

Was Heidegger an Externalist?

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ABSTRACT *To address the question posed in the title, I focus on Heidegger's conception of linguistic communication developed in the sections on Rede and Gerede of Being and Time. On the basis of a detailed analysis of these sections I argue that Heidegger was a social externalist but semantic internalist. To make this claim, however, I first need to clarify some key points that have lead critics to assume Heidegger's commitment to social externalism automatically commits him to semantic externalism regarding concept use. I begin by explaining the independence of those positions, arguing that social externalism answers the question of whose concepts in a linguistic community are properly individuated, whereas semantic externalism makes a claim about what it takes for concepts to be properly individuated. Once these issues are distinguished, it is possible to see that Heidegger's intersubjectivist conception of language commits him to social externalism, while his conception of the ontological difference commits him to semantic internalism.*

The title of this paper is intentionally misleading. It is misleading, for it should be obvious that no answer can be given to such a general question before determining what kind of externalism one has in mind. Given the way this term is used in contemporary discussion, the obvious reaction to such a question would be to ask, in turn, “an externalist about what?” But my intention in leaving the question unspecified is actually to point to another obvious fact, namely, that there is no necessary connection among the different kinds of internalisms and externalisms currently under philosophical discussion. Thus, one can find a defender for almost any logically possible combination of them. One can be an externalist about knowledge and an internalist about justification, an externalist about reasons and an internalist about motivation, etc. In fact, this is the most interesting reason

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why the question asked in the title is misleading. For it invites the assumption that the appropriate answer would be *a single yes or no*, when in fact in many cases this would be totally inappropriate. Heidegger is, in my opinion, one of these cases.

In our context, I would like to show this by focusing on two issues related to Heidegger's conception of linguistic communication: first of all, the ongoing discussion between Bert Dreyfus¹, Taylor Carman² and Mark Wrathall³, among others, on Heidegger's social externalism. Here I agree with Dreyfus and Carman that Heidegger's conception of linguistic communication commits him to social externalism. However, I hope to be able to provide an account of what such social externalism amounts to that alleviates some of the worries that Wrathall justifiably raises regarding the alleged connection between social externalism and inauthenticity. In doing so, I hope to dispel the widespread impression that Heidegger's account of communication in *Being and Time* is problematic or inconsistent, and that this is somehow related to his commitment to social externalism (I). This in turn will bring me to discuss a further issue, namely, whether Heidegger's commitment to social externalism automatically implies a commitment to semantic externalism.⁴ Here I will try to show first that, in general, there is no direct route from one to the other, given that each of them is motivated by a response to a different question⁵. This is why one can find contemporary authors who accept the former and not the latter. Once this is clarified, I will try to show very briefly why I think that Heidegger is in fact committed to semantic internalism (II).

If the general line of argument developed in what follows is plausible, it will become apparent that the distinction between social and semantic externalism is very fruitful for the exegetical task of providing a plausible interpretation of Heidegger's account of linguistic communication in *Being and Time*, which may otherwise remain forever puzzling. But beyond this purely exegetical payoff, I think that paying attention to the nuances of Heidegger's combination of social externalism and semantic internalism can shed interesting light on current debates in the philosophy of language concerning the connection (or lack thereof) between both types of views.

These debates seem to have been prompted by a certain tendency in some literature on externalism to assimilate social and semantic externalism under the single heading of "anti-individualism," and to treat them merely as variations of a single view. This is not surprising if one takes into account that for the purposes of questioning or defending individualism it is not always crucial to pay special attention to the distinction between social and semantic externalism. Moreover, the authors who initially launched the attack on individualism (such as Putnam and Tyler Burge) seem to embrace both social and semantic externalism. Thus, the impression can arise that social and semantic externalisms are just the two sides of a single anti-individualist coin. In this context, however, the view of language and

communication characteristic of authors of the hermeneutic tradition (Humboldt, Heidegger, Gadamer, etc.) offers a paradigmatic case against that impression. For the hermeneutic conception of language characteristically combines a strongly social, intersubjectivist view of language use regarding individual speakers with an equally strong internalist view of reference and concept use regarding the linguistic community as a whole.⁶ Thus, a careful analysis of the hermeneutic view of language articulated by Heidegger could offer additional support to those who defend the claim that both types of externalisms are logically independent, although I will not directly address this broader question here.

Given that the internalist/externalist distinction has been coined only very recently, its multiple applications still lack clear boundaries, so it may be useful to first make some terminological clarifications in order to specify what particular theses are at issue in each case. There are many ways in which this can be done, but in this particular context perhaps the best way would be the following:

Social externalism is usually understood as an anti-individualist thesis about conceptual contents, namely, the thesis that concepts are not individuated by the understanding of the individual speakers who use them, but are partly individuated by other speakers, i.e., experts.⁷ This thesis is usually justified by appeal to a social fact about language use, namely, what Putnam calls the *division of linguistic labor*.

*Semantic externalism*⁸ is an anti-individualist thesis about conceptual contents as well, but based on entirely different reasons. It is the thesis that concepts are not individuated by the understanding of the speakers who use them, but are partly individuated by their referents.⁹ This thesis is usually justified by appeal to indexical and other context-involving features of language use, that is, to what Putnam calls the *contribution of the environment*.¹⁰

As this distinction should make clear, the fact that both kinds of externalism rule out individualism does not mean that they are one and the same view. According to social externalism, imperfect mastery of concepts and deference to experts are a pervasive feature of our linguistic practices. Speakers often express beliefs that involve concepts that they do not fully master, such as the use of “arthritis” by a speaker to express the belief that he has developed arthritis in the thigh, in Burge’s famous example. Once speakers are confronted with conceptual errors resulting from the incomplete mastery of the concepts they use (for example, when a doctor explains to them that “arthritis” is a term that only applies to inflammations of the joints) it seems most plausible to assume that they would defer to the experts and change their beliefs accordingly. What this shows is that the concepts they use are not individuated by their idiosyncratic understanding but are partly individuated by the understanding of other speakers, i.e., experts. However, even if it were correct that language use is essentially

social and thus that concept use is subject to a division of linguistic labor, this by itself would not yet answer the question of whether our use of empirical concepts has an indexical component, i.e., whether a descriptivist or a non-descriptivist view of reference is correct. For, so far, we still know nothing about how the concepts used by the experts are in turn individuated. Thus, a descriptivist confronted with the fact of a division of linguistic labor would not see the need to question the internalist assumption that meaning determines reference, and thereby embrace semantic externalism. She would at most recognize the need for a further specification of her descriptivist view in order to clarify *whose* meanings determine reference. The most obvious answer would be “those of the experts, of course.”¹¹ For this very same reason, a semantic externalist needs to prove that a descriptive view of reference is wrong *with regard to the experts themselves* in order to successfully question the internalist assumption that meaning determines reference. This is, of course, what semantic externalists have tried to show.¹²

Assuming that these terminological distinctions are sufficiently clear for present purposes, my partial answer to the question posed in the title is that Heidegger was a social externalist and a semantic internalist. I will try to show this in what follows by analyzing Heidegger’s account of linguistic communication in order to find out his answer to the questions that underlie each of these issues. In a nutshell, Heidegger’s view on *whose concepts are properly individuated* makes him a social externalist, whereas his view on *what it takes for concepts to be properly individuated* makes him a semantic internalist.

