Mitsein, for Heidegger, was a concession that he had to make, but one that he never really got behind…. [It] is, in truth, a very weak idea of the other … (Gadamer 2004, 23)

Perhaps the most influential part of Heidegger’s analysis of human existence (Dasein) for the cognitive sciences is his concept of readiness-to-hand (Zuhandenheit) where he shows that our primary stance toward the world, or our primary way of being-in-the-world, is to be pragmatically involved in everyday contexts. This analysis directly inspires the rich embodied account of action in Merleau-Ponty, is strongly reflected in Dreyfus’s critique of artificial intelligence, and resonates well with both the Gibsonian concept of affordances, and recent enactive accounts of perception and action. One of the important implications of this analysis is that overly cognitive accounts of human existence, which emphasize our internal mental representations of the objective world, and which both the philosophical tradition and cognitive science have treated as central, should be regarded as something derived and secondary.

The argument that we put forward in this chapter is that, in a similar way, Heidegger’s analysis of being-with (Mitsein) goes some distance towards a more adequate account of social cognition than is found in the standard and dominant theories of contemporary cognitive science, but that in this case his analysis does not go far enough and misses something of importance. Furthermore, what Heidegger overlooks in his analysis of being-with also has some implications for how he conceives of readiness-to-hand. Finally, we’ll suggest that this same inadequacy is reflected in the analyses of those who pursue a Heideggerian approach in several related areas of cognitive science.
Initial encounters

There is no doubt that Heidegger understands being-with as an important dimension of human existence, and most interpreters of Heidegger will insist on the centrality of his notion of being-with others (e.g., Wheeler 2005, 149). Being-with is an existential aspect of Dasein, ‘equiprimordial’ or co-original with Being-in-the world (1962, 149/114; also 153/117; 1 1985, 238). Let’s note at the outset that Heidegger avoids the term ‘intersubjectivity’, which is used by numerous other phenomenologists to signify this phenomenon of being with others. The term ‘inter-subjectivity’ seems to signify the traditional (and Cartesian) idea that there is one isolated individual subject, A, standing over against a second isolated individual subject, B, and the problem is how A can understand B, and vice versa. This, according to Heidegger, is simply the wrong way to pose the problem (e.g., 1985, 237-238). Likewise, Heidegger would not use the term ‘social cognition’ since that seems to define the problem as one that involves cognition or knowing, and consistent with his analysis of being-in-the-world he wants to maintain that cognition is a derivative mode of being. Being-with others is something more basic and existential than that – that is, it has an ontological significance more basic than what can be captured by the concept of cognition. In this respect, Heidegger’s analysis, as we’ll see, goes against much of the current discussion of these issues in cognitive science. Having said that, we will argue that his ontological analysis still has something important to tell us about basic intersubjective processes and, derivatively, social cognition, and we will use these terms of art in order to make the relevance, and our own critique, clear. In doing so, however, we are not endorsing the traditional significations of these terms.

To say that being-with is equiprimordial or co-original with being-in-the-world means that it is part of the existential structure of Dasein, not an add-on, not something supplemental to Dasein. Being-with does not signify that Dasein is in-the-world first, and then because of that it comes to be with others. Heidegger makes this point strong and clear. Being-with as an originary existential structure of Dasein actually has nothing to do the fact that there may be other people in the world. The fact that others are in the world only has significance because Dasein is being-with, not the other way around. If Dasein happens to be alone, Dasein is still being-with – and “only as being-with can Dasein be alone” (1985, 238). Indeed, Heidegger makes this point so strongly that it seems that being-with as such does not depend on there being others; Dasein “is far from becoming being-with because an other turns up in fact” (239).2 Cognitive

1 Reference is to the Macquarrie and Robinson 1962 translation of Sein und Zeit (1927), Seventh Edition. German pagination is provided in the margin of the translation; pagination here is English/German.

2 Heidegger makes this kind of statement frequently: “This being-with-one-another is not an additive result of the occurrence of several such others, not an epiphenomenon of a multiplicity of Daseins, something supplementary which might come about only on the strength of a certain number. On the contrary, it is because Dasein as being-in-the-world is of itself being-with that there is something like a being-with-one-another” (1985, 239). Dreyfus, in his commentary on Being and Time (1990, 149) puts
scientists might be tempted to say that Dasein comes hard-wired for social engagement, and this is the case whether Dasein ever meets up with anyone. This is not precisely the way that Heidegger would put it, however; so the question is how precisely does Heidegger cash out this concept. In our everyday existence, what does this being-with amount to?

Heidegger links being-with to the way that Dasein is in-the-world and claims that our encounter with others is “by way of the world” (1985, 239, 242). That is, it is through everyday pragmatic contexts that Dasein encounters the other. In Heidegger’s account, others are neither present-at-hand nor ready-to-hand like the things and instruments that we find in the close environment. Rather, Dasein’s dealings with that environment provide immediate reference to other Dasein. For instance, a work by a craftsperson causes us to encounter not just the thing, but also the person who made it and the person for whom it is intended. According to Heidegger, this is how we initially encounter others. We come upon others as unavoidably involved in the same way that we are involved in pragmatic contexts: “Here it should be noted that the closest kind of encounter with another lies in the direction of the very world in which concern is absorbed” (1985, 241).

Heidegger goes on to further emphasize that this particular way of being-in-the-world co-determines all other modes of Dasein: “By reasons of this with-like [mithaften] Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a with-world [Mitwelt]. Being-in is Being-with Others. Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is Dasein-with [Mitdasein]” (1962, 155 /118). Heidegger tells us that just as others are encountered environmentally, the same is true for when/how we encounter ourselves:

This elemental, worldly kind of encountering, which belongs to Dasein and is closest to it, goes so far that even one’s own Dasein becomes something that it can proximally ‘come across’ only when it looks away from ‘Experiences’ and the ‘center of its actions’ or does not yet ‘see’ them at all. Dasein finds ‘itself’ proximally in what it does, uses, expects, avoids—in all those things environmentally ready-to-hand with which it is proximally concerned. (155/119).

We come upon people who are already in-the-world in this sense of being involved in the pragmatic affairs of everyday life. And we, like them, seem to be already involved with things in the same way. Dasein thus understands itself, and others, “proximally and for the most part in terms of its world” (156/120).

The fact that Dasein is in-the-world, and that the world is shared with others, helps to answer the question of ‘who’ Dasein is. Heidegger shifts the answer away from the traditional solutions of ‘I’, self, mind, and soul. “It could be that the ‘who’ of everyday it this way: “Being-with would still be a structure of my Daseining even if all other Daseins had been wiped out.”
Dasein just is not the ‘I myself’” (150/115). Famously, Heidegger suggests, the ‘they’ (das Man) constitutes an important part of Dasein’s identity. That is, Dasein is so taken up by the social dimension, and by the dominance of others, that it gets lost in a social inauthenticity in which it understands itself as being the same as everyone else (it turns out that even for Heidegger it’s das Man keepin’ you down!).

In contrast to Dasein’s ready-to-hand “circumspective” stance toward the world of “proximal concern,” Dasein’s stance toward the other is one of “solicitude” (155 /119 & 157/122). Heidegger explicates what he terms “deficient modes of solicitude” which include the variety of ways that we pass by each other in our everyday comings and goings without much notice. Solicitude also has two positive, non-indifferent manifestations. In Heidegger’s odd terminology these are ‘leaping in’ (einspringen) and ‘leaping ahead’ (vorausspringen) (158-159 /122). When we “leap in” we take over for another that with which he or she should be concerned. This is an act of domination leading to dependence, even if it is tacit and the other is not fully aware of what has taken place. As such it is equivalent to what Sartre later called ‘bad faith’ in our relations with others. To “leap ahead” “pertains essentially to authentic care –that is, to the existence of the Other, not to a “what” with which he is concerned; it helps the other become transparent to himself in his care and to become free for it” (158/122; see 344/297-98).

