is repeatedly performed over time qualifies as a practice. For example, mundane actions or activities such as eating, sitting, standing, walking, sleeping, etc. – *as such, considered completely apart from the significance they have that derives from the contexts in which they occur* – are not practices even though they are obviously repeatedly performed. Rather, what constitutes a repeatedly performed action or activity as a *practice* is that it is performed by the agent(s) with a *sense* of how the doings and sayings that instantiate the practice are *organized by practical understandings, explicit rules, and teleoaffective structures*. I use the word ‘sense’ here for two reasons. First, as a mere stylistic point, even though the word ‘understanding’ captures more precisely what is meant here, it occurs at least one more time in the specification of what a practice is; in order to prevent possible confusion, ‘sense’ is preferable. Second and more importantly, ‘sense’ here expresses how someone can have a grasp or understanding of things without knowing explicitly how or why, let alone being capable of explaining how or why, she understands them. For this reason ‘sense’ here can be used interchangeably with ‘tacit grasp or awareness’, as long as the latter is not understood as something like transparent, self-conscious awareness in a quasi-Cartesian way, but rather as a general capacity that functions like the “background monitoring” of things. Consequently, whenever an individual performs (enacts, participates in, etc.) an action/activity or makes an utterance that instantiates a genuine practice, she performs it with some *sense* (some tacit grasp

⁴³ Schatzki, “A New Societist Social Ontology”, p. 195; cf. *The Site of the Social*, pp. 96-101, 106-8.

⁴⁴ Later Wittgenstein also insists on this as a general defining feature of a practice. (See my discussion of this in Ch. 5.) For the sake of simplicity, I will initially focus on practices that are instantiated by a single doing or saying. But the import of my explication applies equally to practices that are constituted by a set of doings or sayings that qualify as practices.

or awareness) of how her action/activity or utterance is intelligible in connection with a certain array of practical understandings, explicit rules, and teleoaffective structures.

Some remarks are in order before we explicate what practical understandings, explicit rules, and teleoaffective structures are. First, it will turn out that practices that are intelligible in connection with this array of items are “integrative practices”, which is distinct from what are called “dispersed practices”.⁴⁵ Integrative practices are “thicker” by encompassing a *complex* of items, whereas dispersed practices are “thinner” by revolving almost always around the situational performance of *a single type of repeated action*. Because the nature of dispersed practices is better understood once that of integrative practices is explained, I will postpone my explication of dispersed practices until that of integrative practices is in place. Second, although the repeated performance of an action/activity or utterance is usually necessary for the latter to qualify as an instance of a practice in general, there may be occasions when performances diverge, at least initially and at times even deliberately, from past performances. But these divergent or novel performances may come with time to be seen not only as being continuous with past performances, but extending their significance by casting these in a new light. For example, the practice of Anglo-American common law, which is based on the interpretation of legal principles as expressed in precedents and applied to current circumstances, is a paradigm example of this.⁴⁶ But this type of phenomenon occurs in many different areas of human history. We need only think of revolutionary movements in the sciences (e.g. the Newtonian paradigm vis-à-vis the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics), in the arts (e.g., tonal vis-à-vis atonal music), in politics (e.g., the meaning and practice of democracy in ancient Athens vis-à-vis its meaning and practice in the modern world), etc. These examples show that although repeated performance is a general defining feature of practices, it involves a sort of repetition that also opens up the possibility of divergence and novelty.⁴⁷ For this reason, it is more careful to say that practices are *temporally evolving, open-ended* (sets of) actions/activities or utterances, for “fresh actions are continually perpetuating and extending practices temporally”, rather than simply repeatedly performed actions/activities or utterances that are static over time.⁴⁸ As long as we

⁴⁵ Schatzki, *Social Practices*, pp. 91-110 and *The Site of the Social*, pp. 70-88.

⁴⁶ Brandom, “Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel’s Idealism”, pp. 230-3.

⁴⁷ The intelligibility and significance of the novel performances can only show up against the background of repeated past performances (see 2.3 below).

⁴⁸ Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, pp. 72, 83.

bear this caveat in mind, conceiving practices as (sets of) repeatedly performed actions/activities or utterances over time is not incorrect.

As mentioned, integrative practices are constituted by arrays of practical understandings, explicit rules, and teleoaffective structures. It is easy to give countless examples of such practices: practices related to one's work or occupation, domestic practices, parenting practices, educational practices, political practices, commuting practices, shopping practices, practices having to do one's leisurely activities, etc. To characterize an array of practices as integrative means that such practices are *complexes* of actions/activities or utterances that are necessarily *organized*. Most of the time in our everyday existence, we understand and act in the world, primarily and usually, by engaging in integrative practices, and sometimes in multiple ones at the same time. We engage in them either by directly embracing and participating in them, or else by intending and performing divergent or novel actions/activities whose intelligibility still traces back to their relation to ongoing integrative practices, even if these actions or activities are marginal to, swing free of, or even challenge the patterns, norms, or values that participation in these practices usually (re)establish.

The *practical understandings* of an integrative practice are the abilities that an individual must be able to perform in order to engage in such a practice. Practical understandings depend on the exercise of three specific capacities: (i) knowing how to X (where X is some action); (ii) knowing how to identify instances of X; and (iii) knowing how to prompt or respond to instances of X.⁴⁹ Examples of non-linguistic practical understandings are actions or activities that involve the execution of embodied skills (e.g., the set of motor or perceptual skills at work in performing some bodily activity, or using some set of equipment that requires the exercise of such skills); examples of linguistic practical understandings are actions/activities or sayings that are involved in, e.g., asking and replying to questions, asserting, explaining, ordering, reporting, attributing intentional states, etc. Moreover, two or more people share the same practical understandings involved in a practice when either person's performances of X are mutually intelligible to one another, as well as when either person's judgments of which doings and sayings count as X-ings

⁴⁹ Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 91 and *The Site of the Social*, p. 77f.

are mutually intelligible (provided that in both cases they share knowledge of the circumstances of action).⁵⁰

The second sort of constituents of an integrative practice are *explicit rules*: “explicit formulations, principles, precepts, and instructions that enjoin, direct, or remonstrate people to perform specific actions. To say that rules link [and thereby organize] doings and sayings is to say that people, in carrying out these doings and sayings, take account of and adhere to the same rules.”⁵¹ Because the ways in which explicit rules guide the understanding of and engagement in integrative practices are relatively straightforward, we need not say anything more about them except to note that these rules are *not* the source of the normativity that makes intelligible and constrains practices, whether integrative or dispersed. At most, explicit rules codify what behavior is prescribed or acceptable to a multitude of people who participate in the practices to which such rules pertain; they cannot constitute, all on their own, the normativity of practices.⁵²

The third sort of constituents of an integrative practice is a *teleoaffective structure*. Because this component of such a practice is especially significant for site ontology, as well as for the understanding of the social constitution of the human individual worked out in the previous section, it requires greater elaboration. A teleoaffective structure is a range of normalized and hierarchically structured tasks, projects, and ultimate ends that can also be tied sometimes to certain emotions that are normalized.⁵³ This conception of a teleoaffective structure overlaps significantly with that of the tripartite structure that constitutes the world in its worldliness as a space of intelligibility, as elaborated in the previous section. (Recall that the three components of the world in this sense are: (1) a totality of entities that show up as ready-to-hand equipment, each of which is used for performing some specific task; (2) more encompassing short-term and medium-term goals which are accomplished by performing these tasks; and (3) the self-interpretations for the sake of which individual human beings realize who they are in some context by doing or saying things that contribute toward or enact these self-interpretations.) Typically, any individual who occupies some role or self-interpretation, whether he has assigned himself that role or self-interpretation or else simply fallen into them, engages *ipso facto* in integrative practices that express teleoaffective structures, for the role or self-

⁵⁰ Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 78.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵² See my discussion of this in Ch. 5.

⁵³ Schatzki, *Social Practices*, pp. 100-2 and *The Site of the Social*, pp. 80-5.

interpretation serves as a focal point that binds together and thus organizes the normalized and hierarchically structured tasks, projects, and ultimate ends that make up a teleoaffective structure. As mentioned, the latter sometimes also demand or at least expect the possession and expression of certain emotions. For example, parenting practices evidently involve the understanding and performance of a range of tasks (e.g., those specific and rather tedious ones concerning the well-being of children), projects (e.g., teaching them how to manage their desires and emotions, how to deal appropriately with other children and adults), and ultimate ends (e.g., raising them to be healthy, considerate, and socially competent and engaged individuals). But parenting practices also involve, at least ideally, the possession and expression of certain emotions on the part of parents toward their children (e.g., parental love and affection, but also the requisite amount of sternness and disciplinary actions).⁵⁴ Not all teleoaffective structures, though, require or expect the possession and expression of certain emotions on the part of those who act on the basis of such structures. In such cases, the various items of teleoaffective structures only concern the teleology (the goal-directedness) of a hierarchically structured range of tasks, projects, and ultimate ends.⁵⁵

The tasks, projects, and ultimate ends in a teleoaffective structure must be normalized because they form a *teleological complex*. Absent their normalization, these goal-oriented actions/activities would no longer be coordinated and thus aim, together as a package, to realize the overall *telos* of an integrative practice. In such a situation, the practice that encompasses these goals and actions/activities becomes either defective, parts of other practices, or is even destroyed.⁵⁶ For example, a teacher who does not do, to a minimally competent and satisfactory degree, what he is supposed to do in relation to those whom he teaches and works with may well

⁵⁴ Other teleoaffective structures that demand the possession and expression of a modicum of certain emotions, in addition to a range of normalized tasks, projects, and ultimate ends, occur in certain occupations such as being a medical doctor or a nurse, a teacher, a soldier, an athlete on a sports team, an entrepreneur, etc.

⁵⁵ Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 101. Teleoaffective structures that are typically indifferent to emotions are those that inform the practices, e.g., of sales representatives, office workers, assembly line workers. Note that this point does not express any evaluation of the worth of these occupations. Note also that although these structures *in themselves* do not require or expect the possession and expression of certain emotions on the part of those who act in their light, this does not imply that such individuals do not, *as particular individuals*, have emotional reactions to what they do in response to such structures. For example, although being an office worker or a bus driver in themselves may not require having certain emotions, an individual office worker or a bus driver can very well dislike or even hate her line of work.

⁵⁶ Consider the original significance of why brides in Western marriage ceremonies wear white dresses vis-à-vis their contemporary significance; or the original significance of why practicing Jews originally “ate kosher” vis-à-vis the contemporary significance of doing so for them.

be doing other things, but he would no longer be genuinely engaging in teaching practices; such an individual would not be living up to the set of responsibilities that his occupation of this self-interpretation expects of him. Generally speaking, then, the normalization of a set of tasks, projects, and ultimate ends into an *organized* complex is what binds them together into a goal-directed and (when appropriate) affective complex of coordinated activities and (when appropriate) emotions. As Schatzki writes:

The indefinite range of end-project-task combinations contained in a practice's teleoaffective structure and realized in participants' doings and sayings are either ones that participants ought to realize or ones that it is acceptable for them to do so: A practice always exhibits a set of [ultimate] ends that participants should or may pursue, a range of projects that they should or may carry out for the sake of these ends, and a selection of tasks that they should or may perform for the sake of these projects. Participants, moreover, typically carry out end-project-task combinations that are contained in the practice's teleoaffective structure; that is to say, normativized [i.e., normalized] ends, projects, and tasks determine what is signified to them to do.⁵⁷

As also emphasized in the previous section, the normativity (normalization) that applies to the tasks, projects, and ultimate ends that make up teleoaffective structures is not primarily prudential or morally prescriptive, but figures as a constitutive aspect of the very organization (i.e., intelligibility) of such structures. Lastly, in contrast with explicit rules, it is evident that the normativity (normalization) of teleoaffective structures need not and mostly does not apply in a deliberate or self-conscious way, unless there is some sort of anomaly or breakdown concerning the realization of the tasks, projects, or ultimate ends that compose these structures.

One final point should be especially emphasized regarding the nature of a teleoaffective structure. Such a structure is not a set of properties of an individual or a plurality of individuals, but of the *practice* they engage in *as such*. That is, they are properties of the “set of ends, projects, and affectivities that, as a collection, is (1) expressed in the open-ended set of doings and sayings that compose the practice and (2) unevenly incorporated into different participants' minds and actions”.⁵⁸ To put it in more Heideggerian terms, our predominant existence in everyday life as *one-selves* provides us with shared public teleoaffective structures on the basis of which we typically understand things and act. These are not the unique possessions of particular individuals, but their common possession because of their social constitution. In other words, once an individual learns to engage competently in practices, it is the normalized intelligibility that flows from the *organization* of the practices *itself* that provides and structures

⁵⁷ Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 80; cf. *Social Practices*, p. 101f.

⁵⁸ Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 80 and “A New Societist Social Ontology”, p. 192f.

the typical contents of her particular intentional states or particular doings and sayings, not these states or doings and sayings in themselves: “the normativity that characterizes a practice’s teleoaffective structure shapes what makes sense to people to do by way of the example, instruction, and sanction to which neophytes (and veterans) are subject and in the context of which certain mental conditions arise in these individuals”.⁵⁹ This point reinforces the one made in the previous section regarding the social constitution of the human individual. Initially and mostly, people understand (project situational possibilities) and act in terms of the normative intelligibility that they share with others just by becoming familiar and competent with the practices into which they are trained. Once they have mastered these practices, this mastery provides them with the situational leeway or room for maneuver on the basis of which they can adopt and modify these practices, from occasion to occasion, in response to the distinctive circumstances in which they find themselves.⁶⁰

What we have before us, then, is a version of *holistic individualism*. On this view, it is only individuals who understand things and act on particular occasions, not any entities (e.g., social regularities, forces, structures, or systems) that exist above and beyond them and allegedly coerce them to behave in certain ways. But *what* individuals understand – i.e., the practices on the basis of which they usually make sense of the world – is not initially and mostly their individual possession, but something that they always already share with others just by virtue of having learned (having been trained into) these practices. When other people, e.g., evaluate how well someone understands and performs a practice, they are also guided initially by their understanding of the normative intelligibility that applies to the practice in question. This understanding, again, is not initially and mostly their individual possession, but something they learned on the basis of their social constitution. In sum, the social constitution of the individual, understood here in a way that converges with site ontology, is individualistic to the extent that it holds that it is only individuals who actually understand things and act, from occasion to occasion. But it breaks with reductive forms of individualism by arguing that individuals’

⁵⁹ Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 81.

⁶⁰ I expand on this point in much greater detail in Ch. 5.

understandings of the world are thoroughly socially constituted in the sense that such understandings are always initially shared and public.⁶¹

As mentioned above, dispersed practices differ from integrative practices in that they revolve around the repeated, though still situationally attuned, performances of a single type of action. Unlike integrative practices, dispersed ones are only carried out through the exercise of practical understandings and almost never involve taking into account or adhering to explicit rules or teleoaffective structures. For example, the activities of raising and responding to questions, explaining, etc., occur across an enormously wide variety of circumstances, not all of which always involves connections to explicit rules and teleological structures. The same goes for the exercise of nonlinguistic practical understandings like sitting, standing, walking, raising one's arm, etc., in certain contexts. Practices are "dispersed" in the sense that they are more or less performed in the same way, even though they are performed across multiple, widely diverse contexts of human existence.

It is important, though, not to think of dispersed practices as the "building blocks" of integrative practices.⁶² A repeated bodily activity as such is not the performance of a practice, whether dispersed or integrative, unless it takes place and is understood in some context. There is a world of difference, for example, between performing the dispersed practice of sitting on a chair and the integrative one of sitting on the benches of the British Parliament; or between the dispersed practice of walking on a sidewalk and the integrative practice of walking in a protest march; or between the dispersed practice of telling someone what my name is in informal conversation and the integrative practice of doing the same under oath. Although the same bodily activity occurs in the performances of these actions, it can count, depending on the circumstances in which they happen, as performing a dispersed practice on one occasion and performing an integrative practice on another. Finally, one can simultaneously perform multiple integrative practices, interspersed perhaps also with the performance of various dispersed ones. For example, one can be performing various tasks involved in one's occupation and still be engaged in eating/drinking practices at a restaurant. Into this mix can also come the performance of various dispersed practices like "making small talk" or answering questions unrelated either to

⁶¹ Although "site ontology converges in many regards with individualism, the central component of sites, namely, practices, defies individualist analysis. Practice organization is 'out there' in the practice; only versions of different parts of it are 'in here' in different individuals' minds." (Schatzki, "A New Societist Social Ontology", p. 194)

⁶² Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 99.

one's occupational or eating/drinking practices at a restaurant with other customers. It is very easy to imagine other scenarios where such "multitasking" happens often in ordinary life. The point is that we should not think that there exist rigid boundaries between the actual performances of these different types of practices that separate them, even though we can distinguish them analytically in theory.⁶³

So much for the explication of Schatzki's conceptions of practices. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, a site in his stipulated sense is a mesh of practices and material arrangements. Such arrangements are composed of configurations of entities (i.e., people, artifacts, organisms, and natural things) with which practices are closely interwoven. Practices and material arrangements are meshed because they pervasively implicate each other and do not just "interface" at discrete points of contact. It is worth elaborating briefly the nature of the mutual implication that holds between human practices and material arrangements.

We can focus the issue by asking which pole of this relation is primary. On the one hand, it is clear in the constitution of the site of the social that human practices are primary in the order of explanation to the material arrangements with which they deal, for it is the engagement in practices that confers intelligibility on the entities composing some material arrangement at that site. On the other hand, such practices in so doing also enable the entities that they make intelligible to be *objective* over against these practices, sometimes even to such an extent that the constitutive standard that has hitherto rendered these entities initially intelligible must itself alter in light of changing circumstances.⁶⁴ As noted above (though for a somewhat different reason there), scientific revolutions are a paradigm case,⁶⁵ but this also occurs in other domains of human activity such as politics, art, and much else.⁶⁶ The sense of objectivity in question concerns the ability of entities in the world to *challenge and undermine* our understanding of them: to show, by giving us evidence or even challenging what we count as evidence, that we can be wrong about their natures and connections with other entities. Once entities are

⁶³ Schatzki, *Social Practices*, p. 104 and *The Site of the Social*, pp. 88, 154.

⁶⁴ Haugeland, "Truth and Rule-Following".

⁶⁵ The *locus classicus* is Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. See Rouse, *Knowledge and Power*, Ch. 2 and *Engaging Science*, Ch. 6 for insightful accounts of what goes on in scientific revolutions in a way that is congenial to the perspective advanced in this dissertation. For a more general and instructive account, see again Haugeland, "Truth and Rule-Following".

⁶⁶ Consider as examples the development of mass democracy in politics and various artistic movements in the 20th century.

intelligible, then, how they actually are and their relations to other entities can affect or challenge our conceptions of them. Thus, while the intelligibility of entities and their associated phenomena depends on practices, they can acquire the standing of being independent from us with regard to what and how they are, thereby showing themselves to be *objective* in relation to those practices.⁶⁷ Consequently, the primacy of practices in relation to material arrangements should not be understood as implying that human beings can arbitrarily create or fully control the behavior of entities in material arrangements. Although human practices and material arrangements play different roles in constituting a site, the former have a delicate pride of place over the latter.

I have discussed thus far in this section how Schatzki's conception of the site of the social converges considerably with the conception of the social constitution of the human individual elaborated in the previous section. In particular, it should be clear how the social constitution of the individual is intrinsically tied to a site because the intelligibility of the activities that take place at that site presupposes an individual's ongoing understanding of what actions are intelligible and feasible against the background of her immersion in some mesh of practices and material arrangements. I will not further explicate site ontology at this juncture and turn now to address a possible specific divergence between Schatzki's site ontology and my account of the social constitution of the individual. This concerns the conclusion that human beings, existing predominantly in the mode of the *one*, are fundamentally socially constituted by projecting the situational possibilities that the *one* makes available. In Schatzki's terminology, our existence as *one*-selves thereby "prefigures" our agency by enabling and constraining the field of possible actions that we can perform in a situation.⁶⁸ This is a thought with which we should by now be familiar, for I argued in the previous section that it is an individual's projective understanding of the world which initially and mostly opens up and closes off typical ranges and types of possible actions on any occasion. Schatzki is skeptical, however, of the explanatory usefulness of this thought. He argues that the invocation of fields of possibility, and thus, by implication, of fields of impossibility, fails to explain what individual agents *actually* do in a situation. As he writes:

⁶⁷ I note in passing that Heidegger's position regarding the issue of realism vs. idealism, specifically, regarding how entities can be independent as *purely* present-at-hand objects vis-à-vis Dasein, is just such a view; see SZ §§43-4. See Schatzki, "Early Heidegger on Being, Clearing, and Realism", pp. 91-6; Cerbone, "Realism and Truth".

⁶⁸ Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, pp. 44f., 140-6, and 210-2.

By itself, the fact that various paths are impossible casts no light on why particular paths are taken: It indicates only that certain actions are not going to occur. The exclusion of activities makes a difference to social life only when people are aware that certain courses are impossible and act on this basis. Similarly, saying that phenomena that exclude paths also open others by itself says nothing about why particular courses of action are pursued – it indicates only that certain paths can be taken. If, consequently, prefiguration has a more than minimal bearing on actuality, it must consist of more than the exclusion and enablement of activity. Conceiving of prefiguration as the delimitation of fields of possibility is the thinnest analysis possible.⁶⁹

His purpose in minimizing the significance of prefiguration sets the stage for the larger point he wishes to make concerning the explanation of action. This is that

nothing prior to [the actual performance of] action settles what is going to have made sense to someone to do. ... This fact does not imply that action is *undetermined*. It entails only that what determines action itself remains *indeterminate* until action occurs – only then will what will have determined agency have done so. ... The determination of action, in other words, is a past or future perfect tense phenomenon.⁷⁰

Now, does this judgment about the minimal significance of prefiguration for action explanation undermine the emphasis I have placed on how our predominant existence in the mode of the *one* enables and constrains individual agency? I think not, for Schatzki's criticism here seems misplaced by saddling an explanatory demand on this way of thinking that it is not designed to satisfy. This demand is that an adequate account of agency must be able also to provide explanations of actions that are actually performed, rather than just articulate how agents' familiarity with the intelligibility of fields of (im)possible actions conditions what they do.⁷¹ There is nothing wrong, of course, with wanting to combine what can be described as a phenomenology of action with a theory of action. Indeed, this should be one of the ultimate aims of a complete account of the nature of human agency. But we need to draw a distinction between the way in which prefiguration figures in the social constitution of the individual and the way in which it figures in the explanation of action. While Schatzki makes a convincing argument that prefiguration has minimal relevance when we want an *explanation* of why agents actually do what they do, this conclusion does not diminish the significance of prefiguration as the *starting-point*, no more but also no less, of explanations of action.⁷² For in order to explain agents' actions, we cannot help but draw initially on some background information concerning the psychological motivation and social context in which they perform their actions, which is not to say that agents themselves must be consciously aware of this information. More importantly,

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219; cf. pp. 220, 225f.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 232, emphasis in the original.

⁷¹ Schatzki makes this demand most explicitly in *ibid.*, p. 230.

⁷² Cf. MacIntyre, "The Idea of a Social Science", pp. 223-6.

since our topic is the social constitution of the individual and not the explanation of action, the use of the idea of prefiguration plays different theoretical roles in these two lines of inquiry. As I argued in the previous section, the social – more specifically, our familiarity with and immersion in the *one* – prefigures the capacity of an individual as an agent by serving as the intelligible background on the basis of which she actually performs actions. What Schatzki seeks here in effect is not only the background but also the *foreground* of action, i.e., the set of causal factors that actually explains why agents do (or did) what they do (or did). This desideratum is not directly relevant, however, for the conception of the social constitution of the individual for which I argued, which concerns the way in which such an individual is fundamentally social in his or her very way of being in the world. This constitution is, strictly speaking, related to but distinct from the explanation of action.

2.3 OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

In this section I anticipate and reply to some likely objections to the Heideggerian or site conception of the social constitution of the individual put forward in the previous two sections.

There exists a familiar and understandable set of objections against the Heideggerian conception of human social existence in *Being and Time*.⁷³ 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 moral 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

⁷³ See, e.g., Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp. 333-7, 534-56; Buber, *Between Man and Man*, pp. 193-215; Theunissen, *The Other*, Part II, Ch. 5; Levinas, "Is Ontology Fundamental?" and *Totality and Infinity*, esp. pp. 35-52, 79-101, 194-219 (though Levinas's critique is mostly implicit in this book); Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 149-52 and "Work and *Weltanschauung*"; McGuire and Tuchanska, *Science Unfettered*, pp. 64-71. Rentsch gives probably the most succinct statement of this set of objections in "Interexistentialität: Zur Transformation der existenzialen Analyse Heideggers"; for his more extensive and constructive critique of Heidegger, see *Die Konstitution der Moralität*, Ch. 2, esp. §§11-2.

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 of the ethical dimension of human coexistence. According to this reading of *Being and Time*, the Heideggerian 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" individual.⁷⁴ 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."⁷⁵

It is imperative for any defense of a Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the human individual to address this familiar set of objections.⁷⁶ I will do so at both the interpretive and philosophical levels, because it is the prevalence of the existentialist reading of *Being and Time* that obstructs the philosophical insights about the nature of human social existence that I wish to work out and defend in this dissertation.

Let us begin with the interpretive disputes by making explicit some common ground that a defender of Heidegger's conception of the social like me shares with critics who make the objection in question. 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"). Given that we exist predominantly in the mode of the *one*, his emphasis on our tendency to concern ourselves with

⁷⁴ 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 the war; see esp. Habermas, "Work and *Weltanschauung*". This is a charged and complicated issue that I cannot examine here.

⁷⁵ Rentsch, "Interexistentialität", p. 37, translation mine.

⁷⁶ To the extent that site ontology is inspired by Heidegger's *Being and Time* – in particular, in its emphasis on the normalization of teleological structures – it too would be subject to this set of objections.

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*) that need not be perniciously subject to the social pressures exerted by others (e.g., the care of dependents like children, love, friendship, being an engaged citizen of a community, etc.). 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).⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸

These charges, if true, would be pretty damning. But even when one acknowledges (as I do) that they are legitimate, it does not simply follow that the Heideggerian conception of the social in *Being and Time* must be committed to a negative and distorted understanding of human social existence in general. 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 working out 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*.⁷⁹ While there is no doubt that one of the central themes of *Being and Time*

⁷⁷ 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*).

⁷⁸ According to Habermas in “Work and *Weltanschauung*”, this is the major critique of Heidegger that Western Marxists like Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas himself make.

⁷⁹ Here I have benefited from and agree with Carman’s lucid and instructive discussion of this issue; see his *Heidegger’s Analytic*, Ch. 6 and “Authenticity”.

concerns what it is involved in achieving self-ownership (*eigentliches Selbstsein*),⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹ But this is exactly what the critics in question assume without hesitation. On their reading, our absorption in the *one* 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 this mode of existence on the individual at face value, this existentialist reading of the text thereby closes off any positive contribution that our social existence could make to our personal and collective flourishing.

Admittedly, the fact that this is a common reading of *Being and Time* 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 his 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 *one-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 *one-self*, Dasein is in each case *dispersed* into the *one* and must then [*erst*] find itself. (SZ 129)

Later on in *Being and Time* he characterizes the everyday self in terms of the idea of the necessity 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 *one*. Dasein, as an ability-to-be-a-self 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

⁸⁰ As I mentioned above, this is often misleadingly translated into English (and French) as 'authenticity'. Boedeker gives a convincing justification for why 'self-ownership' is the better translation; see his "Individual and Community in Early Heidegger", p. 96, note 35.

⁸¹ Although I do not do so here, one can argue that Heidegger's concern with the possibility of self-ownership is a serious distraction and maybe even a mistake on his part if we are to appreciate his best thinking in *Being and Time*. Guignon provides a compelling, constructive critique of the ideal of authenticity in *On Being Authentic*, Ch. 8.

(*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 ignores Heidegger's assertions, at important junctures in *Being and Time*, that there are actually *three* basic modes of human existence, not just two. In addition to ownedness and unownedness, there is also the "modally indifferent" or evaluatively neutral way in which an individual exists. Heidegger characterizes this mode of existence as the undifferentiatedness (*Indifferenz*) of everyday life (SZ 43; cf. 12).

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 undifferentiatedness. Thus far, the Interpretation [of Dasein's way of existing in Division One of *Being and Time*] has restricted itself, through its treatment of average everydayness, to the analysis of undifferentiated or [*beziehungsweise*] unowned existence. (SZ 232)⁸²

Why does this matter? The reason is that drawing the distinction between undifferentiatedness 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.⁸³ More specifically, a tenable distinction between undifferentiatedness and unownedness can be established as follows. An undifferentiated individual, in virtue of his familiarity with and absorption in the normativity of the *one*, projects the public roles and self-interpretations (for-the-sakes-of-which) 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. 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 undifferentiated

⁸² Heidegger 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). This remark should receive more attention than it has gotten in most interpretations of *Being and Time* 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; see *Being-in-the-World*, pp. 192-4.) It is further textual evidence that we should distinguish Dasein's undifferentiated understanding of the world from its unowned understanding of it.

⁸³ 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).

self is that the former lives in a *wholly socially informed and prescribed* way that obscures his possibility of achieving genuine autonomy.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, Heidegger does not carefully distinguish undifferentiatedness from unownedness in *Being and Time*; or rather, he uses ‘unownedness’ and its cognates in a persistently ambiguous way so that it sometimes describes the undifferentiatedness of average everyday human life, while at other times it clearly devalorizes this mode of existence by emphasizing how living an unowned life lifts the burden of existing from the individual.

By taking seriously, however, the distinction between undifferentiatedness 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 *Being and Time*.⁸⁵ Furthermore, if Heidegger were so contemptuous of human social existence, why does he nevertheless insist (in his terminology) that the *one* is an “existential”, 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 *one*, but only in an “existentiell” modification of it (SZ 130, 179, 383; cf. 144-6)? In short, although one can rightly criticize Heidegger for the *incompleteness* of his account of the positive significance of human social existence, it is mistaken as a matter of textual interpretation to conclude that his conception of the social *categorically precludes* this significance. Consequently, critics who raise the objection we are concerned with here are wrong in drawing this implication.

Once we succeed in putting the significance of the existentialist interpretation of *Being and Time* in its rightful place, this puts us in a better position to reply to the set of objections raised above. The first three go hand in hand: Any Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the individual is (1) fundamentally individualistic (i.e., monadic, indeed,

⁸⁴ 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*.

⁸⁵ Rentsch’s work in *Die Konstitution der Moralität* is interesting by working out what these positive forms of being-with-others are from within a broadly Heideggerian framework. It is an exemplary case of how to “think with Heidegger against Heidegger” (as contemporary German philosophers often like to say).

solipsistic⁸⁶) because (2) it espouses a monological conception of the human individual and (3) unjustly overlooks or disparages the positive significance of human coexistence. Several replies can be made in response to these objections. To begin with, it is undeniable that Heidegger is primarily concerned with the social constitution of a single individual (Dasein),⁸⁷ not with her concrete (or “ontic”) relations with other particular individuals, even if he does discuss briefly the relation of an individual to the communities, generation, or people to which she belongs (SZ §74). Heidegger’s account of being human (Dasein) is to this extent individualistic. But the fact that it is concerned with other people only insofar as they have an impact on the life of a single individual does not imply that this individual lives out a monadic or monological existence, much less one that is solipsistic. Because these objections have been already addressed elsewhere,⁸⁸ I will direct my remarks below to what seems to me to be the source of these familiar objections. This is the complaint that Heidegger’s conception of human social existence does not assign a central and potentially positive role for our concrete, interpersonal interactions with other people.⁸⁹

This complaint is misplaced, however, because the Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the individual aims precisely to explain how the presence of and interactions with other people can be *significant* in general. The misguidedness of the complaint stems from the failure to draw the important distinction (which was discussed above in 2.1) between the *understanding* and the *actualization* of situational possibilities. For example, in order for me, actually, to be (say) someone’s friend or someone who cares deeply for the well-being of significant others, that friend or those significant others must doubtlessly be present and interact with me in certain ways. But in order for me to understand these possible ways of being myself at all, which in turn opens up and constrains the possible ways in which entities, including those other people under those aspects, can show up as making sense to me from occasion to occasion,

⁸⁶ Rentsch uses this term to characterize, in what seems to me in a tendentious way, Heidegger’s conception of individuality; see “Interexistentialität”, p. 35f. See also McGuire and Tuchanska, *Science Unfettered*, p. 70.

⁸⁷ Haugeland’s reading is to my knowledge the only one that claims that ‘Dasein’ is used as a mass noun (like, e.g., ‘sand’ or ‘water’) and refers to a communal way of life, not to a particular individual; see Haugeland, “Heidegger on Being a Person” and “Dasein’s Disclosedness”. Despite the instructiveness of this reading, it is ultimately untenable; see Schatzki, “Early Heidegger on Being, the Clearing, and Realism”, pp. 82-4 and Carman, *Heidegger’s Analytic*, pp. 37-43.

⁸⁸ Schatzki, “Early Heidegger on Sociality”, pp. 236-8.

⁸⁹ See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 334; Buber, *Between Man and Man*, pp. 201f., 207; and Levinas’s concise early article, “Is Ontology Fundamental?”.

I must already project the relevant referential nexus of significance on the basis of which those people show up with these particular significances. This must be done regardless of whether others are actually present so as to enable me to realize some of these situational possibilities. The projective understanding of situational possibilities is prior in the order of explanation to their actualizations because this understanding is a necessary condition of the intelligibility of such actualizations. Indeed, I think it is a virtue, not a defect, of the Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the individual that it reveals how an individual remains social (more precisely, socially constituted) despite the fact that others are not present. For this conception does justice to our sense that our sociocultural upbringing and ongoing social existence fundamentally permeates our self-understanding and comportment toward the world, regardless of whether others are on the scene. Of course, this upbringing only occurred through interactions with other people (paradigmatically, parents, teachers, and other caregivers) when we were still infants and young children. But this concerns the social *origins*, not the continuous social *constitution*, of the human individual, for the latter concerns how the very existence of a human individual is constitutively social even after this upbringing has been completed.⁹⁰ The Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the individual tries to show precisely how this can be: We are initially and mostly *one-selves*, meaning that we always already understand ourselves and deal with the world against the background of our grasp of the public norms into which we are socialized. It is the contents and usual bindingness of these norms that condition the typical situational possibilities that we project as intelligible on any particular occasion.

A number of critics have also objected that (4) the Heideggerian conception of the social is mistaken by envisaging a *mediated* conception of human social relations. Michael Theunissen, for example, objects that

Heidegger robs the Other of his alienness and contrariness by capturing him, as it is with the remaining intraworldly [ready-to-hand] entities, within [an individual's] projection of the world.⁹¹ ... [I]n the analysis of being-with, the *immediacy* of the encounter with the Other is discounted [because] the *medium* of the 'world' is interposed between 'me' and Others.⁹²

⁹⁰ This issue requires more careful and fuller treatment than I give it here. I discuss it much more extensively in Ch. 5 in connection with whether the later Wittgenstein espouses a social view of rule-following, and if so how.

⁹¹ Theunissen, *The Other*, p. 179, translation modified.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 182, emphases in the original. Theunissen's central aim in *The Other* is to show how Buber's conception of human existence as essentially dialogical is superior to the transcendental, mediated conception of this existence that (according to Theunissen) Heidegger shares, at a certain level of abstraction, with Husserl and Sartre.