I. Heidegger’s Social Externalism: *Rede and Gerede*

In *Being and Time* Heidegger claims that *Rede*, discourse, is an “existential”, that is, one of the essential, ontological features of human beings. However, he also indicates that *Rede* is a technical term, which does not mean the mere physical capacity to talk. *Rede* refers to “the articulation of intelligibility” that human beings possess in virtue of their communicative competence, and which allows them to share the same world with others.¹³ According to Heidegger, what is special about the specifically human capacity of using language for communication is its world-disclosing function. By virtue of sharing a natural language, speakers do not just share a system of conventional signs. More importantly, they share the same way of talking about (i.e., articulating, understanding, describing, conceptualizing) everything that can show up within their world. Thus, understanding a language is never just a matter of hearing noises, but of understanding ways the world is or may be. Knowledge of the language and knowledge of the world are inseparable. This is why, merely through communication, speakers can genuinely acquire information about the world that goes

beyond the narrow limits of their own individual experience. However, for this very same reason, they can also be misinformed, misled or deceived through communication. They can talk about what they do not know or do not fully understand. In order to show the interesting (positive and negative) consequences of this innovative view of linguistic communication, Heidegger offers a detailed, phenomenological analysis of everyday communication, which he designates with the technical term *Gerede*.

Heidegger's analysis of *Gerede* in *Being and Time* is both fascinating and problematic for many different reasons. One of the reasons why it is problematic is endemic to the analysis of what Heidegger calls "the Falling of Dasein", to which the analysis of *Gerede* belongs. In the whole section, Heidegger systematically blends what Dreyfus aptly calls structural and existential motives without sufficient distinction, and as a result it seems at times doubtful that a consistent interpretation of all claims made in those sections is in the end possible. However, in the particular case of *Gerede*, I think that the exegetical situation is more promising than in other cases. On the one hand, the ambiguity pointed out by Dreyfus is undoubtedly present in this section as well. In fact, it is perhaps even more clearly present than in other sections, given that Heidegger provides two different definitions of the term, and thus uses it to refer to two different (although internally related) phenomena without any explicit warning as to which one is meant in each case. This is aggravated by the fact that, like in the other sections, some aspects of these phenomena are supposed to be necessary components of Dasein's existential structure, whereas other aspects seem to be not only optional, but straightforwardly negative. However, once the two phenomena are identified and distinguished, it does seem possible to get a consistent view of Heidegger's claims in that section.¹⁴ Let's thus first take a look at Heidegger's two definitions of *Gerede*. They are the following:

Gerede is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own. (SZ, p. 169)

Gerede is constituted by just such gossiping and passing the word along. (SZ, p. 168)

One clear and obvious difference between the two definitions is that whereas the latter refers to particular kinds of communicative *acts* that speakers can engage in, namely, "gossiping and passing the word along", the former refers only to the passive capacity of linguistic *understanding* that speakers possess just in virtue of knowing a language. In this sense, these two phenomena are surely internally related, but not identical. Whereas linguistic competence is a necessary condition for any kind of linguistic communication, and thus *a fortiori* also for "gossiping and passing the word

along”, the reverse is not the case. A linguistically competent speaker could in principle decide never to engage in the particular form of linguistic communication that Heidegger calls “gossiping and passing the word along”,¹⁵ whereas she could not decide not to have an understanding of the meaning of the terms available in her language and still have communicative competence. As Heidegger claims in *Being and Time*, “only he who already understands can listen.” However, this by itself does not rule out that, once confronted with the practice of “gossiping and passing the word along”, one could decide not to go any further than just listening.

However, things are not that easy. In fact, Heidegger has good reasons to assume that the kind of communicative acts that he calls *Gerede* are not as optional as they may seem. But before I go into the specifics of Heidegger’s conception of *Gerede*, in the active sense of the term, let’s first get some clarity on the specifics of the other, passive sense of the term *Gerede*. For, although it is clear that no communicative acts are involved in the first definition, it is also clear that more is involved than just “the understanding of everything” entailed in Dasein’s communicative competence. The latter is what Heidegger calls *Rede*, namely, the articulation of intelligibility that Dasein possesses in virtue of its communicative competence and thus “before any appropriative interpretation” of something in particular (SZ, p. 161), let alone a decision to communicate such an interpretation by “gossiping and passing the word along.” As the definition makes clear, the term *Gerede* in its passive sense refers to a specific possibility that is entailed in *Rede*, namely, the possibility of having an understanding of something *without previously making it one’s own*. Heidegger explains how this is possible in the following way: “In the language which is spoken when one expresses oneself, there lies an average intelligibility; and in accordance with this intelligibility the discourse which is communicated can be understood to a considerable extent, even if the hearer does not bring himself into such a kind of being towards what the discourse is about as to have a primordial understanding of it... What is said-in-the-talk gets understood; but what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially. We have *the same thing* in view, because it is in *the same* averageness that we have a common understanding of what is said” (SZ, p. 168).

Primordial vs. Average Understanding

Here Heidegger is pointing to the obvious fact that in virtue of sharing a language, speakers can talk about the same things, and thus understand “what is said” to a considerable extent, even if they are not directly acquainted with those things that are being talked about. In virtue of their linguistic competence, speakers can get informed about the fact that arthritis is a very debilitating disease, or that it is raining in Kuala Lumpur, without any need to previously achieve direct knowledge of those things. Obviously,

in order to understand an assertion, for example, one needs to know what would be the case if it were true, but one does not need to know whether it is indeed true. Direct acquaintance with what is being said is only required for the latter kind of knowledge. But precisely for that reason, it follows – and this is crucial for Heidegger’s further argument – that nothing in the linguistic expression of “what is said” *per se* makes it necessary for speakers to be able to tell whether the claims made are the expression of a primordial understanding¹⁶, whether they express knowledge by acquaintance or merely knowledge by description, so to speak. This is just a fact about linguistic communication, and Heidegger is aware that this is not *per se* a negative fact. To the contrary, it follows from an essential feature of communication. As Heidegger points out, the purpose of linguistic communication is “to bring the hearer to participate in disclosed being toward what is talked about in the discourse” (SZ, p. 168). But if the purpose of communication is to make it possible to share experiences and information among speakers that they did not previously have (otherwise communication would be redundant), it seems actually essential for communication that speakers be in principle able to understand everything “without previously making the thing one’s own”,¹⁷ that is, that they can acquire knowledge by description through communication. For, if knowledge by acquaintance were a necessary condition for *Rede* or, as Heidegger puts it, if “going back to the ground of what is talked about” could not be “left undone” (SZ, p. 169), communication would be entirely superfluous. Once the hearers know first hand what is being communicated, communication no longer has a point. Thus, in this passive sense of the term, *Gerede* as a *structural* possibility is a necessary feature of *Rede* and thus of *Dasein*’s disclosedness.