Heidegger tells us that our everyday interactions take place between these two poles of positive solicitude. He goes on to indicate that leaping in often takes place between those who are “hired for the same affair” where the relationship “thrives only on mistrust.” Conversely, when they (ourselves and others) take up a common project they may become “authentically bound together” which creates the right kind of possibilities and “frees the Other in his freedom for himself” (1962, 159/122). In any case, whether we leap in or leap ahead with others we are already involved with them because we are already pragmatically involved in the world (160/123).

To be sure, Heidegger is rejecting the idea that we come to understand the other person first in an intellectual way, or that our relations to others are primarily cognitive. As we noted, the phrase ‘social cognition’ is precisely the wrong phrase to use here. Because Dasein’s existence is being-with, “its understanding of Being already implies the understanding of Others. This understanding, like any understanding, is not an acquaintance derived from knowledge about them, but a primordial existential kind of Being, which, more than anything else, makes such knowledge and acquaintance possible” (160 /123).

**Heidegger and contemporary approaches to theory of mind**

We’ve indicated that Heidegger’s analysis of being-with can lend support to a phenomenological critique of contemporary approaches to explaining social cognition, or what is often called ‘theory of mind’. Let’s first outline the two standard and dominant approaches: “theory theory” (TT) and simulation theory (ST). Indeed, much of the literature on social cognition is taken up by a debate between these two theories. TT claims that in order to understand another person’s behavior we employ folk
psychology, that is, the commonsense theory about how people generally behave based on their beliefs and desires. ST claims that we have no need for folk psychological theory, because we have a model, namely, our own mind, that we can use to simulate the other person’s mental states. We put ourselves in the other person’s shoes and formulate what their beliefs or desires must be. For both TT and ST, the problem is that we have no direct access to the other person’s mind. When we attempt to understand the actions of others, using either theory or simulation, we do so by attempting to infer or “mindread” the other’s mental processes. On either theory, mindreading, ‘mentalizing’, or what is generally called ‘theory of mind’ (ToM), is our primary and pervasive way of explaining or predicting what others have done or will do.3

As the problem of social cognition is defined within these approaches, it is, as Heidegger puts it, “the phenomenon which proximally comes to view when one considers the theoretical problematic of understanding the ‘psychical life of Others’” (1962, 161/124). For Heidegger, this problem is simply framed in the wrong way. We don’t encounter others as other minds or as theoretical problems that we need to explain; we encounter them as agents already engaged with us in a meaningful project. Their meanings and our understanding of them are directly tied to the instrumental or social situation in which we encounter them. In normal unproblematic circumstances there is no further mystery, nothing extra hidden away that we need to theorize about. Nor do we require a simulation process to bridge a gap between ourselves and others, since in everyday life we are them (in the mode of das Man).

In contemporary accounts, theorizing or simulating the other’s mental states involves taking an observational stance toward them. We observe their behavior and then, on the basis of theory or simulation, we infer or project the mental states that would explain that behavior. Here, for example, is one of the standard accounts of simulation theory.

First, the attributor creates in herself pretend states intended to match those of the [observed] target. In other words, the attributor attempts to put herself in the target's 'mental shoes'. The second step is to feed these initial pretend states [e.g., beliefs] into some mechanism of the attributor’s own psychology … and allow that mechanism to operate on the pretend states so as to generate one or more new states [e.g., decisions]. Third, the attributor assigns the output state to the target ...” [e.g., we infer or project the decision to the other's mind]. (Goldman 2005, 80-81.)

3 These are the terms of art in the TT and ST literature: ‘mindreading’, ‘mentalizing’, ‘explaining’, and ‘predicting’, rather than ‘understanding’. Gaining the ability to use folk psychology, or the ability to employ explicit or habitual simulation routines has been standardly thought to occur around the age of 4 years. Prior to that children are thought to lack a full theory of mind, but may be capable of precursor abilities that allow them to understand actions or intentions (see, e.g., Baron-Cohen 1995).
Simulation is often considered a form of empathy, or a way to explain empathy (Gallese 2003; Goldman 2006; Steuber 2006). In this connection ST has received a boost from neuroscientific research on mirror neurons – neurons activated both when I act and when I observe someone else act. Given that observation of the other person’s action activates my own motor system, the claim is that this kind of mirror resonance is a form of empathy or simulation. Simulationists accordingly distinguish between low-level, automatic empathic processes based on subpersonal neural simulations, and high-level more explicit processes that require conscious or habitual simulation or empathy (Goldman 2006; Steuber 2006).

For Heidegger, empathy cannot be an explanation of our ordinary everyday encounters with others. “The phenomenon, which is none too happily designated as ‘empathy’ [“Einfühlung”], is then supposed, as it were, to provide the first ontological bridge from one’s own subject, which is given proximally as alone, to the other subject, which is proximally quite closed off” (1962, 162/124). But we do not exist as isolated subjects, closed off to others, faced with the problem of explaining alien minds. “‘Empathy’ does not first constitute Being-with; only on the basis of Being-with does ‘empathy’ become possible: it gets its motivation from the unsociability of the dominant modes of Being-with” (1962, 162/125; see 1985, 243). Strategies that involve empathy or theory would, at best, come into play when our normal everyday being with others breaks down and becomes problematic. Furthermore, without the more originary being-with, any specialized strategies involving theory or simulation would never get off the ground. For Heidegger, such strategies are only possible because being-with is already our default mode of encountering others.

**Interaction theory**

In recently developed critical responses to TT and ST, a number of theorists have looked to evidence provided by phenomenology (including the work of Heidegger), neuroscience, and developmental psychology, to develop both a fuller critique of the standard approaches, and an alternative approach, termed ‘interaction theory’ (IT) (Gallagher 2001, 2004, 2008; Gallagher and Zahavi 2008; Ratcliffe 2007; Zahavi 2008). IT highlights three sets of capabilities important for our understanding of others: primary intersubjectivity, secondary intersubjectivity, and narrative competency. Here we will leave aside discussion of narrative competency (see Gallagher and Hutto 2008; Hutto

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4 It’s important to note that a complete explanation of our intersubjective capabilities cannot be captured by any one of these aspects. The thought that primary intersubjectivity is the full explanation, for example, is sometimes the basis for a criticism of IT. For example, Carruthers (2009), focusing on what Bruckner et al. (2009) happily call “a weakly integrated swarm of first-order [sensory-motor] mechanisms,” found in Gallagher’s account of IT, claims that “Appealing just to sensorymotor skills (as Gallagher does) is plainly inadequate to account for the flexibility of the ways in which adults and infants can interact with others” (p. 167). Gallagher, however, does not limit the explanation of intersubjectivity “just to” the sensory-motor processes found in primary intersubjectivity; rather, he consistently points in addition to the capacities involved in secondary intersubjectivity and narrative competency.
2008) and provide a partial account of IT, emphasizing the elements that most directly relate to developing a critical stance toward Heidegger's own account. We shall develop that critique in the following section.

(a) *Primary intersubjectivity*

Primary intersubjectivity includes a set of embodied (sensory-motor) and emotion-rich capabilities (Trevarthen 1979; 1980). A primary, perceptual sense of others is already implicit in the interactive behavior of the newborn. Newborns distinguish between inanimate objects and agents and are able to imitate or respond to the facial gestures of others (Meltzoff and Moore 1977; see Gallagher and Meltzoff 1996). The fact that they imitate only *human* faces (Johnson 2000; Johnson et al. 1998; Legerstee 1991) suggests that infants are able to parse the surrounding environment into those entities that perform human actions and those that do not (Meltzoff and Brooks 2001). For infants the other person's body affords opportunities for action and imitation, for interaction and expressive behavior.