This objection is unconvincing, however, because it exploits an understandable but overly idealized picture about what “unmediated” or supposedly genuine social interactions can be. This picture is that the purest form of sociality occurs when two or more individuals engage in open, face-to-face dialogue such that the genuine “otherness” of the other can be encountered “immediately” (i.e., in an unmediated way) and hence without distortion.⁹³ The claim is that true mutuality (reciprocity) can only be achieved in such circumstances. In everyday life, it is true that we do occasionally experience such episodes of mutuality with others, especially when the topic of conversation concerns matters that are of great significance for our lives. But notice that such experiences are always only meaningful against a background of our working understanding of the (life)world. It is seriously misleading to characterize this situation in terms of how the world “mediates” the mutuality that can come about between individuals in dialogue, as if our involvement in the world contaminated the pure reciprocity realized by the interlocutors. But what would pure mutuality look like in the absence of its situatedness in and involvement with the world? How could the experience of the other be *contentful* if this were completely *worldless*? How can an individual experience or be “summoned” by the genuine otherness of the other if there is no worldly context at all that makes initially intelligible what is being experienced? To be sure, the other could not be experienced and recognized as genuinely other if he or she were completely undifferentiated from the world.⁹⁴ But it does not follow that this experience and recognition of the other requires that the engagement with him or her be completely worldless. In the same vein, although it is true that the pragmatic and normalizing dimension of the world recedes into the background when interlocutors establish mutuality, it does not follow that this dimension is completely absent when such episodes occur. Moreover, where can the contentfulness of unmediated mutuality come from if it is not derived from one’s involvement in the world? Unless the determinateness of unmediated mutuality can get its content otherwise than by way of negating its “mediated” worldly instances, it remains

⁹³ Buber, *Between Man and Man*, pp. 115-9; Theunissen, *The Other*, pp. 271-94; McGuire and Tuchanska, *Science Unfettered*, pp. 64-8. Although Levinas clearly rejects the possibility of mutuality or reciprocity and emphasizes instead the asymmetrical and “infinite” (unending, inexhaustible) demand and responsibility that the (“face” of the) other puts on each of us whenever we encounter the other, he holds that this demand and responsibility is experienced, at least paradigmatically, through face-to-face encounters between single individuals; see “Is Ontology Fundamental?” and *Totality and Infinity*, esp. pp. 39f., 79-81, 68f., 194-219. For a very lucid, instructive, and sophisticated interpretation of Levinas’s philosophy as a whole, see Perpich, *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*.

⁹⁴ Cf. Ralph Ellison’s novel, *Invisible Man*.

mysterious what positive content it can have. I conclude, therefore, that mutuality is intelligible only if it is already worldly.⁹⁵ While it surely deserves to be a regulative ideal of being-with-others that is worth achieving on some occasions, this ideal cannot be the foundation of our fundamental sociality. The world in its worldliness, including our comportment toward the world as *one*-selves, should not be conceived as an obstruction to genuine reciprocity among individuals. It instead functions, initially and mostly, as the space of intelligibility within which they can pursue and realize these ideals at all.

The further charges that (5) the Heideggerian conception of the social fails to articulate its positive forms and the ethical dimension of human coexistence, as well as (6) ignores the multifaceted effects of macro-level social structures on the life condition of human beings, are much more tenable as criticisms. Indeed, I think that these are genuine lacunae in Heidegger's conception of human social existence and potential points of weakness. Heidegger himself presumably would have nothing to say in response except to emphasize that addressing these issues goes beyond the scope of his project in *Being and Time*. If this were his response to these objections, one can easily understand why it can be regarded as unsatisfactory. But those who find his conception of the social in that work fruitful for an adequate social ontology or practical philosophy need not confine themselves to this self-imposed restriction, nor should they articulate their theories in explicitly Heideggerian terms.⁹⁶ Once again, the point here is that we should not infer, without further argument, the fundamental inadequacy of a philosophical framework *merely* from its choice not to address certain related topics. Since my topic in this dissertation concerns the social constitution of the human individual and not the nature and characteristics of the social in its entirety, let alone in its ethical dimension, it is beyond the

⁹⁵ Theunissen himself concedes this point in his instructive explication of Buber's conception of unmediated mutuality; see *The Other*, pp. 291-4. It is also noteworthy that Gadamer, who clearly appreciates the significance of being open toward the other in dialogue (whether this other is a text, a person, or a tradition), does not make this mistake in his philosophical hermeneutics. For Gadamer, genuine mutuality is always realized with regard to some *Sache*, some self-standing matter of common concern to parties in a conversation that has always already been shaped by the historical (i.e., worldly) situation that conditions both the *Sache* and its interpreters. Indeed, he argues that the sort of supposedly genuine mutuality that floats free of the *Sache* actually expresses an extreme form of subjective individualism, as opposed to enabling the experience of being genuinely open to the other and possibly learning something from him or her; see Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 268f., 290-300, 367-79.

⁹⁶ In addition to Rentsch, some other prominent thinkers who have done so are Spinoza/Flores/Dreyfus, Taylor, Bourdieu, Giddens, Rouse, Schatzki, and H. B. Schmid. Schatzki engages extensively and critically with the site ontologies of some of these theorists in *Social Practices*, Ch. 5; "A New Societist Social Ontology", pp. 190-7; and *The Site of the Social*, pp. 138-57.

scope of this dissertation to examine the social ontologies that take their point of departure, at least in part, from Heidegger's thinking about human social existence in *Being and Time*.

Lastly, there is the charge that some critics have raised concerning the emphasis on normativity *qua* normalization in the conception of the social constitution of the individual for which I have argued. This is the objection that (7) the Heideggerian conception of the social implies that the individuals who live in some lifeworld must accept as morally or politically correct the norms and values that inform this lifeworld.⁹⁷ The objection is that this conception is *critically impotent* because it fails to provide some external normative standpoint from which we can evaluate the morality or political legitimacy of the practices of a community or society, for instance, by reference to a set of norms or principles that can be demonstrated as universally binding. According to this objection, Heidegger cannot avail himself of such a standpoint because he argues that each individual human being primarily and mostly understands herself as *one*-self and acts accordingly, i.e., understands herself in terms of the communally based and historically situated range of publicly intelligible roles and norms that our predominant existence in the mode of the *one* expects. It seems that such an individual will find it hard, if not impossible, to break free of and criticize those roles and norms, for it is the *one* that articulates the referential nexus of significance in terms of which this individual can make sense of the world at all.

Does the Heideggerian view really imply the blanket and uncritical endorsement of the norms and values of some particular lifeworld? To see how it does not, we only need to understand how our absorption in the *one* also makes *non-normal* phenomena possible, as well as the situational possibilities that flow from them. Although the typical way in which we exist and act in the world is normalized by our conformity to the *one*, this global or structural normalization does not preclude the creativity, non-conformism, or resistance that individuals can achieve in concrete local contexts. In fact, the significance of these creative or rebellious achievements can only stand out as such against the background of global conformity to the *one*.

⁹⁷ Tugendhat, *Self-Consciousness and Self-Determination*, pp. 205-18, esp. 213-8; Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, pp. 148-50 and "Work and *Weltanschauung*", p. 191. As a side note, it seems to me that those who make this charge often come close to conflating the rhetoric and personal political conservatism of philosophers like Heidegger (or, for that matter, Gadamer) with the allegedly political conservatism of their philosophies. This is especially true in the politically charged atmosphere of post-war German philosophy, in light of the catastrophic history of Germany in the first half of the 20th century. This again is a complicated issue that I will pass over here.

Thus, emphasis on the normalizing force of the *one* does not imply any endorsement of the legitimacy or justice of the various specific norms and practices that govern the ethical or sociopolitical arrangements of a culture, e.g., those that unjustly produce socioeconomic inequalities or determine what it is to be a gendered or racialized human being. If the rhetoric about the subversion of norms in various domains of human life is not to be an empty gesture, there must be something sufficiently entrenched and normalizing so as to make such acts of subversion meaningful and worth undertaking.⁹⁸ More generally, revolutions in different spheres of human activity (art, science, politics, self-understanding, race or gender relations, etc.) are never totally innovative, but significant precisely by critically transforming some aspects of their inheritance, even if this is done by way of rejection or destruction (SZ 130, 179). Normalized comportment (the *one*) does not preclude the exercise of individual freedom, but is precisely what makes the latter possible and significant as a fundamental situational possibility.⁹⁹

I suspect, however, that this reply would not placate critics who make the charge in question. For they would presumably insist that the issue does not concern the intelligibility of non-conformism or resistance, but, again, the absence in Heidegger's conception of human social existence of an external normative standpoint that can legitimate social practices by recourse to a set of universally binding norms or principles.¹⁰⁰ It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to deal sufficiently with this objection. Nevertheless, the following remarks can at least gesture at a possibly adequate reply to it. First of all, this charge would have much greater force if Heidegger is read primarily as a "decisionistic" existentialist, i.e., one who holds that there are ultimately no consistently binding, universal normative principles that can determine how any human individual should live his or her life. On this view, the best that anyone one can do is to be "resolute" once one has made momentous decisions in one's life. But as I argued above,

⁹⁸ Even a radical proponent of subversive performances such as Judith Butler acknowledges this constitutive constraint on what is involved in subverting norms; see *Gender Trouble*, pp. 145-8. Gadamer makes the same point by insisting that belongingness to a tradition always involves the possibility of criticizing it; see "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection".

⁹⁹ Kuhn's contrast between normal and extraordinary science illustrates this nicely. Indeed, he emphasizes how the internal dynamic of normal scientific practices sows the seeds of its own possible supersession; see *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. For insightful articulations of this point, see MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science"; Rouse, *Power and Knowledge*, Ch. 2 and *Engaging Science*, Ch. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Many critical social theorists have made this charge; see, e.g., Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie*, Band I, Introduction, p. 39f.; Honneth, "On the Destructive Power of the Third". This charge and the response to it show up explicitly in the debate between Gadamer and Habermas regarding whether hermeneutical reflection can and should claim universal scope or not. See Warnke, *Gadamer*, Ch. 4, for an informative account of this debate.

Heidegger's best thinking about the nature of human social existence should not be understood in a way that leads inescapably to this existentialist conception of human agency. Still, even if critics who make the charge in question accept this suggestion, they would presumably remain dissatisfied until the external normative standpoint that they seek to obtain or construct is in view.

Is it really so clear, however, that such a standpoint is necessary in order for critical reflection and the critique of ideology in social philosophy to be possible and efficacious? Without pretending to settle this question, it seems to me that hermeneutically minded philosophers and political theorists have at least articulated a viable conception of social criticism that deliberately does not rely on the supposed normative force that flows from the availability of an external standpoint.¹⁰¹ Roughly speaking, what they try to show is that the belief that we have finally attained the external normative standpoint from which we are entitled to make evaluations that validate the legitimacy of some set of social practices can itself be partial, anachronistic, or ethnocentric. As they see it, one of the root problems in this context is the unjustified belief that moral relativism and subjectivism will inevitably ensue unless we can criticize our practices, as well as those of others, on the basis of a stable and universal normative foundation for our evaluative standards.¹⁰² Once this conviction is shown to be untenable, doing so makes available a *contextualist* model of normative evaluation that can make ethical demands on us and others. More specifically, the activity of first coming to understand and then evaluating others, especially those who are quite different from oneself, requires the subtle exercise of *reflective judgment* (a modern descendant of Aristotelian *phronesis*) that can decide right from wrong in a situationally sensitive way.¹⁰³ There are, of course, difficulties with this hermeneutical conception of social and practical philosophy, and its claim that it can muster sufficient critical potential remains quite contested. But this state of affairs does not as such

¹⁰¹ Gadamer, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection"; Taylor, "Understanding and Ethnocentricity", "Rationality", and "Explanation and Practical Reason"; Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, Ch. 1 and esp. *Interpretation and Social Criticism*. Warnke does a good job of working out the critical resources available to hermeneutical practical philosophers; see Gadamer, Ch. 3 and 4, "Social Interpretation and Political Theory", and esp. *Justice and Interpretation*.

¹⁰² Richard Bernstein would characterize this as an instance of what he calls "Cartesian Anxiety"; see *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, pp. 16-20. A good deal of Gadamer's and Taylor's work in general focuses on defusing the felt need for such a standpoint; see Gadamer, *Truth and Method* and Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* and "Overcoming Epistemology".

¹⁰³ For a clear overall sketch and critical examination of what this involves in different areas of philosophy, see Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*.

make the hermeneutical conception more critically impotent in comparison with other competing conceptions, which have problems of their own.

To conclude this section, I have raised and replied to some familiar objections to a Heideggerian conception of human social existence. In doing so I have focused narrowly on whether or the extent to which these criticisms directly apply to this conception, not on the independent plausibility or compellingness of the various accounts of human sociality or coexistence from which these criticisms flow. Having worked out the Heideggerian or site conception of the social constitution of the human individual, the main aim of Part II of the dissertation is to put this conception to critical use in its evaluation of several prominent accounts or invocations of the social in contemporary analytic philosophy. My hope is that the significance of the Heideggerian or site conception of human social constitution will be even clearer and more enriched by bringing it into critical contact with the latter.

PART II. THE CRITIQUE OF INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONISM (IPIA)

3.0 THE CRITIQUE OF IPIA IN THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE INTENTIONALITY

With the Heideggerian or site conception of the social constitution of the individual in place, I turn now in Part II of this dissertation to the assessment of versions of what I characterized in the Introduction as *interpersonal interactionism* (IPIA). Although IPIA is by all appearances silent about the social constitution of the human individual, it assumes at least that the key to understanding the nature of human *sociality* is examining modes of interpersonal interaction. I believe that this assumption is taken so much for granted so as to remain nearly invisible and hence rarely questioned. Recall that the understanding of human sociality according to IPIA is defined in terms of two more specific assumptions:

The Assumptions of Interpersonal Interactionism (IPIA):

(I) There exists a prevalent mode of human sociality that is realized when (i) two or more individuals are present in some context (ii) who interact with one another in accordance with some implicit set of constraints that (should) govern in that context.

(II) This mode of human sociality *suffices* for understanding both the *fundamental* way in which human beings are social and *all* forms of sociality. Accordingly, any account or invocation of human sociality should begin with this mode of sociality as its key datum and point of departure.

As noted in the Introduction, IPIA seems to inform much of the work in the philosophy of sociality (to use Raimo Tuomela's label), especially in contemporary analytic philosophy.¹ Philosophers of sociality in that literature seem to think that it is unproblematic to investigate the nature of social phenomena independently of any consideration of the social constitution of the individual. Indeed, they seem to believe not only that they do not need to address the latter, but that doing so would be a serious mistake.²

As announced in the Introduction, one of the main aims of the dissertation is to show that this understanding of human sociality along the lines of IPIA, in particular its assumption (II), is untenable precisely because it fails to take into account the social constitution of the individual.

¹ As he conceives the philosophy of sociality, it "include[s] at least the study of collective intentionality, social ontology, and metaphysics, as well as social epistemology. Philosophy of sociality also branches into normative fields of study such as moral philosophy (think of collective responsibility) and political philosophy (think of social contracts and collective acceptance of basic social institutions as we-notions)." (*The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. viii)

² Hans Bernhard Schmid suggests that this view traces back to an unnuanced rejection of the specter of the group mind; see his *Plural Action*, Ch. 2. I will discuss this issue in 3.3.

This chapter takes a first step towards justifying this conclusion by scrutinizing, to begin with, theories of collective intentionality, which are a currently fashionable way of analyzing social phenomena in contemporary analytic philosophy. I will show that the conception of sociality that informs these theories is indeed a version of IPIA. For this very reason, I will then argue that they are unable to make good on their claim to give an adequate account of the nature of human sociality and, by extension, certain aspects of human social reality.

3.1 THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE INTENTIONALITY

The core idea of collective intentionality, which I use as an umbrella term under which more specific concepts fall such as joint commitments and plural subjecthood (Gilbert), we-attitudes and collective commitment (Tuomela), and the construction of social reality (Searle), addresses the following set of questions: Is there a difference *in kind* between groups or collectives (organizations, institutions, etc.) on the one hand and aggregations of interrelated individuals on the other? What conditions must be satisfied in order for collective agents such as groups or collectives – conceived as *unitary* entities – to exist, have intentional attitudes, and act in the world? What distinguishes the intentional attitudes and actions that are attributed to a group or collective from those attributed to an aggregation of interrelated individuals?³

Before we examine the answers of these three theorists of collective intentionality to such questions, it is revealing first to lay bare their motivations. To begin with, such theories accept ontological and, to a lesser extent, explanatory individualism as the dominant paradigm in the metaphysics and explanation of social phenomena. These two sorts of individualism tend to go together as a package, both as a general theoretical framework and as the dominant way of thinking in Western culture in general since the second half of the last century.⁴ As a reminder, ontological individualism holds that social phenomena are ultimately composed only of human

³ For instructive surveys of theories of collective intentionality, see Tollefsen, “Collective Intentionality”; Schmitt, “Socializing Metaphysics”, pp. 1-37; and Roth, “Shared Agency”. For an extensive and critical examination of them, see Schmid, *Wir-Intentionalität*, Part I and *Plural Action*, Part I.

⁴ The *loci classici* for this intellectual package are Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 13-8 and Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, vol. 2, esp. p. 98.

agents and their (inter)relations and (inter)actions, while explanatory individualism contends that all explanations of social phenomena must in the final analysis be given in terms of the attitudes and actions of individual human beings. Although it is often assumed that forms of individualism must be reductionist, some philosophers have recently made strong arguments that reductive explanatory individualism in particular is neither possible nor desirable with regard to social phenomena.⁵

Given this intellectual context, it would seem at first glance that theorists of collective intentionality can be viewed as natural allies of explanatory anti-reductionists about social phenomena. For they argue that phenomena like collective intentional states (e.g., collective beliefs, intentions, goals, etc.) and collective actions (as ascribed to collective agents like teams, organizations, institutions, etc.) are not reducible to aggregations of the intentional states and actions of interrelated human individuals. As Searle emphasizes: “The crucial element in collective intentionality is a sense of doing (wanting, believing, etc.) something *together*, and the individual intentionality that each person has is derived *from* the collective intentionality that they *share*.”⁶ Although Gilbert, Tuomela, and Searle have different accounts of how collective intentionality is possible or shared, they all endorse this basic claim, which is common to most theories of collective intentionality.⁷ Speaking generally, such theorists claim that what distinguishes collective intentionality from individual intentionality is that the former has a special character of *irreducible togetherness* that cannot be explained by the aggregation of individual intentionality. I will sketch below their respective accounts of what this special character consists in. What they all oppose is “singularism”: the view that it is only *single agents* to whom we can truly ascribe intentional states and agency.⁸ Singularism about collective intentional states and collective agency is the standard form that ontological and reductive explanatory individualism take with regard to the metaphysics and explanation of social phenomena.

⁵ See my discussion of these arguments in Ch. 1.2.

⁶ Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 24f., first and third emphases added.

⁷ The notable exception here is Michael Bratman. He acknowledges that his view is “reductive in spirit” because he tries to analyze shared intentionality, or at least shared cooperative activity, “in terms of the attitudes and actions of the individuals involved” (Bratman, *Faces of Intention*, p. 108).

⁸ Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, pp. 12, 419-25; “The Structure of the Social Atom”, p. 53.

In the course of defending the irreducibility of collective intentionality, however, it is worth noting that these theorists are worried that this defense could be taken to imply the specter of *group minds*.⁹ Thus, Gilbert writes that such an implication would be unacceptable because it “could lead to a belief in independent group minds or spirits, for which there is no empirical warrant, and which has given [social] holism a bad name”.¹⁰ Tuomela shows that he shares this sentiment by claiming that “all social notions are in principle reconstructable in an individualistically acceptable way. ... Ontological interrelationism [Tuomela’s social ontology] does not postulate any social wholes and serves to give a naturalistic account of the social realm.”¹¹ Last but not least, Searle conceives his social ontology as navigating explicitly between two implausible options: reductive explanatory individualism about collective intentionality and the idea of a group mind (“a super mind floating over individual minds”¹²). What is telling is that Gilbert, Tuomela, and Searle cannot envisage the contrast to reductionism in this context except as the postulation of the existence of group minds. As we will see below in 3.3, it is this specter of group minds that blocks an alternative understanding of the contrast to reductionism about collective intentionality. I will take up Schmid’s suggestion that we can appropriate Heidegger’s conception of human social existence (as I interpreted this in Ch. 2) so as to present not only the proper contrast to reductionism, but to show how collective intentionality can be indeed shared. (Having said this, I will reject Schmid’s existentialist interpretation of Heidegger’s conception of this existence in *Being and Time*.)

It is useful at this juncture to have before us some illustrations of the irreducibility of collective intentional attitudes and collective actions.¹³ Consider first the case of collective belief, especially in associations or organizations where voting takes place from time to time to decide what positions (collective beliefs) the associations or organizations take regarding certain issues. The intuitive (“summativist”) view is that if a group or collective of people believe a

⁹ I am indebted to Schmid for this point; see his *Plural Action*, pp. 30-2.

¹⁰ Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, p. 430; *Sociality and Responsibility*, p. 3.

¹¹ Tuomela, *The Importance of Us*, p. 376. This summary description of his social ontology comes close to casting it as a form of reductive explanatory individualism, depending on what he means by the “reconstructability” of social notions in “individualistically acceptable ways”.

¹² Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 25.

¹³ For a very lucid discussion and illustration of different kinds of social agents and their characteristics, and why they are not reducible to individual agency and attitudes, see Stoutland, “Why are Philosophers of Action so Anti-Social?”, pp. 46-51.

proposition, all or most people in this group or collective, as individual persons, believe it too.¹⁴ For example, suppose a vote takes place in the US Senate about whether the US government should sign a certain international treaty. Suppose also that the result of this vote is that it should. There is now a reason to ascribe this collective belief to the US Senate. On a summativist understanding, we are entitled to ascribe this collective belief to the US Senate only because a two-thirds majority of its members (i.e., US Senators) who voted on that occasion held this belief as individuals, which led them to cast their votes on that basis.

According to a non-summativist understanding of collective belief, however, it cannot be so analyzed. The reason is that once a vote has been taken and recognized in the scenario in question, only the US Senate *as such* has the *authority* to reaffirm or alter the result of this vote, say, in a future vote. To be sure, the Senate cannot exist, let alone believe and act as a body, absent the attitudes and actions of its constituent members. But it does not follow that the attitudes and actions ascribed to the Senate itself are identical to the sum of the individual attitudes and actions of its constituent members. For example, during the initial vote, the votes of the minority obviously expressed disagreement with the proposal that the US government should sign the treaty in question. But once the result of the vote is known and sanctioned as procedurally legal, such voters must accept that this is the decision of the US Senate *as such*, even though they themselves *personally* disagreed then with this decision in the vote that sanctioned its collective acceptance. This shows that there can be a divergence between a collective belief and the aggregation of the individual beliefs of the persons to whom this collective belief is attributed. Moreover, there may be those Senators who voted initially with the majority but subsequently changed their minds as individuals about the proposition in question. This change does not alter, however, the collective belief ascribed to the US Senate since the initial vote was taken and recognized, unless there is a new vote that gives occasion for the Senate as a body to change the result of its initial vote on the treaty. Indeed, it can even be that since the initial vote on it took place, there will remain no single Senator who personally concurs with the initial vote of the Senate and would vote for it in the future. In this case, a collective belief is still ascribed to the Senate even though *none* of its current constituent members continue individually to hold this belief. Such states of affairs can occur especially when there are large

¹⁴ Quinton, "Social Object". See Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, pp. 257-88, for an extended discussion of this view.

gaps in time between the discrete actions of collective agents (e.g., courts, legislatures, faculty meetings, etc.).¹⁵ These are just some of the possible scenarios in which the collective beliefs ascribed to a group can diverge from the beliefs ascribed to its individual constituent members as an aggregate. This set of possibilities presents considerations that at least support the distinction between the ascription of collective beliefs to groups as such and the ascription of beliefs to the constituent members of those groups as individual persons.

Something analogous is at work in understanding the nature of collective intentions and actions. Consider the example of a symphony orchestra. A summativist about its collective intentions and actions would analyze them in terms of its constituents' individual intentions and actions, as these figure in shared cooperative activity. Bratman, for example, would analyze the shared intentions of different individuals, say, in carrying out a coordinated activity like playing music together, in terms of a special form of individual intentionality. This special form is expressed by intentions with the propositional form 'I intend that we J' on the part of the individuals involved, where 'we J' means that you and I intend jointly, say, to play music together in an orchestra on the basis of our common knowledge¹⁶ of the meshing subplans and interdependent intentions that pertain to jointly carrying out this activity.¹⁷ On Bratman's view, the "we" that is formed here is not a single unitary collective agent, but a collection of interrelated individuals enmeshed in an interlocking web of intentions and actions. His view is thus a sophisticated form of singularism: He argues that a shared intention is not something that any single individual can have by or for himself, but rather only something that he can have through interrelations with the other individuals with whom he shares the intention.¹⁸

¹⁵ Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, p. 290. For another set of vivid examples, consider the case of some past rulings of US federal courts (e.g., that sanctioned the legality of racial segregation) in relation to the current, surely dissenting opinions of the judges who serve on those courts today. Until these judges are given occasions – as current members of these courts – to strike down those past rulings, however, the latter will continue to be at least formally legal, despite the fact that no single judge today on these courts would concur with those rulings.

¹⁶ 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, *Living Together*, p. 36n4. The use of 'common knowledge' in this chapter will henceforth express this meaning.

¹⁷ Bratman, *Faces of Intention*, Ch. 5 and 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 114. Because Bratman's view is peripheral to my concerns, I will minimize my discussion of it except where this is relevant for my purposes. For forthright criticisms of Bratman's view, see Baier, "Doing Things with Others", esp. pp. 21-9; see also Stoutland, "Why are Philosophers of Action so Anti-Social?", pp. 56-8 and Schmid, *Plural Action*, p. 36f.

By contrast, a non-summative analysis of the collective intentions and actions of the orchestra argues that what gives *overall sense and point* to the individual intentions and actions of each member of the orchestra is precisely that they are carried out from the perspective that it is *we* who are playing a piece of music *together*, not just you and I, individually or severally, even under conditions of common knowledge. The claim is that we are each playing our individual part for the sake of *our* playing a piece of music together *as a unified group*.¹⁹ To be sure, each member of the orchestra can also play her individual part in solitude, say, when she is practicing the music that she plays as an individual musician. But the ultimate aim of this sort of solitary playing is how it fits into and is performed *for the sake of* the collective intentions and actions of the collective agent of which she is a constituent member. Theorists of collective intentionality, then, argue that we should draw a distinction between the *composition* of a collective agent on the part of its constituent members and their coordinated activities (what the collective agent is made of), and the *identity and meaning* of the collective intentions and actions of this collective agent as such (what it intends and does *as a unitary body*).

Having illustrated the sort of phenomena that theorists of collective intentionality are keen to highlight and analyze, I will now briefly sketch in the remainder of this section three theories of collective intentionality that are currently influential in contemporary philosophy of sociality. I will postpone my criticisms of them until the next section.

To begin with, Gilbert contends that what is necessary and sufficient for the distinct existence of a group or collective *qua* a unified agent is its status as a *plural subject*. On her view, the following conditions must be satisfied in order for two or more individuals to form a plural subject, say, with a set of collective beliefs.²⁰ (1) Two or more individuals each conditionally express their personal readiness (willingness) to commit jointly to hold a set of beliefs. (2) There exists common knowledge among them about their conditional personal readiness (willingness) to commit jointly to doing so. (3) Once (1) and (2) are satisfied, the individuals in question become *jointly ready (willing) as a unified agent* to undertake the joint commitment to hold the set of beliefs in question:

¹⁹ This point is a central element of Tuomela's analyses of collective notions; see *Philosophy of Sociality*, pp. 4, 16ff.

²⁰ Gilbert, *Living Together*, pp. 7-15. For her extensive account of what it takes to form a plural subject, see *On Social Facts*, pp. 185-203.

The expression of quasi-readiness [i.e., the sort of personal readiness gearing up for joint readiness] involves a *conditional commitment of one's will*, made with the understanding that if and only if it is common knowledge that the relevant others have expressed similar commitments, the wills in question are unconditionally and jointly committed.²¹

(4) When the individuals in question actually jointly undertake this joint commitment, they constitute a plural subject to which a set of collective beliefs is ascribed, which in turn engenders a set of associational rights, obligations, and entitlements concerning the regulation of the behavior of the individuals who constitute the plural subject in question.

These conditions also hold, *mutatis mutandis*, of the way in which two or more individuals come to share collective intentions and perform collective actions. Take Gilbert's favorite example of what is involved when two or more individuals go for a walk together. Here the topic is what it takes to form a plural subject that intends to achieve a particular goal. In order to understand Gilbert's account of this type of phenomena, it helps to have a contrast, which she calls the "strong shared personal goal analysis".²² According to this analysis, it is logically necessary and sufficient for two or more individuals to walk together if and only if there is common knowledge among the individuals involved that each individual participant has this goal in common and acts accordingly to do his or her part in order to achieve this goal.

Gilbert argues, however, that this analysis cannot explain why two or more people who are really walking together have certain rights and obligations that naturally arise in the course of performing this activity (e.g., stopping to wait, under normal conditions, for the other person in the course of walking together, etc.). Nor can this analysis explain, according to Gilbert, why they are entitled to rebuke each other for their failure to perform certain actions (e.g., chiding those who stray not to walk too far away, etc.).²³ To generalize, her claim is that whenever people (intend to) do something genuinely together, this activity always generates a certain set of *associational norms* to which its participants can appeal for the purpose of accomplishing and regulating the collective activity in question. This is what (she claims) the strong shared personal goal analysis cannot explain, which shows this analysis to be inadequate as an account of what it is for two or more individuals really to do something *together*. In effect, the crucial criterion for the formation and continuous existence of a plural subject according to Gilbert is precisely that

²¹ Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, p. 198, emphasis in the original.

²² Gilbert, *Living Together*, p. 179. Bratman's conception of shared intentions is a sophisticated version of this analysis; see his *Faces of Intention*, Ch. 6, esp. pp. 121ff.

²³ Gilbert, *Living Together*, pp. 180-4.

its constituent members can appeal to the relevant associational norms in order to regulate the behavior of the other constituent members of the plural subject in question. She has lately called this “the permission point or requirement”:

To generalize: if certain persons [who jointly undertake joint commitments in advance] are engaged in a particular joint activity with one another, it follows directly from that fact that a participant who withdraws from the joint activity does something wrong if he (or she) has failed to obtain permission from the other members so to withdraw.²⁴

A few further remarks are in order regarding what is involved in forming a plural subject according to Gilbert. First, the key concept involved in plural subjecthood is that of (*conditional*) *joint commitments*, which are “foundational for plural subjects ... [and] may be regarded as the core of human sociality”.²⁵ What makes joint commitments distinct from a conjunction of personal commitments with the same content is that individuals who jointly undertake joint commitments must do so “*as a body (as a unit, as one)*”.²⁶ The example of the US Senate discussed above illustrates this point quite well: Once a vote has been taken by the Senate as a body, such a vote can only be changed by another session of the Senate *as such*, not by the attitudes and actions of the individual Senators themselves apart from their participation in such a session.

Second and more controversially, Gilbert argues that once a joint commitment is undertaken, no single individual, nor a subset of the individuals, who is a constituent member of a plural subject can unilaterally rescind this commitment; a joint commitment can only be rescinded by everyone who enters into it. As she writes, a “joint commitment does not in the relevant sense, *have* parts. A joint commitment is not a *sum* or *aggregate* of commitments such that each of those committed through it ‘holds sway’ over his or her part of that sum, and is in a position to rescind it.”²⁷ She lists and comments on some central features of joint commitments as follows:

Dependent “individual” commitments. When there is a joint commitment, each of the parties is committed through it. One may, therefore, speak of the associated “individual commitments” of the parties. These commitments exist through the joint commitment: they are dependent on its existence for their own.

²⁴ Gilbert, “The Structure of the Social Atom”, p. 42; cf. pp. 42-6; *Sociality and Responsibility*, pp. 4f. and 17.

²⁵ Gilbert, *Sociality and Responsibility*, p. 4.

²⁶ Gilbert, *Living Together*, p. 8, emphasis in the original; cf. “The Structure of the Social Atom”, p. 54.

²⁷ Gilbert, *Living Together*, p. 10, emphases in the original.

Dependent commitments not personal. Given their existence through the joint commitment, these “individual commitments” are not *personal* commitments: they are not, or not ultimately, the unilateral creation of the respective persons, they cannot be unilaterally rescinded

Interdependence of dependent commitments. The dependent individual commitments are interdependent in the sense that there cannot be a single such commitment, pertaining to a given individual, existing in the absence of any other such commitments. Thus given a two-person joint commitment, and *ceteris paribus*, one person’s dependent individual commitment cannot exist unless the other’s does. These commitments must arise and fall together. Again, this is because of the dependence on [*sic*] each of these individual commitments on the joint commitment.

Simultaneity of dependent commitments. The dependent individual commitments of the parties come into being simultaneously at the time of the creation of the joint commitment ... [at least with respect to] those creating an original joint commitment *de novo*.²⁸

In short, Gilbert’s argument here seems to be that because the joint undertaking of joint commitments (which constitute plural subjects) is *simultaneous and interdependent*, any rescission by one or a subset of the individuals who has undertaken them must also be simultaneously and interdependently approved by everyone who initially jointly undertook the joint commitments.²⁹ If this claim is justified, the fact that an individual or a subset of individuals could rescind the joint commitment unilaterally would actually reveal, according to Gilbert, that the joint commitment in question was not one that genuinely formed a plural subject in the first place.

Third and finally, it is clear that she takes the phenomenon of plural subjecthood to be central to the nature of human sociality: “to understand the structure of joint commitment is to understand the deep or underlying structure of the smallest carrier of genuine sociality – the social atom. ... This concept [of joint commitment] is of fundamental importance for all who seek to understand human behavior in both general and particular circumstances.”³⁰ On this basis, she then tries to show the explanatory power of plural subject theory by using it to explain the possibility of certain social phenomena (besides the ones already mentioned) like the social

²⁸ Gilbert, “The Structure of the Social Atom”, p. 49f., emphases in the original. I have only cited the features that are relevant here.

²⁹ I say “seems to be” because Gilbert oftentimes simply asserts, in numerous places in her writings, the truth of this point without explicit argument. She seems to take it to be rather obvious. The present argument is thus my gloss on how it seems to go.

³⁰ Gilbert, “The Structure of the Social Atom”, p. 41. She expresses the scope and ambitions of her plural subject theory through the titles of articles intended to provide paradigmatic statements of this theory. In addition to *ibid.*, the subtitle of which is “The Foundation of Human Social Behavior”, see also esp. “Walking Together: A Paradigmatic Social Phenomenon” and “Concerning Sociality: The Plural Subject as Paradigm”.

basis of group languages, social rules and conventions, everyday agreements, collective emotions, and collective responsibility and collective guilt.

Tuomela's account of collective intentionality starts from the truism that one common and important way in which human beings are social is that they live and act as members of groups or collectives, in addition to thinking and acting as single individuals. Like Gilbert, he is interested in particular to make explicit the conditions under which they can join together to form collective agents to which collective beliefs, intentions, and actions can be ascribed in ways that are irreducible to the aggregation of the attitudes and actions of interrelated individuals. Gilbert and Tuomela diverge, however, with regard to their explanatory strategies of collective phenomena. Whereas Gilbert takes what can be described as a "bottom up" approach to establishing the explanatory necessity and usefulness of collective agents in terms of the joint commitments that form plural subjects, Tuomela takes what can be described as a (moderately) "top down" approach to analyzing the nature of such agents, along with that of their intentional attitudes and actions. As he writes: "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".³¹ It is for this reason that he thinks he can begin his analysis of collective intentionality by assuming that we human beings are already familiar in practice with what is involved in thinking and acting as members of groups.³²

More specifically, this explains why he thinks he is entitled to begin his analyses of collective phenomena by treating his crucial notion of the "Collectivity Condition" as *explanatorily primitive*. This condition is the requirement that single agents who think and act as members of a group or collective do so for the sake of achieving the group's or collective's goals, i.e., do so (in Tuomela's words) for "group reasons" rather than for "private [non-group] reasons".³³ Basically, if the attitudes and actions of a set of interrelated individual agents satisfy

³¹ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 97. Tuomela's theory seems to have become more anti-reductionist with age. One of his earliest papers on the nature of collective intentionality (Tuomela and Miller, "We-Intentions" , published in 1988) is clearly reductive in spirit; and he does not hesitate to use "building block" talk by asserting in another book (published 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." (*The Philosophy of Social Practices*, p. 3)

³² Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 98: "Generally speaking, they [i.e., the individual agents who are members of a group] must be able to act together (perform X [as a member of a group or collective]) before being able to form the joint intention to perform X. So practice is central – the intention requires the practice."