But hidden behind these positive facts about the everyday mode of communication is the source of Heidegger’s assumption that the active sense of the term *Gerede* is not as optional, and thus not entirely independent of the passive sense of the term, as it would have to be to justify or require the use of two separate terms. Communication allows us to expand our knowledge beyond our individual experience. In fact, most of what we know comes from this source. As Heidegger points out, our average understanding (based merely on knowledge by description) always outruns our primordial understanding (based on knowledge by direct acquaintance), however extended the latter may be: “There are many things with which we first become acquainted in this way [through *Gerede*, C.L.], and there is not a little which never gets beyond such an average understanding” (SZ, p. 169). However, as Heidegger also makes clear, once communication is in place, “it soon becomes impossible to decide what is disclosed in a genuine understanding, and what is not” (SZ, p. 173). This is especially clear in the case of written communication, as Heidegger points out: “the average understanding of the reader will *never be able* to decide what has been drawn

from primordial sources with a struggle and how much is just gossip” (SZ, p. 168). But, if this is so, if speakers are not always in a position to distinguish the two cases, it is no longer clear to what extent they can actually avoid participating in the communicative acts to which the active sense of the term *Gerede* refers. For, as Heidegger makes clear, the acts of “gossiping and passing the word along” by no means coincide with what is just a very special case of them, namely, acts in which one has the explicit intention of deceiving. Thus, in general, “*Gerede* does not have the kind of being which belongs to *consciously passing off* something as something else” (SZ, p. 169). Rather, *Gerede* in the active sense consists merely in *participating in the practices of acquiring and transmitting claims about things with which one is not directly acquainted*. And given that without such a practice communication would be impossible, whenever it was not superfluous, Heidegger seems indeed justified in treating *Gerede* as a positive phenomenon in the active sense as well: nothing is wrong with such a practice, so long as those claims that one acquires and transmits in this way in fact stem *from those who actually have a primordial understanding of what is being talked about*, that is, those who do not have just the average understanding that linguistic competence provides, but who are *experts* on the matter. So long as this is the case, our acquiring and transmitting such claims is perfectly justified by deferral to those who have such authority. In fact, only so can we hope to acquire the primordial understanding that experts already have by learning from them.

From Average Understanding to Complete Groundlessness

However, given that the linguistic expressions of our claims do not wear the origin of their authority on their sleeves, the structure of justification by deferral that is only proper on the basis of claims that are themselves justified differently (that is, on the basis of a primordial understanding of what is being talked about), can get over-generalized beyond its appropriate boundaries. This is where *Gerede* in the negative sense originates. Given that this kind of communication “has lost its primary relationship-of-being towards the entity talked about, or else has never achieved such a relationship, it does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of *gossiping and passing the word along*. What is said-in-the-talk as such spreads in wider circles and takes on an authoritative character. Things are so because one says so. *Gerede* is constituted by such gossiping and passing the word along – a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness” (SZ, p. 168).

Here Heidegger is already indicating the kind of *existential* conclusions that he will draw more explicitly later, in the section on “Falling and

Thrownness”, on the basis of his structural analysis of *Gerede*. Most relevant in our context is Heidegger’s claim that, in *Gerede*, “Dasein itself... presents to itself the possibility of losing itself in the ‘one’ and falling into groundlessness” (SZ, p. 177).

Here it is important to keep in mind that *Gerede*, in its structural sense, only opens up a possibility that as such may or may not occur. Thus, a particular (and optional) transition is needed to move from the neutral to the negative sense of *Gerede*. As Heidegger describes it, this is a process in which “the initial lack of grounds” characteristic of everyday communication, i.e. of a practice that does not require the participants to *always* “go back to the ground of what is talked about”, degenerates into the “complete groundlessness” characteristic of gossiping, i.e. of a practice that does not require that they *ever* go back to the ground of what is talked about.

There are two, internally related aspects to what Heidegger calls the “groundlessness” (*Bodenlosigkeit*) of inauthentic everydayness, to which *Gerede* contributes as an existential possibility. One is related to the active, and the other to the passive, sense of *Gerede*. With regard to the former, given that the structure of justification by deferral is a necessary, structural component of any practice of communication, and thus of Dasein’s disclosedness as such, participating in everyday communication opens up the *possibility* for Dasein to over-generalize that structure of justification to *all* of its claims. When that happens, *the one* has deprived the particular Dasein of its *answerability* (SZ, p. 168): “things are so because *one* says so.” This is one sense in which, through *Gerede*, Dasein can lose itself in the one and fall into groundlessness (SZ, p. 177), namely, by no longer seeing the need to “go back to the ground of what is talked about” in order to justify *any* of its claims.¹⁸ Another aspect of the process of falling that is internally related to this one originates in the phenomenon that the term *Gerede* in its passive sense refers to, namely, the availability of an average understanding that communication provides. This availability opens up the possibility for Dasein to assume that there is no need *at all* for a genuine, primordial understanding, given that in fact such understanding is not needed to participate in *Gerede*, in everyday communication: “the average understanding, moreover, will not want any such distinction, and does not need it, because, of course, it understands everything. The groundlessness of *Gerede* is no obstacle to its becoming public; instead it encourages this.... *Gerede* is something that anyone can rake up; it not only releases one from the task of genuinely understanding, but develops an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, for which nothing is closed off any longer” (SZ, p. 169), and “because of this, *Gerede* discourages any new inquiry and any disputation” (ibid.). This is the other sense in which, through *Gerede*, Dasein can lose itself in the one and fall into groundlessness, namely, by no longer seeing the need to develop a primordial understanding of *anything* (its own existence included).

Of course, in this context Heidegger needs to offer some plausible motivation to explain why Dasein would ever be tempted to fall into the negative possibility that *Gerede* opens up. He points to such a possible motivation right after his definition of *Gerede* as “the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one’s own”, when he claims that *Gerede* “protects from the danger to fail” while attempting to “make the thing one’s own” (SZ, p. 169). Given that there is no guarantee of success in the attempt to reach a primordial understanding of anything (let alone of Dasein’s own existence), Dasein can be tempted to settle for the guarantee of success in reaching an average understanding of everything that *Gerede* does provide. As he explains later in the section on “Falling and Thrownness:” “*Gerede* and ambiguity, having seen everything, having understood everything, develop the supposition that Dasein’s disclosedness, which is so available and so prevalent, can guarantee to Dasein that all the possibilities of its being will be secure, genuine, and full. Through the self-certainty and decidedness of the ‘one’, it gets spread abroad increasingly that there is no need of authentic understanding or the affectedness that goes with it. The supposition of the ‘one’ that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine ‘life’, brings Dasein a *tranquility*, for which everything is ‘in the best order’ and all doors are open. Falling Being-in-the-world, which tempts itself, is at the same time *tranquilizing*” (SZ, p. 177).

Now, if this general interpretation of the negative possibilities entailed by *Gerede* is plausible, it seems possible to understand why *Gerede* as the everyday mode of communication is not by itself a negative phenomenon (and thus why Dasein is not condemned to inauthenticity just by virtue of participating in everyday communication). The key is to keep in mind that, for Heidegger, the positive and the negative aspects of *Gerede* are part of a continuum and not an all or nothing affair.¹⁹ Whereas it is perfectly fine to defer to experts for justifying *those* claims we have acquired through communication with them, genuine communication requires that not *all* claims be so justified. Thus, it is not the structure of deferral to authority *per se* that is responsible for Dasein’s inauthenticity, but only its undue overgeneralization. The same applies to the “average way in which things have been interpreted in *Gerede*.” Whereas it is an essential feature of Dasein’s disclosedness to share this average understanding, genuine understanding requires, in addition, the development of “new inquiry and disputation” (SZ, p. 169). Thus, it is not the fact that “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” that is responsible for Dasein’s inauthenticity, but only the undue overgeneralization of that kind of understanding. By taking such average understanding not just as the starting point, but as the goal, Dasein forgets that “in it, from out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all

re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed” (SZ, p. 169) and thus *need* to still be performed.²⁰

The Social Character of Language: What Makes Sharing Concepts Possible?

