

thinking

togetherness

ANDREJ BOŽIČ (*Ed.*)

THINKING TOGETHERNESS

PHENOMENOLOGY AND SOCIALITY

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PHENOMENOLOGY AND SOCIALITY

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Nerijus Stasiulis

THE ONTOLOGY OF SOCIALITY

Abstract: The question of social relations presupposes ontological questions. The possibility and cause of a social relation is assumed by, and is thus prior to, the individuals of the relation. In Heidegger's philosophy, this presupposition is termed *Mitsein* (Being-with). *Mitsein* is rich in its characteristics, because it further assumes the spatiality of *Dasein*. Social relations are relations of mutual influence and exchange thereof, of a mutual-coming-to-be-together as well as of separation. In fact, they are *etiological* relations. Heidegger offers an analysis of the ontological origin of *etiology* and the historical change of the notions of *aition* and *cause* alongside the history of Being (*Seinsgeschichte*). The world structured according to the techno-scientific principle, in which we find ourselves today, is the outcome of the Cartesian understanding of space. This is also the space of social relations. Heideggerian concepts can serve as a critique of the mediatization of the world in the time of technology, and point to our bodily existence necessarily attached to our senses and direct, immediate experience.

Keywords: body, cause, Heidegger, *Mitdasein*, space.

Introduction

One of Heidegger's key existentials, equiprimordial (*gleichursprünglich*) with the other existentials, is *Mitdasein*, Being-there-with: a human being, characterized as *Dasein*, is always already in the world with other human beings; i.e., *Dasein* is in a sense not a single or particular human being, but a common or shared world of many human beings. All of these human beings are also characterized as *Dasein* and, thus, as *Mitdasein*. In Heidegger, there is no being in a vacuum or a being, which would be single *a priori* and would only later on come into contact with other beings and human beings. *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein* are *a priori*; whether a human being's existence is *authentic* (*eigentlich*) or *inauthentic* (*uneigentlich*), it is always such a *Mitdasein*.

Importantly, Heidegger's existentialism is ontology. The structure of human existence, as it is described in *Being and Time*, is at the same time the ontological structure of Being and the way it manifests itself. This is so, because the "Da-" in *Dasein* stands for Being's manifestation. *Dasein* is first and foremost a *place* for the manifestation of Being, a *guardian* of Being, which stands in a mutual relationship of necessity with Being. *Dasein* is *Mitsein* as Being-in-the-world; it has a world and is, as it were, had by the world. The structure of *Dasein*, its world, and its *Mitsein* are equiprimordial with, or even dependent on, the most primary manifestation of Being and structure thereof. Hence, in order to analyze *Mitsein* and its possibilities, one must analyze Being's possible different manifestations.

270 Heidegger's thought unfolds along the line of two possible manifestations of Being: the modern, or Cartesian, one and the Greek one as it is retrieved/reinterpreted in Heidegger's own thought. Also, these two possibilities are related in terms of the *history of Being*, i.e., the Greek manifestation of Being is that of Being as constant Presence and the modern manifestation is also the same: the latter is a (historically/chronologically) later shape of the former. Accordingly, the Cartesian space, in which modern *Dasein* exists, can also be said to be a derivative of *Dasein*'s original space as it is described in *Being and Time*, because the original structure of *Dasein* is in essence nothing else but the phenomenological description/retrieval of the Greek *Dasein* mentioned above. Around the period of writing *Being and Time*, the phenomenological reading of Aristotle's philosophy was a key for the formation of Heidegger's own description as well as a key to "unlock" the Greek manifestation of Being, in general. Namely, Heidegger sees all Greek thought as an expression of the manifestation of Being as constant Presence.

In this text, we shall assert that the structure of sociality as *Mitdasein* is equiprimordial with *Dasein*'s world and space, i.e., with the different possibilities thereof—the *authentic* and *inauthentic*, or the Cartesian and the "Heideggerian"—, and shall attempt to describe these two ontological structures and their meanings for the social aspect of existence.