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

this condition, this indicates that they are thinking and acting for genuinely “group reasons” as opposed to the “private reasons” of single agents; in such a circumstance, they are “in the same boat”, “stand or fall together”, or “share a common fate”.³⁴ The main set of questions that he tries to answer revolves thus around the multifaceted ways in which single agents think, intend, and act as members of a group or collective, given that we already know how to do so in ordinary life.

In addition to the Collectivity Condition, which he uses in effect as a test for whether competing accounts of collective phenomena are genuinely concerned with collective phenomena, the other basic concepts central to Tuomela’s account of collective intentionality are those of collective commitment and the distinction between an individual’s attitudes and actions in the “I-mode” and in the “we-mode”.³⁵ In order for group members to really think and act as such, they must be collectively committed to doing so. A commitment for Tuomela’s purposes “primarily means being bound to something in a way that gives a sufficient reason for action related to the object of commitment (which object typically gives a group reason in the case of collective commitment)”.³⁶ Collective commitment is important for two reasons.³⁷ First, it is what binds (“glues”) group members together around an *ethos*, “the set of the *constitutive* goals, values, beliefs, standards, norms, practices and/or traditions that give the group motivating reasons for action”.³⁸ Collective commitment to an *ethos* creates the foundation for the unity and identity of the group. Second, this commitment serves to give authority to group members so that they can each do their part in achieving the goals that their commitment to a relevant *ethos* makes intelligible and (on some occasions) requires from each of them. If the group in question is hierarchically structured (e.g., in a corporation), the distribution of the authority to each member, depending on his or her role in the group, is likewise so structured.³⁹

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Tuomela deploys a host of technical terms and formalisms for his theory, which makes a brief exposition of it challenging. For this reason, I will focus only on the most basic concepts that he uses for it. There are also various nuances and qualifications regarding these concepts that I do not have the space to explicate.

³⁶ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 27.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 35-42.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16, emphasis in the original.

³⁹ Although Tuomela himself treats the concepts of the Collectivity Condition and collective commitment as interdependent (see *ibid.*, p. 5 and Ch. 1), it seems to me that collective commitment is more explanatorily basic. For without it, no genuine group or collective can be constituted, let alone sustained over time. If so, the question of whether the attitudes and actions of interrelated individuals satisfy the Collectivity Condition would be moot absent the realization of collective commitment.

The distinction between an individual's attitudes and actions in the "I-mode" and those in the "we-mode" flows straightforwardly from the idea of what it takes to think and act as a member of a group. If an individual thinks or acts as a member of a group, i.e., for group reasons and not for private (non-group) reasons, she expresses attitudes or performs actions in the "we-mode".⁴⁰ To return to the examples used above, US Senators who consider possible legislation and take votes when the US Senate is in session, as well as the individuals who really are walking together, are cases of single agents who think and act in the we-mode.

The we-mode is the mode of the thick we-perspective (or group perspective), and it gets a central part of its content from *for-groupness*, which means thinking and acting for the group so that all the activities and results of them that are *collectively accepted* by the group are group "shareware" and thus for the use of, and collectively available to, the group members in their thinking and acting as group members.⁴¹

To put this a bit more schematically, an individual has an attitude *A* in the we-mode (i.e., a shared we-attitude *A*) if and only if:

- (1) She has *A* as a functioning member of (i.e., as playing her appropriate part in) a group or collective.
- (2) *A* has been collectively accepted, with collective commitment, under conditions of mutual belief (i.e., common knowledge), by other members in this group or collective.
- (3) Therefore (because of (2)), she is participating in the members' collective commitment, with attitude *A*, at least in part for this group or collective (i.e., for the benefit and use of this group).⁴²

By contrast, when an individual has attitudes or performs actions in the "I-mode" in relation to a group, she expresses attitudes or performs actions either (i) in the purely private (singular) I-mode, (ii) in the plain I-mode, or (iii) in the progroup I-mode.⁴³ We need not clarify their differences for our purposes, except to say that what is lacking in them, to various degrees, is precisely thinking and acting from the group perspective (the property of "for-groupness"). To his credit, Tuomela provides here a precise taxonomy of the different ways in which an individual can be seen to believe or do something for the group. In particular, he explains nicely how it is unproblematic for a single individual simultaneously to have attitudes and perform actions under individual and collective descriptions, showing thereby that expressing attitudes and performing actions in the I-mode and in the we-mode are not mutually exclusive.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Tuomela, "The We-Mode and the I-Mode", p. 97.

⁴¹ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 52, emphases in the original.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 52f. I have omitted some formal details from this definition for the sake of clarity.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 53; cf. "The We-Mode and the I-Mode", p. 104.

⁴⁴ Tuomela, "The We-Mode and the I-Mode", pp. 104-9.

Lastly, when shared we-attitudes are further combined with collective acceptance, this makes possible the creation and maintenance of social institutions and the ascription of intentional attitudes and agency to the latter.⁴⁵ For instance, a group or collective intends to bring about a goal if all its “operative” members set this goal as a collective goal of the organization. “Operative” members are those individuals who are authorized to make decisions and set policies for collectives like organizations and corporations (as, e.g., their mid- or higher-level managers or administrators). If an organization is large, it will surely also contain “non-operative” members, who differ from “operative” ones because they tend not to have the authority to make decisions and set goals in a strategic sense. “Non-operative” members tend to play their part in performing collective actions by receiving tasks and carrying them out; they are, so to speak, the “underlings” or “worker bees” of the group. Collective acceptance is the means through which interacting individuals with shared we-attitudes can construct macro-level social entities like social institutions without reifying them as self-subsistent wholes that exist completely above and beyond the workings of individual intentionality.

Although Searle’s social ontology puts much less focus on the precise mechanism involved in constituting collective agents, he shares Tuomela’s interest in showing how social or at least institutional reality should be understood. Searle’s social ontology is in some ways more intuitive than those of Gilbert or Tuomela, so its exposition here can be more brief.⁴⁶ There are four conceptual building blocks in Searle’s theory: collective intentionality, the assignment of functions, constitutive rules of the form “X counts as Y in context C”, and the Background (in his sense of that term). He argues that collective intentionality is the key to his analysis of social reality: “The central span on the bridge from physics to society is collective intentionality, and the decisive movement on that bridge in the creation of social reality is the collective intentional imposition of function on entities that cannot perform those functions without that imposition.”⁴⁷

To illustrate with one of his favorite examples, money is instituted as a social entity only when members of a society collectively assign to certain artifacts (metal, paper, electronic data, etc.) the function of being a means of economic value and exchange. The collective assignment

⁴⁵ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, pp. 43f., 129.

⁴⁶ For more extensive summaries and critical assessments than the one given here, see, e.g., Carsten’s, Hund’s, and Wettersten’s essays in “Review Symposium on *The Construction of Social Reality*”; and Hornsby’s, Tuomela’s, and Ruben’s essays in “Book Symposium on *The Construction of Social Reality*”.

⁴⁷ Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 41.

of such a function to entities is possible only when individuals follow the constitutive rule that such artifacts count as money (in a certain society). Because the rule in question is constitutive and not merely regulative, perceiving and using something as money necessarily implies that individuals who do so conform to the relevant set of constitutive rules if they are to encounter entities *as* money at all, for otherwise money cannot exist as such. Instituted entities like money have thus, on the one hand, the status of being (in Searle's terminology) ontologically subjective: their existence as whatever they are, i.e., as having the function they perform, depends wholly on their acceptance and treatment as such by a community of individuals. On the other hand, Searle argues plausibly that the ontological subjectivity of instituted entities like money does not imply their "epistemic" (better: explanatory) subjectivity.⁴⁸ For example, once something is instituted as money by a community of individuals, there are objective facts that govern what can be taken and used as money, facts that no single individual or a plurality of individuals can arbitrarily ignore or alter, even though money is an ontologically subjective entity. Searle's view is thus that social entities, or at least institutional ones, have the status of being ontologically subjective and yet explanatorily objective.

In order to prevent an infinite regress of rule-following from generating, Searle invokes his concept of the Background, i.e., the set of nonintentional or preintentional capacities that are the conditions of the possibility of intentionality in general, whether individual or collective.⁴⁹ The Background structures our capacity to have collective intentionality because this capacity "requires something like a preintentional sense of 'the other' as an actual or potential agent like oneself in cooperative activities".⁵⁰ This suggests that an individual's socialization in communal practices is necessary for the possibility of having collective intentionality. Moreover, like Gilbert and Tuomela, Searle argues that collective intentionality is not reducible to the sum or aggregation of individual intentionality. Similarly, he argues that adding the condition of

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Ch. 1-2, esp. p. 7f. I put 'epistemic' in quotes because I find it misleading of Searle to characterize the point he has in mind in this way. The right adjective is 'explanatory', not 'epistemic', because this point concerns the condition under which institutional facts and phenomena are *explained in an objective way*, not those under which we come to know them. For this reason I will replace in this chapter the uses of 'epistemic subjectivity or objectivity' and their cognates with those of 'explanatory subjectivity or objectivity' and their cognates.

⁴⁹ Searle, *Intentionality*, Ch. 5; Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, Ch. 6. "The Background ... is not a set of things or a set of mysterious relations between ourselves and things, rather it is simply a set of skills, stances, preintentional assumptions and presuppositions, practices, and habits. And all of these, as far as we know, are realized in human brains and bodies." (*Intentionality*, p. 154)

⁵⁰ Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions", p. 413. He has some suggestive remarks, but no more, about what this involves in the section in which this thought is expressed (*ibid.*, pp. 413-5).

common knowledge (or mutual belief) to the coordinated interactions of a plurality of individuals does not result in non-singularist collective intentions and actions.⁵¹ On his view, collective intentionality is instantiated whenever the contents of an individual's intentions or actions are intelligible only as part of some collective intentions or actions (e.g., playing my part as a member of an orchestra or fulfilling my obligations as a member of a committee, etc.). Searle's commitment to methodological solipsism,⁵² however, compels him to hold, controversially, that access to the contents of collective intentions and actions is completely intelligible from within the purview of each individual who instantiates it, so that

the structure of any individual's intentionality has to be independent of the fact of whether or not he is getting things right, whether or not he is radically mistaken about what is actually occurring. ... [T]he account must be consistent with the fact that all intentionality, whether collective or individual, could be had by a brain in a vat or by sets of brains in vats.⁵³

If this is right, a single individual could still have collective intentions ("We intend ...") even if there are no others present, either actually or virtually, with whom he can share them.

To conclude this section, it should not be hard to see how Gilbert's, Tuomela's, and Searle's theories of collective intentionality instantiate conceptions of human sociality along the lines of IPIA. This is clearest in the case of Gilbert's conception of joint commitments as the core of plural subjecthood. According to this view, if there is to be collective phenomena and collective agents, understood in non-singularist ways, two or more individuals must interact jointly in accordance with the structure of what is involved in undertaking joint commitments. Moreover, once a plural subject is formed in this way, this engenders the set of rights and obligations that regulate the behavior of the constituent members of such subject. According to Gilbert, the fact that a plurality of individuals can assert certain rights and incur certain obligations that govern how they (should) associate with one another derives from their mutual creation and maintenance of a plural subject. Tuomela's theory of collective intentionality also resembles Gilbert's in this respect. For it too analyzes what it is for two or more individuals to think and act as members of a group or collective in terms of how they must undertake collective commitments in order to come to share attitudes and perform actions in the we-mode. The

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 402-6.

⁵² Searle misleadingly uses the label of 'methodological individualism' to characterize this commitment. But no sane methodological individualist in social ontology or the philosophy of social explanation needs to be committed to Searle's understanding of what this position entails. Rather, what he actually means when he uses this label is methodological *solipsism*. (This will become clear shortly.)

⁵³ Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions", pp. 406-8.

crucial constraint that must be satisfied in these cases is the Collectivity Condition; its satisfaction constrains the respective roles that members of a group or collective are supposed to play in them (e.g., what functions and responsibilities they have as members in them) in the course of sharing collective intentions and performing collective actions. Although it takes a bit more effort to discern how Searle's social ontology instantiates a form of IPIA, we can see how this is so by highlighting the role that following constitutive rules plays in this ontology. For this activity is the basic manner in which two or more individuals collectively impose functions on entities so as to confer institutional significance on them. Searle's conception of collective intentionality is peculiar, however, because it makes room for the logical possibility that collective intentionality could be had by a single individual *qua* a brain in a vat. Even if she were actually alive in this circumstance, however, Searle's view is that the virtuality of her experience of collective intentionality has no bearing on its collective character. Methodological solipsism is a constraint on intentionality in general (as Searle conceives this), not one that applies only to collective phenomena.

In sum, Gilbert's, Tuomela's, and Searle's theories of collective intentionality are versions of IPIA. They understand human sociality in terms of (I) how two or more individuals interact in ways that are constrained by the specific norms that these theories specify as implicitly governing such interactions. Furthermore, they clearly assume (II) that their theories of collective intentionality *suffice* for understanding the *fundamental* way in which human beings are social and *all* forms of human sociality. Accordingly, they take it as self-evident that their theories of collective intentionality should begin with this mode of sociality as its key datum and point of departure.

3.2 PROBLEMS WITH THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE INTENTIONALITY

Although I have not elaborated the extensive details of Gilbert's, Tuomela's, and Searle's accounts of collective intentionality, I hope to have given readers a sufficient sense of their

motivations, concerns, and arguments. Ignoring the specific disagreements among them,⁵⁴ they exhibit a broadly similar approach to clarifying the nature of collective phenomena. What unites them is their shared commitment to what can be called *non-singularist constructionism* about collective phenomena and collective agency: non-singularist because they reject singularism (though not explanatory individualism as such) about collective agency and collective phenomena; constructionist because they each attempt to isolate a set of conceptual raw materials from which social and institutional phenomena are built up, or at least analyzable (“reconstructable” in Tuomela’s sense), by means of certain sorts of interactions among single agents.

Despite the ingenuity and analytical rigor that these theories of collective intentionality display, however, they are problematic both in their own terms and on external grounds. To begin with, because Gilbert and Tuomela (unlike Searle) apply the method of conceptual analysis in their investigations of social and collective phenomena, the immediate internal problem they are faced with is the *circularity* of their analyses.⁵⁵ We saw above how Gilbert argues that two or more individuals form a plural subject just in case they are jointly ready (willing) to undertake the joint commitment, as a body, to believe that *p* or achieve the goal that *p*. It is crucial to point out that she adds the requirement that they do so *as a unified body or subject*, for otherwise her account would collapse into a sophisticated form of reductive explanatory individualism about collective phenomena. But it is hard not to understand this condition of believing or doing something “as a body” as anything but a notational variant for the idea of a plural subject, which is what her theory intended to analyze in the first place. In effect, she is arguing that the set of necessary and sufficient conditions that must be satisfied for the existence of a collective agent requires that its constituent members think and act as a unified collective subject. But the latter notion is precisely what is in need of explanation and may not figure in the explanans.

In the face of this charge of circularity, Gilbert could respond, first, by denying that she is giving complete conceptual analyses of collective phenomena (even if the spirit and style in which she articulates her theory suggests otherwise). Instead, she could weaken her position by claiming that she is primarily concerned with how collective subjects can come to exist by means of interpersonal interactions of a certain kind. For what she actually does in her theory is

⁵⁴ For a helpful discussion of what these are, see Tollefsen, “Collective Intentionality”.

⁵⁵ Cf. Tollefsen, “Collective Intentionality and the Social Sciences”, p. 28f.

articulating the *mechanism* through which interacting individuals can constitute unified collective subjects, not undertaking the more difficult task of giving a complete conceptual analysis of them. She writes:

I do, of course, posit a mechanism for the construction, so to speak, of social groups [*qua* plural subjects]. And this mechanism can only work if everyone involved has a grasp of a subtle conceptual scheme, the conceptual scheme of plural subjects. Given that all have this concept, then the basic means for bringing plural subjecthood into being is at their disposal. All that anyone has to do is openly to manifest his willingness to be part of a plural subject of some particular attribute.⁵⁶

This reply cannot sufficiently deflect, however, the charge of circularity. The reason is that the individuals who jointly undertake the joint commitments that form various plural subjects, as she explicitly admits in the passage just cited, must still grasp the conceptual scheme of plural subjecthood in order to effect plural subjects. But this modification goes nowhere as a response to the charge of circularity because it is simply another way of saying that they must *already* think and act as constituent members of such subjects in order to constitute them. The fact that she can change her topic from that of giving a complete conceptual analysis of plural subjects to an account of how they are formed through an interpersonally interactive mechanism only elaborates what single agents must do, step-by-step, to form such subjects. It does not alter the presupposition that they must already think and act as constituent members of such subjects in order to bring them into being.

Another problem concerns the sense in which ordinary individuals “grasp” the conceptual scheme of plural subjecthood. If Gilbert means that they have a working *theoretical* understanding of this scheme, this claim is surely false, for the battery of concepts in this scheme is much too complicated for ordinary people to have in mind whenever they come to share collective beliefs or undertake collective actions. More plausibly, Gilbert may mean that they grasp this scheme *in practice* whenever they believe or do things together in genuinely collective (non-singularist) ways; she may mean that they do not already need to self-consciously understand and apply her theory of plural subjecthood in order to form collective subjects to which collective beliefs and actions can be ascribed. This more charitable understanding of her claim that ordinary individuals understand, in practice, the conceptual scheme of plural subjecthood renders this claim more plausible. But even if this is the case, this still would not lessen the vulnerability of her theory to the charge of circularity.

⁵⁶ Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, p. 416; cf. *Living Together*, p. 185.

Moreover, while Gilbert is right to emphasize the permission point that governs the behavior of the individual participants in a plural subject, it is too strong to claim that a participant or subset of participants therein cannot unilaterally rescind their initially joint commitment to form such a subject. For in an ordinary sense, such rescissions go on all the time as a matter of fact. Suppose you and I, for example, agree to have dinner together tonight. I decide later in the day, however, not to show up and can provide no good reason for “standing you up” in subsequent communication. Obviously, I unilaterally broke our joint commitment to have dinner together. I can be, of course, criticized in all sorts of ways for having done so. And Gilbert is right that the basis for such criticism rests on non-moral associational rights and obligations that derive from our initially joint undertaking of joint commitments. Nevertheless, it is clear, as a factual matter, that unilateral rescissions happen. Of course, once an individual jointly undertakes joint commitments with others, he *should* not unilaterally break them unless he has good reasons. The problem with Gilbert’s formulation of the permission point is that she often puts matters in a *factual* mode, when it is more appropriate that she put them in a *prescriptive* mode. Thus, instead of specifying the non-rescission feature of joint commitment as follows:

Once a plural subject has been formed, the joint commitments that underpin it is not rescindable by either party unilaterally, but only by the parties together,⁵⁷

she ought to give it a prescriptive formulation:

Once a plural subject has been formed, the joint commitments that underpin it should not be rescindable by either party unilaterally, but only by the parties together (unless this possibility of unilateral rescission has already been built into the initial joint commitments).

Lastly and more problematically, Gilbert seems to suggest (in her comment on the central features of joint commitments) that unilateral rescissions are somehow, conceptually speaking, incoherent. As I noted (in 3.1 above), her argument seems to be that because the joint undertaking of joint commitments is simultaneous and interdependent, any rescission by a single individual or a subset of the individuals who has undertaken them must also be simultaneously and interdependently approved by everyone who initially jointly undertook those joint commitments. If so, this claim is also too strong as it stands. As Gilbert often emphasizes, one

⁵⁷ Cf. Gilbert, “The Structure of the Social Atom”, p. 50.

can attribute a sort of wrongdoing to someone who is a constituent member of a plural subject but who subsequently unilaterally breaks a joint commitment that constitutes the latter. This action is not wrong, however, because it is somehow conceptually incoherent. It is simply wrong because one has broken a commitment made in advance, not wrong in some intrinsic or conceptual sense. One can be accused of not living up to this original commitment, but not of failing to sustain a plural subject as such, i.e., of failing to do so *under that description*. Given that Gilbert holds that the formation and persistence of a plural subject consists in *nothing more* than that of sustaining initially jointly made joint commitments by its constituent members, it is unclear what exactly is amiss when a participant to this subject withdraws unilaterally from it, other than his failure to live up to his initially jointly undertaken joint commitments. The rights and obligations that participants in a plural subject have to one another derive from their mutual commitments to one another, not from their commitments to a joint “we” that is somehow additional to such commitments, even after these commitments engender, as a matter of conceptual status, plural subjects.

The problem of circularity also troubles Tuomela’s conception of an individual’s attitudes in the we-mode. Recall that an individual has an attitude *A* in the we-mode (i.e., a shared we-attitude *A*) if and only if:

- (1) She has *A* as a functioning member of (i.e., as playing her appropriate part in) a group or collective;
- (2) *A* has been collectively accepted, with collective commitment, under conditions of mutual belief (i.e., common knowledge), by other members in this group or collective;
- (3) Therefore (because of (2)), she is participating in the members’ collective commitment, with attitude *A*, at least in part for this group or collective (i.e., for the benefit and use of this group).⁵⁸

Notice that this analysis of what it is for an individual to have an attitude in the we-mode uses the notions of her functioning as a member of a group, as well as her collective acceptance of and collective commitment to this attitude for the sake of the group (i.e., for group reasons). Again, it is hard not to see this analysis as anything but circular, because the specification of what it is for an individual’s attitude to be in the we-mode is given in terms of ideas that make implicit use of just that idea. Almost all the work of the analysis is already done by the crucial idea of an individual agent’s self-understanding and activities *as a member of a group*, for this

⁵⁸ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 52f.; cf. *The Philosophy of Social Practices*, p. 36f.

membership is what supplies the bulk of the explanatory power of the notions used in the analysis.

Now, Tuomela acknowledges this point of criticism in effect by treating the notion of the Collectivity Condition (i.e., thinking and acting for group reasons, for the sake of the group) as explanatorily primitive. He is thus aware that the charge of circularity can be raised against his account of collective intentionality (in his terms, of the we-perspective). In his reply to this charge, although he concedes that his account is strictly speaking circular, he maintains that it is not viciously so.⁵⁹ He gives two reasons for this view. First, he contends that his account is still informative by showing how we can seamlessly transpose collective phenomena at the group level (the macro level) into the interrelated commitments and shared goals of single agents at the level of their “jointness” (the intermediate level).⁶⁰ Second, he emphasizes that this account allows for the possibility that human beings in ordinary life often act as members of groups without it being explicit to them that they are so acting (e.g., in lifting a table up the stairs together, in playing tennis together, etc.).⁶¹ In other words, his reply is that the battery of concepts introduced and deployed (e.g., the Collectivity Condition, collective commitment, thinking and acting in the we-mode, etc.) for philosophical analysis need not be explicit to single agents in ordinary life who think and act as members of groups in the course of understanding and carrying out collective actions. Instead, these concepts “can be regarded as underlying conceptual presuppositions that philosophical analysis has revealed” about the structure of collective intentionality.⁶²

I think these two replies to the charge of the circularity of his account are well taken. For it is true that his account does supply us with a seamless way of redescribing collective phenomena in terms of the interrelated attitudes and activities of individuals. More importantly, his analytical framework, at least of late, is not meant to be reductive, but clarificatory, and is in this sense informative.⁶³ This must be the case if one assumes *from the outset*, as Tuomela does, that human individuals often think and act, in non-singularist ways, as members of groups or

⁵⁹ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, pp. 97f., 139f.

⁶⁰ The micro level is just that of the actions and commitments of single agents, considered apart from their relations to other single agents.

⁶¹ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 97f.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 97: “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”.

collectives. Having said that, I think critics can still make the following objections to Tuomela's and, for that matter, Gilbert's theories of collective intentionality.

To begin with, one can take issue with how their theories privilege, without defense, one specific mode of social existence, namely, interpersonal interactions among a plurality of individuals that establish collective attitudes or achieve collective goals, as the general or core form of human sociality.⁶⁴ This starting-point is quite questionable, however, for the following reasons. (1) There are clearly other modes of human coexistence that not only do not fall under this category, but are more explanatorily basic. These modes concern above all the social heritage and attachments that individuals have simply in virtue of the concrete contingencies that shape and matter to their lives as individual persons. Thus, facts concerning the particular era, families, languages, communities, cultures, traditions, and nationalities to which individuals belong obviously condition their existence prior to, in the order of explanation, their actual interpersonal interactions with others to constitute collective attitudes, agents, and institutions. Tuomela concedes this much when he writes that his account of collective intentionality requires the prior understanding and use of the concept of group ethos:

My analysis of thinking and acting as a group member will assume that we are dealing with normal human beings to whom propositional attitudes, other mental states, and actions can meaningfully be attributed. In general, such agents must [already] understand what group membership means and must also know to which groups they belong. In my technical developments, this will require that they [already] understand what the group ethos is, that is to say, what its central or constitutive goals, values, beliefs, norms, and standards are and what it is to take it, or its ingredients, as one's reason for action.⁶⁵

As we can see, the concept of group ethos contains quite a lot of content (!). The fact that Tuomela helps himself to this concept *at the outset* of his theory shows that the generic framework of theories of collective intentionality at best only examines one single, admittedly important, form of human social existence that shows itself, nevertheless, not to be its most basic one. More specifically, the fundamental limitation of these theories is their fixation on the active (constructive) dimension of individuals' choices and commitments, while ignoring the equally important *passivity* of such choices and commitments, i.e., the background social conditions that already shape the range of concretely possible experiences and actions that at once enable and

⁶⁴ For similar complaints, see Baier, "Doing Things with Others", pp. 20ff. and Stoutland, "Why are Philosophers of Action so Anti-Social?", pp. 45-58.

⁶⁵ Tuomela, *The Philosophy of Sociality*, p. 5. Recall that he defines a group's ethos as "the set of the *constitutive* goals, values, beliefs, standards, norms, practices and/or traditions that give the group motivating reasons for action" (*ibid.*, p. 16, emphasis in the original).

constrain the exercise of individual agency.⁶⁶ It is precisely the nature and ramifications of these conditions (their structure and basic character) that the Heideggerian understanding of human social existence seeks to bring into the foreground and articulate as the necessary enabling conditions for the choices and commitments of individuals.⁶⁷

(2) This fixation connects directly with a related problem with theories of collective intentionality: There is a bias toward an *overly voluntaristic* conception of human sociality. But clearly human beings just as often find themselves coexisting with others in ways that they have not freely chosen. The most dramatic examples are the social identities attributed to individuals by the social environment in which they are born and live (e.g., those determined in terms of race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, etc.). Most individuals do not freely choose these identities, but simply find themselves with them as aspects of their self-understanding and agency that may either enable them to realize or prevent them from realizing their particular goals and life-projects. The examples used by theorists of collective intentionality, however, assume that human beings typically coexist and interact with one another on the basis of symmetrical power relations among free agents.⁶⁸ But more often than not, this is the exception rather than the rule and depends crucially on the character of the sociopolitical order of the communities or societies to which they belong.

In response to this criticism, Gilbert, for one, tries to accommodate it by emphasizing that the sort of voluntary choice and commitment in play in forming plural subjects is special because it allows for a good deal of coercion: “Clearly people may be pressured into joining a particular conversation, into getting married, into fighting in a particular war. The type of ‘volunteering’, then, is such that it is possible to be coerced into it.”⁶⁹ If this is so, however, the sense and manner in which individuals express their personal “readiness” (or “willingness”) to undertake joint commitments becomes either misleading or vacuous because we start to lose our grip on how such commitments can be really *jointly* undertaken. For if they are not really *jointly* undertaken, it becomes unclear whether the interpersonally interactive mechanism that engenders

⁶⁶ This is a central theme in Baier’s “Doing Things with Others”.

⁶⁷ See Ch. 2 of this dissertation.

⁶⁸ Schmid, *Wir-Intentionalität*, p. 15 and *Plural Action*, Ch. 3. Cf. Baier, “Doing Things with Others”.

⁶⁹ Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, p. 410; cf. esp. *Living Together*, Ch. 12.

joint commitments really creates plural subjects rather than plural *objects*.⁷⁰ It seems, then, that Gilbert's theory of plural subjecthood has a serious problem in distinguishing between plural subjects into which individuals freely agree to enter and people who are members of involuntary social groups and treated – without their consent – as a collective. Note that this is not an objection about the intelligibility of coerced choices or commitments itself, which I think is an important and useful way of explaining human exploitation and oppression despite the existence of formally free choices or commitments. It is rather an objection about the plausibility of Gilbert's conception of what is really involved in *jointly* undertaking joint commitments to form plural subjects, if this conception is unable to distinguish between the creation of plural subjects and plural objects.

(3) The general orientation of theories of collective intentionality also distorts the nature of human coexistence by focusing primarily on what it takes for individuals to form small groups that can share collective intentions and perform collective actions.⁷¹ The paradigms that such theorists use as illustrations are telling: to mention only a few, walking together, managers setting a company's policies together, making hollandaise sauce together, painting a house together, pushing a car with a mechanical problem on the road together, etc. But this orientation toward what is involved in the formation of small groups is faced with a number of problems. (i) Depending on the example chosen, many of these actions are merely contingently social, in the sense that they are social only insofar as it is simply easier or more efficient when another person or a number of people help an individual achieve some goal. But there is no reason in principle why an individual could not achieve this goal if he possessed sufficient power to do so on his own. (ii) Moreover, theories of collective intentionality make it too easy on themselves by selecting examples of interpersonal interactions that do not, at least initially, involve institutional significance. One can wonder as an empirical question, however, whether interactions involving institutional significance are more prevalent than ones without this significance when individuals interact. To anticipate, the problem here is that collective intentions and actions are analyzed in

⁷⁰ It would amount to what we can call a "Mafia conception" of voluntary choice and commitment, where the head of a Mafia family says to someone: "I'm gonna make you an offer you can't refuse. I would like you to join our Mafia as an important member. But it's really up to you what you wanna do."

⁷¹ Baier makes the same objections that I do here in "Doing Things with Others", esp. pp. 22-9; see also Stoutland, "Why are Philosophers of Action so Anti-Social?", pp. 45-58.

isolation from their embeddedness within the relevant nexus of background practices that make them intelligible and have a point at all.

Now, Searle's social ontology avoids the problem of circularity that troubles Gilbert's and Tuomela's accounts of collective intentionality because he eschews giving a conceptual analysis of it. But this comes at the cost of leaving ultimately unexplained how it is that individual minds can share collective intentions in general, let alone perform collective actions, for Searle asserts that collective intentions are explanatorily primitive.⁷² To state his view a bit more accurately, he holds that there are limits to how much philosophical reflection can explain the existence and sharing of collective intentionality, for ultimately this can only be given by an evolutionary explanation. Be that as it may, problems still remain with his conception of the nature of collective intentionality at the philosophical level.

To begin with, given Searle's commitment to methodological solipsism, according to which the contents of collective intentions are intelligible and accessible from entirely within the purview of individual minds (brains) alone, he is confronted in effect with the problem of other minds.⁷³ As noted in my brief sketch of his theory above, he stipulates that a necessary constraint on what he conceives as an adequate account of collective intentionality is that individual minds can have this intentionality even if they are actually a collection of brains in a vat. If so, however, how can such minds know with confidence that the other minds to which they are intentionally related can share, whether actually or virtually, the same understanding of the content of some collective intention?⁷⁴ We are left with a situation where it seems rather accidental or lucky that a plurality of minds can have the same understanding of collective intentions and actions. Since Searle appeals to evolution as revealing the "brute fact" that we just have collective intentionality, I suppose he can circumvent this objection in this way.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the convenience of such an appeal just at the moment when this objection is raised seems rather unsatisfactory.

⁷² Searle, "Collective Intentions and Actions", pp. 402-7.

⁷³ For another line of objection to Searle's commitment to methodological solipsism that goes in a different direction, see Schmid, *Plural Action*, pp. 38-40.

⁷⁴ The diagram that Searle gives on p. 26 of *The Construction of Social Reality* does not solve this problem, but actually exacerbates it.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 23f., 37f.

Searle could also presumably reply to this objection by emphasizing that his concept of a constitutive rule is conceived in part to address the very problem that this objection highlights. For what ensures that a plurality of individuals can share the same understanding of a collective intention is that each of them must follow the *same* constitutive rule that imposes some collectively assigned status function on something that would otherwise not have this status function. Although Searle himself does not put this point in the way that I just did on his behalf, what he writes in the following passage implies it in connection with the role that constitutive rules play in his account of the construction of institutional reality. Recall that constitutive rules have the form “X counts as Y in context C”. He writes:

So the application of the constitutive rule introduces the following features: The Y term has to assign a new *status* that the object does not already have just in virtue of satisfying the X term; and there has to be *collective agreement, or at least acceptance* [emphasis added – JJK], both in the imposition of that status on the stuff referred to by the X term and about the function that goes with that status. Furthermore, because the physical features specified by the X term are insufficient by themselves to guarantee the fulfillment of the assigned function specified by the Y term, the new status and its attendant functions have to be the sort of things that can be *constituted by collective agreement or acceptance* [emphasis added – JJK]. Also, because the physical features specified by the X term are insufficient to guarantee success in fulfilling the assigned function, there must be *continued* collective acceptance or recognition of the validity of assigned function; otherwise the function cannot be successfully performed.⁷⁶

This passage clearly implies that if individuals did not share collective agreement about, or at least collectively accept, what is instituted by following the same constitutive rule, phenomena like money could not exist because they would then not (continue to) fulfill the status function that the collective agreement or acceptance has imposed on them on the basis of people following the same constitutive rule in a society. Thus, conformity to constitutive rules is what guarantees that individual persons have the same understanding of the content of a collective intention when they share it.

But this reply is subject to its own problem of circularity, one that differs, however, from the one that troubles Gilbert’s and Tuomela’s accounts of collective intentionality. This can be seen when we examine how Searle’s appeal to the necessity of conforming to constitutive rules itself presupposes the prior availability of collective intentionality. As he writes:

Collective intentionality presupposes a Background sense of the other as a candidate for cooperative agency; that is, it presupposes a sense of others as more than mere conscious agents, indeed, as actual or potential members of a cooperative activity. ... What you must suppose [in order to have or act on collective intentions] is that the others are agents like yourself, that they have a similar awareness of you as

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44f., emphases in the original unless noted otherwise.

an agent like themselves, and that these awarenesses coalesce into a sense of *us* as possible or actual collective agents.⁷⁷

This train of thought seems circular, however. We want to understand the possibility and nature of collective intentionality. Although Searle gives us an account of how social or at least institutional reality is constructed on the basis of individuals who have collective intentionality, collective intentionality itself (as the passage just cited above states) presupposes that people are at least ready to cooperate with one another so as to make collective intentionality possible: “they must have the type of communal awareness that is the general precondition of collective intentionality”.⁷⁸ In order to fully understand the possibility and nature of collective intentionality, then, we need to understand the structure or character of the kind of cooperation or communal awareness that makes collective intentionality possible. If so, however, we cannot appeal to notions like cooperation or (even more vague) communal awareness to explain collective intentionality, for these notions might very well presuppose that something like collective intentionality is *already available and operative* if the appeal to these notions is supposed to be illuminating. This is not to deny that this appeal can work. But in order for this to be the case, Searle owes us at least an account of how exactly cooperation or communal awareness helps to enable collective intentionality as its precondition, as opposed to treating cooperation or communal awareness as explanatorily primitive phenomena.

At this juncture, Searle appeals (if I understand him correctly) once again to evolution as providing the ultimate explanation for existence of cooperation and communal awareness: “the capacity for collective behavior is biologically innate”.⁷⁹ Indeed, “[m]any species of animals, our own especially, have a capacity for collective intentionality ... not only [in the sense] that they engage in cooperative behavior, but [in the sense] that they share intentional states such as beliefs, desires, and intentions”.⁸⁰ It is undeniable that many species of animals engage in cooperative behavior. The question of whether they are also able to have intentional states such as beliefs and intentions is much more disputable.⁸¹ The question for Searle in the present

⁷⁷ Searle, “Collective Intentions and Actions”, p. 414, emphasis in the original. His more extensive discussion of the Background in *The Construction of Social Reality* aims at resolving other difficulties and does not address the problem I am pointing out here.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸¹ See, e.g., Davidson, “Thought and Talk” and “Rational Animals”; McDowell, *Mind and World*, Lecture VI.

context does not engage him on those fronts, however. Rather, it concerns the issue of whether cooperative behavior or communal awareness, regardless of which species of animals we have in view, might not already implicitly rely on the prior availability of collective intentionality. To appeal to evolution as a response to this query is not satisfactory because such a response does not address the particular problem of circularity that I have pointed out here, even if the evolutionary basis of collective intentionality is true enough.