On the basis of this short analysis of Heidegger’s conception of everyday communication, it seems possible to show that it does entail a commitment to social externalism. In particular, Heidegger’s distinction between primordial and average understanding only seems plausible under the assumption that concepts are not individuated by the understanding of the individual speakers who use them, but are partly individuated *by other speakers, i.e., experts*. For the opposite assumption is incompatible with Heidegger’s claim that speakers with a primordial understanding and those with an average understanding can have a common understanding of what is said. Let’s see why.

If the concepts that speakers use were individuated by each speaker’s respective understanding, that is, if all speakers were *per definitionem* experts on the terms they use, there would be no basis for the distinction between primordial and average understanding. For each understanding would *ex hypothesi* provide a primordial “relationship of being towards the entity talked about” (SZ, p. 168). As a consequence, differences in understanding among speakers would *eo ipso* imply that the concepts they use were different, and thus what they intend to refer to by using them would also be different. Obviously, communication among speakers who use totally different concepts would be impossible. This is why Heidegger’s conception of communication allows for *different* levels of understanding of the *same* concepts.

As he makes clear right at the beginning of the section on *Gerede*, speakers who share the same language have the same concepts available, and thus can talk about the same things.²¹ What is different among the speakers (in virtue of their differences in experiences and beliefs) is the richness of their respective understanding of those concepts. Thus, a primordial understanding of concepts is not a requirement for sharing them. An average understanding of them suffices for participating in communication, and thus for understanding what is said “to a considerable extent.” As we already saw, Heidegger explains it in the following way: “In the language which is spoken when one expresses oneself, there lies an average intelligibility; and in accordance with this intelligibility the discourse which is communicated can be understood to a considerable extent, even if the hearer does not bring himself into such a kind of being towards what the discourse is about as to have a primordial understanding of it... We have *the same thing* in view, because it is in *the same* averageness that we have a common understanding of what is said” (SZ, p. 168).

Thus, according to Heidegger's description of the situation, in virtue of their linguistic competence average speakers are able to use the *same* concepts that expert speakers use, although their average understanding alone does not bring them into a primordial relationship of being towards what is being talked about. However, to claim that only the understanding of the expert speaker establishes such a primordial relationship implies that only the latter understanding individuates the concepts at issue. Only under this social externalist assumption is Heidegger justified in claiming that the expert and the average understandings are not simply different, but that one is primordial whereas the other is not.

Does Social Externalism Lead to Groundlessness?

However, in view of the ongoing discussion between Dreyfus, Carman, and Wrathall, it may be important to focus briefly on what follows from Heidegger's social externalism. The debate among these authors is very instructive in this context. For, although they disagree in their respective conclusions, they all seem to share the problematic assumption that ascribing social externalism to Heidegger necessarily implies ruling out the possibility of authenticity. On the basis of this assumption, Dreyfus and Carman just bite the bullet and accept that, according to Heidegger's interpretation, the social character of language leads to inauthenticity,²² whereas Wrathall, in order to defend the possibility of authenticity, sees no alternative to questioning Heidegger's social externalism, that is, arguing that "Heidegger is not committed to the view that conversational content is necessarily subject to public norms" (p. 286).²³

In contradistinction, I think that the right strategy is to question the assumption that there is a *necessary* connection between social externalism and inauthenticity in Heidegger's account of linguistic communication. In fact, the plausibility of this assumption seems rooted exclusively in a conflation of the positive and negative senses of the term *Gerede*, as used by Heidegger. For, as we have seen, nothing about the negative aspects of *Gerede* needs to be invoked to establish Heidegger's social externalism. All that has been assumed is a pretty trivial constraint for any plausible account of communication, namely, that speakers must be able to talk about the same things, even if they are not equally acquainted with those things (either because not all of them are in a position to simultaneously perceive them, or because not all of them have the same level of understanding or expertise about those things).

But perhaps one could question the triviality of this constraint on communication in order to deny the social externalist thesis. This could be done by invoking the possibility of a linguistic community in which speakers spoke only about those things they had previously made their own, that is, those things of which they had a primordial understanding.²⁴ To the extent

that all speakers would qualify as experts, the social externalist thesis would have no application to such a linguistic community. In view of that possibility *Gerede* would turn out to be – *pace* Heidegger – an optional, purely negative, feature of linguistic communication. This view of linguistic communication, however, seems rather implausible if one takes into account a crucial kind of expertise that unavoidably generates differences in acquaintance and knowledge among speakers, namely, the expertise that only *witnesses* have. Taking that crucial case into consideration, as Heidegger does (see SZ, p. 155; GA 20, p. 370), provides a very strong reason in favor of the view that communication based on testimony (i.e., the testimony of others) is not an optional feature of linguistic communication. If, as Heidegger plausibly claims, most of what we know results from the average understanding provided through communication with others, that is, through the testimony of others (who either had a primordial understanding of the claims communicated or had acquired them through communication with those who had such understanding), limiting communication to those things speakers have directly witnessed would make it impossible to transmit most of the knowledge at the disposal of a linguistic community at a given time throughout the community and to new generations. However, the problem with such a drastic restriction would not stop there. For in order for speakers to achieve a sufficient understanding of those things they cannot directly witness it would be necessary not only that witnesses never lie, but also that they never make mistakes in the articulation of such understanding. Now, in contradistinction with the former restrictions, the latter could not be implemented just by the good will of speakers. In fact, in order for such a community to be able to learn from mistakes (and thus to increase the richness of the understanding of the concepts they use and to modify them accordingly) they would need to be able to talk about the same things in spite of the differences in beliefs (assumptions, hypothesis, etc.) among speakers, and thus to be open to the possibility that other speakers may have a better understanding of the very same things they themselves are talking about. Only so could they hope to correct and improve their understanding, whenever it is deficient. To that extent, social externalism seems to express a necessary condition for mutual learning.