It's important to note that, in contrast to the observational stance implicit in TT or ST, the idea here is not that the infant begins as an isolated subject who observes and identifies the other, and then enters into relations with the other. Rather, the recognition of the other is already an interaction, and it is from this interaction that anything that can be characterized as (inter)subjectivity can be characterized.

The early capabilities that contribute to primary intersubjectivity constitute an immediate, non-mentalistic mode of interaction. Infants, notably without the intervention of theory or simulation, are able to see bodily movement as goal-directed intentional movement, and to perceive other persons as agents. This does not require advanced cognitive abilities or simulation skills; rather, it is a perceptual capacity that is “fast, automatic, irresistible and highly stimulus-driven” (Scholl and Tremoulet 2000, 299), and likely based on some form of mirror (neuronal) resonance (Sinigaglia 2009). Evidence for this early, non-mentalizing interpretation of the intentional actions of others can be found in numerous studies. The infant, even at 9 months, follows the other person’s eyes (Senju, Johnson and Csibra 2008), and starts to perceive various movements of the head, the mouth, the hands, and more general body movements as meaningful and goal-directed. Baldwin and colleagues, for example, have shown that infants at 10-11 months are able to parse some kinds of continuous action according to intentional boundaries (Baldwin and Baird 2001; Baird and Baldwin 2001). Such perceptions give the infant, by the end of the first year of life, a non-mentalizing, perceptually-based embodied understanding of the intentions and dispositions of other persons (Allison, Puce, and McCarthy 2000; Baldwin, 1993; Johnson 2000; Johnson et al. 1998).

Infants do not simply perceive others in an observational mode; they perceive while interacting with them. Primary intersubjectivity includes affective coordination between the gestures and expressions of the infant and those of caregivers with whom they interact. Infants "vocalize and gesture in a way that seems 'tuned' [affectively and temporally] to the vocalizations and gestures of the other person" (Gopnik and Meltzoff 1997, 131). Infants at 5 to 7 months detect correspondences between visual and
auditory information that specify the expression of emotions (Walker 1982). The perception of emotion in the movement of others, however, does not involve creating a simulation of some inner state. It is a perceptual experience of an embodied comportment (Bertenthal, Proffit, and Cutting 1984; Moore, Hobson, and Lee 1997).

Thus, what we call the mind of the other person is not something that is entirely hidden away and inaccessible. Rather, in our encounters with others we not only have perceptual access to another person’s intentions, because their intentions are explicit in their embodied actions and expressive behaviors, but also their actions resonate in our own motor systems. Other persons elicit our enactive responses; they have an effect on us, which is not reducible to a subjective simulation or an empathic response to the other’s behavior, but attunes our system to further possible interaction.

Importantly, primary intersubjectivity is not a stage we go through and leave behind; it does not disappear with maturity, it gains in sophistication. Both Scheler and Wittgenstein find the kind of perceptual abilities involved in primary intersubjectivity in everyday adult experience.

For we certainly believe ourselves to be directly acquainted with another person’s joy in his laughter, with his sorrow and pain in his tears, with his shame in his blushing, with his entreaty in his outstretched hands .... And with the tenor of this thoughts in the sound of his words. (Scheler 1954, 260–61).

Look into someone else’s face, and see the consciousness in it, and a particular shade of consciousness. You see on it, in it, joy, indifference, interest, excitement, torpor, and so on. ... Do you look into yourself in order to recognize the fury in his face? (Wittgenstein 1967 §229)^5

This kind of perception-based understanding is not a form of mindreading or mentalizing. In seeing the actions and expressive movements of the other person one already sees their meaning; no inference to a hidden set of mental states (beliefs, desires, etc.) is necessary. At the phenomenological level, when I see the other's action or gesture, I see (I immediately and enactively perceive) the meaning in the action or gesture. I see the joy or I see the anger, or I see the intention in the face or in the posture or in the gesture or action of the other. I see it. No simulation of what is readily apparent is needed, and no inference to mental states beyond what I can see is required in the majority of contexts.

^5 Or again: “In general I do not surmise fear in him – I see it. I do not feel that I am deducing the probable existence of something inside from something outside; rather it is as if the human face were in a way translucent and that I were seeing it not in reflected light but rather in its own.” (Wittgenstein 1980, § 170)
(b) Secondary intersubjectivity

The capabilities of primary intersubjectivity are supplemented and enhanced by those of secondary intersubjectivity starting at around one-year of age (Trevarthen and Hubley 1978). Expressions, intonations, gestures, and movements, along with the bodies that manifest them, do not float freely in the air; we find them embedded in the world, and infants soon start to notice how others interact with the world. Infants begin to tie actions to pragmatic contexts; they enter into contexts of shared attention – shared situations – in which they learn what things mean and what they are for. Behavior representative of joint attention (where the infant looks to the other person to check that they are looking at the same object) begins to develop around 9-14 months (Phillips, Baron-Cohen, and Rutter 1992), and infants start to perceive others interacting with the world.

It’s important to distinguish two related aspects of interaction in secondary intersubjectivity (Gallagher 2009). First, by gaining familiarity with different pragmatic contexts, and by interacting with others in those contexts, we are able to understand the other person’s intentions and actions. Second, by interacting with others, and by seeing them engage with the surrounding environment, we start to make sense out of the world. This latter aspect is referred to as ‘participatory sense-making’ (DeJaegher and DiPaolo 2007).

In all of these interactions the child looks to the other’s expressive movements, actions, and concernful dealings with the environment to discern their intentions or to find the meaning of some object. The child can understand that the other person wants food or intends to open the door; that the other can see him (the child) or is looking at some object. This is not taking an intentional stance, i.e., treating the other as if they had desires or beliefs hidden away in their minds; rather, the intentionality is there to be perceived in the embodied actions of others. We begin to see that another’s movements and expressions often depend on meaningful and pragmatic contexts and are mediated by the surrounding world. Heidegger is absolutely right in this regard. Others are not given (and never were given) primarily as objects that we encounter cognitively, objects in need of explanation. We perceive them as agents whose actions are framed in pragmatic and socially defined contexts. It follows that there is not one uniform way in which we relate to others, but that our relations are mediated through the various pragmatic (and ultimately, institutional) circumstances of our encounters.

As we noted, children do not simply observe others; they are not passive observers. Rather they interact with others and in doing so they develop further capabilities in the contexts of those interactions. By 18 months children are able to comprehend what another person intends to do with an instrument in a specific context. They are able to re-enact to completion the goal-directed behavior that someone else fails to complete. Thus, the child, on seeing an adult who tries to manipulate a toy and who appears frustrated about being unable to do so, quite readily picks up the toy and shows the adult how to do it (Meltzoff 1995; Meltzoff and Brooks 2001; also see Herrmann et al. 2007).
The environment, which is not only a physical location, but also a pragmatic context and a social situation, is never perceived neutrally (without meaning), either in regard to our own possible actions, or in regard to the actions and possibilities of others. In this regard, the world itself does much of the work involved in social understanding. As both Heidegger’s analysis of Zuhandenheit and Gibson’s (1979) theory of affordances suggests, we see things in relation to their possible uses and, therefore, never as a disembodied observer. Likewise, our perception of the other person is never of an entity existing outside of a situation, but rather of an agent in a pragmatic context that throws light on the intentions, or possible intentions, of that agent.6

Back to Heidegger

As we indicated previously, Heidegger gives a central place to being-with in his existential account of Dasein, and he sees the truly essential sociality of Dasein to be an important dimension of existence. Moreover, we can find important insights in his notion of being-with that contribute to both the phenomenological critique of standard accounts of TT and ST and the development of IT. For Heidegger, framing the problem in terms of other minds, or in terms of social cognition, is to overlook something much more fundamental. The kind of suggestions that we find in the proposals of TT and ST—such as the use of inference or empathy for understanding others—may seem obvious at some level, but as Heidegger suggests, “they have little ground to stand on” (1962, 162/124).