3.3 COLLECTIVE INTENTIONALITY AND THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL

I have argued that three of the most prominent theories of collective intentionality currently on offer are beset by a number of problems that arise from an examination of these theories in mainly their own terms. From the standpoint of a Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the human individual (as I have presented this in Ch. 2), though, their most serious flaw is that they take individual agency for granted by failing to take into account the *worldly context* (*site*⁸²) that makes the exercise of this agency intelligible, and in this sense possible, at all. Clearly, they assume without hesitation that human sociality consists primarily in the interpersonal interactions of individuals. But what they fail to see, let alone examine, is how the social can be already at work in the individual prior to such interactions. What they overlook is that there is a dimension of human social existence that constitutes the individual by structuring the situational possibilities of experience and action that make sense to him or her as a necessary condition of the exercise of his or her agency in general. As I argued in Ch. 2, this dimension of the social permeates and makes intelligible an individual's very comportment toward the world because this comportment is normalized, primarily and usually, in accordance with the public norms of the *one* (*das Man*). This conformity to the public norms of the *one* is prior in the order of understanding to the actualization of interpersonal interactions by constraining the latter's very intelligibility.

⁸² See 2.2 for a detailed explication of what a *site* is, as well as of some of the remarks in this section.

In order to see how this Heideggerian approach pertains to the concerns of the three theories of collective intentionality examined in this chapter, let us take some favored examples used by Gilbert, Tuomela, and Searle and show how the intelligibility of the interpersonal interactions that they privilege depends on individual agents' prior and shared understanding of the world.⁸³ This is fairly easy to do with regard to collectively instituted entities like money (Searle) and the collective intentions and actions, e.g., of employees in corporations (Tuomela). As Searle himself acknowledges, something functions as money only when it is situated and used "in a whole network of practices: the practices of owning, buying, selling, earning, paying for services, paying off debts, etc."⁸⁴ In other words, collectively instituted entities like money depend on their involvement within the relevant nexus of practices and material arrangements that must already be in place as a complex whole if such entities are to be intelligible as what they are at all. Absent this involvement, money cannot be what it is, not even when nothing physical has changed regarding the artifacts that are token-identical with money. More generally, Searle is surely right in stating that: "In the case of social objects, ... process is prior to product. Social objects are always ... constituted by social acts; and, in a sense, *the object is just the continuous possibility of the activity.*"⁸⁵ Although he would presumably not put it as follows, what he emphasizes in effect is that collectively instituted entities like money can only be what they are at a *site*. That is, such entities exist *inherently as part of the worldly context*, i.e., the relevant nexus of human practices and material arrangements, to which they belong because their very intelligibility depends on their placement and meaning in this sort of context. This placement and meaning is what enables socially instituted entities like money to be what and how they are.

We can make the same point in a more concrete fashion in connection with Tuomela's analyses of collective phenomena. The claim here is that collective intentions and actions are only intelligible and thereby realizable on the basis of an understanding of how a nexus of practices and the material arrangement with which they are interwoven *hang together*, i.e., on the basis of an understanding of how individuals coexist and carry out their activities at a *site*. In

⁸³ Although the focus and terms of analysis are different, the criticisms of Searle and Tuomela that follow below overlap in significant ways with Mandelbaum's criticisms of reductive explanatory individualism in "Societal Facts", esp. pp. 107-13.

⁸⁴ Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 52.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36, emphasis in the original.

other words, the claim is that understanding what it is for individuals to exist and act at a site is prior, in the order of understanding, to understanding analytically how individuals at that site can join together to have collective intentions and actions. To take an example to which Tuomela's account of collective phenomena surely applies, consider the collective intentions and actions of the operative and non-operative members of a bank. The chief manager of this bank, who is an operative member of it because she is authorized to make strategic decisions and set collective policies concerning the long-term goals of her bank, can only do so by drawing on an ongoing understanding of banking practices. This includes (*inter alia*) understanding: that a bank is the site where money in various forms is deposited, borrowed, invested, converted into other financial instruments, etc.; that engaging in banking practices requires the cooperation of a host of bank employees not just at her own bank, but also at other banks and other banking-related institutions; that the employees at her bank and elsewhere must in turn play their appropriate roles by carrying out the various tasks assigned to or expected of the occupants of these roles in instituting and sustaining the collective intentions and actions of her bank (i.e., in Tuomela's words, they must be "functioning" members of the bank); that the material arrangement of the bank (e.g., the constellation of banking equipment like computers, their software, deposit slips and receipts, spreadsheets, contracts, ATMs, certain furniture, etc.) is organized, both physically or virtually on the Internet, in ways that facilitate the functioning of the bank; and so forth.

It should not be hard to see that the way in which all these banking practices and the material arrangement with which they are interwoven hang together (how they make sense as a whole) must be already understood by those who carry out their activities at this site. These practices and their concomitant material arrangement are only intelligible as *inherent parts or aspects of this particular site*, such that they cannot be what they are (cannot function in their appropriate roles) when they are abstracted from their place or role at that site. Furthermore, what institutes and sustains them as inherent parts or aspects of that site is the specific set of public norms to which its participants by and large conform when they assign themselves in practice the roles of being bank managers, bank employees, bank customers, etc. Moreover, in the course of engaging in banking practices at the particular site that renders them intelligible, there will also surely be some possible intentions and actions that are collective in nature, in Tuomela's sense that those who have these intentions and perform the corresponding actions will do so only as members of the bank or other organizations or institutions. The present point is that

they can have such intentions and perform such action in the we-mode only by availing themselves of a background understanding of how various phenomena hang together as inherent parts or aspects of a particular site (in this case, a bank). Absent the possession and exercise of this understanding of a site, individual agents cannot even make sense of the collective intentions that are only meaningful thanks to their inherent connections to this site, let alone realize them by performing certain actions that are expected of them as members of a group or collective.

Gilbert's example of two or more individuals walking together may seem to present the toughest case for the Heideggerian or site conception of the social, for it lends itself more readily to a much "thinner" description of the doing in question by being seemingly devoid of the "thicker" sort of significance that flows from its embeddedness at a site. But even in this case, the individuals involved must still at least understand what they are doing in terms of some role or self-interpretation, even if the latter can be utterly mundane (e.g., as a pedestrian, hiker, etc.). As a reminder, this understanding need not be and often is not self-conscious or reflective; it is simply something they find intelligible in the course of doing something else, e.g., going for a walk together. As I argued in Ch. 2, the world that practically concerns individuals has three components, of which (3) roles and self-interpretations (*Worum-willen*) form one constituent. The other two components are (1) a totality of entities that show up as ready-to-hand equipment, each of which is used for performing some specific task; and (2) more encompassing short-term and medium-term goals which are accomplished by the execution of these tasks. These three components are *mutually dependent*, even if there is a certain primacy that accrues to the projective understanding of the world that flows from individual agents' roles or self-interpretations.

Given that this is the case, Gilbert's example of two or more individuals walking together must be *worldly* in the rich sense that the Heideggerian or site understanding of the world emphasizes. In this example, this means not only that there must be some ongoing understanding among them of how their joint intentions and actions fit into the worldly context (i.e., the particular site) in which such joint intentions and actions make sense and have a point, but also that this understanding is normalized by its participants' absorption in the *one*, even in undertaking a mundane activity such as walking together. Why must this be so? The reason is that this activity always occurs *somewhere* (e.g., on the sidewalk, on a path in the woods, in a park, etc.). Where it occurs specifically determines which public norms constrain their activity of

walking together, even though their conformity to these norms need not be at the forefront of their conscious awareness of what they are doing while they walk together. Thus, two or more individuals constitute themselves as a plural subject who walks as a unified body only by already practically understanding how relevant ready-to-hand entities (e.g., sidewalks, paths in the woods, sign-posts, etc.) make sense in connection to the nest of mundane short- and medium-term goals that they accomplish in the course of performing this activity (e.g., avoiding other pedestrians or hikers that they encounter, using road signs to get to where they want to, etc.). Clearly, these are aspects of the world to which these individuals pay the barest attention while they walk together, so much so that this skillful coping with their environing world may seem trivial in comparison with their joint goal of walking together. But it should be obvious that the individuals in question could not go for a walk together unless they could exercise these basic, worldly skills as they navigate their way through their environing world with the joint goal of walking together. Moreover, the associational rights, expectations, and obligations that are central to Gilbert's conception of plural subjecthood cannot be intelligible unless they too are situated within a nexus of human practices and material arrangements. If, e.g., one person walks on ahead for a stretch, misreads a sign-post, and goes thus in the wrong direction, her companion can rebuke her when or if they meet back up at a later time by noting that she should have understood the sign-post in this particular (correct) way; that she could have asked someone else for directions or called the person left behind to tell him where she has ended up, etc. Thus, a member of a plural subject cannot be in a position to admonish her fellow pedestrians for not playing their appropriate part in carrying out their activity of walking together if they do not show the requisite competence involved in skillfully and fluidly navigating their way through the world, in this instance under the aspect of how the world shows up to them as affordances for walking together. Some practical understanding of the worldly (normalized) context must be already available to the individuals who participate in some joint activity if such individuals take themselves to be sensitive and subject to the associational rights and obligations that come with their participation in that collective activity.

From the Heideggerian or site conception of the social, then, the source of the problems pointed out in the foregoing remarks is the failure of Gilbert, Tuomela, and Searle to consider how human individuals are already *socially constituted*, in the order of understanding, prior to their actual engagement in interpersonal interactions. This implies that the most basic way in

which human beings are social cannot be modes of interpersonal interactions or their products, *contra* the non-singularist and constructionist spirit of Gilbert's, Tuomela's, and Searle's accounts of collective intentionality. The logical order of dependence is the other way around: Collective intentionality is possible and realizable because human individuals must always draw on their very understanding of the *world* on each occasion – a world in which they are already involved as engaged agents and which makes intelligible the exercise of their individual agency, not one that is incidental or extraneous to their interpersonal interactions.

This culminating point connects now directly with Schmid's resolution of the dilemma that he ascribes to theories of collective intentionality. The dilemma is this:

On the one hand, the[ir] aim was clearly to break with individualism [*qua* singularism] in the sense of the orthodox limitation to purely individual intentionality, which is recognized as being overly restrictive and unfit for our understanding of the social world. On the other hand, however, individualism (in the broad sense of an emphasis on the role of the individual) seemed to be the only effective defense against the specter of the group mind. Thus, in a sense, the theory of collective intentionality had to reject and to endorse individualism at the same time.⁸⁶

That is, theorists of collective intentionality endorse non-singularist constructionism about collective phenomena because they envisage singularism (reductive explanatory individualism) and the specter of the group mind as the only two conceivable options on offer, both of which they reject as flawed. Schmid argues that this state of affairs reveals a blind spot that these theorists share regarding the nature of intentionality in general. This is the assumption that whenever we encounter phenomena that exhibit intentionality, there must be *somebody* – some *subject*, whether individual or collective – that “has” it. Adapting a suggestive phrase from Annette Baier, Schmid calls this assumption the “Cartesian brainwash”, in the sense that many theorists remain so accustomed to thinking about the nature of intentionality in a Cartesian fashion, even when they reject some of its central tenets,⁸⁷ that they cannot conceive how there can be intentionality without assuming that there must be someone who possesses it.⁸⁸ Such an assumption is clearly at work when theorists of collective intentionality feel immediately

⁸⁶ Schmid, *Plural Action*, p. 34.

⁸⁷ Cf. Dennett's description of many cognitive scientists as “Cartesian materialists” because they cannot resist the intuition that consciousness is a “Cartesian Theater” where whatever is present to the mind must introspectively come together, as it were, on a central stage; see *Consciousness Explained*, pp. 107ff.

⁸⁸ Schmid, *Plural Action*, p. 32; see Baier, “Doing Things with Others”, p. 18. Following Pettit, I noted (in 1.1) how this assumption is mistaken: It is a fallacy to think that sharing thinkable contents must presuppose sharing, literally, a group mind or collective consciousness that enables the sharing of thinkable contents to take place. I will pursue, however, another line of response to this assumption in what follows.

compelled to dismiss the specter of the group mind upon their rejection of singularism about collective phenomena, for they assume that if there are group or collective intentional attitudes that are irreducible to the aggregation of individual ones, then there must be the existence of group or collective minds that bear these irreducible attitudes, even if such theorists dismiss this possibility as “spooky”.⁸⁹ Schmid’s treatment of the “Cartesian brainwash” is interesting for our purposes because he argues that Heidegger’s conception of the social enables us to undermine the plausibility of this assumption and, in so doing, understand the nature of collective intentionality. Schmid does so by developing his key concept of *inter-intentionality*, which is coordinate with that of *common* or *shared* (*gemeinsames*) Dasein that he discerns in early Heidegger’s thinking about the nature of the social.⁹⁰ He draws out the import of these concepts in connection with the specific concerns of theories of collective intentionality.

To begin with a brief point of clarification, although Heidegger in *Being and Time* deliberately eschews the use of the term ‘intentionality’, let alone ‘inter-intentionality’, because of the mentalistic associations of the idea of intentionality in his mind, it is not incorrect on Schmid’s part to attribute the use of these concepts to Heidegger. For once intentionality is understood in accordance with Heidegger’s full conception of *being-in-the-world*, what is distinctive about this way of existing remains, after all is said and done, its particular manner of being directed at the world. It is just that this way of being directed at the world is no longer allowed to be conceived in ways that isolate it from its situated and practical engagement with the world in its concretion. As Heidegger writes:

In directing itself at something and grasping it, Dasein does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been initially enclosed, but rather its primary mode of being is such that it is always already “outside” in the midst of [*bei*: dealing with] an entity that makes sense in terms of a world that is discovered on each occasion. Nor is any inner sphere abandoned when Dasein is particularly occupied [*bestimmendes Sichaufhalten bei*] with an entity that it comes to know. But even in this “being-outside” with [*beim*: being occupied by] the object, Dasein is still “inside”, if we understand this term correctly; that is, it is itself “inside” as being-in-the-world *qua* knower. And furthermore, the act of perceiving what is known is not one of returning with one’s acquired booty to the “container” [*Gehäuse*] of consciousness

⁸⁹ Bratman and Searle clearly accept and work with this assumption; see Bratman, *Face of Intention*, p. 110f. and Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Schmid, *Plural Action*, pp. 168ff. In terms of textual evidence, Schmid traces Heidegger’s emphasis on the communal character of Dasein mainly to the lecture course that Heidegger gave in the winter semester of 1928/29, published as *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Band 27 of Heidegger’s *Gesamtausgabe*). Although Schmid thinks he needs to draw attention to this character in Heidegger’s thinking in a way that diverges from its elaboration in *Being and Time*, I think that it is not only already in view in *Being and Time*, but required by Heidegger’s way of thinking in that text. (I will make this point in due course below.)

after one has gone out and grasped it; even in perceiving, retaining, and preserving [the way the world is in thought,] Dasein as knower *remains outside as Dasein*. (SZ 62, emphasis in the original; cf. 54)

Thus, intentionality (though not under this particular description) remains a central theme for Heidegger in *Being and Time*. He prefers instead to use the term ‘comportment’ (*Verhalten*) as a substitute for ‘intentionality’ because the former better expresses human beings’ absorption in and direct engagement with the world; this way of putting things makes clear that intentionality and the world in its worldliness should be understood as a fundamentally *unitary* phenomenon (hence the use of hyphens in ‘being-in-the-world’ [SZ 53]). As long as we understand Heidegger’s conception of intentionality as something inherently bound up with the world – such that there could not be intentionality, not even notionally, absent its interwovenness with the world – it is innocuous for particular purposes to use ‘intentionality’ and its cognates to characterize early Heidegger’s thinking.

Provided that same cautions are kept in mind regarding Schmid’s conception of inter-intentionality, it offers a way of understanding the nature of shared intentionality that avoids the above-mentioned dilemma of theories of collective intentionality. With one notable exception, this conception strongly resembles the Heideggerian account of the social constitution of the individual that I provided in Ch. 2.⁹¹ In particular, both accounts emphasize and appropriate Heidegger’s important concept of *possibilities* (SZ §31). These possibilities are, primarily and mostly, those that are situationally intelligible to individuals in virtue of their understanding of and participation in the shared practices that constitute a common world on each occasion. Schmid has precisely this understanding of situational possibilities in view in his own interpretive appropriation of Heidegger’s thinking. As he argues with regard to the nature of joint activity or joint action:

Inter-intentionality ... is, above all, a matter of *joint activity*. 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

⁹¹ Given that Heidegger’s philosophy around the period of *Being and Time* is a source of inspiration for both accounts, this is not surprising. I will discuss in due course what this exception is below.

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.⁹²

Schmid argues, then, that inter-intentionality derives from the shared possibilities of action that a multitude of individuals have (i.e., project) in virtue of their shared or common way of making sense of situational possibilities and acting in the world on that basis (as the example of participating in an election illustrates), i.e., their *shared or common* way of being in the world (their *common* Dasein). These shared possibilities cannot derive from the aggregation of individual ones because the latter *presuppose* the former for their very intelligibility.⁹³

But neither does it follow from this conclusion that there must then be collective or group minds that somehow “possess” shared possibilities of action or, more generally, collective intentional attitudes. Thinking that this must be the remaining implication only reveals one’s susceptibility to the “Cartesian brainwash”. Rather, these possibilities are not “possessed” by or “contained” in any sort of singular or collective mental realm but (to use a suggestive phrase of Charles Taylor) “out there in the practices themselves”,⁹⁴ in the sense that these possibilities make sense and flow from individuals’ *comportment toward the world as such*, including how they comport toward one another as aspects of their overall comportment toward the world. More precisely, shared possibilities are “out there in the practices themselves” because their *organization* is not a set of properties that we can attribute to specific individuals as their particular possessions, even though, to be sure, it is such individuals who *grasp* the organization of practices “in their mental states” as their individualized understanding of what is going on and what makes sense for them to do on each particular occasion. As Schatzki writes:

A practice is organized by an array of intelligibilities, rules, ends, projects, and ways things matter. ... The “mental states” that organize a practice, *qua* components of the practice’s organization, are not the states of particular individuals. *Qua* organizing phenomena, they are distinct from whatever mental states actual participants possess. Participants’ states are, at best, versions of these organizing states, and many of their mental states are not even these. For example, the desire to earn profit that helps organize bank loan practices is distinct from both the desire of any given bank employee and the desires of any sum of employees to do so. That is to say, that this desire organizes the practices is distinct from either this or that or any specific set of actual participants desiring profit. *As a set*, moreover, the array of states that

⁹² Schmid, *Plural Action*, p. 171, emphases in the original. Charles Taylor argues in non-Heideggerian terms for the same point (and, indeed, uses the example of voting in an election for very similar purposes) in “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man”, esp. pp. 32-40.

⁹³ I gave an extensive argument for this conclusion in 2.1. Using his own vocabulary, Schatzki makes the same argument in “A New Societist Social Ontology”, p. 183f.

⁹⁴ Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man”, p. 36.

organizes the practice is expressed in the entire open manifold of actions composing the practice. It is an affair (or feature) of the manifold and not of any subset of practitioners.⁹⁵

This line of thought explains well Schmid's claim that shared possibilities are the "base and frame" of our individual possibilities: Shared possibilities supply the typical tasks, short- and longer term goals, and more generally the determinate significance and point of some action or activity, for the sake of which an individual acts. Individual possibilities not only do not come about *ex nihilo*, but emerge primarily and usually from an individual's prior familiarity with some set of shared possibilities that the practices themselves make available. It is thus the understanding of and participation in *shared practices* and what this involves, not the sharing of some supposedly collective or group mind, that explains the nature of shared possibilities in relation to individual ones.

Last but not least, Schmid's conception of inter-intentionality also emphasizes the centrality of individuals' *conformity to norms* in ensuring that they continue to share wide-ranging commonalities regarding the possible actions that make sense to them. As he writes:

In the authentic view, norms and conventions are not just restrictions and guiding lines [*sic*] for Dasein's individual actions. Rather, norms are the infrastructure of our *common* Dasein. Norms are the *instruments* with which, with more or less circumspection [*Umsicht*: fluid coping with the world on each occasion], we "*take care*" of the Dasein we share. An authentic view of norms is *sub specie communitatis*, as it were.⁹⁶

This thought expresses another way in which Schmid's conception of inter-intentionality and common Dasein strongly resembles the conception of the social constitution of the individual that I laid out in Ch. 2. It was argued there that the human individual is socially constituted because such an individual understands (projects) situational possibilities of experience and action that accord, primarily and usually, with the normative (normalized) intelligibility that the *one* (*das Man*) supplies.⁹⁷ In short, human beings in everyday life are mostly *one*-selves (*Man-selbst*) because they understand possibilities and perform actions or activities that realize these possibilities in accordance with, or else in reaction to, the public norms of the *one*.

⁹⁵ Schatzki, "A New Societist Social Ontology", p. 192f., emphasis in the original. I have inserted scare quotes around 'mental states' at the beginning of this quotation because this expression picks up a previous use of it surrounded by scare quotes.

⁹⁶ Schmid, *Plural Action*, p. 178, emphases in the original. I will discuss why he claims that this is the "authentic" view of norms and conventions below.

⁹⁷ As in Ch. 2, whenever I italicize 'one' in this chapter, I am using it in Heidegger's loaded sense of *das Man*. When I do not italicize it, I am using it as this is standardly done in English.

Because Schmid is committed, however, to an *existentialist* interpretation of the significance of the *one* as social norms or pressures that hinder our attempt to achieve individual autonomy and personal flourishing, he would reject the way in which I discern and ascribe a positive significance to the *one* and criticize, more generally, the non-existentialist interpretation of the *one* that I elaborate and defend above in Ch. 2. In fact, he characterizes this interpretation rather tendentiously as a “conventionalist” understanding of the *one*, especially regarding the tight connection that it seeks to establish between social normativity and intentionality.⁹⁸ This interpretation is alleged to be “conventionalist” because understanding oneself in terms of the public norms supplied and prescribed by the *one* implies (according to Schmid’s construal of this interpretation) not only understanding oneself and others in accordance with the shallow conventions and social norms of the crowd, but sanctioning this as an acceptable state of affairs. By contrast, when Schmid discerns and elaborates a Heideggerian conception of inter-intentionality and common Dasein, he takes himself to be working out the way in which the early Heidegger (especially in his lecture course, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*) has the conceptual resources that reveal the positive significance of our social or communal existence. As Schmid asserts: “Heidegger [in this lecture course] outlines a non-individualistic account of intentionality ... that does not depend on social normativity in terms of conventions, normative communal practices or social institutions, but is not an affair of single individual minds nevertheless. It is social, but not conventional.”⁹⁹ In short, because Schmid thinks that Heidegger in *Being and Time* disparages the significance of human social existence, he seeks and succeeds in finding another source in Heidegger’s corpus that largely retains the insights of *Being and Time* but jettisons this negative understanding of the significance of human social existence. Schmid’s account of inter-intentionality and common Dasein is meant to reveal how Heidegger makes a positive understanding of this existence available that contrasts rather strongly with his remarks about it in *Being and Time*. In particular, Schmid argues that the “authentic” view of norms and conventions derives from the concepts of common or shared Dasein and inter-intentionality, whereas the “inauthentic” view of norms and conventions flows from the stifling character of the

⁹⁸ Schmid, *Plural Action*, pp. 157-66. He explicitly attributes such a reading to Dreyfus and those who have found it to be fruitful (e.g., Haugeland, Brandom, Okrent, Carman, or, for that matter, Schatzki) for understanding not only Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, but a host of other philosophical issues. It should be clear that my own interpretation of this text falls into this camp.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

social conformism that the *one* effects in the lives of human beings: “the inauthenticity of the *One* [*das Man*] should not be interpreted as standing in contrast to an *individualistic* idea of authenticity that is intrinsically alien to any form of social normativity ..., but in contrast to a *common* or *shared* Dasein, a Dasein which is transparent to itself in its common, inter-intentional practices of shared ‘taking care’”.¹⁰⁰

For reasons given in 2.3, however, I think that this existentialist interpretation of Heidegger’s understanding of the significance of human social existence is not only simplistic and reductive, but also prevents Schmid’s positive evaluation of its significance from coming to light in *Being and Time*. If this judgment is right, Schmid does not need to find something else in Heidegger’s corpus that rectifies the distorting effects of the existentialist interpretation of human social existence in *Being and Time*. Rather, once we properly understand the import of being-with and the *one* in that text (see Ch. 2 as a whole), we equip ourselves to discern the contributions that these phenomena make to an account of human social existence that does not slight the positive significance of this existence. What Schmid identifies as the “authentic” view of norms and conventions in Heidegger’s early philosophy is in fact already encompassed by Heidegger’s understanding of the significance of the *one*. *Contra* Schmid, then, the “authentic” norms that express and sustain the common Dasein that a community of individuals share are not opposed to the normative (normalizing) function of the *one*, in the positive sense of this function, but actually serve to fulfill this function (in the way that Ch. 2.1 explains). In short, Schmid is wrong to hold that common or shared Dasein, along with the inter-intentionality that it enables, opposes the *one*. This view only makes sense, however, if one subscribes to an existentialist interpretation of the significance of the *one*. But this is a one-sided and hence flawed interpretation of Heidegger’s view of the social in *Being and Time*. Regardless of this mistaken interpretation, it is to Schmid’s credit that he has not only made astute observations and criticisms about the literature concerning the nature of collective intentionality, but finds a way in which Heidegger, of all people, can be seen as making a positive contribution to this literature.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 178, emphases in the original.

4.0 THE CRITIQUE OF IPIA IN DAVIDSON'S APPEAL TO SOCIAL INTERACTION

Although they have certainly not gone unchallenged, Davidson's views have been influential with regard to an impressively wide range of issues central to the philosophy of action, language, mind, and interpretation. Moreover, his views are notable, especially in light of the spirit that animates this dissertation, for serving as a source of stimulation and discussion not only in analytic philosophy, but also among contemporary philosophers who work at the intersection of recent analytic and continental philosophy.¹ My aim in this chapter, however, is not to survey the various ways in which Davidson's philosophy is of general interest or of interest at such an intersection.² I will focus instead on how his implicit commitment to interpersonal interactionism (IPIA) of a certain sort is problematic given the issues that he seeks to address with the help of IPIA.³ As a reminder, IPIA is a generic conception of human sociality that is defined in terms of two specific assumptions:

The Assumptions of Interpersonal Interactionism (IPIA):

(I) There exists a prevalent mode of human sociality that is realized when (i) two or more individuals are present in some context (ii) who interact with one another in accordance with some implicit set of constraints that (should) govern in that context.

(II) This mode of human sociality *suffices* for understanding both the *fundamental* way in which human beings are social and *all* forms of sociality. Accordingly, any account or invocation of human sociality should begin with this mode of sociality as its key datum and point of departure.

Although my criticisms of Davidson's version of IPIA will stand in the foreground in what follows, I wish to register in passing at the outset that they are made against a wide background of underlying agreement regarding, e.g., the anti-reductive spirit of his philosophy, his defense of the holism of the mental, his conception of the *a priori* constraints that necessarily condition the

¹ As noted in the Introduction of this dissertation, I am using 'analytic' and 'continental' loosely.

² For general interpretations of Davidson's philosophy, see Ramberg, *Donald Davidson's Philosophy of Language*; Malpas, *Donald Davidson and the Mirror of Meaning*, "Locating Interpretation", and "Gadamer, Davidson, and the Ground of Understanding". Although Malpas is certainly right that there are important points of convergence between Davidson and hermeneutic philosophers like Heidegger and Gadamer, he also tends in my view to downplay points of divergence that are just as philosophically significant. See my discussion in this chapter for an instance of the latter.

³ Davidson's criticisms of Tyler Burge's social externalism or anti-individualism will not figure in this chapter because they are not, as far as I can see, directly relevant to my concerns here.

objects and activity of interpretation (the constitutive ideal of rationality and the principle of charity), and his rejection of the dualism between conceptual scheme and uninterpreted content (the non-conceptual given). That said, the IPIA that informs Davidson's philosophy deserves scrutiny because it exemplifies an influential way of thinking among contemporary philosophers who try to show that there must be an *intersubjective* dimension in how we should think about issues of standing philosophical concern like rationality, normativity, objectivity, and the relation of minded creatures to the world.⁴

Davidson emphasizes the significance of social interaction with regard to two capacities that are clearly basic to what it is to be human: the nature of linguistic communication and the possibility of thought. His appeal to social interaction, however, differs somewhat in tone, if not emphasis, as it figures in his discussion of these two capacities. In what follows I will first lay out his argument that successful linguistic communication does not require that interlocutors share a language (in a particular sense of 'language' to be explicated below), but consists rather in the momentary sharing of what he calls "passing theories" in linguistic interactions.⁵ Second, I will examine his appeal to social interaction, under the guise of what he calls "triangulation", as necessary for the possibility of thought as such.⁶ I conclude each of these sections with brief but general remarks concerning the appeal to the IPIA that informs his reflections on these two capacities.

⁴ Philosophers who emphasize the later Wittgenstein's "social turn" are a paradigm; for sophisticated defenders of this line, see, e.g., Pettit, *The Common Mind*; Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind, and Meaning*. I discuss how we should understand this "social turn" in Ch. 1.3 and 5. Other strands in contemporary philosophy that emphasize the social dimension of these phenomena are philosophical hermeneutics (e.g., Gadamer) and critical social theory (e.g., Habermas and Honneth). This does not imply that they agree about how exactly such phenomena are or should be social, especially in connection with the critique of ideology in contemporary Western societies. Witness the debate between Gadamer and Habermas that occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s; for a good account of this debate, see Warnke, *Gadamer*, Ch. 4.

⁵ Davidson gives and defends his argument for this conclusion, respectively, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" and "The Social Aspect of Language". The basic line of thought in these essays is already present in "Communication and Convention", esp. pp. 276-80.

⁶ Davidson argues for the significance of triangulation in a number of his later essays; see, e.g., "The Second Person", "The Emergence of Thought", "Three Varieties of Knowledge", "Epistemology Externalized", and "Externalisms".

4.1 THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION

Davidson's appeal to social interaction as this figures in the achievement of successful linguistic communication gains its persuasiveness by opposing the standard conception of what a natural language is, one that many philosophers and linguists have taken for granted (or so he claims).⁷ According to this conception, successful linguistic communication occurs when interlocutors have the ability to express and understand the literal (or first) meanings of one another's utterances "in accord with a precise and specifiable set of syntactic and semantic rules; [furthermore] verbal communication depends on speaker and hearer sharing such an ability, and it requires no more than this."⁸ More precisely, on such a conception, linguistic competence and successful linguistic communication require the satisfaction of three conditions on any interlocutor's dealings with literal (first) meaning:

- (1) *First meaning is systematic.* A competent speaker or interpreter is able to interpret utterances, his own or those of others, on the basis of the semantic properties of the parts, or words, in the utterance, and the structure of the utterance. For this to be possible, there must be systematic relations between the meanings of utterances.
- (2) *First meanings are shared.* For speaker and interpreter to communicate successfully and regularly, they must share a method of interpretation of the sort described in (1).
- (3) *First meanings are governed by learned conventions or regularities.* The systematic knowledge or competence of the speaker or interpreter is learned in advance of occasions of interpretation and is conventional in character.⁹

The satisfaction of these three conditions is meant to be individually necessary and jointly sufficient for what it is to "know a language". What is noteworthy in particular is the assertion that, once linguistic competence is acquired, interlocutors are able to understand the meanings of utterances *in advance* of the occasion of linguistic interaction on the basis of the *shared knowledge* (i.e., *shared method of interpretation*) of the relevant *linguistic rules or conventions*.

More specifically, the picture we get of linguistic competence and successful linguistic communication is as follows. Once a speaker acquires linguistic competence, i.e., masters a set of precise and specifiable syntactic and semantic rules, and, moreover, once other interlocutors have mastered the same set of rules, linguistic communication becomes possible because each interlocutor now not only shares the same method of interpretation for the meanings of arbitrary

⁷ Henceforth the use of 'language' will only refer to natural language.

⁸ Davidson, "The Social Aspect of Language", p. 110.

⁹ Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", p. 93, emphases in the original.

utterances, they also each know that their interlocutors know this fact and know that their interlocutors know that they each know this fact (and so on). On this picture of linguistic communication, then, once interlocutors have mastered a language and know that others have similar mastery of the same language, all they have to do to ensure successful communication is to apply the set of linguistic rules that they each know that others can apply too. Thus, successful linguistic communication is by and large the direct result of the correct following of such rules. Conversely, if interlocutors fail to follow these rules, linguistic communication is either not achieved or significantly hampered. What is primary in the order of explanation, then, is the exercise of competence in a language so conceived. It follows that although the particular occasion of linguistic communication may be relevant in determining the meaning of utterances, this feature of communication is secondary to the fact that interlocutors share a language in the sense of having shared knowledge of linguistic rules or conventions.¹⁰ And when we consider the learning of foreign languages (more often than not in educational settings), it is understandable why this conception of linguistic competence and successful linguistic communication can seem quite plausible.¹¹ In short, the standard conception of language is “the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases”,¹² the mastery of which enables them to internalize “portable interpreting machine[s] set to grind out the meaning[s] of ... arbitrary utterance[s]”¹³ on actual occasions of linguistic interaction.

It is this particular conception of language that Davidson means to reject. His eventual position regarding this conception is to retain (1) with one qualification, seriously modify (2), and reject (3) outright. Note that although he concludes the argument for his position with the provocative claim that “there is no such thing as a language ...”,¹⁴ this claim is only correctly understood once one sees that he is only attacking the standard (mechanical and static conception) of language that is committed to (1)-(3). He does not deny the obvious existence of

¹⁰ Dummett, “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs: Some Comments on Davidson and Hacking”, p. 474; cf. “The Social Character of Meaning”.

¹¹ Unless, of course, a speaker is already bilingual in virtue of his or her upbringing at home.

¹² Davidson, “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”, p. 107.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

language in the vague but practically useful sense in which ordinary people understand the word ‘language’.

Davidson’s strategy for rejecting the standard conception of language focuses on our unexceptional ability to deal with malapropisms, i.e., mistakes in the use of words, in the course of understanding ordinary linguistic communication. Mistakes in the spelling, pronunciation, or combination of words, ungrammatical or stylistically awkward utterances (e.g., those made by toddlers and some adults¹⁵), slips of the tongue (“There is a sex hour difference in time between Germany and the US”), idiosyncratic utterances (e.g., Yogi Berra sayings like “It’s like déjà vu all over again” or “When you get to a fork in the road, take it”), and other unfamiliar or non-standard uses of words are all different kinds of malapropisms. Putting all amusement aside, Davidson’s preliminary goal highlights the ubiquity of malapropisms in ordinary communication, which is undeniable. Moreover, a person obviously cannot learn his or her mother tongue(s) as a child on the basis of the standard conception of linguistic competence. This is a simple point that theorists who overemphasize the stringency of the rule-following character of linguistic competence often forget.

Most importantly, Davidson argues that our unexceptional ability to understand malapropisms reveals something fundamental about the nature of linguistic competence and communication that seriously undermines the standard conception of language. In his view, what matters above all in linguistic communication – however this is achieved – is not conformity to standard linguistic usage as such, but rather that speakers manage to get across what they intend their hearers to understand by their utterances and, correlatively, that hearers skillfully interpret speakers so as to understand the latter’s intentions in communicating.¹⁶ As Davidson writes:

Success in [reliably] communicating propositional contents ... is what we need to understand before we ask about the nature of meaning or of language, for the concepts of a language or of meaning, like those of a sentence or a name or of reference or of truth, are concepts we can grasp and employ only when the communication of propositional contents is established. Meaning, in the special sense in which we are interested when we talk of what an utterance literally means, *gets its life* from those situations in which someone intends (or assumes or expects) that his words will be understood in a certain way, and they are.