It seems thus that the definition of *Gerede* in the passive sense, namely, “the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one’s own” (SZ, p. 169), is indeed pointing at a basic constraint for any plausible account of communication, namely, that speakers must be able to speak about the same things, even if they are not equally acquainted with those things. Precisely to the extent that without such a possibility, as we already saw, communication would be impossible whenever it was not superfluous, Heidegger seems justified in claiming that *Gerede* is “a positive phenomenon which constitutes the kind of Being of everyday Dasein’s

understanding and interpreting” (SZ, p. 167). Thus, in that sense of the term, Dreyfus and Carman are right in assuming the structural necessity of *Gerede* in Heidegger’s account of linguistic communication. However, if *Gerede* in this sense is a positive phenomenon, and thus it does not *per se* lead to the negative, optional possibility of “falling into groundlessness”, none of its structural features would *a fortiori* lead to that possibility. It thus seems that Wrathall’s worry that the social externalism characteristic of *Gerede* may rule out the possibility of authenticity can be dispelled on purely exegetical grounds. If it is terminologically fixed by Heidegger that *Gerede* does not lead to inauthenticity, then it is equally fixed that neither does its social character²⁵ (or any of its other structural features, for that matter). The social character of language cannot by itself lead to “groundlessness” if everyday communication does not do so either.²⁶

But, even putting these exegetical considerations aside, it is not clear to me why the social, public character of language should lead to “banalization, leveling, and untruth”, as Wrathall puts it. Given that Heidegger’s social externalism essentially depends on the distinction between the layman’s average understanding and the expert’s primordial understanding, the only way to draw a connection between the social character of language and “banalization, leveling and untruth” would be by reversing the division of linguistic labor among speakers and claiming not just that concepts are not always individuated by the understanding of the individual speakers who use them, but that they are individuated by the layman’s understanding of them instead of the expert’s. It is hard to imagine why anyone would be willing to defend such a bizarre view. In any event, that Heidegger would accept it seems out of the question. For his choice of terms to characterize the different ways in which concepts can be understood already answers the question of whose understanding properly individuates them. That only the expert’s understanding does so is precisely the reason why that is the only one that deserves to be called “primordial”.

In my opinion, all Heidegger is claiming by pointing at the negative and the positive aspects of *Gerede* is that language does not prevent “banalization, leveling, and untruth.” In that respect, Heidegger’s claims about both aspects of everyday communication seem basically right: learning through everyday communication requires the structure of deferral of authority, but that structure is intrinsically problematic. For by its very nature it opens up the possibility of Dasein’s inauthenticity. On the one hand, deferral of authority *is* directly at odds with Dasein’s accountability. But on the other, as Heidegger clearly sees, its appropriate limits are not always under Dasein’s own control. For once the structure of deferral to authority is in place, there is no guarantee that speakers will defer their accountability only to real experts and not to gossipers (passive sense of *Gerede*), and only defer to them for some but not for all of their claims (active sense of *Gerede*). This is why “falling into groundlessness” is *possible*

for Dasein.²⁷ However, as long as language makes it equally possible to achieve not just an average, but also a primordial understanding, as Heidegger explicitly claims,²⁸ there seems to be no reason to be suspicious of his social externalism, and thus no motivation left to deny it.

II. Heidegger's Semantic Internalism: What Individuates Concepts?

As I mentioned at the beginning, my general aim here is not so much to try to establish that Heidegger was a semantic internalist, for I do not have the space to try to do so any more convincingly than I have done elsewhere in a much more detailed form.²⁹ My aim is rather to show how and why his social externalism cannot by itself make him a semantic externalist. There is indeed *some* internal connection between social and semantic externalism, but it is not of the kind that would be needed here. As I will argue in what follows, semantic externalism in some of its versions (especially those of the Putnamian variety) may be a sufficient condition for social externalism, but it is not a necessary condition.

The social and the semantic externalist share a social understanding of concepts and thus accept the so-called division of linguistic labor to the extent that both agree that the understanding of concepts that the average speaker has does not always properly individuate such concepts. However, this negative claim by itself does not determine the positive answer to the underlying question, namely, *what does in fact individuate such concepts*. It is a specific answer to this question that can make a social externalist also a semantic externalist, namely, the additional commitment to a non-descriptivist view of reference. The target here is the internalist assumption that concepts are always individuated by descriptive satisfaction conditions associated with them, which determine their extension. In contradistinction, as we already mentioned at the beginning, the semantic externalist claims that in some cases concepts are partly individuated by the referents themselves.

Perhaps the difference³⁰ can be seen best by focusing on the different reasons that a semantic internalist and a semantic externalist have to agree with the social externalist thesis. The reason for a semantic internalist to agree that concepts are not always individuated by the understanding of the individual speakers is that in some cases the understanding of *some* speakers may be insufficient to properly determine the extension of such a concept. In such cases, the non-expert speaker uses such a concept with the intention of referring to whatever the expert speaker refers to by it, for only the understanding of the expert speaker individuates such concepts properly. In contradistinction, the reason for the semantic externalist to agree that concepts are not always individuated by the understanding of the individual speaker is that in some cases the understanding of *all* speakers may be insufficient to properly determine the extension of such concepts. As already

mentioned, this is so because the concepts they all use in those cases are partly individuated by their referents. To claim that concepts are not totally individuated by the understanding of the speakers who use them, but are partly individuated by their referents, is actually to claim that neither the understanding of the lay speakers nor the understanding of the experts *per se* suffices to determine the extension of such concepts. To the extent that in some cases they do not intend to refer to whatever satisfies the descriptive conditions entailed in their understanding of the concepts they use, but (roughly) to everything that is like the paradigm samples they have in fact referred to by using those concepts (whatever these end up being), the precise extension of such concepts is not determined just by the speakers' understanding of them, but also crucially by facts about the referents. To the extent that not all those facts need to be known to any of the speakers (in the way that their own understanding is by definition known to them), this semantic view is an externalist view.

Thus, in order to determine whether Heidegger was a semantic internalist or an externalist, it is not enough to find out here his answer to the question of *whose* concepts are properly individuated. What needs to be found out is his answer to the further question, namely, *what it takes* for concepts to be properly individuated. The main issue here, of course, is whether he accepted the traditional, descriptive view of reference as an appropriate answer to that question.

According to the Heideggerian conception of linguistic communication that we have analyzed so far, what it takes for speakers to talk about the same things is to use the same concepts, that is, to have *at least* a common, average understanding of those concepts. As he puts it, speakers have *the same thing* in view, because it is in *the same* averageness that they have a common understanding of what is said (SZ, p. 168).³¹ In order to make³² *true* claims about those things, however, the average understanding that linguistic competence provides is obviously not sufficient, one *also* needs a primordial understanding. In this sense, the difference between a primordial and an average understanding consists in the fact that only the latter succeeds in establishing a "primordial" relationship of being with what is being talked about (SZ, p. 168). Accordingly, the difference between groundless and genuine communication is that only in the latter case is "what is said drawn from what the talk is about" (SZ, p. 32). In other words, those who have an average and those who have a primordial understanding are able to talk about the same things. The important difference among them, of course, is that the claims of the former, in contradistinction to those of the latter, are necessarily groundless.

Now, in order to determine whether Heidegger was a semantic internalist or an externalist, the issue that matters is, obviously, the first one. What needs to be found out is not what it takes for speakers to make true claims, but what it takes for them to make claims about the same things in the first

place, that is, to achieve a shared relationship of being towards the entity talked about. If all it took for speakers to achieve such a relationship was, for example, to be in causal contact with the referents of the terms they use, Heidegger would undoubtedly be a semantic externalist. It seems to me, though, that one would be hard pressed to argue that he would have accepted such view. The reason for this is actually not hard to find. For Heidegger's answer to this question is all pervasive: what it takes to achieve a relationship of being towards the entity talked about is just what it takes to achieve any intentional relationship to an entity, namely, *a prior understanding of its being*.³³ For, as Heidegger never tires of arguing, without such understanding there is no possibility of distinguishing some entities from others and thus no possibility of determining which entity in particular it is to which one is referring.