What we can ask, however, is whether Heidegger provides an adequate account of being-with, even if he places it centrally in the structure of Dasein. Here we want to suggest that he does not.7 He fails to do so because, from the perspective of interaction theory, Heidegger’s account is cast entirely in terms of secondary intersubjectivity, with no mention of processes that would fall under the concept of primary intersubjectivity.

6 There is much more to say about the role of socially defined situations and the roles that people play in them, and how these things get reflected in narratives (see Gallagher and Hutto 2008; Hutto 2008). As children develop, and precisely because they have the embodied capabilities defined by primary and secondary intersubjectivity, they easily learn what to expect of other people in such situations. In most cases we have no need for theories or simulations because most of our social understanding is shaped by communicative practices and narratives.

7 We are not the first to advance this criticism. Heidegger’s student, Karl Löwith (1928), for example, a year after Being and Time was published, suggested that Heidegger ignored the role of direct interpersonal contact in is account. Binswanger (1962) made similar criticisms and claimed that the idea that Dasein is being-with left him with “a knot of unresolved questions” (1962, 6). Heidegger’s (1989, 236-42) response was that Binswanger worked with an ontic, psychological interpretation, whereas Heidegger had been concerned with an ontological analysis. This motivated another Heidegger scholar, Otto Pöggeler to comment that “it is certainly beyond doubt that Heidegger’s inquiry into social being is some of the most unsatisfying questioning of his work. This must be said even if one considers that Heidegger never concretely worked out this question; that he dealt with it at all only with the intention of doing ‘fundamental ontology’” (1989, 251). Also see Theunissen (1984); Tugendhat (1986), and Frie (1997) for further discussion. Previous treatments of this topic, however, have neither been drawn in, nor drawn from the context of cognitive sciences.
Moreover, as we suggest below, the lack of any account of primary intersubjectivity (or its ontological correlate) leads to a misconstrual of secondary intersubjectivity and to a form of philosophical autism that can be clearly discerned in other thinkers who follow Heidegger.

One might object that the basic nature of being-with must be equivalent to or include primary intersubjectivity. Let’s recall, however, that even if being-with is basic in an ontological-existential sense, it is so in a way that does not involve anything like primary intersubjectivity. Dasein is being-with even if there are no others in the world, whereas primary intersubjectivity cannot be characterized without the interaction with others that is essential to it. Heidegger would likely say that primary intersubjectivity is possible only because Dasein is being-with, but Dasein’s being-with does not depend on primary intersubjectivity. If that is so, then clearly being-with cannot be equivalent to primary intersubjectivity. We contend, further, that the only way that Heidegger explicates being-with is in terms of processes that constitute secondary intersubjectivity— as he puts it, being-with is “by way of the world,” that is, it constitutes a solicitude that is closely tied to ready-to-hand circumspection. His explication indicates nothing about the kind of embodied, sensory-motor and emotion-rich capabilities that are present in primary intersubjectivity. Although Heidegger provides an analysis of an embodied spatiality that is essential for gearing into pragmatic contexts (1962, §§22-24), this analysis stands on its own and is never integrated into his account of being-with (§§25ff). Furthermore, although the analysis of the ready-to-hand sets the stage for his analysis of being-with, and one might infer that some kind of embodied action would also be involved in being-with others, there is absolutely no mention of embodiment in his account of being-with. If Dasein has a face, this is not mentioned; if Dasein encounters other beings with faces, this is not noted as important in such encounters. If there is anything like embodied expressions of emotions and intentions, this finds no place in Heidegger’s account. If there is something like intersubjective interaction in everyday life, it is not a face-to-face, emotion-rich interaction, but at best an interaction facing out towards the world, or a communication for the sake of our pragmatic dealings with the world.

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8 Even in his analysis of spatiality, embodiment is suppressed as a topic— as Heidegger notes, this “bodily nature hides a whole problematic of its own, though we shall not treat it here” (143/108). As Paul Ricoeur points out, Heidegger failed to develop the notion of Leib (lived body) “as a distinct existentiale” (1992, 327). There is much to say about Ricoeur’s analysis, which conceives of the lived body as the “primary otherness” required for our openness to other people, and which points to the overly strong association between spatiality and inauthenticity in Heidegger. “If the theme of embodiment appears to be stifled, if not repressed, in Being and Time, this is doubtless because it must have appeared too dependent on the inauthentic forms of care ....” (328). The message we can take from this is that an impoverished conception of the body leads to an impoverished conception of being-with, and, as Ricoeur goes on to show, a problematic conception of conscience (Gewissen), where the voice of conscience is not the voice of the other, but is “vertical” and dissymmetrical (341ff). These ideas, however, would take us too far afield.
This is not to say that Heidegger denies an emotional life to Dasein; indeed, the fact that Dasein is characterized by mood (Stimmung) and the existential feelings, seems central to his analysis (see 1962, §§29-30; also see Ratcliffe 2008 on existential feelings); but these aspects, for the most part, are not carried over into his analysis of Mitsein. Such existential states of disposition (Befindlichkeit) and mood are always characterized as states in which Dasein finds itself, but rarely as states in which Dasein finds others (we note two exceptions below), or in which others find Dasein. Despite the fact that we may find ourselves in bad moods, for example, because of what someone may have said to us, or because of what they did, or even how they looked at us; and despite the fact that we often discover that we are in a particular mood because someone else points it out to us, and that may be because it affects them as much as it affects us, Heidegger’s account makes no mention of others in this context, even as an example of something ontologically deeper. In bad moods, for example, “Dasein becomes blind to itself, the environment with which it is concerned veils itself, the circumspection of concern [with the ready-to-hand] gets led astray” (175/136). It is not that Heidegger does not provide decisive insight into phenomena such as mood; it is simply that in this respect his analysis remains incomplete and indifferent to the issue of intersubjectivity (or being-with).

Let’s consider two exceptions to what we have just said. The first is in Sein und Zeit, and is the closest that Heidegger gets in this work to a discussion of an affective relation with respect to others – his discussion of “fearing for” others (181/140-41). We well know why we might fear for others who may be in the line of danger, and this is something that may happen at a generic level or at a very personal level where we care for the person involved. As a result, we have an intuitive understanding when Heidegger says that in fearing for another “what one ‘is apprehensive about’ is one’s Being-with with [sic] the Other, who might be torn away from one” (181/142). Nothing, however, in Heidegger’s analysis of being-with can explain this. Indeed, from Heidegger’s analysis one might wonder why we would be apprehensive about a particular other being “torn away” from us, since in the everydayness of our relationships one Dasein is more or less the same as any other Dasein (das Man is everyone and no one). That is, in an analysis of intersubjectivity which is made exclusively in terms of secondary intersubjectivity, and for Heidegger, that means in terms of the ready-to-hand contexts within which we find others, there is a certain kind of interchangeableness amongst others. The everyday public world is often characterized by Heidegger as a workplace filled with equipment, or as a world of commodities, where others are encountered in terms of their particular functions – “One is what one does .... One is a shoemaker, tailor, teacher, banker. Here Dasein is something which others also can be and are .... Here we move with others in modes of being which every other is just as I am ...” (1985, 244-45). We encounter others as those who produce or supply or use products, as owners of property, as shopkeepers, etc. (1962, 153-54/117-118). In such a world, one producer or supplier or shopkeeper may be differentiated by the quality of their work, but as Dasein one seems much the same as another. Personal, face-to-face, emotion-rich
relations, the kind of relations that depend heavily on primary intersubjectivity, are strikingly missing in Heidegger’s analysis.⁹

The second exception can be found in a set of lectures from 1929-30, subsequent to the publication of Sein und Zeit, possibly in response to Löwith’s criticism (see note 7, above). In an analysis of attunement or mood in §17 of The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics (2001) Heidegger provides a short discussion of encountering another person who is grieving or one who is in a good humor. Such attunements are ways of being-with that cannot be reduced to anything having to do with practical comportment. “Everything remains as before, yet everything is different, not only in this or that respect, but – irrespective of the sameness of what we do and what we engage in – the way in which we are together is different” (2001, 66). These two attuned ways of being-with, however, are mentioned by Heidegger merely as examples of a fundamental way of being Dasein which he goes on to analyze in terms that do not further explicate the aspect of being-with. Indeed, he explicitly indicates that he will not pursue this context any further, and he does not, except to say that (1) attunement is a way of being-there with one another, and (2) attunements determine this being-there with one another in advance. On our view this is the closest Heidegger comes to glimpsing primary intersubjectivity. He doesn’t follow through on this, however; his subsequent analysis is framed entirely in terms of either a Dasein, without mention of being-with, or a broad definition of the contemporary situation.