¹⁵ To my mind the most egregious case of an adult who commits malapropisms galore is our illustrious former President of the United States, George W. Bush, who has spawned a whole set of “Bushisms”. Here are some gems: “They misunderestimated me”; “I know how hard it is for you to put food on your family”; “See, in my line of work you got to keep repeating things over and over and over again for the truth to sink in, to kind of catapult the propaganda.”

¹⁶ Davidson, “The Social Aspect of Language”, p. 118.

... Where understanding matches intent we can, if we please, speak of “the” meaning; but it is *understanding that gives life to meaning*, not the other way around.¹⁷

Obviously, communication becomes vastly easier when interlocutors use words in ways that most people who speak their language (in the vague ordinary sense) do. This is probably what leads many philosophers and linguists to hold that linguistic competence and communication requires the shared mastery of a precise and specifiable set of linguistic rules or conventions. But the satisfaction of this condition is not necessary for linguistic communication to succeed, as the common occurrence and unproblematic understanding of malapropisms shows. For if the shared mastery in question is required for successful linguistic communication, it should not be possible or easy to understand speakers who commit malapropisms. But this is something that happens all the time in ordinary life.

Even worse for the standard conception of linguistic competence, neither can the satisfaction of (2) and (3) suffice for successful linguistic communication. For suppose two interlocutors shared similar knowledge of linguistic rules or conventions for understanding the literal meaning of what they utter, i.e., suppose they shared a language in the way that the standard conception envisages. This would imply that they invariably hit upon the same meaning for every utterance made and heard, given that literal meaning is systematic in the way described in (1). But this idealized scenario ignores all sorts of contextual nuances and subtleties that we all know are in play in real-life linguistic communication (e.g., a speaker’s tone of voice and body language while speaking, etc.), ones that the study of the pragmatics of language (in a broad sense) has long emphasized. Further complicating the situation are the host of non-linguistic clues offered and actions performed by interlocutors that are meant to indicate how the audience is supposed to understand someone’s utterances. In addition, there may well be some sociocultural or historical background that informs the reasons why interlocutors say what they say on given occasions. Moreover, different interlocutors may draw different and perhaps incompatible inferences from the same set of utterances given their different understandings of the collateral commitments of these utterances. Lastly, all these factors are further complicated by the holistic nature of interpretation: We generally interpret people’s utterances in light of seeing how well the sense we make of these utterances coheres with the beliefs attributed to them

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 120f., emphases added. As we will see, what “gives life to meaning” is the construction of “passing theories” for interpreting one another’s utterances.

and the actions they perform.¹⁸ These are only the most obvious complications involved in trying to understand people's utterances; there are surely more. It is thus far from clear that successful linguistic communication is possible solely on the basis of shared mastery of linguistic rules or conventions, even if we restrict the scenario merely to the understanding of utterances as such.

Does this result imply that there is nothing that interlocutors share in the course of linguistic interactions? This would be rather odd since we are examining the nature of *successful* linguistic communication. But Davidson does not draw this radical conclusion. Although speaking a common language (as the standard conception envisages this) is neither necessary nor sufficient for achieving such communication, what is needed among interlocutors is the momentary sharing of what Davidson calls "passing theories": ongoing but revisable interpretations of utterances that interlocutors each work out by continually adjusting their prior expectations ("prior theories") about the meaning of the words contained in these utterances for the occasion.¹⁹ What distinguishes passing theories from the standard conception of language is their *contingent* and for this very reason *dynamic* character, for the interpretive adjustments that are necessary for the construction of passing theories include every successfully interpreted use of any word or expression for the purposes of communication, no matter how "mistaken" or idiosyncratic such use is by the lights of standard linguistic usage. As Davidson writes:

Every deviation from ordinary usage, as long as it is agreed on for that moment (knowingly deviant, or not, on one, or both, sides), is in the passing theory as a feature of what the words mean on that occasion. Such meanings, transient though they may be, are literal: they are what I have called first meanings.²⁰

Malapropisms provide the most conspicuous cases when interpretive adjustments are most needed. But even when linguistic communication occurs without malapropisms, this process (as just emphasized above) still involves the making of subtle interpretive adjustments that effect the successful construction of passing theories. In short, the Achilles heel of the standard conception of language is its inability to deal satisfactorily with novelty and contingency in the understanding of utterances.

¹⁸ Davidson, "The Emergence of Thought", pp. 123-7; cf. "Belief and the Basis of Meaning".

¹⁹ Davidson distinguishes "passing theories" from what he calls "prior theories" as follows: "For the hearer, the prior theory expresses how he is prepared in advance to interpret an utterance of a speaker, while the passing theory is how he *does* interpret the utterance. For the speaker, the prior theory is what he *believes* the interpreter's prior theory to be, while his passing theory is the theory he *intends* the interpreter to use." (Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", p. 101, emphases in the original.)

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

The following objection may be raised at this point: Davidson's argument that we construct passing theories concerning what interlocutors intend to say through their utterances is falsified by our actual experience of communicating with ordinary people, for we do not normally understand one another by self-consciously reflecting at every moment on the meaning of our words. That is, we do not normally apply a theory of meaning in light of the relevant linguistic and non-linguistic body of evidence from a perspective somehow removed from our involvement in linguistic transactions.²¹ This objection, however, misunderstands Davidson's use of the word 'theory' in this context. Its use in 'prior theory' and 'passing theory' is not meant to suggest that we understand one another's utterances from a disengaged, theoretical stance. Rather, the point is only that *if* philosophers or linguists want to have a satisfactory account of what interlocutors must be able to do in order to understand linguistic communication and meaning, then they (the philosophers and linguists) must work out a theory of meaning that describes what this ability consists in; the interlocutors themselves do not need to have explicit knowledge of the latter in order to show linguistic competence.²²

Davidson's argument for why the standard conception of linguistic competence is mistaken, then, makes two general points about the nature of linguistic communication.²³ First, given that most of what we say is new, in the sense of being combinations of words that no one has hitherto uttered before, passing theories must be constructed in order for interlocutors to make sense of these novel utterances. Second, the fact that interlocutors must only share passing theories in order to achieve successful linguistic communication shows that their success in achieving mutual understanding in past or present linguistic transactions, even with the same interlocutors, does not even guarantee future successful linguistic communication. For there is always an ineliminable moment of creative interpretation involved in the construction of passing theories:

²¹ Hacking, "The Parody of Conversation", p. 450f.; Dummett, "Comments on Davidson and Hacking", p. 471f. In a related context, Charles Taylor makes an objection along similar lines with regard to Davidson's earlier attempt to articulate a truth-conditional semantics. See Taylor, "Theories of Meaning", esp. pp. 252-5, 273-92; cf. also Mulhall, *On Being in the World*, pp. 91-106.

²² Davidson, "The Social Aspect of Language", p. 112f. See also "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", p. 96 and "Appendix: Replies to Rorty, Stroud, McDowell, and Pereda", p. 323f. I take this point to express Davidson's modified acceptance of (1) of the standard conception of language.

²³ Bertram, *Die Sprache und das Ganze*, p. 90f. I am indebted to him for the following way of putting these two points.

We may say that linguistic ability is the ability to converge on a passing theory from time to time. ... But if we do say this, then we should realize that we have abandoned not only the ordinary [i.e., standard] notion of a language, but we have erased the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around in the world generally. For there are no rules for arriving at passing theories, no rules in any strict sense, as opposed to rough maxims and methodological generalities. A passing theory really is like a theory at least in this, that it is derived by wit, luck, and wisdom from a private vocabulary and grammar, knowledge of the ways people get their point across, and rules of thumb for figuring out what deviations from the dictionary are most likely. There is no more chance of regularizing, or teaching, this process than there is of regularizing or teaching the process of creating new theories to cope with new data in any field – for that is what this process involves.²⁴

If this line of thought is convincing, it follows directly that there is no such thing as a language according to the standard conception, for such a thing does no work in explaining how the creativity involved in making interpretive adjustments is an essential aspect of all successful linguistic communication.

I have laid out at some length Davidson's argument for the necessity of arriving at passing theories in successful linguistic communication, and more generally for the dynamic character of interpretation in this process, for the following reasons. First, I think there is much to be said for its persuasiveness, though it is not my aim here to adequately defend this claim.²⁵ Second, and more importantly for my purposes, we need to have a sufficient grasp of the conceptual apparatus that Davidson uses in this argument in order for the criticisms of it below to be significant (this will become clearer shortly). Third, it should be apparent that Davidson's alternative conception of what is required for successful linguistic communication is an instance of IPIA, the specification of which was reiterated at the beginning of this chapter. For clearly such communication (I) requires (i) the actual presence of two or more people; and (ii) the linguistic interactions that they have with one another are constrained by certain normative principles of interpretation. Furthermore, he argues (II) that (i) and (ii) *suffice* as the sort of sociality that effects successful linguistic communication. Besides the principle of charity and the holistic-cum-normative character of interpretation with which it is coordinate, there is the additional constraint that interlocutors can best understand and communicate with one another by means of arriving at passing theories for one another's utterances.²⁶ Of course, the fact that Davidson's own conception of the nature of linguistic communication instantiates IPIA does not

²⁴ Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", p. 107. I will return to the point about the erasure of the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around in the world below.

²⁵ For an excellent defense, see Ramberg, *Donald Davidson's Philosophy of Language*, Ch. 8.

²⁶ Davidson, "The Second Person", p. 116.

as such imply that it is flawed. Having said this, I will now try to show how his interpretive interactionism, insofar as it is connected to his argument for dismissing the significance of shared practices for successful linguistic communication, is problematic for the following reasons.

To begin with a simple observation that does not in itself undermine Davidson's position about the nature of linguistic communication, it is evident that human beings also communicate successfully without using language (in the sense of solely using words to communicate). Otherwise, it would be mysterious how people who cannot communicate in other languages besides their own could ever understand other people who speak different languages. Of course, the degree of mutual understanding achieved through non-linguistic communication is much less fine-grained than that obtained through linguistic communication, not to mention that the absence of linguistic communication precludes a whole range of actions (speech acts) that are only possible through the use of language. But the fact that non-linguistic communication can and does occur shows that there is another mode in which communication among us is possible. How this can occur is evident: All human beings share some very basic but nonetheless important general interests and activities on which non-linguistic communication, say, through hand and other bodily gestures, can get its points of purchase (e.g., greeting gestures, sharing food or drink or shelter, indicating a need for protection or mutual aid, etc.). Lest there is any chance of misunderstanding, let me insist that it does not follow from this fact that the non-linguistic mode of communication is somehow more basic than the linguistic mode. The relevant point is that non-linguistic communication among human beings is possible without the need to construct passing theories of any sort. As noted above, this observation does not undermine Davidson's position, since he is only concerned with what is required for successful *linguistic* communication. But the reminder that non-linguistic communication is possible, and, more importantly, that the basis of this mode of communication lies in the sharing of some very basic but general human interests and activities, sets the stage for the following point.

Davidson's conception of the nature of successful linguistic communication correctly emphasizes the importance of the contingent and dynamic character of what is involved in arriving at passing theories. But what he persistently denies is the equally important role that *shared practices* play in this process:

The theoretical possibility of communication without shared practices remains philosophically important because it shows that such sharing cannot be an essential constituent in meaning and communication.²⁷ ... [M]eaning something requires that by and large one follows a practice of one's own, a practice that can be understood by others. But there is no fundamental reason why practices must be shared.²⁸

To be fair to Davidson, it seems clear that the conception of shared (linguistic) practices which he disparages as unessential for linguistic communication is of a piece with the other notions that he attacks more explicitly, such as shared ways of speaking or a shared set of linguistic rules or conventions.²⁹ If he identifies shared practices more or less with the latter, then he has good reasons (as we saw above) to criticize the plausibility of the static and mechanical conception of shared linguistic practices that informs his targets. But there is an alternative conception of shared practices that plays an important (albeit suppressed) role in Davidson's own positive account of what is involved in achieving successful linguistic communication. Indeed, as I will argue below, this alternative conception of shared practices is fundamental to the sharing of passing theories for such communication, to such an extent that there can be no such sharing absent engagement in shared practices according to this conception.

It should not come as a surprise that the alternative conception of shared practices that I have in view is the Heideggerian or site one that was articulated and defended in Ch. 2. Recall that according to this conception, engagement in shared practices is equivalent to sharing a *world*: a referential nexus of significance constituted by an interrelated complex of equipment, tasks, short- and longer-term goals and ends, all of which relate to and thereby make sense for the sake of enacting some ongoing self-interpretations on each of our parts as agents. More relevant for present purposes, we human beings *share* a world by projecting a normalized range of situational possibilities that renders our dealings with entities initially and mostly intelligible, including human beings and the linguistic and non-linguistic products that they bring about through their activities. The sort of sharing in play here differs fundamentally in character from the one that Davidson attacks, for his target is always the sort of sharing that is describable in terms of regularities, rules, or conventions supposedly governing how we speak as members of a population. By contrast, the sort of sharing involved when we share a world concerns how we initially and mostly *make sense* of the entities that show up for us in terms of their situational

²⁷ Davidson, "The Social Aspect of Language", p. 119.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

possibilities, regardless of whether we in fact go on to actualize one or more of these possibilities, say, by actually speaking the same way as others do. As I argued in Ch. 2, the sharing of situational possibilities is what makes both agreement *and* disagreement possible, whereas the sort of sharing that informs shared ways of speaking or a shared set of linguistic rules or conventions does not. And what ensures that we by and large share a common world is our everyday existence as *one*-selves (*Man-selbst*): as individuals who know our way around in the world, initially and mostly, in terms of our understanding of the public norms to which our existence in the mode of the *one* must by and large (but not always) conform.

To be sure, shared practices in this fundamental sense do show up in passing in Davidson's conception of the role that *prior* theories play in linguistic communication. For instance, he acknowledges that "knowledge of the character, dress, role, sex [or gender], of the speaker, and whatever else has been gained by observing the speaker's behavior, linguistic or otherwise", are relevant factors that shape the prior theory (expectations) that we use for this speaker.³⁰ More generally, he affirms that "understanding, even of the literal meaning of a speaker's utterances, depends on shared general information and familiarity with non-linguistic institutions (a 'way of life')".³¹ These remarks suggest that Davidson realizes that prior theories are themselves only intelligible in light of the sense that they make in connection with a familiar lifeworld. Because he is exclusively focused, however, on what is necessary for successful linguistic communication, he persists nonetheless in downplaying the contribution that prior theories play in communication as speakers converge on passing theories. In particular, one is left with the impression that the knowledge of the social roles or identities of speakers, along with the practices with which such roles or identities are intertwined, only plays a significant role at the outset of communicative encounters. But this cannot be right since the ongoing, successful construction of passing theories must continue to rely on such knowledge *as* interpretation unfolds.

Now, Davidson could presumably rebut this objection by emphasizing that his positive conception of what is required for successful linguistic communication precisely erases "the boundary between knowing a language and knowing our way around in the world generally", an erasure that makes room for the thought that the ability to converge on passing theories depends

³⁰ Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs", p. 100.

³¹ Davidson, "The Social Aspect of Language", p. 119.

in part on the knowledge that we have about the social roles or identities of particular speakers as we interpret their utterances. But the context in which he could make this possible acknowledgment (see the relevant quote above) indicates that its accent remains on the interpretive adjustments that hearers make about how to skillfully interpret the words of speakers, suggesting that this process could take place without any *significant* contribution from hearers' familiarity with the social roles or identities of speakers as the latter's utterances are interpreted. That is, the thought is that even though Davidson can well acknowledge that this familiarity remains operative in the background of communication, he would insist that this familiarity cannot be one of the *primary* factors involved. Whether this is exactly true or not, however, can only be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on how words are exactly used by interlocutors with regard to a particular subject matter in ongoing conversations. In any case, my point here is that familiarity with shared practices in the more fundamental sense turns out to be necessary not just for prior theories as they figure in the process of linguistic communication, but also for what it takes to arrive at passing theories and thereby to understand what speakers mean.³² The understanding of shared practices in the fundamental sense permeates the *whole* process of linguistic communication; it does not only enter and cease at *discrete* moments of communicative interaction. If this is correct, Davidson is right to dismiss the importance of shared practices only insofar as they figure in shared ways of speaking or a shared set of linguistic rules or conventions, but he is wrong to disparage the significance of shared practices in the fundamental sense for successful linguistic communication.

At this juncture in the dialectic, Davidson could presumably concede this point, but continue to insist that it is after all still *individual* interlocutors who actually effect such communication. In other words, he could maintain that what is still primary in the order of explanation, even after all is said and done, remains the necessity of converging on passing theories on the part of individual interlocutors. I think this view, so qualified, is defensible without further objection from the perspective of the present dissertation, provided that he is mindful of the following cautionary point. As just argued above, although it is individual interlocutors who *actualize* successful linguistic communication through interpersonal

³² It is telling, for example, that the first sentence of "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" informs the reader that the lengthy passage she is about to read just below this sentence comes from a *radio sitcom* (a situational comedy playing on the radio). For as soon as the reader understands that what she is about to read has such a character, she puts herself in the right frame of mind to interpret (enjoy) the utterances quoted in that passage.

interactions (by way of converging on passing theories in the course of conversation), the *intelligibility* at work in such interactions, along with the products that result from them, is only partially the doing of individuals. If Davidson does not acknowledge this point, then he would be making a typical mistake that proponents of IPIA make. This is the inference from the fact that some particular mode of social interaction *suffices* for the creation and continued existence of some important phenomenon in human life to the conclusion that this mode of human sociality forms *the basic way* in which human beings are either social in general or interact socially within certain basic areas of human activities. I have argued that Davidson's conception of what is required for successful linguistic communication commits a fallacy along these lines if he does not qualify this conception in the way that I urge. Absent this qualification, his appeal to social interaction *qua* IPIA is flawed insofar as it is intended as a complete account of the sort of sociality that is in play in successful linguistic communication. For the need to converge on passing theories would not be intelligible, much less necessary, unless interlocutors were already familiar with shared practices as these figure in the ongoing process of sharing a by and large common world.³³

4.2 THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF THOUGHT

As mentioned above, Davidson has also appealed to social interaction in a number of his later essays as a resource for his thinking about a different issue, namely, the possibility of thought. To begin with a clarification, he uses the term 'thought' broadly to include the host of propositional attitudes like beliefs, intentions, desires, doubts, hopes, worries, the mere entertainment of possibilities, etc. What is common to them is the fact that they all contain propositional contents, i.e., the kind of contents that are paradigmatically expressed in sentences. To be more precise, then, the issue that concerns him here is the possibility of propositional thought, not aspects of the mind that give pride of place to the phenomenology³⁴ of experiencing

³³ My criticism here agrees in spirit, though not in its details, with McDowell's dissatisfaction with Davidson's view in this context; see McDowell, "Gadamer and Davidson on Understanding and Relativism", pp. 181-7.

³⁴ As this term and its cognates are used in contemporary philosophy of mind in the analytic tradition.

certain kinds of mental contents (e.g., “qualia”) that do not seem *prima facie* to have propositional structure.

Before we assess Davidson’s argument for why a certain kind of social interaction is necessary for the possibility of thought, it is useful first to review what he holds to be the fundamental nature of thought. Time and again, Davidson has forcefully argued that in order for an entity to have thought, it is not enough for it to have the capacity to reliably discriminate various features of its environment. Rather, what distinguishes an entity as genuinely thinking is its ability to apply concepts correctly or incorrectly.³⁵ This is equivalent to holding that such an entity must be able to make judgments that can be right or wrong about the various features of its environment.³⁶ Applying concepts and making judgments are two sides of one coin. If an entity has this ability, it has *eo ipso* a grasp in practice of the concept of objectivity, the idea that its thoughts (i.e., the applications of concepts in its judgments) can be true or false. The concern here is not epistemological, i.e., not with how we can know that our thoughts are in fact true or can be possibly true, but with the conditions that must be satisfied if something is to qualify as having thought at all. For Davidson, the ideas of applying concepts, making judgments, having thoughts, and objective truth all go together as a package:

To apply a concept is to make a judgment, to classify or characterize an object or event or situation in a certain way, and this requires application of the concept of *truth*, since it is always possible to classify or characterize something *wrongly*. To have a concept ... is to be able to entertain propositional contents: a creature has a concept only if it is able to employ that concept in the context of a judgment. ... These mental attributes, then, are equivalent: to have a concept, to entertain propositions, to be able to form judgments, to have command of the concept of truth. If a creature has one of these attributes, it has them all.³⁷

Aside from the obvious holism of this view, what is striking is Davidson’s emphasis that what distinguishes something’s activity as thinking is not shown when it “gets things right” in the sense that it has the reliable capacity to respond differentially to features of its environment, but only when it can put itself in the position also to “get them wrong” by making errors in

³⁵ Davidson, “The Emergence of Thought”, p. 124; “What Thought Requires”, p. 136f.; “The Problem of Objectivity”, pp. 4-7; “Seeing Through Language”, p. 139.

³⁶ Davidson, “What Thought Requires”, p. 137, emphasizes in the original: “There is no distinction to be made between having concepts and having propositional attitudes. To have a concept is to class things under it. This is not just a matter of being natively disposed, or having learned, to react in some specific way to items that fall under the concept; it is to *judge* or *believe* that certain items fall under the concept.” Davidson already held this view in earlier essays; see esp. “Thought and Talk” and “Rational Animals”.

³⁷ Davidson, “The Problem of Objectivity”, p. 9, second emphasis added. This view about what constitutes thought is not universally accepted, especially by philosophers who demand or wish for a scientific explanation of the mind. But I need not address this issue for my purposes below.

judgment. More precisely, it must be able to make such errors *as seen from its own point of view*, not just from that of an intelligent observer.³⁸ In short, a creature or entity shows that it thinks at all only when it can recognize that it can make mistakes in judgment about how things are.

Davidson's argument that social interaction of a certain sort is necessary for the possibility of thought takes its point of departure from this view about the nature of thought. He calls the sort of social interaction he has in mind "triangulation", and describes it as follows:

There is a prelinguistic, precognitive situation which seems to me to constitute a necessary condition for thought and language, a condition that can exist independently of thought, and can therefore precede it. Both in the case of nonhuman animals and in the case of small children, it is a condition that can be observed to obtain. The basic situation is one that involves two or more creatures simultaneously in interaction with each other and with the world they share; it is what I call *triangulation*. It is the result of a threefold interaction, an interaction which is twofold from the point of view of each of the two agents: each is interacting simultaneously with the world and with the other agent. To put this in a slightly different way, each creature learns to correlate the reactions of other creatures with changes or objects in the world to which it also reacts.³⁹

On Davidson's view, such a triangle must be established for the possibility of thought because the relevant notion of error only makes sense from within such a space.⁴⁰ What makes error possible is that two or more creatures first come to repeatedly share similar responses to some object, event, or feature in their common environment that each of them perceives. Once these correlations in similar responses are in place, this sets up not only the possibility of divergence in their responses to what they perceive, but also the possibility that a creature can notice that either its behavior or that of the other creature diverges from what usually happens.

For example, suppose there are two dogs, Rex and Spot, that hear a bell ring and usually react by going to the food tray. On some later occasion(s), however, Rex hears the bell ring and reacts as usual but Spot does not, etc. In addition, Rex sees that Spot does not react to the bell's ringing as he does and vice versa. According to Davidson, they each are now "in the position to sense" that something is "amiss" either in their own response or in the other dog's response to the ringing of the bell. (The reason why this statement is put so vaguely will become clear shortly.) Something analogous is supposed to happen in some situations involving a young child, her parents, and some object or event in their shared environment.⁴¹ Since Davidson clearly acknowledges that nonhuman animals and small children can triangulate in this sense, and yet

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁹ Davidson, "The Emergence of Thought", p. 128, emphasis in the original.

⁴⁰ Davidson, "Externalisms", pp. 4-8.

⁴¹ Davidson uses these examples in "The Second Person", p. 117f.; cf. "Seeing Through Language", p. 141.

holds that neither of them can have propositional thought (yet), he must be read as claiming that it is only in triangulation that there exists at least a mistake recognizable to an intelligent observer regarding their respective responses to the way the world is, not that nonhuman animals or very young children have the cognitive capacity to recognize that something among them has made a mistake.⁴² Regardless of whether we are dealing with nonhuman animals, very young children, or mature human adults, the relevant point is that involvement in triangulated interactions is what makes conceptual space, Davidson claims, for the very possibility of being wrong about the way the world is, as seen from the perspectives of those engaged in such interactions.

More specifically, Davidson argues that we need the idea of triangulation in order to account for (i) the objectivity of thought and (ii) the empirical content of thought about the external world.⁴³ Thought is objective in the sense that its content can be true or false (with rare exceptions) independently of the existence of the thinker or of his or her activity of thinking. He suggests that the only way in which we can get the idea that we may be mistaken about the way the world is comes from how other creatures like us can have different responses to that same way the world is, which we both perceive. This is what the situation of triangulation is supposed to put us in the position to notice. Absent at least another perspective that can diverge from ours about how things are, his claim is that we could have never acquired the distinction between appearance and reality, and hence the possibility, as seen from our own perspective, that our thoughts can be true or false.

Furthermore, the empirical content of thought about the external world also depends on our triangulated interactions with others. The reason has to do, he thinks, with the “double ambiguity” involved in determining what in the world causes us to have the perceptual beliefs that we have on some occasion.⁴⁴ First, there is a question of how much of the total cause of a perceptual belief is relevant to determining its content. Typically, we only regard a very small part of the total cause as relevant to what we perceive. Thus, even though the Big Bang can be said to be the cause of everything in our universe, we do not (with rare exceptions) think of it as causally relevant, say, for our perception that there is a car accident or that a field of grass is

⁴² Bridges, “Davidson’s Transcendental Externalism”, p. 294.

⁴³ Davidson, “The Emergence of Thought”, p. 129f.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

painted red. But then what part of the total cause should determine the particular content of our perceptual belief on some occasion? Second, there is a question about the proper locus of the stimulus that causes us to have a perceptual belief. Is my perception that there is a rabbit in front of me caused by something “proximal” within me like light rays striking my retina, or rather by something “distal” outside me like the light rays between the rabbit and my eyes or even farther out like the rabbit itself? The problem is this: “If we consider a single creature by itself, its responses, no matter how complex, cannot show that it is reacting to, or thinking about, events a certain distance away rather than, say, on its skin.”⁴⁵ Davidson contends that we can answer these questions only by using the conceptual resources that triangulation supplies. As he writes regarding a circumstance involving a table, a child, and an adult:

Given ... three patterns of response we can assign a location to the stimuli that elicit the child’s responses. The relevant stimuli are the objects or events we [adults] naturally find similar (tables), which are correlated with responses of the child we find similar. It is a form of triangulation: one line goes from the child in the direction of the table, one line goes from us in the direction of the table, and the third line goes between us and the child. Where the lines from child to table and us to table converge, “the” stimulus is located. Given our view of child and world, we can pick out “the” cause of the child’s responses. It is the common cause of our response and the child’s response.⁴⁶

To be sure, Davidson makes it clear that triangulation is at most necessary, but not sufficient, for the objectivity and the empirical content of thought about the world. Only the addition of linguistic communication with others can supply the further element that suffices for genuine thought, for only in this way can thought be objective and give determinate content to our perceptual beliefs in relation to a shared environment.⁴⁷

Two brief comments are in order before I evaluate Davidson’s argument here. The first concerns the relation between his appeal to social interaction, respectively, for successful linguistic communication and now for the possibility of thought. These may seem at first glance to be in tension with each other. The emphasis on social interaction as it figures in linguistic communication is geared to the occasion and hence contingent and punctual, for all that is required is the convergence on passing theories, no less but also no more. By contrast, the appeal to social interaction *qua* triangulation for the possibility of thought seems to require social interactions that are more fundamental or stable by comparison. But this tension is merely

⁴⁵ Davidson, “The Second Person”, p. 119.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* See also “Three Varieties of Knowledge”, p. 212f.

⁴⁷ Davidson, “Rational Animals”, p. 105; “The Second Person”, p. 120f.; “Epistemology Externalized”, p. 202; and “Three Varieties of Knowledge”, p. 213.

apparent. While the social interaction involved in bringing about passing theories presupposes the existence of propositional contents for purposes of communication, their existence is precisely what triangulation is supposed to make possible. The latter is therefore compatible with the former by being more basic in the order of explanation. Second, it should be discernible that Davidson's idea of triangulation instantiates at least a loose version of IPIA. Once again, we have a conception of sociality such that (I) (i) two or more individuals in a situation (ii) interact with one another in accordance with a set of normative constraints. The normative constraints in operation in this context concern the conditions that must be satisfied for thought to be objective and directed at ordinary objects, events, or features in a common environment. Although Davidson acknowledges that (I) does not suffice for the objectivity and empirical content of thought, he does claim that (I) is a necessary condition of the latter.

How convincing, though, is Davidson's argument that we must have recourse to triangulation in order to understand the possibility of thought? Not very, if the criticisms below are telling. To begin with, his claim about the necessity of triangulation for the objectivity of thought is open to the following objections. As mentioned above, his claim here is that we can only get the idea of being mistaken about things when we compare our responses with those made by other creatures like ourselves to some object, event, or feature of a shared environment. But this reasoning seems to commit the genetic fallacy: Even if it is true that we did originally get the idea of error in this way (which is empirically true as a matter of human upbringing), it does not follow that mature human beings can only make sense of the *very idea* of getting things wrong by comparing their judgments with those of others like themselves. Of course, other individuals can evaluate and correct our judgments on any single *local* occasion. Moreover, it is a fact of human development that teaching anything to anyone in general, especially to young children, must involve triangulation. But once our cognitive abilities as human beings develop sufficiently, it does not follow that our judgments depend *globally* on the evaluation or correction of others in the sense that this is the *basic* way in which our judgments can be objective. Why can't it be, at least sometimes and perhaps even most of the time, the *world* (in its *worldliness*) that shows whether our judgments are right or wrong? That is, once human beings understand the world in this way, why can't the various situational features or aspects of the world be *objective* in relation to us?

Now, if Davidson's argument is not empirical but rather conceptual, then the examples he chooses to illustrate it are at least misleading and may elicit the objection about genetic fallacy.⁴⁸ Moreover, if it is meant to be conceptual, it is far from obvious (as just suggested) that participating in triangulation is the *only* way in which thought can be objective at all, even if we grant that this may be one way in which this occurs. But a much stronger objection to Davidson's argument does not turn on its status. Suppose two or more creatures each correlated their own reactions to something in the shared environment by triangulating. It is not clear at all, however, how this sort of correlation of reactions with the other creature(s) can matter in rendering the very idea of error intelligible *to them*. How can a similarity in response in two or more creatures, followed by the failure on a subsequent occasion on the part of either of them to respond similarly, create as such the intelligibility of error?⁴⁹ The problem is that if such a correlation and the possibility of divergence that it sets up were to matter to either creature, then the very idea of error in question must *already* make sense to them, for this idea involves not just the fact that a mistake is made, but also that the creature either making or observing a mistake made by another creature is *aware* (i.e., *judges*) that it or the other is the one making this mistake.⁵⁰ If they are each so aware, then correlations in similar reactions do no explanatory work and are thus redundant, for then they (the creatures) are already in the position to see whether they each make a mistake on their own. If they are not each so aware, then it is mysterious how correlations in similar reactions can engender the notion of error that applies *within the purview* of the creatures themselves. In short, Davidson's conception of triangulation makes it quite unclear upon examination how the occurrence of divergence in light of a background of similarity in responses by two or more creatures can make conceptual space for the possibility of error, and hence of thought.⁵¹

⁴⁸ I will examine the significance of the origins and nature of objectivity, in connection with later Wittgenstein's remarks on the normativity of rule-following, in Ch. 5. As we will see there (esp. in 5.4), there is a particular way in which the origins of objectivity and normativity are philosophically significant, though not in the way in which it is considered here.

⁴⁹ We saw how this objection applies to Pettit's account of rule-following in 1.3.

⁵⁰ For this reason an evolutionary account of how creatures in triangulation can make mistakes in terms of doing (or not doing) things that decrease their chances of survival will not do for Davidson's purposes.

⁵¹ Bridges makes the same objection in "Davidson's Transcendental Externalism", p. 294f.; cf. Fennell, "Davidson on Meaning Normativity: Public or Social", esp. pp. 149-51. Fennell argues that there is tension between a public as opposed to a social conception of the normativity of meaning in Davidson's philosophy and, furthermore, that Davidson should ultimately jettison the former and embrace the latter. But Fennell's conception of the sociality operative in his sketch of a social conception of the normativity of meaning turns on his particular construal of the

Perhaps the force of triangulation does not really consist in showing its necessity for the objectivity of thought, however, but rather for isolating a location for the common cause that fixes the content of the perceptual beliefs of two or more creatures in a shared environment. This seems to be the argument to which Davidson ultimately resorts when he defends the necessity of triangulation.⁵² Jason Bridges has argued convincingly, however, that this view presupposes a distorted conception of animal life, in particular, that of nonhuman animals.⁵³ For if Davidson is right here, it would always be an open question whether an animal is reacting to stimuli that are proximal or distal, unless it has participated in triangulated interactions with others of its kind in the past. But this assumption is untenable. For example, when animals flee from threats, there will of course be proximal stimuli that cause them to react in this or that way. But animals are not fleeing from proximal stimuli when they feel threatened, but rather clearly from something in their distal environment (say, from predators). Moreover, this way of understanding what they do is not something isolated or unusual, but an integral part of our general understanding of how animals generally behave: e.g., that they are perceptually sensitive in a certain sort of way to their environment and react to what they perceive, that they are driven to act so as to satisfy certain biological needs that are particular to their species, to seek mates in order to reproduce, etc. None of these thoughts that we have about animals can make sense unless it is settled that they are reacting to the environment that is outside their skin surface. To be sure, this thought does not rule out at all that such reactions are closely connected to the physiological mechanisms under their skin that enable them to act and survive; nor does it imply that such reactions are objective in the demanding sense that Davidson insists must characterize the relation of thinking creatures to their environment. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that nonhuman animals (and human beings, for that matter) are reacting to the distal causes of their behavior, not to sensory promptings at the surface of their skin. Otherwise, we would not be able to explain what nonhuman animals do by recourse to how they perceive the world at all. If Davidson is not urging that we significantly revise our ordinary conception of animal life, then, he must be

principle of charity; it is not social *qua* interpersonally interactionist in the way that concerns me here. That said, there are certainly convergent points of criticism in his and my reading of Davidson.

⁵² Davidson, "The Second Person", pp. 119-21; "Epistemology Externalized", pp. 201-3; "Three Varieties of Knowledge", p. 212f.

⁵³ Bridges, "Davidson's Transcendental Externalism", pp. 307-13. I am indebted to him for the following line of criticism.

wrong to assume that nonhuman animals cannot identify the distal causes of their behavior unless they have engaged at some point in triangulation. The same conclusion holds *mutatis mutandis* in this respect for our understanding of human behavior. This does not entail that there are no other ways in which nonhuman animals or human beings exist or act as essentially social creatures – quite to the contrary, as this dissertation argued at length in Ch. 2 in the case of human beings. But locating distal causes in the external environment as something requiring social interaction *qua* triangulation is not one of them, insofar as this figures in the ascription of perceptual beliefs to nonhuman animals or to human beings.

4.3 CONCLUSION

There is a final, general point that I wish to make regarding Davidson's implicit conception of the social *qua* interpretive interactionism, one that generalizes from the foregoing criticisms. In light of the Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the human individual, Davidson's conception of the social is flawed insofar as it emphasizes the *individual* and *active* dimension of social (interpretive) interactions to such an extent that it becomes tempting to overlook or dismiss as irrelevant the *communal* and *passive* dimension of such interactions, as this latter dimension is articulated by the Heideggerian conception (please note this proviso). At a high level of abstraction, this is basically the same mistake that theorists of collective intentionality make in their analyses of the nature of collective phenomena (see 3.2).