***Mitsein* as simple, and not one**

It is essential that, for Heidegger, the Greek thinking of Being as Unit(y) and thus constant—immovable/unchanging—Presence is not a thinking of a monotonous unity, but of that which is crucially related to temporality and plurality. The philosopher employs a distinction, which he finds in Aristotle, between *one* (*einhaft*) and *simple* (*einfach*): for the Greeks, Being is one, not as “one/single,” but as “simple.” Simple is at the same time one and manifold (*mannigfaltig*) (Heidegger 2005a, 153; Arist. Phys. 187a 1–10). Analyzing the Aristotelian/Greek notion of Being during the course of his discussion of the way Being unfolds, the philosopher describes this thus:

Is this one being [*Sein*] something before all unfolding, that is, something that exists for itself, whose independence is the true essence of Being? Or is being in its essence never not unfolded so that the manifold and its foldings constitute precisely the peculiar oneness of that which is intrinsically gathered up? Is being imparted to the individual modes in such a way that by this imparting it in fact parts itself out, although in this parting out it is not partitioned in such a way that, as divided, it falls apart and loses its authentic essence, its unity? Might the unity of being lie precisely in this imparting parting out? And if so, how would and could something like that happen [*geschehen*]? What holds sway in this event [*Geschehen*]? (These are questions concerning *Being and Time*!) (Heidegger 1995, 25; Heidegger 1990, 31.)

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This is a description of the world of existence as *Mitsein* and *Mitdasein*. Being manifests itself in such a way that there is plurality of beings and human beings, who exist as *Dasein*: that is, a) they are always already in the world and space, which is structured according to *Dasein*'s relation to Being; and b) they are always with one another, that is, they are always already in a relation to one another, which is determined by the very structure of both their existence as well as their space.

Hence, one sort of the social relation is among people as *subjects*, which essentially treat others as *objects*, where “object” is defined techno-scientifically

along the lines of the Cartesian space; the other sort of relation is among people as *Dasein*, which essentially treat others as *Dasein*, where *Dasein* is defined by its ek-sistential relation to Being as other than beings (the ontological difference).

The Cartesian space and *Ge-stell*

272 In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes two ways of relation among people (Heidegger 2006, 122–123). This relation is always one of *regard* (*Rücksicht*). In the inauthentic mode of the regard, one cares about, or for, the other in a way, which usurps the other and takes away their own authentic existence. In the authentic mode, one's care manifests itself in liberating and respecting the other's authentic existence, i.e., one regards the other as *Dasein*, and not as an object. This seems to be similar to what Kant says about treating the other as an *end* in itself or what, anticipating the Kantian ethics, Descartes says about the equal moral status of, and respect for, all human beings in virtue of their free will (see Rutherford 2021). But there is an important difference. For Heidegger, the Cartesian metaphysics of the subject is equiprimordial with the metaphysics of the object or the revealing of the world as the Cartesian space. In the Cartesian space/world, all beings manifest themselves as objects, are set as certain constant presences, and, thus, eventually such a world turns out to be one governed by the principle of *Ge-stell*. Descartes “forgot” to pose the question of the Being of Subject and Object (Heidegger 2006, 113), and his metaphysics resulted in the forgetfulness of Being, or *Gestell*. In turn, asking the question of Being collapses the metaphysics of subject and objects back to its ontological origin, and reveals the possibility of *Dasein*'s space and the authentic social relationship.

The Cartesian space is that of extension; it is essentially mathematical. Heidegger emphasizes that this Cartesian extension expresses the ontology of *ständiger Verbleib* (Heidegger 2006, 95, 96) or constant presence and enduring; the same is true for all later science despite its transformations (such as moving from the three-dimensional space to the multidimensional space or to the purely mathematical quantum and relativistic physics) (Heidegger 2005b, 3). The ontology of science remains the same. In fact, Descartes “merely” took over the traditional ontology of substance, and worked it into the transcendental

basis for modern science (and eventually technology) (Heidegger 2006, 93, 96). One needs to emphasize that modern metaphysics was not determined by the mathematical science, which somehow happened to gain importance at a certain historical period, but, on the contrary, because of the metaphysics/ontology of constant presence or Being as constant and unchanging presence, mathematics was suitable to grasp and describe it. Both the identical and unchanging “laws of Nature” and the “particles” characterized merely by the properties of size, shape, position, and movement in the mathematical space express a possibility of the ontology of presence (see more, for example: Heidegger 1979, 276 and earlier).