Thus, for Heidegger, encounters with others are defined almost exclusively in terms of secondary intersubjectivity, of the pragmatic “for-the-sake-of-which,” which characterizes our ready-to-hand relations with the world. “[...] Others are not proximally present-at-hand as free-floating subjects along with other Things, but show themselves in the world in their special environmental Being, and do so in terms of what is ready-to-hand in that world” (1962, 160/123). In these pragmatic contexts where we encounter others, “they are what they do” (163/126).

With this focus on secondary intersubjectivity, one might think that Heidegger’s analysis would do better in regard to the social constitution of meaning, or what De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007) call “participatory sense making.” As we noted, this refers to interactions in which we co-constitute the meaning of our shared world, and we often do so in just those social and pragmatic contexts that are characterized in terms of secondary intersubjectivity. In this regard, however, we acknowledge Frederick Olafson’s analysis.

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⁹ The they is absorbing of Dasein and of the Dasein of others, but in a way that is “inconspicuous and unascertainable;” it is in these characteristics, according to Heidegger, “that the real dictatorship of the ‘they’ is unfolded.” Thus, “[w]e take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the ‘great mass’ as they shrink back; we find shocking what they find shocking.” (164/127). Individuality is lost in the they.
Although it is understood that it is an essential feature of Dasein that the entities it uncovers are, at least in principle, the same entities in the same world that other like entities uncover ... there is no real account of the way in which my uncovering an entity depends on someone else's doing so as well. As a result, the uncovering of entities as entities by one Dasein comes to seem quite distinct from their uncovering by others, even though it is stipulated that each such Dasein understands that its uncovering is not unique and that the entities uncovered are the same from one case to another. At no point is there any definite indication of why uncovering must be joint and convergent. (Olafson 1987, 146)

In effect, Olafson is noting the absence of anything like joint attention in Heidegger’s account. In truth, the kind of secondary intersubjectivity that Heidegger describes is initiated in a way that is just opposite to the way it is described by developmental psychologists. As Heidegger describes it, we discover the things of the world as usable entities in our pragmatic relations to the world; and through these relations we encounter other people as entities relevant to such relations.10 In contrast, for contemporary developmental science, secondary intersubjectivity is described as starting in joint attention. As Olafson notes, “it is normally from these others that I have learned what a hammer is and how to use one” (146).11 That is, we discover the world through our relations with others – relations that have already been established in primary intersubjectivity.12

10 One almost gets the sense that Heidegger gives a certain priority to instrumental things over other people in passages like the following: Dasein “finds itself primarily and usually in things because, tending them, distressed by them, it always in some way or other rests in things. Each one of us is what he pursues and cares for. In everyday terms, we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and the things we take care of” (1988, p. 152). He explains further: “as originally as Dasein is being-with-others, it is as originally being with what is ready and present to hand .... Only because Dasein is previously constituted as being-in-the-world can a Dasein factually communicate something to another in its existence, but this factual communication in existence does not first of all constitute the possibility that a Dasein has a world with another” (1988, 421)

11 Dreyfus (1990, p. 143) takes issue with Olafson’s interpretation on this point – and to this point we shall return shortly. For Heidegger, “primary contexts of meaning” arise first of all, not through solicitation (or being-with), but through “interpretive circumspection” (1985, 210). Moreover, even if Dasein “speaks, expresses itself, discourses” and if accordingly words have meanings, such meanings are derivative from our circumspective ways of being-in-the-world. If there is a role for communication and intersubjective (solicitative) interaction in the generation of meaning, Heidegger doesn’t pursue it in his account of meaningfulness, since in both Being and Time, and in his earlier lectures (1985), the account of meaningfulness is worked out prior to his account of being-with.

12 Maria Talero (this volume) offers a more optimistic or positive reading of Heidegger in this regard. Although there is clearly a difference of interpretation we see no major inconsistency between the critical view we express here and the general details of her analysis. Talero sees something important in the notion of Rede (discourse or expressivity), and on that score, there is surely potential to develop this idea in ways that could lead to a better account of intersubjectivity than we think is actually present
This is not to deny Heidegger’s attempts to characterize the basic social nature of human existence, for he often emphasizes the idea that “the world is always already primarily given as the common world,” (1985, 246); after all, being-with is equiprimordial with being-in-the-world. But it does suggest that there is little in Heidegger’s analysis to justify the claim. Heidegger fails to give us any account of primary intersubjectivity – that is, the set of bodily, face-to-face, emotionally-rich encounters into which we are first thrown as infants. Of course, Heidegger is not attempting to provide anything like a developmental account, and as such it would be unfair to expect him to address developmental issues. As already indicated, however, primary intersubjectivity is not something that disappears in infancy. Heidegger also lacks any account of primary intersubjective practices that characterize adult interaction with others. He fails to acknowledge anything like a direct perceptual access to the emotions, the intentions, or the dispositions of others of the sort mentioned by Scheler and Wittgenstein, or the ineffable moral significance that we can perceive in the other person’s face, as we find in the critical indications provided by Levinas (1969). Moreover, the primary conception of authenticity that Heidegger offers is the non-relational, i.e., non-intersubjective, phenomenon of being-onto- (our very own) death. 

There appears to be no room in this account for the possibility of recognizing that in our being-towards-death we are all in the same camp, that is, that our shared mortality is precisely the thing that calls for a responsibility towards one another, and moves us toward a very different conception of authentic relations with others (see especially Werner Marx 1987). Perhaps Heidegger’s concept of the solicitude of ‘leaping ahead’, which target the existence of the other as such, is a start on this. We suggest, however, this is possible only on the condition that we are capable of relations that are best described in terms of primary intersubjectivity.

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in Heidegger. What is interesting in her extremely good analysis of intimacy, betrayal, and trust is a certain disconnect between that and her discussion of Heidegger. Although she indicates that she will use Heidegger as a guide, there is very little (almost no) reference to Heidegger in her account of just those phenomena that would count as examples of primary intersubjectivity. Rather, she relies on others -- Derrida, McNeill, Vygotsky, Merleau-Ponty, and so on. Talero rightly ties intimacy, betrayal, and trust to joint attention, but these kinds of experiences don’t emerge solely from joint attention. They have their origins in primary intersubjective relations (see, e.g., Talero’s example of the little girl imitating and trusting her mother. This goes beyond joint attention, not in some mysterious way, but precisely because of possibilities set up in primary intersubjective relations.

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13 Heidegger offers a negative perspective in this regard; he characterizes social relations as the occasions of inauthenticity, whereas the possibility of authenticity seems to be tied to a being-towards a possibility that is said to involve no intersubjectivity at all – i.e., being-towards-death.