Although there can be no denial that human individuals are social by interacting with one another in myriad ways, one the central claims of this dissertation has been that such interactions cannot be intelligible, and in this sense possible, unless human individuals are already socially constituted in the sense of projecting situational possibilities that are normalized by way of their existence as the *one*. Even though it is an individual who projects such possibilities, what is projected is always initially and mostly a common way of knowing one's way around in the world. Furthermore, this by and large common way of making sense of things in the world cannot be something that two or more individuals, or even a group of individuals, can ever generate or construct on their own, for such generation or construction always already

presupposes this ongoing common way of making sense of things (which is not to say that the latter is static).⁵⁴ From this perspective, then, what is fundamentally unsatisfactory about Davidson's appeals to social interaction in ways that have concerned us is the persistence of a *minimalistic* conception of human sociality, one that traces precisely to the slighting of the passive and communal source of human social existence. I have tried to show why this conception is problematic for reasons both internal and external to those appeals.

⁵⁴ Cf. Wittgenstein's imagery of the movement of the water of a river at its surface in relation to its river-bed in *On Certainty*, §§94-7.

5.0 THE CRITIQUE OF IPJA IN COMMUNALIST ACCOUNTS OF THE NORMATIVITY OF RULE-FOLLOWING

5.1 PRELIMINARY REMARKS

In one way or another, the theme of *normativity*, as this is connected to the social constitution of the human individual, has been in play in each of the previous chapters. It is useful at this point to spell out this connection a bit more, both as a summary of what has been shown thus far in the dissertation and as a way of setting the stage for the more extensive discussion of how we should properly understand the connection between normativity and the social constitution of the human individual in this chapter.

In 1.3, I criticized Pettit's defense of social holism (as he conceives this position) by arguing that he does not succeed in showing convincingly how his interpersonal-interactionist account of the normativity of rule-following can satisfy the requirement that there be genuinely normative standards determining whether an individual is following rules correctly or not. I argued there that interpersonal interactions as Pettit conceives them can at best articulate, but not constitute, the normativity of rule-following. In 2.1, I substantially modified Pettit's argument for the social constitution of the human individual by means of an interpretive appropriation of Heidegger's conception of that constitution in *Being and Time*. Following Heidegger, I argued that normativity ordinarily shows up under the guise of how everyday human existence is fundamentally *normalized*, for human beings exist by primarily and mostly (*zunächst und zumeist*) making sense of the world, including themselves and other people, in accordance with the *public norms* (*das Man*: the *one*) with which they are utterly familiar. More specifically, the main conclusion for which I argued is that the human individual is fundamentally socially constituted because she cannot help but project normalized situational possibilities that make intelligible, and in so doing enable and constrain, how she primarily and mostly acts and, thereby, who she is primarily and mostly to herself and to others in everyday life. It is this normalized understanding of situational possibilities of action that different human individuals project which ensures that those individuals who have been "socialized" into a particular set of customs, practices, and traditions *share a common world*, i.e., share a common starting-point or

frame of reference in terms of which they make sense of the world and act (a common way of knowing their way around the world).¹ It should be evident how normativity, under the guise of normalization (i.e., our everyday existence in the mode of the *one*), is crucial to my Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the human individual.

With this conception in place, I then sought to show how it challenges the prevalent understanding of human *sociality* that most philosophers especially in the analytic tradition take for granted, an understanding which I have characterized in terms of the idea of *interpersonal interactionism* (IPIA):

The Assumptions of Interpersonal Interactionism (IPIA):

(I) There exists a prevalent mode of human sociality that is realized when (i) two or more individuals are present in some context (ii) who interact with one another in accordance with some implicit set of constraints that (should) govern in that context.

(II) This mode of human sociality *suffices* for understanding both the *fundamental* way in which human beings are social and *all* forms of sociality. Accordingly, any account or invocation of human sociality should begin with this mode of sociality as its key datum and point of departure.

I believe that IPIA is exemplified by some currently influential ways of thinking about or appealing to human sociality in contemporary philosophy. To mention only those that I examined at some length thus far in the dissertation, Pettit's conception and defense of social holism, prominent theories of collective intentionality, and Davidson's view of the social character of linguistic communication and the objectivity of thought each instantiate IPIA in their own way. As I noted in the Introduction to this dissertation, although IPIA does not, strictly speaking, offer a competing conception of the social constitution of the human individual, it does not follow that understanding the nature of human sociality is completely disconnected from reflection on this constitution. Thus, even though IPIA may be, strictly speaking, irrelevant, or at least silent, in connection with the social constitution of the individual, the same cannot be said for the converse. One of the main aims of the dissertation is to show that understanding the nature of human sociality along the lines of IPIA is seriously flawed precisely because it ignores or fails to take fully into account the social constitution of the individual.

In my assessment of prominent theories of collective intentionality in Ch. 3, one of my main criticisms concerns how their accounts of what they take to be paradigmatic social

¹ This way of putting the thought in question can risk sounding trivial. But those who have read Ch. 2 of this dissertation should have little trouble by now in dispelling this possible impression.

phenomena like going for a walk together (Gilbert), the collective beliefs and actions of an organization (Tuomela), or money (Searle) take for granted the intelligibility of such phenomena. The objection is that these social phenomena can only be what and how they are by *presupposing* individual agents' normalized understanding of the roles and behavior of the entities that typically compose the nexuses of practices and material arrangements in virtue of which these social phenomena make sense at all. The claim is that theories of collective intentionality must help themselves to conceptual "raw materials" (paradigmatically, the supposed explanatory primitives of the individual agent, her attitudes and actions, etc.) that are already normatively constituted.² And I argued that whatever specific kinds of normativity exhibited in collective or social phenomena theorists of collective intentionality discern and take themselves to explain³ must ultimately rest on individual agents' prior familiarity with normatively understood attitudes, roles, and practices that are intelligible only in terms of how they are bound up with their relevant nexuses of practices and material arrangements.

Readers familiar with Davidson's way of thinking will not be surprised that normativity is a central theme in his philosophy as a whole. What I criticized in Ch. 4 (among other things) is his specific attempt to explain the objectivity of thought and the empirical content of thought about the world by appealing to a certain kind of social interaction that he describes as triangulation. Davidson argues that triangulation is necessary because it helps to create the conceptual space for the very possibility of being wrong about the way the world is, as seen from the perspectives of the creatures in question themselves.⁴ Although I cast doubt on the cogency of his argument for this claim in 4.2, it is evident that he takes triangulation to be at least a necessary condition for the normativity, and thereby objectivity, of thought.⁵

The connection between normativity and the social constitution of the human individual, then, has been a leitmotif in this dissertation. If so, one may wonder why I have chosen to postpone its more extensive discussion until now. There are three reasons for this choice. First, I

² Recall my argument in 3.2 that Gilbert's, Tuomela's, and Searle's theories are faced with various problems of circularity.

³ E.g., Gilbert's emphasis on satisfying the "permission requirement" in constituting a plural subject; Tuomela on constructing the authority structure of an organization; Searle on the importance of collectively following constitutive rules.

⁴ It is this particular requirement that is crucial to why Davidson finds triangulation appealing as a conceptual tool. I argued in 4.2 that his argument falls short because it fails to satisfy this requirement.

⁵ It should be mentioned that he also holds that there must be a causal dimension to the objectivity of thought; see "The Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge", esp. pp. 151-3, and "Epistemology Externalized".

did not wish to distract from my chief aim of showing the inadequacy of various conceptions of human sociality along the lines of IPIA, from the standpoint of a Heideggerian conception of this constitution. When suitably interpreted and reconstructed, the Heideggerian conception as such has in my view sufficient conceptual resources that it can deploy for accomplishing this task.

If this is so, one may ask why we should bother considering the normativity of rule-following at all as an aspect of the foregoing. Addressing this question leads to the second reason for postponing until now my treatment of the connection between normativity and the social constitution of the individual. The context of this point is the following. One may get the impression that the Heideggerian conception of this constitution focuses overwhelmingly or even exclusively on the *unavoidability* and *necessary stability* of our conformity to public norms. More precisely, one may get the impression that our predominant existence in everyday life as *one-selves* (Man-*selbst*) – i.e., that we must primarily and mostly understand things and act in conformity with the public norms that the *one* supplies and, indeed, prescribes – implies a largely *passive* and *static* understanding of what it is to conform to norms. Put in the terms that I elaborated in Ch. 2, the impression may be that the normalization of situational possibilities of understanding and action that flows from our everyday existence as *one-selves exhaustively* captures how we conform to norms. In short, normativity amounts to nothing but normalization on such a view.⁶ I also mentioned in passing in Ch. 2, however, that this is a mistaken impression that will be dispelled once we consider the nature of rule-following. This issue has broader significance because it pertains not only to how we should understand and appropriate Heidegger’s insights about the social in *Being and Time*, but also to the nature of normativity in general. There is an important point of contact and mutual illumination here between early Heidegger’s thinking and that of the later Wittgenstein on this issue. In particular, I think that careful consideration of the nature of normativity helps to better clarify whether and (if so) in what sense exactly the later Wittgenstein holds a so-called “community view” of rule-following.⁷ In so doing, Wittgenstein’s reflection on the normativity of rule-following casts further light on

⁶ As I pointed out in 2.3, the familiar (but in my view overly simplistic and reductive) *existentialist* reading of Heidegger’s conception of *das Man* in effect construes normativity only as normalization. Such a reading wrongly accepts at face value Heidegger’s rhetoric about the “dictatorship” of *das Man* and how it *prescribes* conformity in how Dasein is supposed to live, etc. (Heidegger, *SZ* §27).

⁷ I think that the expression ‘the community view’ is quite ambiguous. I will show how this matters philosophically below.

Heidegger's argument that human individuals are necessarily socially constituted by always already sharing a public normative (in the first instance, normalized) understanding of the world. As we will see, one of Wittgenstein's key points is that human individuals have an active role to play in sustaining this normativity.

This leads to the third and final reason for postponing the discussion of the connection between normativity and the social constitution of the human individual until now. For my purposes, such a discussion involves some minimal degree of engagement with complicated issues pertaining to how we should understand Wittgenstein's remarks about rule-following in his *Philosophical Investigations*,⁸ an undertaking that also involves some corresponding degree of engagement with the relevant secondary literature about this topic. I think that a good deal of what we can learn from these remarks has greater force in reaction to this literature. That said, this chapter cannot aim to provide a critical survey and assessment of the voluminous secondary literature on Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following. As with my interpretation of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, that of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is not meant to be exegetical and scholarly in that way. Given the style and spirit of Wittgenstein's way of thinking in that text, there is always a risk of potentially distorting what lessons (or "reminders" in his distinctive sense [*PI* §127]) we are meant to learn and appreciate from his remarks. With this caution in mind, I hope to highlight and put to use the lesson he emphasizes regarding the normativity of rule-following in a way that does justice to the spirit of his thought.

This chapter is organized as follows. In 5.2, I will explain briefly the standard opposition between individualist and what I prefer to call "communalist" conceptions of the normativity of rule-following.⁹ This sets the stage in 5.3 for my discussion of Michael Luntley's forthright critique of communalism about rule-following. His articulation and defense of individualism about the normativity of rule-following is insightful precisely because of its unorthodox character. Having said this, I show in 5.4 that Luntley's critique of communalism applies only to a dominant but flawed understanding of how normativity is supposed to be connected to the social character of human existence. This is precisely the understanding of the social in terms of IPIA. Not surprisingly, I will argue that Luntley's positive account of the normativity of rule-

⁸ All references in the text of this chapter are henceforth to Anscombe's translation of this work and cited as *PI*.

⁹ I will explain my preference for using this particular label in the next section.

following coalesces well with the Heideggerian conception of the social in connection with normativity.

5.2 THE STANDARD OPPOSITION BETWEEN INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNALISM ABOUT THE NORMATIVITY OF RULE-FOLLOWING

We can begin by quickly forestalling two possible objections that one can have about the significance of normativity in connection with the social constitution of the human individual. First, there may be those who insist that when Wittgenstein talks about rules and rule-following in *Philosophical Investigations*, he only intends to consider how the latter concern the understanding and meaning of words (language), not non-linguistic phenomena in general, whether normative or not.¹⁰ But this restriction clearly does not square with the spirit of, nor the methods applied in, Wittgenstein's remarks about language and its place in human life. He insists in numerous sections that we should understand the meaning of words (with few exceptions) in terms of their uses, functions, or roles in human life (e.g., *PI* §§7, 19, 23, 88, 182, 199, 241). In fact, he shows no hesitation in using non-linguistic examples (e.g., games, sign-posts, etc.) to illuminate how we should understand the normativity inherent to grasping the meaning of words, which he typically highlights by pointing to the *particular circumstances* in which the uses of words are embedded and make sense (e.g., *PI* §§154-5). Moreover, he is strongly critical of the belief that language has an essence that can be fully analyzed as a self-contained system of symbols ("a calculus according to definite rules" [*PI* §81; cf. §§193-4]), in abstraction from the non-linguistic activities of everyday life. Consequently, it is a mistake on textual grounds to believe that Wittgenstein's remarks on rules and rule-following only pertain to what is involved in understanding the meaning of words (language). That this is also a philosophical mistake will be shown below. Second, there may be those who remain unconvinced by the significance of the

¹⁰ For present purposes, linguistic activities are those that explicitly involve the use of words, while non-linguistic ones are those that *prima facie* can but need not involve such use (e.g., using a hammer, etc.). But Wittgenstein would insist that most non-linguistic activities are so closely interwoven with linguistic ones that neither is ultimately intelligible without the other (cf. *PI* §§23, 25). His emphasis throughout *PI* on the significance of *training* is the crux of this point. (I will discuss this much more below in 5.4.)

normativity of rules, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, to everyday life.¹¹ They remark as a matter of observation that human beings in actual life seek more often than not to evade following rules for reasons of self-interest; they only follow them when it suits the satisfaction of their needs or desires or because they fear the punishment that would ensue if they failed to follow rules.¹²

Empirically speaking, this may be true enough. But if this dismissive attitude about the significance of the normativity of rules is supposed to have philosophical import, it is mistaken for the following reasons. First of all, following rules need not be a self-conscious action or activity. In fact, we often follow rules correctly by simply acting in response to particular circumstances without reflection (*PI* §§289, 506). If we rightly reject an overly intellectualistic conception of how we conform to norms, it is evident that norms shape the intelligibility of what we primarily and usually do, e.g., how we are supposed to use equipment, how far we should stand from people in conversation, etc. Taking this fact into account thus significantly expands the scope of the normative in human life. Second, the dismissive attitude about the significance of normativity overlooks the great degree to which many (though not all) of the things we do require implicitly following *constitutive* and not merely *regulative* rules.¹³ Entities and performances such as chess pieces and chess moves, money, a person's social status and power, etc., could not *exist* at all unless people followed the constitutive rules that let (enable and constrain) such entities and performances be what and how they are. Dismissing the significance of normativity misses the way in which conformity to rules or norms effects *positive* freedom, in the sense that such conformity can enable (empower) those who conform to certain rules or norms to find intelligible and perform certain activities at all. Third, this attitude fundamentally misunderstands the very nature of rules and norms. For their very nature makes conceptual room for the possibility of their violation; otherwise, they would not be rules or norms at all but rather laws of nature. Rules or norms always contain a "moment" of freedom and hence the possibility of violation on the part of the agents who subject themselves to them. Lastly and most importantly, as I argued (following Heidegger) in 2.1, this attitude completely misses the way in

¹¹ I dealt with Davidson's objection to the importance of linguistic norms for communication in 4.1.

¹² This attitude echoes in effect Thrasymachus's cynicism about the nature of justice in Book I of Plato's *Republic*, which is further amplified by the parable of Gyges's ring at the beginning of Book II.

¹³ Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality*. Although I criticized Searle's account of collective intentionality in 3.2, I have no disagreement with him about the importance of constitutive rules; quite the contrary.

which human understanding and existence in the world *as such* is always already constitutively normalized. The fact that many people violate various specific rules and norms in life is actually something that *presupposes*, but does not undermine, the significance of rules and norms in the fundamental sense that I have sought to highlight. The burden of argument, then, should be on those who dismiss the significance of normativity, once the pervasiveness and centrality of normative phenomena is brought to light. In particular, we do well not to run together the way in which our conformity to rules and norms *enables us to make sense of things at all* with the separate question of the extent to which we *actually follow* some specific rules and norms in particular circumstances.

With these remarks in place, we can now elaborate the standard opposition between individualist and communalist conceptions of the normativity of rule-following. To a first approximation, they are both attempts to satisfy a basic requirement of any satisfactory account of normativity: There must be a genuine difference between correct and incorrect performances in what we do (*PI* §§202, 258).¹⁴ This leads naturally to the following question: What is the *basis or source of the standard* according to which performances are correct and incorrect? The attempts to answer this question define the context in which the standard opposition between individualism and communalism about rule-following arises.

It is important to emphasize that such attempts have reacted invariably to the skepticism about the very possibility of meaning – more generally, of rule-following – that Saul Kripke’s reading of Wittgenstein has prominently highlighted.¹⁵ We need not rehearse in detail the main argument provided by this reading because it is by now quite familiar. To summarize, Kripke’s Wittgenstein argues that there can be no isolable facts about any single individual, no isolable mental states of any kind that she is in or dispositions that she has, that can guarantee that she is following a rule correctly or incorrectly. In making this argument, Kripke’s Wittgenstein puts enormous emphasis on the first paragraph of *PI* §201, the so-called “paradox of interpretation” argument:

¹⁴ On pain of being self-defeating, even those who may wish to reject (“unmask” or “interrogate”) the very idea of correct and incorrect performance appeal in practice to some implicitly normative value(s) for this rejection.

¹⁵ Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, esp. Ch. 2. Although Winch’s reading of Wittgenstein does not develop this sort of skepticism as extensively as Kripke, he already anticipates it in *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 29f.

This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made to accord with the rule. The answer was: if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here.

If this conclusion goes unchallenged, the result we cannot escape is that we are all under the illusion of understanding and meaning anything at all. The reason is that understanding and meaning depends necessarily on the grasping of something as *the same (and thus also of them as different) over stretches of time*.¹⁶ The significance of this basic point (constraint) will be discussed much more below, but we can put it for the moment as follows: Our understanding of a rule is inadequate if we are unable to extend its correct application to novel circumstances that go beyond those under which we initially learned the rule. If someone does what she is supposed to do, say, when she encounters traffic lights, but then behaves on subsequent occasions, *ceteris paribus*, in ways that show that she does not know how to respond skillfully to traffic lights, this would be evidence that she does not really understand what one is supposed to do in circumstances involving them after all. For she does not do the same thing correctly over time in circumstances that call for doing so (in this case, knowing how to act appropriately in response to traffic lights).

The same constraint applies regarding the use of words over time to express linguistic meaning. Although no use of a word on any particular occasion needs to express the same meaning as it did on previous occasions,¹⁷ the uses of the other words that accompany the use of the word in question must more or less express the same meanings that they usually do if the (possibly) idiosyncratic use of the word in question is to be meaningful at all. The exchange between Humpty Dumpty and Alice about the meaning of ‘glory’ in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* illustrates this nicely. When Humpty Dumpty explains that he means ‘nice knock-down argument’ when he uses the word ‘glory’, the explanation itself, let alone the expression ‘nice knock-down argument’, must use words that retain their usual meanings if this explanation of the meaning of ‘glory’ is to be itself meaningful. If *every single word* in linguistic communication deviates idiosyncratically from its past usage *on every occasion*, we would start to lose our grip on the meanings of words in general; we would fall into the insane abyss that

¹⁶ “The word ‘agreement’ and the word ‘rule’ are *related* to one another, they are cousins. If I teach anyone the use of the one word, he learns the use of the other with it. The use of the word ‘rule’ and the use of the word ‘same’ are interwoven. (As are the use of ‘proposition’ and the use of ‘true’.)” (*PI* §§224-5; cf. §207)

¹⁷ Davidson’s “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs” gives a compelling argument for this claim.

Kripke's skeptic about meaning tries to motivate as a viable possibility.¹⁸ In short, if Kripke's skeptical reading of Wittgenstein is right, there can be *nothing determinate* that we grasp in a stable way over time as *the same* in our attempts to understand and mean anything. On this view, what we are actually doing is making "unjustified stabs or leaps in the dark" when we believe, mistakenly, that we are understanding and meaning anything at all.

Although Kripke focuses on the meaning and understanding of words, this skeptical line of thought applies readily (as we just saw) to the understanding of non-linguistic phenomena as well. For the understanding of non-linguistic entities, paradigmatically equipment, what is grasped as the same is their standard use, their standard role or function in an interrelated nexus of activities and material arrangements. But if Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein is right, what ensures that we always know what (is the same thing that) we are supposed to do when we encounter, say, a sign-post? Why couldn't there be some bizarre but logically possible rule governing our encounter of a sign-post that applies, say, only on sunny days where there must be at least another person standing half a mile from us? What ensures that our use of a hammer cannot also instantiate another norm of usage, for hammers can also be used for other purposes than for pounding in nails? Clearly, this line of skeptical questioning can be easily generalized for our understanding of non-linguistic entities in general.

Kripke thus reads Wittgenstein as having invented a novel and radical form of skepticism about meaning and rule-following. Seeing no way of providing a "straight solution" to this sort of skepticism, Kripke's Wittgenstein advocates instead a "skeptical solution" to the problem of the normativity of rule-following, a resolution that emphasizes how the embeddedness of the single individual in a community is supposed to enable us to live with this sort of skepticism. What is important for present purposes is that almost all individualists and communalists take this sort of skepticism seriously, thereby tacitly accepting the underlying assumptions that make it seem compelling, and develop their accounts in reaction to it as a foil.

¹⁸ Cf. Pettit, "The Reality of Rule-Following": "If speech and thought involve rule-following, then the magnitude of [Kripke's skeptical challenge about its reality] can hardly be overstated. Deny that there are such things as rules, deny that there is anything that counts strictly as rule-following, and you put in jeopardy some of our most central notions about ourselves. More than that, you also put in jeopardy our notion of the world as requiring us, given our words and concepts, to describe it this way rather than that; you undermine our conception of objective characterization. There is no extant philosophical challenge that compares on the scale of iconoclasm with the skeptical challenge to rule-following." (p. 31)

Against the background of this sort of skepticism, individualists about rule-following hold that a single person has in fact sufficient resources to distinguish between the appearance of following rules correctly and actually following them correctly.¹⁹ They typically make two moves. First, they argue that a single individual can be the bearer of properties that effect the application of this distinction and thus overcome skepticism about meaning and rule-following. While they differ quite significantly regarding the nature of those properties – these may be, e.g., mental states, dispositions, access to transcendent standards of applications of rules, habits,²⁰ etc. – what matters for our purposes is that they hold that such resources, whatever their nature, are fully available to the single individual in ensuring normative standards for their rule-following. Second, they also argue that the “community view” of rule-following, upon critical examination, fares no better than individualist accounts in genuinely distinguishing between the appearance of following rules correctly and actually following them correctly.²¹ The answer of individualists to the question about the basis or source of normativity, then, is straightforward: The standard of correctness and incorrectness for our application of rules is, *contra* Kripke’s Wittgenstein, provided either by properties beneath or at the skin surface of the single individual; or else such an individual has access to some normative standard transcending finite usage that can fully determine what counts as correct and incorrect performance (a version of Platonism about rule-following).

In this context, there are those who oppose individualism about rule-following and draw upon Wittgenstein’s way of thinking in *Philosophical Investigations* as a conceptual resource. These interpreters ascribe a “community view” of rule-following to Wittgenstein, according to which a single individual can only genuinely apply the distinction between the appearance of following rules correctly and actually following them correctly in virtue of being embedded within a community.²² On this view, it is the community that is the ultimate source and basis of

¹⁹ E.g., Baker and Hacker, *Scepticism, Rules and Language*; McGinn, *Wittgenstein on Meaning*; Blackburn, “The Individual Strikes Back”; Gilbert, *On Social Facts*, Ch. III; Boghossian, “The Rule-Following Considerations”. For a full bibliography of individualists about rule-following, see Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*, p. 145, note 2.

²⁰ Turner, *The Social Theory of Practices*, esp. Ch. 4. For convincing criticisms of Turner’s arguments, see Bohman, “Do Practices Explain Anything?” and Rouse, “Two Concepts of Practices”.

²¹ Blackburn, “The Individual Strikes Back”, makes an especially strong argument for this conclusion.

²² E.g., Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*; Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*; Malcolm, *Wittgenstein*, Ch. 9, and “Wittgenstein on Language and Rules”; Taylor, “To Follow a Rule”; Pettit, *The Common Mind*, Ch. 2 and 4; Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*; M. Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning*. For a

the normative standards that determine which performances are correct and incorrect. As with individualist accounts of normativity, most advocates of the “community view” accept that the sort of skepticism about meaning and rule-following that Kripke’s reading of Wittgenstein highlights is a challenge worth taking on.

I think it is crucial at this juncture to distinguish *three* different understandings of the “community view” of rule-following, which I will regiment terminologically as follows. The first is one to which I will give very short shrift here, especially since I examined it at some length in Ch. 1. This is the view of the community as a self-subsistent supra-individual entity that allegedly exercises the agency of an individual person. On this view, it is the community *as such* that determines the standards of correct and incorrect performance. As extensively discussed in 1.2, however, this conception of the nature of a community is beset by several significant problems, the most serious of which are its illegitimate reification of the community and its account of the latter’s causal powers. Although I will not discuss it further in what follows, we can accordingly call this the “reified community” view of normativity.

The second understanding of the “community view” of normativity is *prima facie* more plausible. Call this “communalism”.²³ Communalism differs from the reified community view precisely by not committing the fallacy of reifying (personifying) the community. Communalists differ considerably among themselves, however, with regard to *how exactly* the embeddedness of the individual in a community is supposed to constitute normativity. Now, although the third understanding of the “community view” of normativity – namely, the “socially constituted” view – will have to remain off the stage until 5.4 below, we can give a preview of it as follows. In contrast with the reified community and communalist views of normativity, the socially constituted view contends that it is the learning of bedrock practices through training, not the policing and sanctioning of one’s rule-following by others, that fundamentally connects the human individual to others in his or her community. The argument for this conclusion, however, will have to await the discussion in 5.4 because the significance and force of the socially

full bibliography of communalists about rule-following, see Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*, p. 145, note 2. Note that many of these communalists strongly criticize Kripke’s particular way of invoking the community in this debate.

²³ This expression is preferable to ‘communitarian’ or ‘collectivist’, which are also sometimes used in the literature about rule-following, because the latter terms have connotations in political theory that are related to but conceptually distinct from the sort of issues considered here.

constituted view of normativity will be much better appreciated in juxtaposition with communalism. In this section and the next, it is communalism and its problems that are in the forefront.

It is useful to cite some representative passages from the texts of communalists not only to illustrate the differences among them, but, more importantly for my purposes, to bring out their similar assumptions regarding the terms of debate against individualists. Peter Winch's reading of Wittgenstein, for instance, emphasizes how the normativity of one's rule-following consists in the possibility of its being checked by other people:

Establishing a standard [for one's rule-following] is not an activity which it makes sense to ascribe to any individual in complete isolation from other individuals. For it is contact with other individuals which alone makes possible the external check on one's actions which is inseparable from an established standard.²⁴

The public checkability by others of one's rule-following is the source and basis of normative standards according to Winch.²⁵ Kripke's reading of Wittgenstein also emphasizes the importance of public checkability, but is more self-conscious about the exact status of what can and cannot serve as the basis of normativity. Put in its terms, its main claim is that there are no facts *of any sort* that can constitute normativity, but only communally sanctioned justification ("assertibility") conditions that an individual must satisfy in order to count as following rules.

... [I]f one person is considered in isolation, the notion of a rule as guiding the person who adopts it can have *no* substantive content. There are no truth conditions or facts in virtue of which it can be the case that he accords with his past intentions [of following a rule] or not. ... The situation is very different if we widen our gaze from consideration of the rule follower alone and allow ourselves to consider him as interacting with a wider community. Others will then have justification conditions for attributing correct or incorrect rule following to the subject, and these will *not* be simply that the subject's own authority is unconditionally to be accepted.²⁶

The [skeptical] solution turns on the idea that each person who claims to be following a rule can be checked by others. Others in the community can check whether the putative rule follower is or is not giving particular responses that they endorse, that agree with their own.²⁷

The thought here is that an individual can receive her entitlement (i.e., her right to "assert") that she is correctly following rules only from others in the community who are already authorized to grant such entitlement.

More sociologically minded defenders of communalism likewise emphasize the presence of *consensus* as the source and basis of normativity. Thus, David Bloor writes:

²⁴ Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*, p. 32.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 39.

²⁶ Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, p. 89, emphases in the original.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Normative standards come from the consensus generated by a number of interacting rule-followers, and it is maintained by collectively monitoring, controlling and sanctioning their individual tendencies. Consensus makes norms objective, that is, a source of external and impersonal constraint on the individual.²⁸

... [E]ach of us individually *is* compelled by something outside, namely, other people around us in society. It is society that is external to us and the true source of our sense that rules exist as an independent reality set over against the individual rule-follower. ... We are only compelled by rules in so far as we, collectively, compel one another.²⁹

More specifically, Bloor argues that it is the idea of rules as *institutions* (picking up on *PI* §199), which he characterizes in terms of “collective pattern[s] of self-referring activity”, that underpin the consensus that effects the normativity of rule-following. Although Bloor agrees with Kripke’s Wittgenstein that there cannot be any facts about the lone individual that can effect normativity, he argues that there are social – more precisely, institutional – facts that are available, in the form of tacit consensus, to perform this task:

The “right” continuation, say, of a number series (which also defines what is meant by the rule) is that continuation which is collectively called “right”. This is not a matter of counting up votes, but refers to a stable pattern of interaction. I call this continuation right because others call it right, but I am correct in calling it right on this basis because their calling it right makes it right.³⁰

The claim is that the “self-referring” character of institutional facts is supposed to generate the requisite normativity: “An institution [i.e., a rule] can be looked upon as the collective product of the interactions between the dispositions of many individuals. ... [It] provide[s] a normative basis for the actions of the individuals who are within it.”³¹ Unlike Kripke, then, Bloor argues that we can give a “straight solution” to skepticism about meaning and rule-following, for we can directly appeal to social-institutional facts to ensure the normativity of rules.

So much for a sampling of the standard line of argument that some prominent communalists give regarding the source and basis of normativity.³² I have quoted these passages at some length not just to give the reader a sense of how they typically appeal to the social for explaining the constitution of normativity, but also to bring out how they each rely on an understanding of the social along the lines of IPIA. Their respective communalism clearly

²⁸ Bloor, *Wittgenstein, Rules and Institutions*, p. 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22, emphasis in the original.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33; cf. pp. 65-9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³² For an elaboration (and critique) of Pettit’s communalism, see 1.3. I postpone my discussion of Meredith Williams’s defense of what she now prefers to call the “social view” of normativity for reasons that will emerge in 5.4 below.

accepts assumption (I) of IPIA: They each assume that (i) two or more individuals have to be present in some context (ii) who must interact with one another in order to constitute the normative standards that govern their rule-following in that context. Their communalism also endorses assumption (II) of IPIA: Interpersonal interactions are presumed to *suffice* for generating the normativity of rules or norms; moreover, there is the presumption that *all* forms of sociality must rest on such interactions, for no other alternative conception of human sociality is (on this way of thinking) thought to be available or viable. In short, the core idea is that only interpersonal interactions can *generate* the source and basis of the bindingness of norms. Furthermore, the primary character of these interactions is *corrective*, consisting in the standing possibility of other people checking – interpersonally monitoring, assessing, and sanctioning – an individual’s efforts to conform to norms. According to communalism, then, the social shows up primarily as that which *polic*es the individual’s rule-following activities.

5.3 LUNTLEY’S CRITIQUE OF COMMUNALISM ABOUT THE NORMATIVITY OF RULE-FOLLOWING

Luntley has recently argued forcefully against the communalist view of the normativity of meaning.³³ Although he takes himself to argue for a strongly individualist account of rule-following, his position breaks with some central tenets of orthodox individualism about rule-following and is for this reason instructive. One of the achievements of his reading is to draw our attention to what he calls the “bipartite conception of meaning”, which he sees as informing virtually every competing account of meaning on offer, whether they be Platonist, individualist, or communalist. If Luntley is right, the prevalence of this conception of meaning shows that it is deeply entrenched in and thus hard to dislodge from our current assumptions about the nature of meaning. In order to appreciate the implications of his critique of communalism, then, we need to understand this in terms of its attack on the bipartite conception of meaning.

³³ Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*. Although Luntley focuses on the normativity of meaning, it would be easy (as noted above in relation to Kripke’s skeptical reading of Wittgenstein) to generalize the implications of this reading to the understanding of non-linguistic phenomena as well.

According to this conception, the understanding and meaning of words consist in the combination of two components: (1) normless things (e.g., bare sounds or inscriptions) with (2) some additional element that supplies the normativity for normless things. Once this occurs, normless things become “animated” because of this addition and are thereby rendered meaningful or action-guiding (cf. *PI* §§431-2).³⁴ The element usually thought to supply the requisite normativity is what Wittgenstein calls an “interpretation” (*Deutung*), which he defines as the substitution of an expression of a rule for another expression (see the third paragraph of *PI* §201). Although Wittgenstein urges that we restrict the use of ‘interpretation’ and its cognates to express this meaning, I do not think that it goes against his way of thinking to see how this conception of interpretation applies more generally to any act or activity that confers meaning on bare sounds or inscriptions, whether via substitution in the aforementioned sense or else via some more general sort of semantically relevant activity (cf. *PI* §§206-7).³⁵ Interpretations on this view, then, serve as that which enables us to perceive sounds and inscriptions as meaningful at all. Given this conception of the function of interpretations, it is evident that the bipartite conception of meaning must presuppose that bare sounds and inscriptions are intrinsically meaningless because they are not intrinsically normatively constrained. Otherwise, there would be no work for interpretations to do, for then sounds and inscriptions as such would be already meaningful and action-guiding without needing interpretations. Clearly, this interpretivist model of meaning is most plausible when speakers of a language try to understand the words of languages foreign to them. The question is whether it can serve as the standard way in which our use of words is normatively constrained, i.e., as the normal way in which we understand and speak our native language(s).

As mentioned above, much of the debate concerning normativity takes place in a dialectic that takes the “paradox of interpretation” (see the first paragraph of *PI* §201) to be the central point of departure for this debate. The conclusion of the paradox is radical: Normativity is

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-9, 100-5. For a lucid account of the motivations of this conception of meaning, see also Stroud, *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, pp. 80f., 170-4.

³⁵ Unless otherwise noted, I will henceforth use ‘interpretation’ and its cognates to express this broader meaning.

illusory because *everything* we do can be interpreted in accordance with some logically possible alternative rule. This is the conclusion that skepticism about meaning establishes:³⁶

A: Meaning Skepticism

- (1) Suppose meaning is a function of sign display (what you say) + interpretation.
 - (2) Nothing you say can fix the interpretation.
-

- (3) There is no such thing as determinate meaning.

Premise (1) seems intuitively compelling because we have all at times encountered words whose meanings we can grasp only by *imposing* an understanding on them, i.e., by *interpreting* such words, whether these words belong to a foreign language or even to our own native language(s). That we need to do so presents evidence that words do not have meanings before we interpret them. Premise (2) would be true if we grant the paradox of interpretation. If (1) and (2) hold, it seems unavoidable that (3) must follow.

In the face of this result, most interpreters of the *PI* across the spectrum reject its compellingness by correctly noting that Kripke's skeptical reading of Wittgenstein on rule-following unjustifiably ignores Wittgenstein's own immediate suggestion (made in the second paragraph of *PI* §201) about the paradox of interpretation. As Wittgenstein writes in a passage that is often cited:

It can be seen that there is a misunderstanding here [i.e., with the paradox of interpretation] from the mere fact that in the course of our argument we give one interpretation after another; as if each one contented us at least for a moment, until we thought of yet another standing behind it. What this shows is that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not an interpretation* [*Deutung*], but which is exhibited, from case to case of application [*von Fall zu Fall der Anwendung*], in what we call "following the rule" and "acting against it" (*PI* §201, emphases in the original, translation slightly altered in the second half of the last sentence).

