

# Being-in-the-world of the international

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**Abstract.** Even though the international permeates our daily lives in many ways, it rarely discloses itself as part of our everyday engagements. Drawing from Martin Heidegger's phenomenology, this article seeks to explore the ways in which the international remains hidden to, as well as the ways in which the international can become part of, our being-in-the-world. Additionally, it will show the terms in which International Relations (IR) scholars can disclose the world of the international, and what the implications of that 'knowing' are for the discipline. Finally, it will explore the possibilities and limitations of a Heideggerian phenomenology for a social science such as IR.

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## A phenomenology of the international?

The international is a strange phenomenon. On the one hand it presents itself clearly in our everyday lives, through our access to international news, travels abroad, access to international networks and products, etc. On the other hand, though, the terms in which the international reveals itself to us are often opaque. Sometimes, the international presents itself as local; in other occasions as far away and exotic. In yet other situations the international does not seem to reveal itself at all in our everyday going about.

In other words, we live in a globalised world in which the international permeates the fibres of our societies in complex and multilayered ways, and we increasingly become aware of how our practices are intermingled with the international.<sup>1</sup> Yet simultaneously, this insight seems to come more from cognitive and scientific reasoning than from direct experience. Only when we step outside of our normal everyday activities, for instance when we go on vacation, provide help in cases of humanitarian disaster, or go to an international conference, do we experience the international in clear and direct ways. But even then it usually discloses itself in very peculiar terms. Either we seem to experience the international within our own local circle of experience, or we grasp it as something distant and exotic. In each case, we seem to miss out on an experiential vocabulary for dealing with the 'inter' aspect of the international.

This article seeks to address the ways in which the international discloses itself to us (humans) in our everyday lives. It will particularly focus on the terms in which this disclosure takes place, and what the consequences are for the ways in which we can – as

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International Practices', *International Theory*, 3:1 (2011), pp. 1–36.

well as fail to – experience the international. Finally, it will assess how the way in which we experience the international affects our academic knowledge, particularly for the field of International Relations (IR). To this end, it will make use of a phenomenological perspective, and in particular Martin Heidegger's 'radical phenomenology',<sup>2</sup> mostly associated with his early work, and *Being in Time* in particular. In the process, it will seek to explore the possibilities and limitations of using radical phenomenology as a methodology within the social sciences in general, and IR in particular.

While in recent decades much attention has been paid to the role of everyday life in IR, it has mostly been studied from a sociological or anthropological perspective. Simultaneously, Heidegger's phenomenology has been applied to, amongst others, international security,<sup>3</sup> the environment,<sup>4</sup> and coexistence.<sup>5</sup> However, little attention has been paid to the way in which the international discloses itself phenomenologically in everyday life. This article seeks to bridge this gap by analysing the phenomenon of the international from the perspective of our daily experiences.

Like all phenomenological approaches, Heidegger's phenomenology points towards the possibility of grasping phenomena 'from within'. However, there are certain aspects of Heidegger's approach that make it particularly useful for the analysis of our experience of the international. Firstly, his radical approach towards subjectivity allows us to grasp reality in its own terms. Even while other phenomenologists, such as its founding father Edmund Husserl, have attempted to overcome the Cartesian divide, they continued to wrestle with issues such as interpretation and expression.<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, however, was able to articulate an understanding of reality that completely transcended the Cartesian framework of the subject-object divide. By focusing on *Dasein* (being there) as the central expression of Being, Heidegger was able to approach our experiences 'as from the start already expressed, already interpreted'.<sup>7</sup> This approach allows us to study the international from a non-subjectivist perspective without falling into structuralist accounts.

Secondly, and connected to the first point, Heidegger's phenomenology makes possible the access to reality as lived experience without recourse to theoretic models or conceptualisations.<sup>8</sup> By emphasising the ontological nature of his approach, Heidegger is able to approach reality not through conceptual lenses in the fashion of the social sciences, but in a more primordial way, laying bare the structures of being itself. This 'letting-something-be-seen'<sup>9</sup> allows us to access social experiences in a phenomenological manner, disclosing the underlying structures of our ways of being in a hermeneutical fashion. Even while this article does not pretend to follow him in the full ontological depth of his analysis, it is based on his cue that the social sciences can build on his ontology of being.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Michael Dillon, *Politics of Security: Towards a Political Philosophy of Continental Thought* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), pp. 36–48; Louiza Odysseos, 'Radical phenomenology, ontology, and international political theory', *Alternatives*, 27 (2002), pp. 373–405.