14 In this sense, the notion of ‘leaping ahead’, which is explained entirely in terms of secondary intersubjectivity, i.e., as a stance that we take towards others whom we encounter in our worldly projects (1962, 160/123), remains mysteriously unmotivated in Heidegger.
A Heideggerian lineage

The Heideggerian analysis, by ignoring primary intersubjectivity, gives priority to the pragmatic interactions of secondary intersubjectivity, and despite all claims for the equiprimordial status of being-with, it tends to privilege the individuality of action by making our encounters with others contingent on what seems to be our already established involvement with ready-to-hand instruments and worldly projects. We meet with others only through our practical dealings with the world. If this approach makes it difficult to characterize authentic intersubjective relations, it also leads to the idea that authenticity can only be won in an individuated being-towards-death. This Heideggerian schema is reflected in a certain line of development that can be traced from Freiburg to Harvard and thence to Berkeley. Tracing out this line will help to show that in this kind of analysis, when we leave out primary intersubjectivity, we end up with a deficient account of secondary intersubjectivity and a form of philosophical autism (Gallagher 2009). To show this, we will take a very brief tour of this Heideggerian tradition, starting with the work of Aron Gurwitsch.

Gurwitsch

Gurwitsch, a student of Husserl, who also studied psychology with Carl Stumpf and Adhémar Gelb, and neurology with Kurt Goldstein, published his habilitation essay, Human Encounters in the Social World in 1931. His analysis was greatly influenced by Heidegger. Like Heidegger, he challenges the argument of inference from analogy, an early forerunner of ST (1931, p. 108). For Gurwitsch, and in contrast with Scheler, one’s encounter with the other is not based on an enactive perceptual access to the bodily comportment (expressive movements, gestures, facial expressions) of others. Gurwitsch turns rather to Heidegger’s analysis of equipment, the ready to hand, and circumspective engagement with the surrounding environment, and defends the idea that our primary conviction that we live with others, is mediated by the pragmatic contexts in which we are involved. "Prior to all specific cognition, and independent of it, we are concerned with other people in our 'natural living' of daily life; we encounter them in the world in which our daily life occurs" (1931, p. 35). In the contexts of instrumental dealings with the surrounding world we discover an implicit contact with others. "It is in this milieu that we ... encounter our fellow human beings. We encounter them because we live in determinate situations of the surrounding world of utensils" (p. 95). Specifically, Gurwitsch suggests that other people are always implicitly on the horizon of our practical dealings with the world. It is the constant and implicit references to others in our pragmatic affairs that generate the inescapable conviction that we live in a human world.

This network of implicit references to others is the basis for our experience of being-with, or being together with others. "In these horizontal situations the 'co-included' others appear. That they come to light in this situation, and are not 'near by' or 'merely beside' it, signifies that they appear as belonging to the situation in their specific roles and functions" (p. 97). Here Gurwitsch suggests that our understanding of others is from the beginning in terms of the roles that they play in relation to our projects. "But it
is always a matter of a person *in his role*. Understanding is yielded here by virtue of the situation and is, therefore, limited to what is inherent in it" (p. 114). Accordingly, Gurwitsch suggests that to provide a full analysis of how we understand others, one first needs to provide clarification of this notion of the surrounding world. This, however, precludes any appeal to intersubjectivity itself as a primary element in an account of the meaning-constitution of the surrounding world.

In this determined horizon, again as Heidegger had indicated, we do not have to construct cognitive bridges between our own mind and the mind of the other. As our thinking takes shape, we are already existing in reference to others. The horizon of this reference is such that we do not need to add some social-cognitive relation to the other person on top of our pragmatic concerns in order to make them social, or in order to constitute a separate understanding of the other. "We do not meet other people *alongside of* but rather directly *in* the concrete sector in which we always stand. ... our comportment toward the other is codetermined by our entire situational comportment" (Gurwitsch 1931, p. 36).

This insight leads Gurwitsch to an important principle. "No encounters of fellow human beings are ever given that would be absolutely without a horizon such that two "monads" unrelated to the surrounding world would simply confront each other ..." (p. 36). Gurwitsch offers an important qualification of this principle that is not found in Heidegger. It is possible that an encounter with another can transcend this shared horizon. "In that case, being-together finds its meaning in itself, for example, when we are together with a person 'for his own sake'" (p. 36). Accordingly, the horizon is redefined as a purely intersubjective one, as in the case of friendship or love. Still, he cautions, this kind of intersubjectivity, purely for the sake of the other, should not be taken as paradigmatic, and he insists that "it cannot even obtain as the originary and primary sense of being together" (p. 37). The originary and primary sense of being together is always mediated by a pragmatic or concernful living in the surrounding world. "So even those 'known personally' are encountered in this reference not as individuals of this determined specific constitution peculiar to them, but instead as sellers, as customers – stated universally, as individuals *in their appropriate roles*" (1931, p. 97-98).

Thus, Gurwitsch, like Heidegger, has no place for primary intersubjectivity. What he does not explain, even in his detailed explication of the appearance of the other on the horizon of our pragmatic projects, is precisely why, *in the first place*, the other appears as another person rather than simply another piece of equipment. It is also not clear

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15 Gurwitsch takes pains to avoid an overly *cognitive* account of intersubjectivity, e.g., he rejects both Lipps’ and Stein’s conceptions of empathy as too cognitive (pp. 20, 57). The solution is not to find special cognitive acts that have special empathic insight – the explanation is not to be found in some magical psychical mechanism. In this regard, and very much like Heidegger, the primary basis for intersubjectivity remains pragmatic involvement rather than cognitive confrontation.

16 Gurwitsch offers an account of the difference between a tool or instrument and a fellow human being, but only in terms that come too late to count as an answer to how "in the first place" we come to recognize the distinction. The other person is represented as having a freedom to be outside of the
why just such pragmatic encounters are necessarily the basis for encounters that are not just pragmatic.

**Todes**

Gurwitsch left Germany in 1933, and after a seven-year stay in Paris, he emigrated to the United States where he was an instructor in physics at Harvard (1943-46) and taught mathematics and philosophy at Brandeis University (1948-59). While he was in Boston he had numerous discussions with Sam Todes, at the time a graduate student at Harvard.\(^ {17} \) Todes’ dissertation focused on the phenomenology of object perception, and the general strategy he follows reflects the analyses of Heidegger and Gurwitsch. Specifically, for Todes, anything like a full analysis of how we understand others, depends first on clarifying our relations with the surrounding world. Again, despite any claims about the equiprimordial nature of being-with, what comes first is the world as we meet it in our embodied perceptions or pragmatic actions. Other persons are then encountered only on the horizon of those situations. Any solution to the problem of intersubjectivity presupposes a solution to the question of how we perceive the natural world of objects, and how we begin to interact with those objects in an instrumental or pragmatic manner. Todes’ accounts clearly give primacy to an embodied knowledge of objects, which then sets the problem of intersubjectivity within the proper framework. "So the result that our knowledge of objects is body-centered does not turn out to make the problem of intersubjectivity more difficult; it turns out rather to open the way for a solution of this problem. ... [T]hose who live and work together, those who move and act in respect to one another, cannot regard each other solipsistically while co-operating in this way" (p. 3).

In defining his project of offering an account of the "body's role in our knowledge of objects" (p. 1), Todes acknowledges his exclusion of any account of how we perceive other persons.

All issues in the social philosophy of the human body, all issues concerning our body's role in our knowledge of persons, are carefully avoided. ... The reader is thus forewarned that the analyses presented in this study are not of our normal experience in its full complexity .... for the purposes of this study of the human body as the material subject of the world, our experience is simplified by disregarding our experience of other human beings. (p. 1).

\(^ {17} \) See Dreyfus’ Foreword to Todes 2001.
Although he admits that "the way I know persons differs from the way I know objects" (p. 2), he also suggests that the solution to the question of other persons "turns out to presuppose a solution to the natural issues [i.e., the issues of object perception], though the converse is not the case" (p. 1). Todes assumes not only that object perception can be analyzed separately from person perception, but also without introducing any considerations about interaction with others. According to Todes' strategy, we would come to understand the fullness and complexity of human experience by first understanding how an isolated body, moving alone in the world, perceives non-living objects. We would then add to this an analysis of how others enter into the picture. Seemingly, the dimension of social interaction that characterizes human existence at least from birth has nothing to do with the way that we perceive objects (see Gallagher 2008b; 2009 for further discussion).