The suggestion is clearly that the paradox of interpretation only arises when we assume the necessity of interpretation for the application of every rule. But this assumption is mistaken for two reasons. First, interpretations are not helpful for ensuring the correct application of every rule because this thought opens up an infinite regress of interpretations. For if every case of following a rule requires interpretation, what ensures that the interpretation itself, or the interpretation of an interpretation, etc., is correct (*PI* §§186, 198)? Second, even if we could avoid this regress by claiming that there is a final, uniquely correct interpretation that we can

³⁶ Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, p. 95. By 'display', Luntley means words we encounter that are not normatively constrained (*ibid.*, p. 98). In such cases, words "just stand there" without any connections to the contexts in which they show up (cf. *PI* §85).

unproblematically access and apply for every rule, we become committed thereby to a Platonism about the normativity of rule-following (*PI* §§188-97). But this sort of Platonism is untenable. For it either begs the question concerning the normativity of rule-following by simply asserting that this normativity can only flow from an abstract normative standard transcending and yet somehow governing our use of words; or else it too is subject to the problem of infinite regress because this problem arises for our understanding (interpretation) of this abstract normative standard itself.³⁷ In short, normativity cannot be derived from interpretations “all the way down” (*PI* §§217-9). Rather, Wittgenstein argues (“reminds” us) that we can prevent skepticism about meaning from arising in the first place by emphasizing that there must be ways of following rules, of conforming to norms, that do not involve interpretations at all: “For this reason [*Darum*] ‘obeying a rule’ is a practice.” (*PI* §202, translation slightly altered). “To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions).” (*PI* §199, emphasis in the original) Wittgenstein’s point, then, is that we can (re)gain a satisfactory understanding of normativity by paying attention to how this is *bound up with customs and practices*. Modifying argument *A*, we can set out this line of thought as follows:³⁸

B: Normativity as Engagement in Practices (I)

- (1) Suppose meaning is a function of sign display + interpretation.
- (2) Nothing you say can fix the interpretation.

-
- (3) It is not what you say that determines meaning; it is what you do.

This is the point at which individualists and communalists diverge in their accounts of normativity. While they both agree that it is what we *do* that is central to understanding the nature of normativity, they disagree about the nature of what we do, with individualists insisting that the practices we perform can be individual (singular), while communalists argue that they must be communal.

Luntley’s critique of communalism gets its purchase at this point in the dialectic, both at the textual and philosophical levels.³⁹ Textually speaking, communalists understandably seize upon and highlight *PI* §199 as evidence for communalism, where Wittgenstein writes:

³⁷ For succinct and convincing objections to Platonism about rule-following, see *ibid.*, p. 9f.

³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 95.

³⁹ He is strongly critical of orthodox individualism about rule-following too; see *ibid.*, pp. 11-5 and esp. Ch. 4. I am sympathetic to these criticisms. But since they are not my concern here, I omit discussion of them.

Is what we call “following a rule” something that only *one* human being, only *once* in his or her life, could do? – And this is of course an issue about the *grammar* of the expression “following a rule”. It cannot be the case that there is only one occasion on which only one human being followed a rule. It cannot be the case that there is only one occasion on which a report is made, an order given or understood, etc. [*Es kann nicht ein einziges Mal nur ein Mensch einer Regel gefolgt sein. Es kann nicht ein einziges Mal eine Mitteilung gemacht, ein Befehl gegeben, oder verstanden worden sein, etc.*] – To follow a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* [*Gepflogenheiten*] (uses [*Gebräuche*], institutions).⁴⁰

At first glance, this passage seems to invite, if not explicitly support, the communalist reading. The first sentence explicitly draws attention to two modes of generality pertaining to the normativity of rule-following: one applying to different people and the other over stretches of time. But as Luntley notes, what is striking is that after having drawn explicit attention to this distinction, Wittgenstein chooses not to discuss the first mode of generality about the relevance of other people for normativity, but goes on only to address the second one about whether an individual could follow a rule on only one occasion.⁴¹ As the above passage shows, Wittgenstein denies that the latter state of affairs is possible. One important central feature for Wittgenstein of the concept of following a rule (performing a practice), then, is *repeatability over time*: “a person goes by a sign-post [i.e., follows a rule] only insofar as there exists a *continual* [*ständigen*] use of sign-posts, a custom” (*PI* §198, translations slightly altered, emphasis added; cf. §202 on the application of a rule from case to case and also §207).⁴² If he had also wanted to insist on the importance of other people for constituting the normativity of rule-following, it is puzzling that he chooses not to discuss this at all despite having just given himself the opportunity to do so in that context. What the above passage suggests, especially the particular placements of ‘*ein einziges Mal*’ in the sentences in which this expression appears, is that what matters centrally for Wittgenstein is the repeated application of a rule over time, not so much the fact that other people can also apply the rule in question, let alone check on the correctness of one’s rule-following.⁴³

⁴⁰ Emphases are made in the original German text. I have consulted it and altered the English translation somewhat so that the latter hews more closely to the former.

⁴¹ Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, p. 105f.

⁴² See also *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*: “In order to describe the phenomenon of language, we must describe a practice, not something that happens once, *no matter of what kind*.” (Part VI, §34, p. 335, emphasis in the original)

⁴³ The emphasis on repeatability over time, not across people, is also highlighted in *ibid.*: “But what about this consensus [of techniques belonging to the essence of calculation] – doesn’t it mean that *one* human being by himself could not calculate? Well, *one* human being could at any rate not calculate just *once* in his life.” (Part III, §67, p. 193, emphases in the original)

Now, Eike von Savigny in this context has emphasized not only that ‘*Gepflogenheiten*’, ‘*Gebräuche*’, and their cognates connote *socially established customs* in ordinary German, but that Wittgenstein can only be plausibly read as using these terms in this sense in *PI*.⁴⁴ As a German interpreter of Wittgenstein’s philosophy who pays meticulous attention to how words are used by Wittgenstein in *PI* and in ordinary German, von Savigny is surely on solid ground here.⁴⁵ Consequently, it may seem that he would reject Luntley’s non-social reading of §199 and its surrounding sections simply on linguistic grounds. Let us grant that customs, uses, and obviously institutions are socially established. Does this imply that they are necessarily social? A lot turns on how one conceives the nature of socially established customs and what role they play with regard to the normativity of rule-following. If the performances of such customs imply communalism, then someone like Luntley would certainly reject the claim that the normativity involved in these performances are necessarily social (more on this below). In other words, if von Savigny is a communalist about rule-following, then his and Luntley’s readings of §199 and its surrounding sections would indeed be opposed. But it seems in fact that von Savigny should not be understood as a communalist about the sort of normativity involved in performing socially established customs. For he remarks that what makes a custom socially established is not that there are other people on the scene that continually monitor and sanction your rule-following, but that there exists a *shared, public understanding* (to put it in Heideggerian terms) of the referential nexus of significance that must be in place and makes intelligible what one does in typical situations involving, e.g., the use of sign-posts. As von Savigny writes:

One person follows a rule [e.g., a custom of going by a sign-post] only in so far as a corresponding way of acting is established in her social environment. ... The custom may involve more than the fact that all concerned are just following one and the same rule; the sign-post custom necessary for any one person to go by a sign-post involves, for instance, following the rule of erecting sign-posts in certain ways, having public ways [i.e., paths, streets, and roads], using names for referring to places, etc., as well as following the rule of going in (what we are used to calling) the direction of its finger.⁴⁶

Put in terms of site ontology, von Savigny is emphasizing the *integrative practices* involving sign-posts that must be already established in order for an individual to act appropriately in response to sign-posts, on the basis of her understanding of these practices. His emphasis on the fact that customs, uses, and institutions are socially established, then, does not in itself preclude

⁴⁴ Von Savigny, “Self-Conscious Individual versus Social Soul”, p. 81.

⁴⁵ That these terms have this connotation is also confirmed by my German friend Martin Kley, who (as a native speaker and a fellow academic) is sensitive to the linguistic nuances of his native tongue.

⁴⁶ Von Savigny, “Self-Conscious Individual versus Social Soul”, p. 81f.

particular occasions on which *single individuals* can follow rules, as long as their actions instantiate socially established customs that they understand. If so, this view of how the social figures in rule-following is not incompatible with Luntley's position (see more below).⁴⁷

Without attending further to issues of scholarship, it seems fair to hold that the textual evidence shows that it is repeatability over time that is crucial for Wittgenstein, even though he does not explicitly rule out the importance of others for understanding normativity either (as evidenced by his mention of customs, uses, and especially institutions in the above passage). What this shows is that we should be very cautious about assuming that the concepts of custom and practice are inherently social in some unexplained sense. After all, it is logically and indeed actually possible, *once* a human being has been brought up ("socialized"), that she can at least perform certain customs or practices by herself so long as she does so on many occasions over time.

Philosophical issues cannot be settled just by appeal to textual evidence alone, however. Luntley argues that Wittgenstein's real target is the bipartite conception of meaning in general, not just the interpretivist model of meaning as commonly assumed.⁴⁸ This model turns out only to be the intellectualist version of the bipartite conception of meaning, not this conception in general. The problem for communalists is that they leave the bipartite conception of meaning as such in place, even after they reject its interpretivist species. But if this conception as such is left unchallenged, it remains quite unclear how engagement in communal practices can manage, all on their own, to *generate* the requisite normativity constraining our use of words without presupposing the prior availability of this very normativity. As Luntley argues:

If "use" [i.e., practice] picks out a thin conception of use, mere empirical patterns of sign deployment, then it is utterly unclear how sign deployment gets policed by reference to what amounts to no more than more of the same; the sign deployment of the individual gets policed by being measured against the sign deployment of others. If there is a problem with what constitutes sign deployment as such, for signs are inert and require animation, then simply throwing more signs into the picture offers no policing. Alternatively, if "use" is not understood thinly in terms of sign deployment, then "use" does not necessarily pick out something that stands in need of animation.⁴⁹

In other words, if other people's clarifications or criticisms of our uses of words are to genuinely constrain these uses, such responses must themselves be already normatively structured. It is not

⁴⁷ Von Savigny is in effect giving a partial glimpse here of the socially constituted view of normativity that I will discuss in 5.4 below, though he himself does not put it, of course, in those terms.

⁴⁸ Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, pp. 96-8.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

the case that sheer responses from other people suffice alone to constrain these uses, for now we would want to ask what it is about these responses that can ensure the normativity of meaning. Unless this objection to communalism is successfully rebutted, communalism cannot satisfactorily account for the normativity of meaning. Communalism is appealing as an account of normativity because it trades on the genuine gain in knowledge and understanding that sometimes results when we interact with others, paradigmatically, through linguistic communication and dialogue responsive to reasons.

This is all well and good. But interpersonal interactions serve at most an *articulatory* and *critical* function by enabling us to clarify our stance toward things in the world and subjecting this stance to criticism. This is certainly important and deserves to receive the significance that it has garnered in certain strands of contemporary philosophy, both in the analytic and continental traditions. Nevertheless, the communalist view cannot serve as a *constitutive* account of the normativity of meaning because it is faced with the following dilemma: Either it opens up an infinite regress or else it is redundant. An infinite regress would ensue if the correctness and incorrectness of an individual's rule-following derives solely from its being checked by other people. For what makes the assessments of other people authoritative in turn? If the reason is that their assessments are checked again by others, an infinite regress looms. Now, communalists could try to halt the regress by insisting that there can be a final group of arbiters whose assessments are definitive. But this move goes nowhere because the question then arises about why this group is so privileged. As I argued toward the end of my assessment of Pettit's version of communalism in 1.3, other people's responses are authoritative only if such responses themselves answer to normative standards that are *independent of other people in the sense of not being fully under their control*. We should not conflate the factual, often institutional, circumstances that certify what an individual must be able to do in order to show that her rule-following is correct (i.e., her entitlement to claim to have mastered some set of skills and knowledge by passing some sort of tests) with the philosophical point that the evaluation by others of this rule-following must itself answer to some independent normative standard that is not fully under the control of other people. On the other hand, communalism would be redundant if it concedes that other people's evaluations of an individual's rule-following cannot after all depend *solely* on the fact that these evaluations come from others. For if this concession is granted, it becomes very unclear why an individual cannot sustain the normativity of rule-

following, whereas interpersonal checking by others can do so. To this limited extent, Luntley's individualism is in agreement with the orthodox individualist critique of communalism.

In light of this rather devastating critique of communalism, Luntley's positive account of normativity breaks with both communalism and orthodox individualism by focusing, not on the normativity putatively supplied by other people checking the correctness of an individual's rule-following, nor on some state occurring beneath or at the skin surface of an individual, but on the nature of the *practices themselves* that an individual engages in. As he puts it:

The focus should be, not on the notion of what *you* do, but on what you *do*. That is to say, it is the nature of the "doing" that matters. To put this another way, understanding is a practice, but what matters about the concept of practice is not centrally whether the practitioner is singular or plural; it is the nature of practice itself. In short, on an impoverished conception of "doing", it is tempting to recover normativity by embedding the doer in a community of doers. My account rejects this by focusing on a conception of doing in which normativity is intrinsic.⁵⁰ ... If we get the individual subject's doings right, as activities in direct calibration with things, we do not need others to supply the normativity.⁵¹

What matters, then, is not whether practices are individual or social (on a communalist understanding of the social), but whether practices are intrinsically normative. Put in terms of arguments **A** and **B** from above, the central task of a satisfactory account of normativity does not consist in trying to challenge or cope somehow with premise (2), i.e., the claim that nothing we say can determine meaning in a stable way. This is what communalists and orthodox individualists try to do. Instead, the central task of such an account should discern premise (1) – the assumption that meaning is a function of a normless component and something additional that supplies the normativity (the bipartite conception of meaning) – as the real source of the difficulty we apparently have with understanding the nature of normativity. It is thus premise (1) that should be rejected. Modifying argument **B**, the conclusion that Luntley defends is therefore this:⁵²

C: Normativity as Engagement in Practices (II)

- (1) Suppose meaning is a function of sign display + interpretation.
- (2) No amount of further sign display can fix the interpretation.

(3) It is not sign display + some additional element X that determines meaning; it is sign practice.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 95f., emphases in the original.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 98.

The positive part of his account aims to show what it is to engage in “sign practice”. It is relevant for my purposes to sketch this account now because some of its features will be significant in the next section.

Luntley defends a *unitary* conception of meaning in which we come to see how normativity is *intrinsic* to our engagement in linguistic and non-linguistic practices. The normative bindingness of rules or norms is not something we have to generate somehow apart from this engagement and then impose on normless sounds and inscriptions or, for that matter, on normless non-linguistic entities. For Luntley, talk of *seeing* how this is so is not metaphorical or merely a figure of speech. He argues that the central task is to *see aright* – and it is crucial for Luntley’s position that he means this literally – how normativity can be immanent to practices in our engagement with the world. In particular, it is crucial that we understand how normative patterns of language use emerge from the *activity of seeing similarities from case to case*. On this view, following a rule is a practice because it is only by seeing similarities in particular circumstances that patterns of the correct use of words (correct application of concepts) actually bind us. This conception of how normativity is immanent to our use of words is strongly individualist (as Luntley understands this) insofar as the activity of seeing similarities from case to case is something that an individual does. But the right contrast to this view is not communalism, as is commonly believed in the literature on rule-following, but rather the view that performing this sort of activity is something *essentially passive*, something that an individual merely does in accordance with rules whose normative bindingness comes from somewhere extrinsic to the actual performances that accord with the rule. As Luntley puts it, we have an *active* part to play in how norms come to bind us: “we are not pawns in the grip of the transcendent structures of meaning or, for that matter, the empirical structures of use. We are active shapers of the patterns of language use, agents with a capacity to judge and thereby to affect the ongoing patterns of use.”⁵³

How does he argue for these claims? He begins by showing how his position can actually draw support from the thrust of Wittgenstein’s metaphilosophical remarks, rather than conveniently ignoring or even contravening them, as constructive readings of *PI* in particular do. Indeed, this support is crucial for his positive account of the nature of normativity; it has not only

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

interpretive but also philosophical import. He starts by noting perceptively that Wittgenstein actually works with *two* understandings of the *hidden* in his thinking, not just the one that Wittgenstein attacks continually in *PI*. This distinction deserves greater attention in the literature. The first understanding of the hidden is that of the *transcendent* hidden, which stands in various guises as Wittgenstein's main target (e.g., *PI* §§91-2, 102, 111, 153). According to this understanding of the hidden, what we must do in order to understand, say, the *essence* of language, is to look *behind* or *beneath* linguistic phenomena (*PI* §§90, 92, 97) so that we can articulate a philosophical theory that definitively explains this essence. Such a theory propounds and justifies philosophical theses that claim to articulate the deep structure of language once and for all and explain on that basis how this structure underpins ordinary uses of language. It exemplifies a Platonic attitude toward the phenomena it seeks to analyze: It disparages their contingency, their transitory, complex, and messy character, and aims to articulate transcendent ("crystalline") doctrines that are timeless and universally applicable.⁵⁴

It is well known that the later Wittgenstein is deeply hostile to this Platonic or intellectualist way of doing philosophy. By contrast, his own method of philosophizing does not seek to resolve philosophical problems by providing a better theory, but to clarify the "grammar" of certain basic concepts that we cannot help but apply, i.e., to do so by illuminating the multifaceted roles they play in human life. By removing misunderstandings (mistaken assumptions) that lead us to believe that we have to solve certain unavoidable philosophical problems associated with the use of these concepts, "grammatical" investigations do not so much solve these problems as dissolve them (*PI* §§90, 93, 109, 118, 122). On this view, the idea of the transcendent hidden is a tempting illusion of which we can rid ourselves by means of such investigations (*PI* §§97, 110). What we are left with is a position that is often characterized as "quietism", which aims to do away with all philosophical explanations and renounces the obligation of doing constructive philosophy (*PI* §§109-33):

Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies open to view [*offen daliegt*], there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden [*verborgen*], for example, is of no interest to us. (*PI* §126)

⁵⁴ Consider the lessons we are suppose to learn from the famous parable of the cave at the beginning of Book VII of Plato's *Republic*.

On this understanding of what it is to conduct grammatical investigations, then, there is not much left over for philosophy to do after “bring[ing] words back from their metaphysical to their ordinary use” (*PI* §116), after we rid ourselves of the impulse to try to capture the transcendent hidden by explaining it with some philosophical theory.

But there is another understanding of the hidden at work in the *PI*, one to which Wittgenstein is not hostile. As he writes:

The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden [*verborgen*] because of their simplicity and familiarity [*Alltäglichkeit*]. (One cannot notice this – because it is always before one’s eyes.) The actual foundations of a human being’s inquiry do not strike him or her at all. Unless *that* fact has at some point in time struck him or her. – And this means: we fail to be struck by what, once seen, is most striking and most powerful. (*PI* §129, emphasis in the original, translation slightly altered)⁵⁵

Several ideas stand out in this thought-provoking passage.

The first is that there are aspects of things that are hidden, not by being an essence that lies behind or beneath the phenomena we investigate, but precisely by being obvious or utterly familiar. Moreover, Wittgenstein claims that these are the aspects of things that are most important and most powerful. In contrast to his strongly critical attitude about our craving for the transcendent hidden, these remarks about this second kind of hiddenness show great respect for it.⁵⁶

Another striking idea from *PI* §129 can be best brought out when it is considered in conjunction with *PI* §122. It concerns the nature of the aspects of things that are most striking and most powerful according to Wittgenstein. Although he does not elaborate them very much, he does suggest that they pertain to how our uses of words are connected by the contexts (*Zusammenhänge*) in which such uses make sense and function in human life. Although these uses are often readily intelligible to us in context, in the sense that we usually know how to respond correctly and skillfully to them (*PI* §150), it is very hard to attain a *perspicuous survey* (*Übersicht*) of the diverse ways in which words are understood and used in context. We know how to do so in practice, but have great difficulty in providing an explicit account of this sort of knowledge. As Wittgenstein writes:

⁵⁵ This second understanding of the hidden shows up already in *PI* §92, where he is focused primarily on criticizing the idea of the transcendent hidden.

⁵⁶ For readers familiar with Heidegger’s philosophy in *Being and Time*, this passage will have strong resonance. For the idea that there are hidden aspects of things in this sense that are at once most important and yet very hard to bring into focus (e.g., the world in its worldliness, the nature of being-in as such, the nature of the self, etc.) is a pervasive theme in *Being and Time*.

A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not *perspicuously survey* [*übersehen*] the use of our words. – Our grammar is lacking in this sort of synoptical character [*Übersichtlichkeit*]. – A synoptic presentation [*übersichtliche Darstellung*] produces just that understanding which consists in our “seeing connections or contexts” [*“Zusammenhänge sehen”*]. ... The concept of synoptic presentation is of fundamental significance for us. It signifies our form of presentation [*Darstellungsform*], the way in which we see things. (*PI* §122, emphases in the original, translation altered; cf. §125)

It is hard to attain a perspicuous survey of the uses of words because their aims and functioning (*PI* §5) are *context-dependent and hence open-ended* (*PI* §§11, 23), for this kind of survey requires that we take into account the *particular circumstances* in which words are used in each situation (*PI* §§154-5). There is no mechanical way of knowing in advance which aspects of particular circumstances are relevant for understanding the uses of words on each occasion.⁵⁷ What is hidden concerning the use and understanding of words, then, is not transcendent and static, but dynamic and immanent, to the phenomena with which they are connected. This is the *immanent hidden*. As Luntley writes:

What is hidden is the structure of use, not because it is something that lies behind use as an essence to be articulated and stated in a philosophical theory of meaning, but because it is a structure immanent to language use. Given its multifaceted shape, this structure is difficult to take in a perspicuous representation [better: synoptic presentation – JJK]. The aim, in removing the obstacles to this hidden, is not, however, to achieve a statement of the hidden. The aim is to achieve a clear sight of this hidden – to see things aright.⁵⁸

The translation of ‘*übersichtliche Darstellung*’ as ‘perspicuous representation’ may suggest that such a representation is something obtained from a “God’s eye view” of things. But this cannot be what Wittgenstein has in mind in using this expression. For one thing, this construal opposes the general spirit of his way of thinking, which is hostile to the craving that we have for a transcendent perspective on things that is external to any engagement in human practices (forms of life). For another, the immanent hidden is not something we can fully *represent* by explicitly articulating it, but rather something we can only *show* by *presenting* it in certain ways, e.g., by using examples or comparisons that shed light on similarities and dissimilarities among the uses of words (*PI* §130).⁵⁹ Not just this. It is a form of presentation that serves a particular purpose: It aims to show and thereby teach, through its presentation, how we can *see what is common* (*PI*

⁵⁷ Once again, Davidson illustrates this point nicely in “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”.

⁵⁸ Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, p. 51.

⁵⁹ In German, ‘*Darstellung*’ usually means presentation, arrangement, installation, etc. and has an aspect of engaged involvement on the part of the one to whom something is presented, etc. By contrast, ‘*Vorstellung*’ usually means representation or conception; the mode of engagement from the one who represents or conceives something tends to be detached or theoretical. (The matter is not so simple in Kant’s philosophy and those he influenced. But this is obviously not the place to pursue this matter.)

§72) to the use of words in contexts over time. That is, it aims to be a *synoptic (übersichtliche)* presentation.

A paradigm instance of such a presentation is Wittgenstein's remarks on games. It is evident that the significance of these remarks extends beyond phenomena of games, for he takes his consideration of these phenomena to be a reply to the objection that his method fails to articulate the essence of language-games and hence of language (*PI* §65). Indeed, it seems clear that these remarks pertain to what is involved in our understanding and use of classificatory concepts in general, whether concrete or abstract. As is well known, Wittgenstein rejects the demand that we must isolate and specify a set of necessary and sufficient features, i.e., some unique essence, that all activities must have in common if they are to be rightly classified as games. He urges us instead to *look and see* on a case-by-case basis, not think (i.e., theorize) about, whether there is any set of properties that games share; the idea of family resemblance is put forward as an anti-essentialist account of what games have in common (*PI* §§66-7).

Luntley notes that there are at least two different ways of understanding Wittgenstein's remarks here.⁶⁰ On the quietist understanding, what we classify as games is simply something that we do. We note various similarities and dissimilarities among the games we compare and that is pretty much the end of the story: "we are left with homely reminders of the complex and multifaceted way in which words are actually used", without much insight about what makes these uses of words (applications of concepts) hang together.⁶¹ This may be an appealing result to quietists who have a dogmatic understanding of what Wittgenstein's metaphilosophical remarks enjoin. But this is unsatisfactory because it assumes the false dilemma that we are forced either to do philosophy in an explanatorily reductive way, or else only to engage with philosophy so as to cure it of the problems with which it has afflicted itself, the foremost of which is its craving for generality (i.e., for the full articulation of the transcendent hidden).⁶²

There is, however, a middle ground between these options. It shows up in Luntley's proposal that there is an alternative understanding of the remarks on games available, one that illuminates how our uses of words hang together without acceding to the demand that we must explain this reductively. Because this sort of illumination is inherently context-dependent and

⁶⁰ Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, p. 78f.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁶² This is a familiar, but I would argue facile, way of understanding the metaphilosophical remarks that culminate in *PI* §133.

open-ended, it draws limits to explicitness. This alternative understanding sheds light not only on how we classify things, but on the nature of normativity in general, i.e., how our words are constrained in contexts from case to case in their applications. Although both the quietist and the more illuminating understandings deny that there must be some essentialist account of what games are in order to be rightly classified as such, the more illuminating understanding emphasizes the *primacy of seeing similarities* as a constitutive aspect of what it is to rightly classify something as such and such. As Luntley writes:

Wittgenstein is not merely critiquing conceptual essentialism but asking, “Which comes first – seeing the similarities or the patterns [of language use]?” His view is that seeing the similarities is primitive. ... To say that seeing the similarities between things is primitive is to say that the normative patterns of correct use of words emerge from the activity of seeing similarities. This is in contrast to holding that we see similarities in virtue of having grasped the transcendent patterns and applying it. This is not to deny patterns of correct use, it is only to deny that they pre-exist the activity of seeing similarities.⁶³

Two key passages in Wittgenstein’s remarks on games support this emphasis on the primacy of seeing similarities as constitutive of normativity. For they respond to the objection that unless we can set sharp boundaries, i.e., formulate explicit rules, that determine what counts as a game and what not, the games we play will be unconstrained by rules (*PI* §68). Wittgenstein writes:

How should we explain to someone what a game is? I imagine that we should describe *games* to him, and we might add: “This *and similar things* are called ‘games’.” And do we know any more about it ourselves? Is it only other people whom we cannot tell exactly what a game is? – But this is not ignorance. (*PI* §69, emphases in the original)

The key point here is expressed by the last sentence of this passage. On an intellectualist conception of what knowledge of classificatory concepts consist in, if we are entitled to claim knowledge, e.g., of what a game is, we must be able to specify the essential features that something must have if it is to count as a game. If we persist in claiming to have such knowledge and yet fail to articulate these features in a general definition, this would show (as someone like Socrates would point out) that we do not really possess this knowledge after all. More generally, on this conception of what knowledge of classificatory concepts is, resorting to the “this and similar things” locution in explaining the nature of anything is either woefully incomplete or at

⁶³ Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, p. 79. Luntley connects his emphasis on seeing similarities with the disjunctive account of perceptual experience (*ibid.*, pp. 100-5) and especially with Wittgenstein’s lengthy remarks in Part II, xi of *PI* on what is involved in seeing aspects (*ibid.*, Ch. 6). It is beyond the scope of this chapter, however, to elaborate Luntley’s rich discussion of these connections.

best only gestures at what a complete account of it could look like.⁶⁴ On this Socratic way of thinking, the use of this locution exposes our ignorance about something's nature because we cannot give a fully explicit account of its essential properties.

Wittgenstein rejects this intellectualist conception of what this sort of knowledge consists in. He argues that our inability to fully articulate what a game is does not show our ignorance about it, for such a conclusive articulation cannot be had in principle, given the inherent context-dependence of what counts as a game from occasion to occasion. What we should reject is intellectualism about what such knowledge is. He puts forward the alternative view that one can sufficiently explain what a game is by giving various examples of it, in order to get his readers to *see* why this and similar activities are called 'games':

One gives examples and intends them to be taken in a particular way. – I do not, however, mean by this that he is supposed to see in those examples that common thing which I – for some reason – was unable to express; but that he is now to *employ* those examples in a particular way. Here giving examples is not an *indirect* means of explaining – in default of a better. For any general definition can be misunderstood too. (PI §71, emphases in the original)

The last sentence anticipates his response to the paradox of interpretation in PI §201: Explanations must come to an end somewhere (see already PI §1, where he first uses a variation of the “this and similar things” locution), for otherwise we are off on an infinite regress. But the more relevant point here is that once we have exhausted our explanations (justifications), all we can do is to give examples that aim to teach our audience to see how concepts are rightly applied:

But if a person has not yet got the *concepts*, I shall teach him to use the words by means of *examples* and by *practice* [Übung]. – And when I do this I do not communicate less to him than I know myself. (PI §208, emphases in the original; cf. §144)

Giving examples does not display the possession of an inferior sort of knowledge, “a loose exercise in arm-waving that roughly indicates but cannot fully specify what ought to be said” about why something should be classified as such and such.⁶⁵ It is not ignorance to resort to the “this and similar things” locution for such purposes because our judgment that two or more things are *X* rests ultimately on our activity of seeing the similarities among them, once our explicit reasons for thinking that they are *X* are exhausted (PI §§217, 340). This activity is basic (explanatorily primitive), not the intellectualistic view that two or more things are similar only in virtue of some fully explicit account of why they are so.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The significance of seeing similarities for understanding the normativity of rule-following should be apparent. This is another striking idea that is implicit in *PI* §129 (“... we fail to be struck by what, *once seen*, is most striking and most powerful” [emphasis added – JJK]), especially when it is understood in conjunction with the other passages considered above. To be specific, when Wittgenstein reminds us that understanding and following norms are practices, he is highlighting how the normativity of norms is something that *we ourselves must continually bring about over time* (*PI* §§197-202), not something that derives from the explicit formulations of rules, captured or experienced perhaps by undergoing certain kinds of mental episodes, that supposedly predetermined how norms should be applied (*PI* §§138-40, 152-55, 188-93).⁶⁶ We continually enact and thereby effect their normativity by seeing the similarities between the aspects of past circumstances that are connected to our application of norms and those of the present that elicit the possible application of these norms (*PI* §§154, 228). As Luntley writes:

There is nothing behind the utterance of a formula that underwrites the normativity of the right way of going on: that is, there is no transcendent hidden in virtue of which going on one way rather than another is correct. The notion of the correctness of going on one way rather than another, for there is such a thing, is available in the particular circumstances. We justify one way rather than another not by subsuming it under a general theoretically articulated pattern, but by seeing the pattern in the particular case. And part of what it is to see the right development consists in the fact that the language user is an agent, a judge with the capacity to contribute to the patterns of right usage.⁶⁷

We are not passive in relation to norms, but act in ways that enable norms to have claims on us by seeing similarities – seeing connections or related contexts (*PI* §122) – between the aspects of things.

Another way to put this point is to say that we are continually *judging* whether, and if so how, norms can and should apply in connection with the relevant aspects of a particular situation. In so doing, we have a part to play in calibrating the normativity of norms with how the world is in a particular situation. It is important to emphasize that judging in this sense need not be and often is not something consciously or deliberately done, but is exhibited simply in how we cope practically with the relevant aspects of things in that situation (*PI* §201). To object that practical coping is not properly judging, because judging should be understood as a conscious or deliberate activity, assumes an intellectualistic understanding of what judging is. But Wittgenstein directly challenges the very plausibility of such an understanding in his extended

⁶⁶ See also Taylor, “To Follow a Rule”, pp. 176-8.

⁶⁷ Luntley, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Judgement*, p. 57.

discussion of rule-following. Someone who makes this objection cannot, therefore, take its plausibility for granted because this is exactly what is at issue here. Once we jettison the intellectualistic understanding of judging, it becomes clear that judging is something that we do all the time in the course of living human lives, primarily and usually as an implicit or necessary aspect of many of the other things that we do (*PI* §§25, 31, 224-5, 241-2). To judge in this sense involves engaging in *bedrock* practices that outrun any explanation (explicit justification) of why they are correctly or incorrectly performed (*PI* §§217-8).

We are now also better placed to explain why Wittgenstein's remarks on games are a paradigm instance of what he calls a *synoptic presentation*. Although we have trouble attaining a perspicuous survey (a fully explicit articulation) of why and how a norm applies on *all* the occasions on which it does over time (*PI* §125), we can nevertheless *show* how normativity is immanent to our conformity to linguistic and non-linguistic norms on each occasion by using perspicuous examples like games, sign-posts, the proper continuation of an arithmetic function, etc. Once we gain the insight (are "reminded") that normativity is something that we ourselves must continually effect over time in response to relevant aspects of particular circumstances, we acquire a *synoptic* presentation of the nature of normativity in general. That is, we come to *see aright* the immanent hidden (*PI* §129). A synoptic presentation of the nature of normativity contrasts strongly with its representation from a "God's eye" point of view by taking the inherently context-dependent and open-ended character of rule-following into account. It shows, so to speak, the "how" of normativity – the way in which we enable norms to make claims on us and bind us from occasion to occasion – but cannot fully specify the "what" of normativity – i.e., give a fully explicit theoretical articulation of its nature that can transcend its contingency. It is in this manner that the concept of a synoptic presentation is of fundamental significance: It illuminates a distinctive form of presentation, the way in which we come to see the immanent hidden (*PI* §122).⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Although Luntley does not make this point in the way that I do here, his reading of *PI* clearly implies it.

5.4 THE SOCIAL CONSTITUTION OF NORMATIVITY

In light of my sympathetic sketch above of Luntley's account of the nature of normativity, it should not be surprising that I find much of it to be illuminating and persuasive. But this endorsement would seem to stand in tension with my defense of the social constitution of the human individual, given Luntley's forthright critique of communalism about the normativity of rule-following. I will argue in this section that not only is there no tension between these commitments, but that Luntley's understanding of his account of normativity as strongly individualist is compelling only when set against the understanding of the social as IPIA. Once we jettison the latter, I will show how his account of normativity actually coalesces with the Heideggerian conception of the social constitution of the individual.

I begin by considering whether Luntley's critique of communalism also applies to Meredith Williams's defense of the "community view" of normativity, a task that I have deliberately postponed for present purposes. This defense is worth examining in virtue of its nuance and emphasis in particular on the significance of learning for normativity, something on which most defenders of the "community view" insufficiently focus. At first glance, it seems that Williams's position also falls into the target range of Luntley's critique. Like other communalists, Williams highlights *PI* §§185-242 (especially §§198-219) as expressing a line of thought that supports a "community view" of rule-following. According to Williams, this view has four important tenets.⁶⁹ (1) We need to change the typical way in which we consider the nature of rule-following, for this way leads us to try to isolate certain sorts of mental states or else appeal to interpretations as the source of normativity. (2) Training into customs or social practices is the way in which we come to follow rules. (3) Meaning is a social phenomenon and thus the individual cannot be radically (socially) isolated from the community. (4) Once the individual is trained in the correct performance of customs or social practices, he or she has learned to master certain techniques, i.e., certain ways of doing things that exhibit a normatively structured understanding of them.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ M. Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning*, p. 167f.

⁷⁰ The fact that Williams takes customs and *social* practices to be interchangeable phenomena or concepts is grist for Luntley's mill here. Taylor also makes this assumption without argument in "To Follow a Rule", p. 173f.

As we will see below, the endorsement of these tenets does not as such necessarily imply a commitment to communalism, provided that they are qualified in certain ways. What renders them, especially (2) and (3), into an instance of communalism is the further construal that these tenets are only intelligible in terms of *interpersonal interactions*. This seems to be what Williams affirms in the following passages:

The very logic of actions, of obeying a rule, presupposes a context of structure, and that is provided by the actual harmonious interactions of a group of people. ... That structure is a social structure, that is, the dynamic interactions of a group of people in sustaining certain regularities, customs, and patterns of action over time.⁷¹

This appeal to the harmonious interactions of a group of people as that which grounds the normativity of rules gives us initial reason to think that Williams understands the social along the lines of IPIA. This seems to be confirmed when Williams asserts that

the very idea of normativity, and so the structure within which the distinction between correct and incorrect can be drawn, cannot get a foothold unless the practice is a social one. ... Wittgenstein's point is that only a social structure can provide the context within which objects can be used as standards and representations. For the defeasibility of our judgments, that is, that judgment can be incorrect, can only get a hold in our being able to contrast the actions of the individual with the actions of the community.⁷²

It is passages like these that lead Luntley, understandably, to read Williams as espousing communalism about the normativity of rule-following.