The modern Subject and Object are revealed equiprimordially. It is usual to speak of the Cartesian dualism or the split into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, spirit and matter/body, subject and object. In fact, this is not so much a “split,” but an equiprimordial manifestation of the two where they reveal each other and depend on each other. The Subject, too, is the expression of the ontology of presence (Heidegger 1984, 76–82). The Subject is the *ground* and the container of axioms (the principle of the *constant-mathematical* “laws of Nature”), and sets the world as (post-)Cartesian space, where beings are (must be) revealed as objects, i.e., techno-scientifically. It is the action of the Subject’s will. But here one must not confuse will and ontological freedom. Heidegger is emphatic that manifestation of Being in terms of *Gestell* is not a matter of our free choice, but, on the contrary, we are governed by the very manifestation of Being as constant presence, and thus we (in our time) must see the world in terms of *Gestell*. Also, one must not confuse techno-scientific activity and *Gestell*: Heidegger leaves the “practical” side of techno-science as it stands, and devotes his thought merely to its ontology. This is not a matter of science or technology as such, but “merely” that of ontology. Due to this ontology, we are Subjects, i.e., we live in the digital-informational space. In our social relation, we reveal one another as digital-informational objects, which stand in a mutual informational relation. Heidegger’s work, however, revolves around revealing Dasein, the *Mitdasein* and its/their world as rooted in Being, by collapsing the ontology of constant presence back into its ontological origin in self-concealing Being.

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Next, we shall discuss two more aspects of the social relation in this dual possibility of being either subject/object or Dasein: the bodily Being and Being-with as well as the causality implicit in this relation.

The other and I as bodily

The Cartesian thought is based on the Greek distinction between the essential, or true, being and the inessential being or non-being(s). And there is a corresponding distinction between the mind and the senses. In Descartes's philosophy, mind takes on the meaning of mathematical-physical knowledge (Heidegger 2006, 95), and the sensual and the bodily is reduced to the sphere of non-essence. Phenomenally, we are revealed to each other and one another as bodies, but in the Cartesian space body is an "organism," and "organism" is a mechanical-technical concept of the body (Heidegger 1979a, 255).

274 The bodies are revealed to us phenomenally and via senses, which first and foremost reveal the world as Dasein. But the phenomenally given is scattered into a multiplicity of single sense-data, if we construe it in terms of the Cartesian space. The Cartesian twist of the Greek (Platonic) *chorismos* between the intellectual and the sensual arose equiprimordially with the "dualism" of mind and body, and it also gave rise to the empiricist philosophy. The more we tend to see things in terms of their pure shape, position, and extension, the more—as opposed to these relations of positions—noticeable becomes what fills the gaps and places, i.e., the sensually given; thus, the sensually given—color, pressure, tone, etc.—becomes the building block of a thing (Heidegger 1984, 211). Heidegger notes that the treatment of sense-data by modern physics depends upon this ontology. Modern physics (and biology) treats the data as effects of a mathematically grasped/graspable cause. For example, color is (objectively) a wave of a certain length and a certain number of vibrations per second. Its (subjective) "impression" can be explained by the effect of this vibrating wave on the nervous system. Just like in the case of Subject and Object, the question of Being is forgotten here. Such an explanation bypasses the question of the Being of color, the sensually/phenomenally given, body, etc. Therefore, Heidegger is strict: such an explanation cannot be considered scientific, because it completely bypasses or ignores what it purports to explain. The true or authentic explanation should not bypass or abandon color, body, and the sensually given as phenomena, that is, as manifestations of Being. But as manifestations of Being, they appear in the Daseinian space, and not the Cartesian one.

Causality and *Mitdasein*

The social relation in the Cartesian space is a relation among organisms. Thus, it is a causal relation in the modern sense of causality. This causality presupposes the chronological and linear notion of time: the cause temporally precedes the effect. It also presupposes the ontology of constant presence: the causal relation is stable, reproducible. While sensual things change, the “law of Nature” remains unchanging. Such is the “mechanistic” or technological, or informational, notion of causality.