In order to make plausible the conceptual pluralism implicit in his interpretation of the ontological difference,³⁴ Heidegger often discusses examples of situations in which different people are in causal contact with the same entities, but do not share the same understanding of their being. He then tries to show that to the extent that they do not have the same understanding of the being of those entities they do not have access to the same entities. In *The History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger discusses the example of an entity (a stone-ax) that for a historian is *a vestige* of a past world, whereas for a farmer it is *an obstacle* to his concern. He describes the situation of the farmer as follows: "the stone is *inaccessible to him, not because the thing is not bodily there, not because he does not have the historical source so to speak as an extant thing*, but precisely because he still only appresents this thing in its extantness, as it is disclosed for him through his specific concern... It [the stone-ax] is not only inaccessible to him but access is expressly put off by him, perhaps even finally blocked, in that *he positively takes it for what it is to him, an obstacle*, and shatters it against the nearest rock" (GA 20, p. 289; my italics).

From this perspective, it follows that, as Heidegger expresses it in his *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, "an entity can be uncovered, whether by way of perception or some other mode of access, only if the being of this entity is already disclosed – only if I already understand it. Only then can I ask whether it is real or not and embark on some procedure to establish the reality of the entity" (GA 24, p. 72). It is very important to keep in mind that the understanding that Heidegger refers to in this context is not just any random understanding that a speaker may have, but an understanding of *the being of the entity referred to*. Thus, no understanding qualifies as an understanding of being unless it can fulfill such a function, that is, unless it can determine in advance *to which* entity is being referred. No matter how precise or imprecise it may be, it must at least be an understanding that provides the resources for identifying the entity at issue and distinguishing it from others. Thus, by the same token, the entity at issue would be *whatever*

satisfies such understanding of being. Heidegger's claim that there can be no access to entities without a prior understanding of *their being* expresses his commitment to the internalist view that descriptive satisfaction conditions associated with the concepts we use determine the extension of those concepts. Moreover, in his case there is no possibility of interpreting the satisfaction conditions associated with our concepts as merely contextual or indexical,³⁵ given that they must amount to a determination of *the being of the entities* meant or, as he often puts it, a determination of *what and how the entity is*.

Not surprisingly, whenever Heidegger discusses examples of singular reference, even if they involve the use of indexicals, he argues that reference to a particular entity is only possible on the basis of a prior understanding of the general sortal concept under which the entity falls. In *Being and Time*, he argues against the possibility of direct reference or, as he puts it, of "simply naming" something with the help of an example of indexical reference to a particular available entity. He explains it as follows: "The circumspective question as to what *this* particular available thing may be, receives the circumspectively interpretative answer that it is for such and such a purpose. If we tell what it is for, we are not *simply naming* something; but that which is named is understood *as* that *as* which we are to take the thing in question... In dealing with what is environmentally available by interpreting it circumspectively, we 'see' it *as a table, a door, a carriage or a bridge*" (SZ, 149, my italics). Consequently, the use of singular terms such as demonstratives to refer to particular entities ("*this* particular thing") presupposes an understanding of general terms that specify *what* the entity is (namely, "*a table, a door, a carriage or a bridge*").

Heidegger never offers a detailed justification for the assumption that we can only refer to individual exemplifications of general concepts. But perhaps the best way to express his general line of argument would be with the help of Quine's maxim "no entity without identity."³⁶ The idea seems to be the following: communication requires speakers to identify which entities they want to talk about so that they can be distinguished from others. And this cannot be done unless the terms used to designate those entities provide an understanding of what distinguishes them from others, that is, unless they provide the resources to identify entities as *what* they are, that is, in their *being*. To the extent that it is meaningless to purport to refer to entities whose conditions of identity one cannot possibly indicate, our understanding of the being of entities must determine in advance which entities we are referring to, that is, *meaning must determine reference*. Thus, according to Heidegger, it is just a general constraint on meaningful concept use that the realm of objects to which concepts apply must be determined in advance. And this determination requires establishing criteria of identity for those objects. Now, to the extent that the meaning of a designative term provides an understanding of the being of the entities it refers to, it determines at the

same time *as what* these entities are accessible to us, it determines our experience with those entities. From this Heidegger concludes that there can be no access to entities without a prior understanding of their being. In *What is a Thing?* Heidegger explains it in the following terms: “If we become acquainted with *this rifle* or even a determinate model of rifle, we do not learn for the first time what *a weapon* is. Rather, we already know this in advance and must know it, otherwise we could not at all *perceive the rifle as such* [my italics]. When we know in advance what a weapon is, and only then, does what we see lying before us become *visible* in that which it is” (FnD, p. 56).

To claim that there can be no access to entities without a prior understanding of their being is to claim that our understanding of the being of entities determines which entities we are referring to and thus determines the extension of the terms we use.³⁷ This is why Heidegger was a semantic internalist.

In contradistinction, a semantic externalist claims that we can refer to entities, that is, have communicative access to them, without a prior understanding of their being.³⁸ This is the case when the concepts we use, even if they are general concepts (such as natural kind terms or those involved in definite descriptions) have an indexical component.³⁹ In such cases, our understanding of these concepts (i.e., the rule of use for them) does not amount to a determination of the being of the entities at issue, however precise or imprecise it may be, but to something totally different, namely, to a contextual specification of paradigm samples of such entities. Consequently, the extension of those concepts is not determined by our *understanding of the being* of the entities that fall under them, but only by the *actual being* of those entities, that is, by the referents themselves. To this extent, semantic externalism is actually incompatible with the most basic assumption of Heidegger’s interpretation of the ontological difference, namely, that “there is being only in an understanding of being” (SZ, p. 168).

Of course, this does not mean that for the semantic internalist the referents do not play a crucial role in our knowledge of them. As Heidegger makes very clear in the quote from *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* that I mentioned before, it can very well happen that once I try to find out whether there is something that satisfies the understanding of being of a particular concept, it turns out that nothing does. In this sense, it is always possible that when I try to establish whether the entity meant is real, it turns out that it is not. However, as he also argues, the latter question can only be answered on the basis of an answer to the former question and not the other way around. The reasons are not hard to find here, either. As we saw before, in order to say something true, what is said must be drawn from what the talk is about (SZ, p. 32). But, precisely for that reason, in order to determine whether what is said is true, it must be determined first what the talk is about. That is, in order for the referents to determine the truth value of our

claims, it must first be determined *which referents are meant*. And this, according to the semantic internalist, is determined by the descriptive satisfaction conditions associated with the concepts used by the speaker⁴⁰ or, to put it in Heidegger's own terms, by "the understanding of the being of the entities" entailed by such concepts. Only once the truth conditions of our claims are established through the satisfaction conditions of the concepts used to make them can the referents that satisfy those conditions determine in turn the truth values of our claims.⁴¹ However, it is one thing to recognize that the referents determine the *truth values* of our claims, and quite another to accept that the referents determine the *content* of our claims. Heidegger would certainly have agreed that the referents determine *whether there is something in the extension of our terms*, but as a good semantic internalist (like Frege, Husserl, Carnap, Searle, etc.), he would have considered the externalist claim that the referents also determine *what we mean by our terms* to be just a magical theory of reference.