Things first, people second. This particular order, which seems only obscurely represented in the analyses of Heidegger and Gurwitsch, is made extremely clear by Todes. The important thing to note here is that this order not only ignores primary intersubjectivity, as we mentioned above, it gets secondary intersubjectivity wrong. Secondary intersubjectivity involves two aspects. First, based on shared or joint attention, the child discovers a meaningful world through his interactions with others who are pragmatically dealing with surrounding things. What the things are, and what they mean, are revealed by others’ their meanings are co-constituted in “participatory sense-making” (DeJaegher and DiPaolo 2007). The movement here is from understanding others to understanding the world. Second, the child furthers her understanding of others by interacting with them in these pragmatic contexts and coming to understand roles they play in the world. The movement here is from world to the understanding of others. The Heideggerian analysis starts and ends with the second aspect; it ignores the developmental movement that goes first from shared attention (already based on primary intersubjectivity) to understanding the world.

This suggests that the Heideggerian line, which runs through Gurwitsch to Todes, runs past something important: we first gain perceptual and pragmatic access to the meaning of objects through our interactions with other people. If our perception of objects is something more than simply the mechanical registration of shapes and qualities on our sensory system, that is, if perception is of a meaningful world, then we need to acknowledge the involvement of other people in shaping our perception of

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18 Certainly this phrase seems too strong for the Heideggerian analysis. Heidegger’s analysis does not put ‘things’ per se first; rather, as Julian Kiverstein (in his editorial comments on this paper) puts it, ‘we are involved with entities that function as equipment and have a place in involvement wholes’ — and these structures of involvement include others. Yet, even in Heidegger, the order of analysis (if not the existential order) puts us in the world with our projects, and then through those projects, puts us in contact with others. Even if in our very structure we are being-with, this existential structure gets fulfilled only in such involved encounters. We thank Julian Kiverstein for his helpful and critical comments on earlier versions of this paper. He helped us to strengthen our arguments on a number of points, although in the end we did not convince him in regard to our reading of Heidegger.
The meaning that derives from my interactions with others shapes the way my perception of objects develops. In this respect, it is not simply a matter of saying, as Todes does, that the perception of others is different from the perception of objects; rather, the claim is that object perception only happens under constraints and complexities already generated in our interactions with others. I learn what I am capable of doing in regard to an object, by seeing what others are capable of doing. I learn the meaning of objects not simply by interacting with them, but by interacting with others who are interacting with objects – this is part of what secondary intersubjectivity means, i.e., when it is understood as emerging from primary intersubjectivity.

Theory-of-mind accounts of social cognition (TT and ST) suggest that social deficits in autism are due to a failure of theory-of-mind mechanisms for mindreading. Autistic individuals are unable to understand others in terms of mental states (see, e.g., Baron-Cohen 1995). In contrast, IT suggests that autism is characterized by a failure in the sensory-motor processes that inform primary intersubjectivity (Gallagher 2004). We use the term ‘philosophical autism’ to indicate any theoretical analysis that ignores the role of primary intersubjectivity and that fails to take into account the primary role of others in gaining a knowledge of the world, or in facilitating a pragmatic involvement with the ready-to-hand. In this sense, the Heideggerian line of analysis is philosophically autistic.

Dreyfus

This kind of philosophical autism is also apparent in more recent analyses inspired in part by Heidegger, including the important philosophical work of Hubert Dreyfus. Dreyfus more than anyone is responsible for drawing Heidegger’s work into the arena of cognitive science. Dreyfus was also influenced by Todes at Harvard, and was instrumental in publishing Todes’s Body and World. Dreyfus’s deployment of Heideggerian insights in his critical work on artificial intelligence (AI), his extensively developed theory of expertise, and even his detailed commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, place him directly in the Heideggerian lineage.

In his work on AI, Dreyfus was required to address the central problems that faced, and in some sense still face researchers in that field. One good example is the frame

19 As is well known, our perception is shaped by what we are looking for, by our interests, by our understanding of what it is we are perceiving. E.g., I feel burned if I am given to understand that the object touching my skin is a hot poker, even if the object is a piece of ice. More specifically, a number of studies have shown that the presence of others, their glance, their emotional expression, or their style of acting with objects influence my perception in terms of attention, valence, or its effect on my motor preparation (see, e.g., Becchio et al. 2008 for review). Heidegger captures some, less-embodied, aspects of this in his analysis of the power that ‘they’ have in their (our) average understanding: “This everyday way in which things have been interpreted is one into which Dasein has grown in the first instance, with never a possibility of extrication.... The ‘they’ prescribes one’s disposition, and determines what and how one ‘sees’ (1962, 213/169-170).

[G]iven a dynamically changing world, how is a nonmagical system ... to take account of those state changes in that world ... that matter, and those unchanged states in that world that matter, while ignoring those that do not? And how is that system to retrieve and (if necessary) to revise, out of all the beliefs that it possesses, just those beliefs that are relevant in some particular context of action?

In criticizing recent attempts to address this problem – specifically the work of Rodney Brooks in robotics – Dreyfus ignores the hints that Brooks himself gives in terms of the lack of a proper social aspect. Brooks describes his work as an attempt “to emulate insect-level locomotion and navigation. ... There have been some behavior-based attempts at exploring social interactions, but these too have been modeled after the sorts of social interactions we see in insects” (1997, 291). One of the aims, Brooks suggests, is to build robots that are capable of “emotional interactions” (1997, 301). Brooks does not say that solving the frame problem may depend on such emotion-rich interaction, or on massive amounts of experience in intersubjective contexts in a rich social world – but is there any other way that we humans in our own existence solve the frame problem? Dreyfus’ response to problems in AI continues to be Heideggerian, but his proposal to make the analysis even “more Heideggerian” turns into an analysis that actually remains less Heideggerian because it is entirely sans Mitsein. With reference to Walter Freeman’s neurodynamics, he defends “a radically new basis for a Heideggerian approach to human intelligence—an approach compatible with physics and grounded in the neuroscience of perception and action” (2007). On this model the frame problem is not solved, it’s dissolved. But the example he offers is telling.

In coping in a particular context, say a classroom, we learn to ignore most of what is in the room, but, if it gets too warm, the windows solicit us to open them. We ignore the chalk dust in the corners and the chalk marks on the desks but we attend to the chalk marks on the blackboard. We take for granted that what we write on the board doesn’t affect the windows, even if we write, “open windows,” and what we do with the windows doesn’t affect what’s on the board. And as we constantly refine this background know-how, the things in the room and its layout become more and more familiar, take on more and more significance, and each thing draws us to act when an action is relevant. Thus we become better able to cope with change. Given our experience in the world, whenever there is a change in the current context we respond to it only if in the past it has turned out to be significant, and even when we sense a significant change we treat everything else as unchanged except what our familiarity with the world suggests might also have changed and so needs to be checked out. Thus, for embedded-embodied beings a local
Either this specific classroom is empty of teacher and classmates, or Dreyfus simply ignores them entirely. Yet certainly, even in a classroom empty of others, if the things that we ignore and the things that we attend to as relevant or salient are based on prior experience, the interactions that we have had with others will determine the contours of significance and salience in the current circumstances. A teacher telling us to write on the blackboard, or to recite a lesson in front of other classmates – these are certainly things that define what is and what is not salient in such circumstances. And windows may have significance for solving the problem of an overheated room only because we have learned from others what a possible solution in that situation is. Even in changing contexts where the frame problem may reassert itself, the affordances that may resolve that problem are often social affordances. We can be “directly summoned to respond appropriately” not simply by objects in ready-to-hand environments, but by other people. This thought seems never to cross Dreyfus’s mind; at least it is never mentioned in his analysis of possibilities. Yet frame problems when they occur in human situations are most often avoided simply by asking someone what’s relevant.