The Daseinian space has its own temporality, which precedes the chronological one. It is the temporality of the so-called ecstasies of time: future, past, present. This kind of temporality is the Heideggerian retrieval of the Aristotelian notion of *dynamis*, *entelecheia*, and *energeia*, which imply the so-called four causes. Heidegger retrieves these Aristotelian four causes in his analysis of the ready-to-hand, and the structure of the ready-to-hand is the structure of both the Daseinian space and the Daseinian time (see Stasiulis 2019). Also, Heidegger reinterprets constant presence as *entelecheia* and *energeia*, that is, as one that is not “outside time,” but one that has to do with time—namely, as the unity of the three ecstasies of time.

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Now, the structure of the three ecstasies of time as the unity of the three ecstasies of time is the structure of *the thrown project* (*geworfener Entwurf*) or, in Aristotelian terms, of *pathesis* (passion, receptivity) and *poiesis* (production). Here lies the key difference between the Subject’s space and the Dasein’s space. The Subject should be seen as the ground of beings, which as such actively sets beings as constant presences—or, as discussed above, the sensually given and bodies as organisms. It renders them into variants of informational space. Crucially, it has forgotten Being, does not hearken to Being, forecloses the possibility of revealing things non-informationally and as phenomena of Being; in this sense, it is absolutely active. When several such subjects come into a relation, they are both mutually absolutely active and (seek to) turn each other into objects. Hence, they are in the condition of war, and here Being is, to use Heidegger’s description from his later interpretation of early Greek thought, “out of joint” (*aus der Fuge*) (Heidegger 1977, 354). The relation of Dasein, on the other hand, is rooted in the hearkening to Being, whereby Dasein is not

merely active as a subject, but also (and first of all) passive in this hearkening to Being. This passivity–activity is also characteristic of the social relation. In *Mitdasein*, human beings are revealed to each other and one another in such a way that, instead of actively objectifying, they are receptive to the other as a phenomenon of Being, and only thus they are active/productive. They do not usurp the other and are not usurped by them, but both “sides” of the relation are at once active and passive. The passive has its own activity, and the active has its own passivity. This kind of relation is not brought about as a causal project, but arises equiprimordially with the right relation to Being, which Heidegger calls the remembering of Being or of the ontological difference between Being and beings, which are manifested as phenomena of Being.

Conclusion

276 Sociality should be seen in the broader or even broadest context in which it comes to pass. This context may be called cultural, but we treat culture as an expression of ontology or history of ontology, and thus the context of sociality is ontological. Our current informational-cybernetic society and informational-cybernetic space do not give rise to each other, but they arise “equiprimordially” as expressions of our relation to Being. The characteristics of our current relation to Being are by Heidegger called the forgetfulness of Being, the implicit metaphysics of the Subject as the ground of all revelation of beings or phenomena, the setting of beings as constant presences in the sense of informational entities. This is seen as a way of transitioning into Dasein and sociality as *Mitdasein*, which is characterized, correspondingly, by the remembering of, and hearkening to, Being, turning from the “absolutely active” Subject to the receptive-productive Dasein and to the relation among human beings as among Dasein. This change presupposes a change in the notion or perception of space, causality, and time.

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“The publication edited by Andrej Božič on *Thinking Togetherness. Phenomenology and Sociality* presents a novel and up-to-date account of phenomenology, which comprehends this philosophy as an essentially intersubjective or a communal enterprise; in the volume, phenomenology exceeds narrow limits of subjective life of consciousness, and focuses on various phenomena connected to the public, communal, and political spheres. [...] The book can serve both as a textbook in the heritage of the phenomenological movement and as a collection of original studies.”

Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Witold Płotka**

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“The comprehensive collection of contributions entitled *Thinking Togetherness. Phenomenology and Sociality* represents an important scientific achievement within the field of phenomenological philosophy. The monograph, the central topic of which is the elucidation of some of the essential dimensions of the social, was prepared, as already a simple glimpse over the table of contents reveals, in cooperation with an assemblage of authors from across the world. Such an international configuration of the whole composed of 32 chapters, meaningfully arranged into seven thematic sections, imparts upon the volume the character of an extensive and exhaustive, panoramic scrutiny of the phenomenological manner of confronting the question what constitutes the fundamental traits of interpersonal co-habitation with others. [...] *Thinking Togetherness. Phenomenology and Sociality*, therefore, not only offers a historical account with regard to the development of phenomenology, but also quite straightforwardly concerns its relevance within the philosophical research that deals with the contemporary problems of society.”

Assoc. Prof. Dr. **Sebastjan Vörös**

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