Notes

1. See Dreyfus (1991).
2. See Carman (2000), and chapter 3 of Carman (2003).
3. See Wrathall (1999).
4. T. Carman and M. Wrathall make suggestions to this effect in their respective criticisms of the interpretation of Heidegger as a semantic internalist that I offer in Lafont (2000). See Carman (2002), pp. 212–14, and Wrathall (2002), pp. 218–25. See also my replies in Lafont (2002).
5. My claim here is only that authors can give (and have in fact given) different kinds of answers to each question. I make no claims with regard to the further issue of whether all these combinations of answers are equally coherent or plausible, let alone correct.
6. For a detailed analysis of the hermeneutic conception of language along these lines, see Lafont (1999).
7. This view is commonly associated with Tyler Burge's defense of externalism in his famous "Individualism and the Mental." However, in the context of our distinction between social and semantic externalism, it would be misleading to characterize Burge's externalism as of the former *rather than the latter kind*, for he endorses both. See Burge (1986), p. 707, and Burge (1989), p. 187. An example of a contemporary author who embraces "social externalism" without embracing "semantic externalism", as the terms are defined here, is Brandom (1994). As I will try to show in what follows, Heidegger is another example.
8. Here I follow Putnam's use of the term "semantic externalism" to refer to a more specific thesis than "social externalism" in general. This is clear, for example, in Putnam (1996), when he explains: "In this introduction, I have focused on the two doctrines in 'The Meaning of "Meaning"' that have aroused the most controversy: semantic externalism and the division of linguistic labor" (p. 21).
9. I take this formulation from Sawyer (2003), p. 272.
10. Some authors call this thesis "physical externalism", but I find this label misleading, for it seems to narrow the indexicality of language to the domain of the *physical*. The physical environment is a particularly appropriate domain to illustrate semantic externalism through the analysis of our use of natural kind terms, etc., but the indexicality or context-sensitivity of language is by no means restricted to the practice of

referring to physical objects. As Donnellan's examples of the referential use of definite descriptions show, the thesis of semantic externalism can be equally illustrated with regard to our *social* environment. The indexicality of language allows our use of terms to be hooked up to the *actual* world, but not necessarily to the actual world *qua physical* world. The latter claim requires an independent commitment to physicalism.

11. For an example of this reaction see Searle (1983), pp. 201–2.
12. This can be done in different ways, either by analyzing cases in which only some speakers are experts, like Putnam's examples of the use of terms such as "electron", "momentum", "multiple sclerosis" etc. by scientists, or by analyzing cases in which all speakers are equally experts, as in his famous example of the use of the term "water" in the context of his Twin Earth thought experiment.
13. See BZ, pp. 12–14.
14. My claim here is only that it is possible to give a consistent interpretation of the view of communication that lies at the basis of Heidegger's analysis of *Gerede*. Whether this interpretation could contribute to giving an entirely consistent interpretation of Heidegger's analysis of "the Falling of Dasein" as a whole is not clear to me at this point.
15. As will become clear later, that a single speaker could in principle make such a decision (although at great personal cost) does not mean that all speakers could do so without causing the practice of communication to collapse.
16. Heidegger often illustrates the difference between primordial and average understanding by recurring to examples based on perceptual experience (i.e., cases in which some speakers had perceptual access to the entity that is being talked about whereas others do not). However, this is not a necessary feature of the distinction. According to Heidegger's definition of the term, to have a primordial understanding of an entity is to have a primordial access to the being of that entity. Thus, perception provides a primordial understanding only of those entities whose primordial way of access is perceptual, whereas for entities such as numbers, for example, a primordial understanding of them requires not perceptual but mathematical knowledge. On the other hand, that the primordial way of access to a particular kind of entities is perceptual does not mean that perception is all that is needed for a primordial understanding of them. Direct perception is certainly a necessary condition for a primordial understanding of perceptible entities, but it may not be a sufficient condition. Even if a layman and an expert both have only an average understanding of my claim that "I have a dangerous skin rash", since neither of them is in a position to directly examine my body, that does not mean that examining my body is all it would take for both of them to reach a primordial understanding of my claim. Whereas this would be the case for the dermatologist, the layman would need substantive medical knowledge, in addition.
17. Heidegger had already explained that this feature is essential to communication in section 33. In the context of explaining the sense in which assertion means communication, he points out that "as something communicated, that which has been put forward in the assertion is *something that others can 'share' with the person making the assertion, even though the entity which he has pointed out and to which he has given a definite character is not close enough for them to grasp and see it*. That which is put forward in the assertion is something which can be passed along in 'further retelling'. There is a widening of the range of that mutual sharing which sees" (SZ, p. 155, my italics).
18. On this aspect of *Gerede*, see the very illuminating analysis provided by Brandom (1997), pp. 23–33. I find Brandom's overall argument in the article illuminating as well. But, in my opinion, his view of assertion as central to language does not do justice to Heidegger's central aim of criticizing such a traditional, logo-centric view of language in *Being and Time*. Having said this, I nonetheless think that Heidegger would have

- accepted Brandom's main thesis, namely, that the capacity to participate in the assertive practice of "thematizing" (and thus to treat some things as occurrent) is an essential feature of Dasein, at least of modern Dasein. (Whether Heidegger would have committed himself to ascribing this view to "primitive Dasein" is much more doubtful. On this issue, see SZ, p. 82.)
19. This is especially clear in Heidegger's choice of words to characterize the step from the neutral to the negative form of *Gerete* as a matter of degree, that is, as "a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on becomes *aggravated to complete* groundlessness [sich das schon anfängliche Fehlen der Bodenständigkeit zur *völlige* Bodenlosigkeit *steigert*]" (SZ, p. 168).
 20. As I will argue later, these claims show that Heidegger's commitment to the social character of language does not force him to accept that "language by its very structure leads Dasein away from a primordial relation to being and to its own being", as Dreyfus (1991) claims (p. 229). The social character of language shows that Dasein always already shares the "understanding of the disclosed world" that is hidden in the language it shares with others, and thus that such understanding is necessarily the starting point for any of its interpretative activities. But, as he immediately makes clear, the inevitability of connecting with a public understanding does not exclude the possibility of actively transforming such understanding. *Being and Time* itself is the perfect example of such a possibility (and thus an indirect proof of Heidegger's own convictions on the matter). See note 28.
 21. Heidegger's explicit reference to the shared concepts that constitute the intelligibility available to all the speakers of a language can be found a little bit earlier, in section 33, when he remarks that a language contains always already a particular conceptuality (see SZ, p. 157). In *The History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger explains this as follows: "In being articulated, in the articulated word, the meaning highlighted in interpretation becomes available for being-with-one-another. The word is articulated in public. This articulated discourse preserves interpretation within itself. This is the sense of what we mean when we say that words have their meaning. This verbal meaning and the verbal whole as language is the interpretation of world and Dasein communicated in being with one another... Genuinely enacted and heard communication brings an understanding being-with to fruition in what is talked over. Since the communication is being said in words, what is said is 'verbal' for the other, which means that it is available in a worldly way. The articulated is accompanied by an understanding in public, in which what is talked over does not necessarily have to be appresented as something on hand and handy. In other words, articulated discourse can be understood without an original being-with involved in what the discourse is about" (GA 20, p. 370).
 22. In that connection, Dreyfus (1991) attributes to Heidegger the view that "language by its very structure leads Dasein away from a primordial relation of being and to its own being" (p. 229). Similarly, Carman (2000) claims that "there is no alternative to expressing and communicating one's understanding in the given idiom of one's social and cultural milieu. To make sense of oneself at all is to make sense of oneself on the basis of the banal, indeed flattened out and leveled off, language of *das Man*" (p. 21).
 23. For examples of Heidegger's own claim to the contrary, see note 25.
 24. Wrathall (1999) mentions this possibility in his discussion of Putnam's externalism (p. 293).
 25. Heidegger's explicit claims about the essentially social, intersubjective character of language can be found, for example, in (SZ), p. 177; (GA 18), pp. 20, 50; (GA 20), pp. 370, 373, 375.
 26. Of course, an entirely different issue is whether Heidegger is not only committed to the claim that *Gerete* is a positive phenomenon, but also whether he is entitled to that commitment. In the previous sections I have tried to offer some evidence in favor of