Unlike Kripke or Bloor, however, Williams is careful to emphasize that we should not conceive communal consensus as static or overly harmonious, but more dynamically as the relatively stable "bedrock" (*PI* §217) on which individuals act in accordance with normative standards. Bedrock practices are performances that are right without needing justifications (*PI* §§219, 289); their performances stop the regress of interpretations that unavoidably looms if one assumes the necessity of an intellectualist understanding of rule-following. This emphasis on the centrality of bedrock practices clarifies the sort of agreement that must be in place in order for rule-following to be possible (*PI* §241): What human beings agree on concerns the things they all *do* that are right without needing justifications (e.g., how to understand the gesture of pointing with one's finger, basic judgments of sameness, or pain behavior, etc.), not opinions that can be made explicit and hence ones for which justifications may be asked. That human beings agree in their bedrock practices cannot mean, therefore, that this agreement can consist in a majority or even unanimity of opinions. As Williams argues:

⁷¹ M. Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning*, p. 169.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

We have standards only *in virtue* of group harmony and *against the background* of group harmony, but the standards themselves do not refer to, nor are described in terms of, group harmony. It is important to see that whatever is meant by “following a rule”, it cannot be captured by a description of actual practice. The community view does not provide a schema for analyzing normative expressions in terms of what people do or are disposed to do.⁷³

Williams, then, rejects the simplistic conception of the community that Kripke’s and Bloor’s readings of Wittgenstein put forward. Nevertheless, it is clear that she is committed to defending the crucial role that the community plays in the constitution of normativity. This is what Luntley takes issue with in reading Williams as a (non-reductive) communalist about rule-following. If his reading is right, her position would not be able to avoid his devastating critique of communalism as either question-begging or redundant for understanding the nature of normativity.⁷⁴

I want now to show, however, that this reading is mistaken because it does not capture Williams’s best thinking about the way in which normativity is social or, as I prefer to characterize it, socially constituted. I think, therefore, that her position is best interpreted as defending a “socially constituted” view of normativity, which is the third understanding of the “community view” alluded to in passing above, not a communalist view thereof. The task of understanding properly the social constitution of normativity has implications beyond the issue of how we should understand the thought of the later Wittgenstein on rule-following, but pertains more generally to how exactly normativity is central to the social constitution of the human individual. Discussing this will also show how it connects directly with the Heideggerian conception of this constitution that I articulated and defended in Ch. 2.

At the core of the socially constituted view of normativity is the significance of *learning through training*. Textually speaking, it is clear that Wittgenstein holds that this process is one of the two key elements needed for dissolving the apparent problem that we have in understanding

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 176f., emphases in the original. Cf. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*: “And does this mean, e.g., that the definition of ‘same’ would be this: same is what all or most human beings with one voice take for the same? – Of course not. For of course I don’t make use of the agreement of human beings to affirm identity. What criterion do you use, then? None at all.” (Part VII, §40) See also Stroud, *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*, pp. 84-94, for a forceful critique of understanding the “community view” in terms of conformity to consensus.

⁷⁴ In fact, her initial argument for the “community view” (M. Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning*, p. 175f.) does seem to beg the question at least against Baker and Hacker’s individualism about rule-following, which is her target in that context.

the nature of normativity (see especially *PI* §198, but also §§5-6, 189-90, 206, 208). His most direct statement of the centrality of learning through training is given elsewhere as follows:

To what extent can the function of language be described? If someone has not mastered a language, I may bring him to a mastery of it by training. To someone who has mastered it, I may remind him of the kind and manner of training, or describe this to him; for a particular purpose; using thus already a technique of the language.

To what extent can the function of a rule be described? Someone who is master of none, I can only train.⁷⁵

The reminders about what we learn through training draw attention to a number of important points. First, such learning takes place at the level of *bedrock practices*, where justifications (explanations) run out and we are simply taught (trained) to do what one does in that situation. This is what stops the threat of the regress of interpretations from occurring (*PI* §§217-9). Second, what we learn through training are not further instructions in the form of explicit rules but *techniques*, i.e., skills that we perform in doing things (*PI* §201; cf. §150). Otherwise, the regress of interpretations would not be stopped because then the question of how to correctly understand further instructions (explanations, justifications) would arise once again. We perform these techniques “blindly” (*PI* §219) only in the sense that we do not need to reflect consciously about what to do and how to do so, not that we act as mindless automata without any sense of why or how well we perform these techniques.

These two points are familiar in the literature and should not require further elaboration and defense. Williams’s position diverges from orthodox communalism, however, by further emphasizing that the point of learning bedrock practices through training is not primarily corrective, but aims rather at the *inculcation of a shared sense of the obvious* among teachers and initiate learners.⁷⁶ Taking this point into account presents an alternative account of the normativity of rule-following that deemphasizes its policing character. We can elaborate this account in terms of two stages: the first is that of learning through training, the second that of autonomous rule-following.

At the first stage, there is no doubt that the teaching and learning of bedrock practices are interpersonally interactive and corrective, provided that these features are understood in a

⁷⁵ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, Part VI, §31; cf. §§16-9, translation slightly altered in consultation with the original German. As discussed above, the other key element is repeatability over stretches of time.

⁷⁶ M. Williams, *Wittgenstein, Mind and Meaning*, pp. 180-2 and 201-6. Although she does not elaborate this point in the way that I choose to do in what follows, it is the source of insights for my remarks.

particular way. For example, when we teach a young child how to count the natural numbers sequence, we simply correct her attempt to count correctly without further explanation; we just drill her to count in the right way. And we do this with all sorts of very basic capacities that we seek to instill in young children, such as teaching them how to identify colors and shapes, how to hold and use certain tools, how to be polite by uttering certain words or expressions when the circumstances call for performing such actions, etc. (Wittgenstein's emphasis in *PI* §6 on the importance of ostensive teaching of words and its contrast with ostensive definition is much to the point here.)

But it is crucial to notice that the teaching and learning of bedrock practices do not involve knowledge (justificatory) claims, except in the uninformative sense that once the learner has mastered the skills in question, she knows then that 9 comes after 8, or that you hold a pencil or a spoon in *this* way, or that you normally say "Thank you" after someone gives you something you asked for, etc. For the learner, it is clear that such know-how depends on the prior mastery of the skills in question, not the other way around, for it makes no sense for someone to claim to possess such knowledge and yet fail to demonstrate it when actually called upon to do so. Knowing how to count the natural number sequence consists simply in doing it right, not in coming up with some independent justification for why 9 comes after 8, etc., in the sense of supplying a proof or evidence of its correctness.

One might think here, understandably, that it is the teacher who provides the justification for the correctness of the initiate learner's actions. It is one of Williams's insights to emphasize that this thought is also mistaken. For while the teacher's demonstration of how (continually) to perform an action is the standard of correctness, this demonstration is *not* the *justification* of this action. The purpose of correcting the actions of the initiate learner is to bring her into conformity with the practices of the community: to train her into its practices, not to justify her actions. Until this is done, the initiate learner is not even in the position of understanding, let alone questioning, the rightness or wrongness of what she has learned to do. The proper response to her question or doubt about how (continually) to perform a bedrock action, or why it is the one that she should perform in a certain circumstance, is not an explanation (justification) of why an action is the correct one, but more training (drilling). The aim of training bedrock practices is to make it *obvious* (*selbstverständlich*: a matter of course [*PI* §238]) to the learner that this is the right thing to do when certain circumstances arise, i.e., to make what she does in those circumstances

become *second nature* to her. In short, there is no concern with justification either for the initiate learner or for the teacher in the learning or teaching of bedrock practices.

This understanding of the significance of learning through training avoids Luntley's critique of communalism as either question-begging or redundant. Such learning is not question-begging because the role of other people is not justificatory, but *instructional*. The infinite regress that looms in communalism, according to which justificatory authority is grounded *solely* in other people's assessments and sanction of the correctness of one's rule-following, does not arise because it is learning bedrock practices through training that *equips* one to do the things that one must be able to do in order for issues of justification to be relevant at all. Thus, it is only once you have learned what pointing with your finger accomplishes in the presence of other people that there can be questions that intelligibly arise about what exactly you are trying to draw their attention to in pointing, and what possible justificatory role this pointing is playing in what one says and does, etc. By the same token, learning through training is clearly not redundant because one must be able to exercise certain very basic capacities competently in order for other people's correction of one's behavior to be intelligible (*PI* §§238, 241-2). If one could not, e.g., count the natural number sequence correctly, it would not make sense for others to correct one's attempt to perform simple arithmetical functions like addition, etc.

Williams is thus right to claim that the distinction between correct and incorrect performance cannot "get a foothold" unless we have learned first to perform bedrock practices, provided that we understand that what it is to "get a foothold" means having been trained to perform such practices competently and not being checked continually by other people, even after the training has ended. Accordingly, once training is finished and the learner displays reliable mastery of the skills in question (the second stage of rule-following), there is no further need for the sort of continually corrective interpersonal instruction (interaction) that took place during the period of learning through training. One has become a competent and autonomous follower of rules by having learned to correctly perform certain actions as the obvious thing to do in particular circumstances. As Williams writes:

The community is not required in order to police the actions and judgments of all members, but in order to sustain the articulated structure within which understanding and judging can occur and against which error and mistake can be discerned.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176f.

Though a community is required to create the structured context within which we name, decorate walls, obey rules, and the like, we, once we have mastered language, are blind to the community in that we act and judge without checking with others. The individual thus has an autonomy that is not subject to community check; she is as able to recognize error as anyone else.⁷⁸

The socially constituted view of normativity deemphasizes, then, the importance of correction and policing as the primary way in which others are significant for rule-following. Rather, normativity has a social basis because it is other people who first train initiate learners to do things correctly without justification, i.e., train them to see what are the obvious things they should do in certain circumstances, which is what puts them in the position to engage in norm-governed practices at all. *It is learning through training that fundamentally connects the individual to the community, not the latter's policing of the former.* Communalism goes wrong by overgeneralizing the importance of correction from those rather specific circumstances of rule-following to all of them. The checking of the correctness of one's rule-following, whether by others or oneself, is mostly out of place and does not figure centrally in the performance of everyday practices, except in the case of initiate learners and those who claim to possess expertise in rarified areas of knowledge, where it does indeed make sense to verify that they are entitled to claim such expertise. I conclude, therefore, that Williams's conception of the social constitution of normativity – when properly understood – does not fall into Luntley's target range as a version of communalism.

Furthermore, the socially constituted view of normativity can readily take in stride Luntley's emphasis on the primacy of seeing the similarities from case to case for the constitution of normativity. As Williams writes:

Through training in the use of the technique for continuing or proceeding correctly, the novice comes to *see* the activity as rule-guided, which means he *sees* a certain outcome as necessary. Without judgments of sameness, judgments of necessity are impossible. ... Initiate learning is a matter of learning what is obvious, not as expressed in explicit propositional form but as expressed in the learner's trained reactions. Mastery of the technique of going on or applying the rule is the vehicle for coming to *see things as obvious*.⁷⁹

There is thus no incompatibility between the social basis of learning through training and the primacy of seeing the similarities from case to case on the part of the individual in performing rule-governed activities. In fact, it is the training that first teaches the initiate learner which particular aspects of a situation are the *relevant* similarities to which he should pay heed.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 209f., emphases added.

Conversely, it is the activity of seeing the similarities from case to case that enables the individual who has learned through training to *extend* appropriately what she has learned into future possible applications of the rule or norm in question. For a competent rule-follower does not only correctly perform actions that she has been trained to perform before, but must be able to perform them in novel circumstances in a rule-governed way. Indeed, the ability to show that one can account for novel aspects of circumstances in one's rule-following is a necessary requirement for manifesting that one has correctly understood the rule at all. The rule or norm is binding only when it is acknowledged and applied from occasion to occasion by the individual rule follower (*PI* §§154, 201). Learning to follow rules or conform to norms through training, and the individual's autonomy in applying them from case to case, are thus mutually implicating. Even in cases where the application of a rule or norm in a particular situation demands going against the results of past applications (i.e., going against what past training regarding how one should apply the rule or norm in question has taught one to do), it is one's prior training that serves as the background against which present applications that go against past ones become intelligible. In sum, Luntley is wrong to dismiss the social constitution of normativity in two ways. (1) There is a way in which rule-following is socially constituted that does not consist in its being continually checked by others. (2) Learning through training is crucial in teaching rule-followers to see which particular aspects (out of many) of a situation are relevant as far as their similarities to other ones in the past and the present are concerned.

This understanding of Wittgenstein's remarks on rule-following connects now with my appropriation of Heidegger's conception of human social constitution in Ch. 2 in the following way. I noted there that the normativity of our social constitution shows up, primarily and usually (*zunächst und zumeist*), under the guise of the *normalization* of our everyday understanding of our activities in the world by the public norms supplied and prescribed by the *one* (*das Man*). We take for granted without self-consciousness in our everyday existence, as our "default" way of dealing with entities in the world, including ourselves and other people, that there are *normal* ways for entities and people to be what and how they are. The use of 'normal' here only expresses secondarily its statistical sense as repeated ways of understanding or doing things over time. Rather, its basic use is properly normative in that it points out what are the correct and incorrect, or at least the acceptable and unacceptable, ways of understanding and doing things

from occasion to occasion. The statistical sense of ‘normal’ flows from its normative sense, not the other way around.

I also noted, though, that we should distinguish the idea of normativity from that of normalization. Wittgenstein’s reflections on the nature of normativity, in particular, on the significance of learning through training for rule-following, enable us to see how normativity and normalization can be related and yet distinct. Through such learning, we are taught how to do things correctly and incorrectly without justification. In other words, our bedrock actions become normalized; they form thereby a more or less stable condition or basis (bedrock) on which more complex or sophisticated actions rest, along with the self-understandings with which they are interwoven. Through such learning and the possibilities that it opens up, then, we get a grip on the very idea of normativity. Our initial normalization (through training by others) brings about, both as a matter of causation and as a matter of understanding, our grasp of normativity. But as Wittgenstein argues, and Luntley following his lead does well to elaborate, we cannot be wholly passive with regard to the bindingness of rules or norms on us, especially once the process of learning through training has finished. Rather, rules or norms can only bind us when we see similarities between their past applications and aspects of our current situation that can call for their present application. Once we have been trained (acculturated) into bedrock practices, rules and norms bind us only in virtue of individual rule-followers’ activity of seeing such similarities. As Williams puts it (and in so doing she expresses her agreement here with Luntley):

Instead of seeing actions as flowing from the sign [i.e., the rule], we need to see the mutually supporting interconnections between the sign and ways of acting. How we act fixes the rule. The rule is made a guide, or standard, for action *by* our acting towards it in ways that are fixed by our training. ... [Moreover] an object [i.e., a rule (e.g., a signpost)] becomes a standard or norm in virtue of the way in which that object is used. The attitudes, judgments, and actions of the participants in the practice hold the object in place as a standard.⁸⁰

In other words, what we do, along with the self-understandings that render what we do intelligible, *remains normalized only insofar as we continually let the rules or norms bind us in particular circumstances by seeing similarities (and dissimilarities) in their applications.* Normalization is not a static condition, but requires ongoing conformity to norms from occasion to occasion on the part of those who engage in the practices through which such norms make sense and are binding.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200, emphasis in the original.

Putting it this way risks making what is in view here sound overly voluntary, however. Primarily and usually, we simply understand and do things (for better or worse) in the customary ways that we have learned through training and, more generally, in our upbringing, because we see them as the obviously correct or incorrect things to do. In short, although we initially acquire the very idea of normativity by being normalized, normativity is the *more basic* idea or phenomenon at work.

5.5 CONCLUSION

I have argued in this chapter that Wittgenstein's reflection on the nature of rule-following (normativity) in his later philosophy is significant for understanding the social constitution of the human individual in a number of ways. First, this reflection enables us to clarify the precise sense in which he can be understood as advocating a "community view" – better, a *socially constituted* view – of normativity, one that breaks with the orthodox communalist understanding of how normativity has a social basis. It is the learning of bedrock practices that fundamentally ties the individual to the community in which he or she is raised, not the possibility that other people can always check (monitor and sanction) the correctness of his or her rule-following, especially once the process of learning bedrock practices has been successfully completed. Although there is no doubt that other people perform a vital function in human social life by articulating and (when appropriate) critically evaluating the correctness of one's rule-following, these activities cannot *constitute* the normativity of rule-following because this normativity must be already available if these activities are to do the work that they aim to accomplish.

Second, this clarification helps us in turn to see how a socially constituted view of normativity can not just deflect, but more importantly, align itself with Luntley's devastating critique of orthodox communalism, without jettisoning the insistence that normativity has a necessarily social basis. Although Luntley does well to criticize orthodox communalism about rule-following, he fails to envisage another way in which the social constitution of the individual is crucial for normativity. Because he can only conceive the significance of the social for rule-following in corrective (policing) terms, he wrongly infers that the social can have no further

relevance for the normativity of rule-following once he succeeds in undermining the orthodox communalist understanding of it. This reveals a blind spot on his part concerning how the social is significant for the normativity of rule-following in *non-policing* terms. Third and finally, once we properly understand the nature of the social constitution of the individual, doing so helps us make more precise sense of the sort of normativity that Heidegger has in view when he claims that the *one* prescribes and regulates our standard interpretation (*Auslegung* [SZ §32]) of the world and each other (SZ 127, 129).⁸¹ Our everyday ongoing absorption in the familiar public norms into which we have been trained normalizes the various roles that entities and people play in their relevant referential nexuses of significance. But this sort of normalization is not a static condition in relation to which we rule-followers are passive. Rather, we have an active part to play in constituting its normative bindingness on our self-understandings and activities. Although the social constitution of the individual is normalized, this normalization also provides the possibility that we can alter its content and force on us from occasion to occasion in the course of living our lives.

⁸¹ We should not run together Heidegger's conception of interpretation with Wittgenstein's. The fact that the same word ('interpretation') is used is an artifact of translation into English. Interpretation (*Auslegung*) for Heidegger makes explicit and appropriates what is already tacitly grasped in an understanding of things that is normatively structured; it does not confer meaningfulness on a constellation of things that are, in themselves, normatively inert. By contrast, interpretation (*Deutung*) for Wittgenstein is the act or activity that supposedly confers meaningfulness on things that are in themselves normatively inert. Indeed, Wittgenstein's conception of rule-following converges quite closely with Heidegger's conception of interpretation (*Auslegung*): the "circumspective-hermeneutic *as*" of interpretation.

CONCLUSION. THE SOCIAL IN THE INDIVIDUAL

The central claim for which this dissertation has argued is that the human individual is socially constituted in virtue of his or her distinctive way of understanding and acting in the world. More specifically, on the basis of an interpretive appropriation of Heidegger's conception of human social existence in *Being and Time*, I argued that the human individual is socially constituted in virtue of his or her normative (in the first instance, normalized) understanding of the world, i.e., his or her training into and (by and large) ongoing conformity with the public norms of the *one* (*das Man*). For this training into and general conformity with such norms is what makes intelligible, primarily and mostly, the typical way in which the human individual understands the world on each particular occasion, including how he or she relates to or interacts with other people as they show up and make sense as aspects of the world. In short, this dissertation has argued that the social ineluctably permeates the very way in which the human individual understands and acts in the world as an individual agent; being with others in terms of the public norms that the *one* makes available is a constitutive condition of human existence that comes prior (in the order of understanding) to the human individual's interactions with others. Having established this conclusion, we put ourselves in the position to adapt Pettit's formulation of the thesis of social holism (his label for the thesis of the social constitution of the individual) as follows:

Individual human beings are not entirely self-sufficient. (1) They must depend upon one another for the possession and exercise of some basic capacity – namely, the capacity to *be-in-the-world* (*In-der-Welt-sein*) – that is central to the flourishing of the human being. (2) Furthermore, no one can come to possess and exercise this basic capacity – no one can be properly human – except by *sharing the world, not primarily by interacting with other human beings*.

The key move in establishing the social constitution of the human individual, then, is to show that such an individual cannot acquire and exercise some basic capacity that is central to his or her flourishing as fully human absent her social constitution.

Once this thesis is established, I then argued that the attempt to understand the nature of human sociality solely in terms of modes of interpersonal interaction is inadequate. I engaged two groups of philosophers who dissent from this judgment. The first group work in the European continental tradition and often criticize the Heideggerian conception of human social

existence as failing to appreciate the positive aspects of this existence. Although these critics readily affirm the social constitution of the individual, they often object that Heidegger's understanding of this constitution fails to appreciate the positive contribution that interpersonal interactions can make in various ways to human life because this understanding (according to these critics) unfairly disparages them as anonymous, shallow, and conformist. This dissertation (especially Ch. 2) defuses the force of this objection by arguing that this objection stems from a common but simplistic interpretation of Heidegger's view of social normativity (the *one*) in *Being and Time*. I argued that once we put this existentialist interpretation of this text in its rightful place, no more no less, a proper understanding of the Heideggerian conception of the social can not only make room for the positive significance of the social, but also illuminate the basis on which this significance rests. Thus, the primary mistake of these critics is that they have a reductive understanding of Heidegger's insights about the nature of social normativity and its multifaceted ramifications.

The second group of philosophers who focus on the importance of interpersonal interactions work in the Anglo-American analytic tradition and seek to analyze or appeal to them in order to account for specific phenomena or resolve certain philosophical problems that interest them. In contrast to those in the first group, who emphasize the *positive value* of interpersonal interactions for human flourishing, those in the second group are motivated by *explanatory* concerns in their conception and use of the idea of interpersonal interactions. From the standpoint developed in this dissertation, the main problem that troubles philosophers in the second group is not that they dissent from any particular conception of the social constitution of the individual, whether Heideggerian or otherwise, but that they do not even have this constitution in view at all as something significant for their own philosophical concerns. Part II of this dissertation showed at great length, however, that their failure to see that this constitution can matter for their work significantly diminishes the persuasiveness of their accounts of social-*cum*-collective phenomena, or of their attempts to appeal to the social in order to satisfactorily handle certain philosophical problems.

Although this dissertation has been critical for the most part of interpersonal interactionism (IPIA) as forming the core of an adequate account of human sociality, we do well to remind ourselves of an important point that was emphasized in Ch. 5 in connection with its discussion of the normativity of rule-following. This is that our activity of understanding and

following norms or rules are practices in the sense that it is *each of us as individuals*, whether consciously or not, who must *continually enact and sustain the norms that bind us on particular occasions*. On this view, we each continually enact and thereby effect the normativity of norms or rules by seeing the similarities between the aspects of past circumstances connected to our application of norms or rules on those occasions and those of the present that elicit the possible continual application of those norms or rules. Consequently, there is not only room for single individuals to play their part in effecting normativity by seeing (understanding) these aspects and acting in response to them in context, but this normativity cannot bind anything or anyone unless it is taken up and effected by individuals from occasion to occasion in particular circumstances. To think otherwise amounts to a mistaken return to some form of Platonism about how norms bind us or else to an unjustified reification of this process (cf. the “reified community” view of normativity). Because much of what we do involves seeing (understanding) situational aspects and acting in response to them that are themselves features of interpersonal interactions, the attitudes and activities of individuals are vital to sustaining the normativity of norms or rules as expressed in and through such interactions. It is just that the normative (normalized) intelligibility of these attitudes and activities can never be something that single individuals generate, all on their own, through interactions with one another. In short, there continues to be an important role for individuals to play with regard to the bindingness of norms or rules, some of which does indeed occur in and through interpersonal interactions, *provided that* the latter are understood to be intelligible in terms of the *sites* to which they inherently belong and apart from which they would not have the normative (normalized) significance that they do.

While this standpoint affirms Pettit’s understanding of what *holistic individualism* in social ontology means, it casts it now under a different light. Recall that this position (as Pettit specifies it) holds that there is no incompatibility, on the one hand, between insisting that the existence and causal relevance of aggregate social regularities or social forces do not compromise intentional psychology and individual agency, and also maintaining, on the other hand, that individual agents’ social relations with one another are partly constitutive of their very capacity to be thinking intentional agents. According to my Heideggerian modification of Pettit’s formulation of holistic individualism, however, we must transform our understanding of these social relations so that their intelligibility is no longer understood as something constituted through interpersonal interactions, but as something that flows from their *social constitution*, i.e.,

their normative (normalized) way of understanding their situations and activities in accordance with the public norms that enable them to share a common world. On this view, holistic individualism comes to be the view that individual human beings are socially constituted without implying that they are thereby under the control of social-structural regularities or social forces in ways that threaten their autonomy. It succeeds thus in dislodging some entrenched but mistaken assumptions that we often make regarding the social character of human existence. More positively, the conception of the social constitution of the human individual that informs holistic individualism enables us to make genuine progress in carrying out the difficult but worthwhile project of understanding what it is to be human.

APPENDIX A. THE DISTINCTNESS OF PETTIT'S INDIVIDUALISM IN RELATION TO FIVE QUESTIONS IN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Pettit emphasizes that his conception of non-reductive individualism in social ontology is distinguishable from five other questions (or theses) that often arise and mislead in the debate between individualism and collectivism (137-43). These are: (I) the holism thesis; (II) the reciprocal influence thesis; (III) the revisability thesis; (IV) the dispensability thesis; and (V) the inevitability thesis. I will very briefly discuss his treatment of them as a further way of specifying the distinctiveness of Pettit's individualism.

(I) The holist thesis concerns the "horizontal" issue in social ontology, i.e., that of whether our social relations with one another are constitutive of the possession and exercise of some basic capacity that is central for being a human individual. This issue must be distinguished from the "vertical" one in social ontology concerning collectivism and individualism. If the holist thesis is true (and Pettit argues that it is), then, this claim is non-committal with regard to the "vertical" issue. Consequently, one can be a non-reductive individualist in Pettit's sense without also being a social atomist, contrary to conventional wisdom about the supposedly inherent connection between individualism and social atomism (see 1.1 and 1.2 for discussion).

(II) The reciprocal influence thesis holds that collective entities can affect the attitudes and behavior of individual agents and vice versa. As examined in the first half of 1.2, the truth of this thesis does not imply that the agency of individual human beings is somehow undermined. Once we understand how there can be no conflict of separate levels of causal powers between the intentional and the social-structural, the thought that there is reciprocal influence between collective entities and individual agents is harmless. Collectivists are wrong to believe that the capacity of collective entities to constrain the exercise of individual agency implies that the latter is compromised. But reductive individualists are also mistaken in insisting that the exercise of individual agency tells the complete story about the nature of human social life.

(III) The revisability thesis is that certain results discovered in the social sciences or in everyday communal life can challenge individual agents by compelling them to significantly revise their prior assumptions or self-understandings. The idea is that individuals may be pressured to change their beliefs and alter their actions even if doing so goes against their

judgments, ethical or otherwise.¹ No doubt individuals can be so affected in their lives, as we can see in the course of human history. But it does not follow that the intentional psychology inherent to individual agency is somehow fundamentally disabled on account of this sort of coerced revision of individuals' beliefs and actions. For once again there is no sense in which higher-level regularities or forces directly cause the production of this sort of lower-level effects in people's intentional psychology. The individual agents in such circumstances still exercise at least the freedom of thought, at least if they have some moral conscience. It is just that the scope of their freedom, especially political freedom, is much more regimented and hence limited. In order to take the truth of the revisability thesis as seriously undermining individual agency, it must preclude the possibility of intentional psychology *in general*, not just restrict the scope of individual agency especially with regard to its exercise in politics. But there is no such entailment in light of the truth of the revisability thesis; its truth does not undermine or fundamentally compromise the intentional psychology that informs individual agency. (Even when Pettit does not explicitly draw the following lesson, what this resolution shows is the confusion that results when we conflate the understanding of collectivism as this view figures in political philosophy with its understanding as a position in social ontology. Unfortunately, this conflation seems to have bedeviled much of the debate concerning "individualism and holism" that ensued from Popper's polemics against what he perceived as totalitarian ways of thinking and social-political arrangements.²)

(IV) The dispensability thesis is that

while any socially significant event is going to come about because of the actions of this or that individual or set of individuals, still no individual makes an indispensable contribution. Had that individual not existed or not acted appropriately, still the phenomenon in question would have occurred. It is either the case that the individual's contribution was not a necessary part of the total cause of the phenomenon or that in the absence of that individual some other agent would have taken her place. (140)

There are two specific versions of this thesis. First, Durkheim argues that the relative invariance of social patterns shows that no activities of a single individual or set of individuals are required to necessitate the existence of such patterns. Second, even if social events or phenomena do

¹ An extreme example of this is Stanley Milgram's set of experiments. But a more plausible set of examples may be people's unwitting tolerance of doctrines and policies in fascist or totalitarian regimes like in Nazi Germany, the sort of political collectivism practiced in eastern Europe after the end of World War II, or theocratic states like in Afghanistan under the Taliban.

² Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies; The Poverty of Historicism*. For a useful and critical clarification of this confusion, see esp. Lukes, "Methodological Individualism Reconsidered".

depend on the activities of a single individual or set of individuals for their occurrence (e.g., that of a social movement or political revolution), those events or phenomena would have happened anyway without the contribution of that individual or set of individuals because there would have been some other individual(s) available to occupy the causal role of these individual(s).³ Do these two versions of the dispensability thesis undermine individual agency and intentional psychology?

Pettit denies that they do. Regarding the first version of the thesis, the reason is that someone like Durkheim could argue that the activities of individuals do not matter for the occurrence of the social patterns he is interested to highlight because such patterns are only discernable at a high level of abstraction from concrete human activities. The illusion that such patterns can still exist and have the significance that they do, absent the contributions of individual agents, stems from the nature of statistical analysis. For it is a truism of the science of statistics that statistics characterize only a *population* of individuals, not any single individual. In other words, Durkheim can justify the dispensability thesis only by conflating two levels of organization and analysis that ought to be held distinct. The fact that statistical analysis of the properties characterizing a population does not require the existence or activities of any single individuals, or even a set of particular individuals, does not imply that the patterns discerned in such analysis can exist above and beyond the existence and activities of *all* the individuals that compose a population. Once again, Durkheim is simply reifying statistical phenomena, treating them as if they were self-subsistent things, as opposed to phenomena that can be revealed only by using a certain theoretical vocabulary and methodology.

Regarding the second version of the dispensability thesis, one can respond that it too reifies the phenomena it aims to characterize. What is reified in this case are not social statistics, but social forces. But the same sort of critical response given to the first version of this thesis can be provided. We can grant that it is contingent that someone like Caesar, Napoleon, or Hitler happened to be in the world at a certain point in human history and caused certain sequences of events to occur. But it took a certain talent and set of political skills, for better or worse for human history, for them to have caused the events that they did. It is quite doubtful that such events could have occurred absent their individual talents and skills. Their decisions and doings

³ This specification of the dispensability thesis, if true, would undercut the force of the so-called “great men” theory of human history.

were not necessary to cause these events, but only insofar as no single individual can bring about, just on his or her own, the *totality* of the set of social conditions that provided the context for his or her decisions and doings. Such a totality, and the complex of social forces that it engendered, cannot as such cause a *particular* sequence of events to occur, though it is certainly plausible to argue that this totality and complex of social forces *set the stage* for the occurrence of this sequence. In any case, even if this second version of the dispensability thesis were true, its truth could not possibly override intentional psychology and individual agency.

Lastly, (V) the inevitability thesis is that

various features of social life limit the opportunities available to individual agents – they are structural constraints on feasible options – in such a way that it is inevitable that agents will act so as to sustain certain social constancies. (141f.)

As far as I understand it, this thesis is a social-structural version of the revisability thesis.⁴ That is, it claims that life in a society or community is so regimented that the actual freedom exercised by its members does not really amount to much (e.g., the sort of freedom exercised within tight-knit premodern communities). In other words, the range of opportunities available to its members as they live their lives is so limited that this range makes it inevitable that such members cannot help but sustain the regimented way of life embodied by such a society or community. I suppose the best analogy to a sort of communal existence along these lines is that of a bee or ant colony. But the very fact that I must resort to an analogy with the social existence of non-human animals already gives the lie to the application of the inevitability thesis to human social life. For it is simply hard to imagine how human beings could live in accordance with the vision of society or community that is envisaged by the inevitability thesis. Human beings are cultural beings. But living as acculturated beings always involves subjection to norms of belief and conduct. Human beings are, therefore, beings who are immersed in social norms in their lives. But these norms are not in general grounded in their biology, or at least most of their normativity does not have such a basis. Given this fact, it is always in principle possible for human beings to revise or even violate the norms according to which they live. The exercise of freedom is always inherent in the subjection to norms, especially to social norms, on the part of human beings. If all this is true, and I submit that it is, the inevitability thesis must be grossly implausible if not outright false.

⁴ It is unclear to me why Pettit distinguishes it from the revisability and dispensability theses.

In any case, Pettit's main concern has been to show how none of these five issues (theses) should be identified with the way in which he argues the vertical issue in social ontology should be understood: as the issue of whether social-structural regularities or forces can override the autonomy that rightly has a central place in our understanding of individual agency and intentional psychology. And it should be clear by now how Pettit's holistic individualism (and, for that matter, Little's methodological localism) can accommodate the grain of truth in collectivism and methodological individualism without their excesses.

APPENDIX B. EXPLICATION OF RELEVANT HEIDEGGERIAN TERMINOLOGY IN *BEING AND TIME*

An *entity* (*Seiendes*) is anything that is, in all its different temporal and modal permutations (e.g., anything that was or will be, that can or could be, could have been, that may or may not be, etc.). Rocks, quarks, money, the Big Bang, mathematical formulae, physical laws, ghosts, dreams, swampmen, God, society, evolution, animals, human beings, etc., are all entities. By contrast, *being* (*Sein*) always refers to *that which determines an entity as what and how it is at all*. What is important is to understand that whatever being is, it is *not* a substance, form, event, process, metaphysical foundation, original ground, first cause, or God. Above all, being is *not* any *entity* or the *totality of entities*, but *that which lets entities be what and how they are as such* (Heidegger's so-called "ontological difference" between being and entities). The being of an entity or a domain of entities must never be hypostasized and understood as referring to any (particular) thing or collection of things. It is rather that which *enables* things of any sort to *make sense in general*. Most importantly, letting entities be does not mean causally bringing them into existence. Put more positively, being is closely bound up with *intelligibility*, in the sense of serving as that in virtue or on the basis of which entities are *understood as entities at all*. With this working distinction between entities and being in place, we can now make sense of the difference in status between the "ontic" and "ontological" characteristics of something: *Ontic* determinations specify the factual or specific features of *entities*, whereas *ontological* determinations characterize the (*way of*) *being* of entities.

Dasein is fundamentally distinct from other entities because it is the entity that *understands being*. As far as we know, it is the only entity that understands being, in the sense of being explicated above. A human being is *Dasein* (or "daseins" [verb]) only insofar as it understands being. Thus, those human beings who lack such an understanding are not *Dasein* (i.e., they do not "dasein") – they do not exist *as and by being-in-the-world*. What their status is, especially their moral status, is a related but separate question. Consequently, the general terms 'Dasein' and 'human being' or 'person' are often, but not always, coextensive.

There can be ontological determinations of entities that are either *categorical* or *existential*. Categorical determinations ("categories") articulate the being of entities that are not

Dasein; such entities do not in Heidegger's terminology "exist" in the sense of *having an understanding of being* as a matter of their ontological constitution. By contrast, existential determinations ("existentials") articulate the way of being of entities that understand being, i.e., entities that exist in the way of being Dasein.

Lastly, the distinction between "existential" and "existentiell" applies to the *sort of understanding* that a human being *qua* Dasein has *of itself*; this distinction applies thus to the individual self-understanding of a human being *qua* Dasein. An *existential* understanding of oneself concerns that in virtue or on the basis of which a human being can exist as Dasein at all; it is *structural and constitutive* of what it is to be Dasein as such, regardless of any human being's particular individual self-understanding. By contrast, an *existentiell* understanding of oneself involves the concrete, actual way in which a human being understands his or her particular existence; it is a *personal and contingent* understanding of who he or she is in the course of actually living his or her life, though it is, of course, not optional that he or she has *some* existentiell understanding of who he or she is in actual life.

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