Dreyfus, however, ignores anyone else in the room and continues to focus on the Heideggerian account of the ready-to-hand. “[...R]eadiness-to-hand is experienced as a solicitation that calls forth a flexible response to the significance of the current situation – a response which is experienced as either improving one’s situation or making it worse” (2007, 253). For Dreyfus, our sense of significance, and the relevance of any particular object or action, is determined purely in these terms, and only in these terms will we be able to solve the frame problem, or make it a non-problem. He builds not only on Heidegger’s concept of Zuhandenheit but makes reference to the work of Merleau-Ponty and Todes as theorists of embodiment (2007, 255). But just as he fails to consider Heidegger’s concept of Mitsein in this context, he fails to carry over Merleau-Ponty’s notion of intersubjective intercorporeity, and his analysis remains closer to the philosophically autistic account of Todes, who has nothing like Mitsein or intercorporeity on offer.

We have focused on one recent paper by Dreyfus, but our claim is that with respect to the question of intersubjectivity, or of what intersubjective considerations could contribute to this area of research, this paper is representative of his overall approach to the problems of AI as found in his earlier work. This also applies to his related work on expertise. Dreyfus provides an account of expertise as an instance of embodied human performance on a continuum with basic life-world practices. In our everyday dealings with the world, we are experts in regard to moving through the

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20 The one exception we have found, and the closest we get to an acknowledgement that intersubjective relations play an important role in how we engage with the world, can be found in two paragraphs where Dreyfus discusses love and Kierkegaard (1992, 277). Otherwise in this work we find only scattered references to social skills and social tasks, which, like Heidegger, Dreyfus notes are “built into the objects and spaces around me” (266).
environment and engaging in the pragmatic activities that characterize our normal lives. In developing specialized expertise we rely on embodied practice and particular skill sets. Dreyfus again relies on Heidegger’s notion of pragmatic contexts as our primary way of engaging in the world. These are precisely the contexts in which expertise is gained through practice. For Dreyfus, one’s expertise is practiced when one is “in the flow” of one’s actions. Again, following Heidegger, higher-order reflection on how one does what one does only occurs when things or procedures fail to work effectively (see Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986).

When it comes to the question of how others enter into the process of gaining expertise, one would expect that Dreyfus would have many things to say about apprenticeship and the role that others might play in training or in terms of imitation or communication. Yet his notion of apprenticeship is worked out exclusively in terms of embodied practices, and he remains quiet on any intersubjective aspects that may be involved. In this regard, Harry Collins (2004) who develops a social explanation of expertise, presents a strong critique of Dreyfus. He points out that Dreyfus ignores the contribution of social communication to the learning of expert practices. For Collins communication, and more generally social interactions are essential to gaining expertise. It is not by isolated practice, but by seeing others act and by imitation, as well as engaging in communicative practices, that we learn how things are done. Social and cultural contexts play no role in Dreyfus’s account. Selinger and Crease (2002), who defend the general approach developed by Dreyfus, nonetheless point out how these aspects are underdeveloped in Dreyfus’s account.

From Dreyfus’s perspective, one develops the affective comportment and intuitive capacity of an expert solely by immersion into a practice; the skill-acquiring body is assumed to be able, in principle at least, to become the locus of intuition without influence by [social] forces external to the practice in which one is apprenticed (Selinger and Crease 2002, 260-61)

At the very least we can say that in his various analyses, Dreyfus sets aside or ignores issues that pertain to intersubjectivity, even when such considerations seem directly relevant to questions like the frame problem or the gaining of expertise. He puts first things first, and from Heidegger (and perhaps Todes) he has learned what comes first. Dreyfus, like Heidegger, seems unable to conceive of others except in terms related to equipment and instrumental doings. Returning to his commentary on Heidegger, Dreyfus argues, against Olafson, that Heidegger’s analysis is indeed adequate to defining our experience as always within a shared world, since Dasein’s being is always a being-with, regardless of whether there are others around. Yet one’s readiness to deal with others is tied directly to the readiness-to-hand of pragmatic situations.

I have a readiness for dealing with [others] along with my readiness for dealing with equipment…. Thus familiarity with the world not only allows particular things to show up as available or occurred, as being-with it also
makes possible the encountering of others as Dasein-with (Dreyfus 1990, 149-150).

At best, for Dreyfus, as for Gurwitsch, Todes and Heidegger, how others come into the picture will depend on the specifics of one’s everyday coping with one’s ready-to-hand, instrumental projects, but there is no recognition that our originary encounters with others, in learning situations, or in the early situations of primary intersubjectivity, have anything to do with how we come to cope or see meaning in the world. We don’t mean to dismiss or disparage the rich and important analyses of embodied engagements with the world that we find in the works of Gurwitsch, Todes and Dreyfus, as well as in other theorists influenced by the Heideggerian tradition. Yet it seems right to at least consider how the capacities of primary intersubjectivity and joint attention, for example, might contribute to explanations of what counts as relevant in particular environments and how we recognize that relevance (the frame problem), how we are enabled or disabled by others (or by social institutions) in achieving expertise, or in the most basic way, how we perceive and understand the world.

Conclusion

In Heidegger, and in thinkers who follow his line of thought, we find the idea that a relatively complete account of our embodied, expert, enactive, pragmatic engagements with the world can be given prior to or without reference to intersubjectivity. When the concept of intersubjectivity does come up (and in some cases it doesn’t even come up) it appears to be a subsequent or auxiliary issue that plays no role in explanations of perception or pragmatic doings. If the order of theory is any indication of the order of existence, and Todes certainly claims that it is, then we should be satisfied with a philosophically autistic account of perception and action, and expect that anything relevant to intersubjectivity can be added on to that. In contrast, explanations motivated by a serious regard for primary intersubjectivity suggest that our intersubjective encounters, from the very beginning and continuously, and especially as they are enriched through joint attention with others, help to shape our perceptions and our pragmatic engagements. Our perceptions and actions in the world are not neutral with respect to intersubjectivity; intersubjective effects are present from the time that we first learn what things mean and what they are used for.

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21 Heidegger, at least, recognizes the power that others have in this regard in his concept of das Man. But the power of sociality comes only through our ready-to-hand relations with the world and the others we find involved in pragmatic contexts. In contrast to the happy phrase ‘participatory sense-making’, which is clearly associated with the beginning point of secondary intersubjectivity, in the interaction of joint attention, the phenomenon of being-lost-in-the-they, and interpreting everything the way they interpret, seems to be placed at the other end of secondary intersubjectivity, where we encounter others playing their social roles and dominating our practices.
The argument that we have presented here, then, should be clear. Because Heidegger’s account ignores the phenomenon of primary intersubjectivity, he is left with an impoverished conception of secondary intersubjectivity, and of being-with overall, as well as a view that makes authentic relations with others, including relations of friendship and love, difficult to understand. The recent work on interaction theory and participatory sense-making suggests that intersubjective (social and cultural) factors already have an effect on our perception and understanding of the world, even in the immediacy of our embodied and instrumental copings with the environment. Interaction theory also suggests a way to start thinking about the possibility of relations with others that are not reducible to instrumental relations. One way to put this, which remains entirely within a naturalistic framework, that is, without anything like an appeal to a transcendent infinitude of the sort one might find in Levinas – and yet without abandoning his emphasis on the importance of face-to-face relations – is to say that face-to-face, body-to-body interaction, which involves what Merleau-Ponty calls a genuine intercorporeity of motor intentions, is the starting point for working out an account of how we relate to others in ways that transcend our everyday pragmatic activities and, in some situations, escape the distortions that are inevitably introduced by institutional and cultural forces.

References