- Heidegger's claim, but in order to settle the issue it would be necessary to offer an entirely consistent account of the section on "the Falling of Dasein" as a whole, which I cannot try to do here.
27. And it had better be, as Heidegger often remarks. For if inauthenticity were not a possibility for Dasein, neither would authenticity. However, there is no direct route from Heidegger's argument about the possibility of inauthenticity rooted in everyday communication to an argument about its unavoidable necessity.
 28. In *The History of the Concept of Time*, Heidegger explicitly claims that language can positively contribute to primordial understanding in spite of the negative aspects stemming from its intrinsically social character. He explains it in the following terms: "But even relatively original and creative meanings and the words coined from them are, when articulated, relegated to *Gerede*. Once articulated, the word belongs to everyone, without a guarantee that its repetition (passing the word along) will include primordial understanding. This possibility of genuinely entering into discourse nevertheless exists and is documented especially in this, that the discoveredness which is given with a word can be rectified with certain sentences and developed further. Indeed, articulated discourse can help first by grasping possibilities of being for the first time which before were always already experienced implicitly. The discoveredness of Dasein, in particular the disposition of Dasein, can be made manifest by means of words in such a way that certain new possibilities of Dasein's being are set free. Thus discourse, especially *poetry*, can even bring about the release of new possibilities of the being of Dasein. In this way, discourse proves itself positively as a *mode of temporalization* of Dasein itself" (GA 20, pp. 375–76).
 29. See Lafont (2000).
 30. For a very illuminating account of the logical independence of social and semantic externalism, see Donnellan (1993). In this article, Donnellan's own claim is more specific. He tries to show the logical independence of the phenomena that underlie Putnam's Twin Earth examples and Burge's examples. But he does so precisely by showing that the division of linguistic labor has nothing to do with Putnam's semantic externalism as exemplified in the Twin Earth examples. As he expresses it, "the revolutionary idea [of the Twin Earth examples, C.L.] is that of a semantic rule which employs paradigms and their underlying nature, a nature which may not even be known to any users of the term. Nothing in the principle of the division of linguistic labor yields such a result. Nor, it is important to add, do the Burge thought experiments" (p. 163).
 31. According to Heidegger, in order for different speakers to share a common understanding of concepts, in spite of their differences in expertise and familiarity, they must at least share the understanding of the being of the entities to which these concepts apply. As long as this is the case, they can *mean* the same things by using such concepts, whereas if their understanding of the being of the entities to which these concepts apply is different, there is no justification for considering them to share the same concepts in the first place. Thus, the layman and the doctor in Burge's example can be said to share the concept of "arthritis" to the extent that both understand that arthritis is a *physical disease*, in spite of the layman's additional (mistaken) beliefs about the concept's application to inflammations beyond the joints. However, if according to the layman's understanding, arthritis were a *sacred place in Greece*, there would be no basis to assume that he shares the same concept with the doctor. I'll discuss one of Heidegger's own examples later (see GA 20, p. 289).
 32. In light of our prior analysis of *Gerede*, this is not strictly accurate. One can make true claims without a primordial understanding in the sense that one can *transmit* claims previously made by those who do have a primordial understanding, but one cannot *generate* (relevant and informative) true claims without a primordial understanding.
 33. Heidegger makes this claim explicit in his lectures of the summer semester 1928, when he remarks: "Intentionality... is only possible on the basis [of] being-in-the-world. [This]

- makes possible every intentional relation to entities. [This relation] is based on a *previous understanding of the being of entities. This understanding of being, however, first secures the possibility of entities revealing themselves as entities.* It bears the light in whose brightness an entity can show itself” (GA 26, p. 135, my italics).
34. For a short summary of the main philosophical assumptions entailed in Heidegger’s interpretation of the ontological difference, see Lafont (2005), pp. 268–269.
35. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the need to clarify this point.
36. In *Theories and Things*, Quine introduces this maxim in the following way: “we have an acceptable notion of... any sort of object only insofar as we have an acceptable principle of individuation for that sort of object. There is no entity without identity” (p. 102). Needless to say, my claim regarding Heidegger’s and Quine’s acceptance of such a maxim does not extend to a further claim regarding any commonality between the specific criteria of individuation that each of them would regard as acceptable.
37. Examples of Heidegger’s explicit commitment to the internalist view that the meaning of a word determines its reference can be found throughout his writings before and after *Being and Time*. In *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (1915), Heidegger explains that the “correct conception of the way in which a subject-term [*Nomen*] signifies” (GA 1, p. 349) is in his opinion: “The subject-term signifies its object, whether it exists or does not exist. Thus, the name ‘Socrates’ designates the meaning ‘Socrates’ Thus, the subject-term does not signify an object as a real object measured through time (i.e. as a continuous, real object), but rather is applicable to the ‘what’ of every object” (GA 1, p. 348). Similarly, in “Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung”, he explains that naming, as the “instituting through the word and in the word”, does not consist in the fact “that something already familiar to us is provided with a name, rather ... through this naming, the entity is first nominated as that which it is. It is in this way that it is known as an entity” (HWD, p. 41). It is for this reason that in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Heidegger explains naming as the “positing of essence” of the entities named, that is, as the “instituting of the being of entities”: “The thing is a thing only where the word is found for the thing The word alone supplies being to the thing, [for] ... something only *is*, where the appropriate word names something as existing [*seiend*] and in this way *institutes* the particular entity *as such* ... The being of that which is resides in the word. For this reason, the following phrase holds good: language is the house of being” (UzS, pp. 164–6).
38. As Wettstein puts it, speakers can have linguistic contact with things without epistemic contact with them. See Wettstein (1991), p. 158, and Wettstein (2004), pp. 75ff.
39. For the *locus classicus* of a defense of this type of view with regard to natural kind terms, see Putnam (1975). For the *locus classicus* with regard to definite descriptions, see Donnellan (1966).
40. Heidegger makes this point very clear in his lectures *The Essence of Truth*, when he remarks that “we must already know what and how the thing is about which we speak” (GA 34, pp. 1–2). And we must do so, precisely in order to find out whether there is such a thing at all (i.e., something that satisfies our concepts) and thus whether our claims are true. On this further issue see the next note.
41. Heidegger makes this point clear in his essay “The Essence of Truth”: “The true is the actual. Accordingly, we speak of true gold in distinction from false... *Genuine gold is that actual thing, whose actuality stands in agreement with what we ‘properly’ mean by Gold in advance and always... Truth [means] here... the agreement of a thing with that which is thought about it in advance*” (WW, p. 7).

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