<sup>3</sup> Dillon, *Politics of Security*.

<sup>4</sup> Hakan Seckinelgin, *The Environment and International Relations: International Fisheries, Heidegger and Social Method* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Louiza Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence: Otherness in International Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 2009 [orig. pub 1962]), p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> William Blattner, *Heidegger's Being and Time: a Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), p. 20.

What would such an engagement of Heidegger's phenomenology with social science mean? In his later writings, he argues that the social sciences are incompatible with his phenomenology, because of the ways they sustain the social order and reduce thinking to a *technè*, 'a process of deliberation in service of doing and making'.<sup>11</sup> For Heidegger, the social sciences bring in metaphysics (such as human nature or rationality) while simultaneously losing sight of the notion that thinking is something like building a house, or a 'clearing', for being.<sup>12</sup> Despite these misgivings, though, I think something of a common – but precarious – ground could be forged between a social scientific understanding of the world and Heidegger's phenomenology. First of all, any social analysis that would seek to invoke a Heideggerian phenomenology would have to be explicitly hermeneutical in its approach. Any form of modelling or hypothesis-testing would negate the spirit of the enterprise. As James Weiner shows, Heidegger's position in this regard is not far removed from Pierre Bourdieu's, who harboured similar suspicions of social science's attempts to model social realities.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, it would have to eschew the Cartesian split between subject and object, and focus on the ways in which the world unfolds *before* any such split is made. Once again, any mind-world dualistic approach would not be compatible with Heidegger's approach.<sup>14</sup> Thirdly, any Heideggerian social science should be wary of certain social constructivist claims on meaning, which argue that the experienced world somehow comes out of a subject throwing meaning over something.<sup>15</sup> Finally, and most fundamentally, it would have to be a form of inquiry that resists *technè*: its purpose should be to 'let something be seen' as a real phenomenon rather than to explain it in certain terms.<sup>16</sup>

## Being and its world

For the purpose of analysing the way in which the international reveals itself in our everyday lives, three themes from Heidegger's *Being and Time* are particularly useful: being, our way of being in the world, and our encounters in our world.<sup>17</sup> To start with the first, our being should be understood as *Dasein* [hereafter *Dasein*], 'being-there'. *Dasein* encompasses both the person and the sets of practices that make that person who he or she is. Simultaneously, *Dasein* can only be 'da' (there) when there is already a world that *Dasein* inhabits, and this world cannot be separated from it. *Dasein* is, as Heidegger calls it, 'thrown' into the world – we are always already part and parcel of the world we inhabit.<sup>18</sup> This sets our limits in what we can do, while simultaneously opening up our potentiality for being. And finally, our being is constituted by what Heidegger calls 'care' – that is, the fact that the world matters to us. We are characterised

<sup>11</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on humanism', in William McNeil (ed.), *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 239–76, 240.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

<sup>13</sup> James Weiner, *Tree Leaf Talk: A Heideggerian Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> David Howarth, 'Towards a Heideggerian social science: Heidegger, Kisiel and Weiner on the limits of anthropological discourse', *Anthropological Theory*, 4 (2004), p. 234.

<sup>15</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 190–1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>17</sup> This categorisation serves clarification and simplification purposes only, since in the context of this article there is little room to expand on the complexity of Heidegger's analysis. The three themes mentioned here should be understood as interconnected, mutually constitutive, and nonhierarchical.

<sup>18</sup> Blattner, *Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 78.

by our caring, not in terms of an emotional state of being, but because the basis of our being comes from intelligibility, meaningfulness, and significance.

Secondly, our way of being in the world can be characterised as ‘ongoing coping’.<sup>19</sup> We live in a world of ‘average everydayness’, which we continually make sense of and cope with.<sup>20</sup> The everydayness of our world is crucial here: our ‘ongoing coping’ is based on the familiarity of our world, which presents itself to us as intelligible, meaningful, and significant. This is not to say that there can be no breakdown of our ‘average everydayness’. In fact, these can occur regularly and be dramatic, and we will have to cope with those changes on the basis of hermeneutic sense-making. After such episodes, however, our world, however changed, will once again present itself to us through familiarity.

Even if Dasein’s way of being in the world consists out of ongoing coping, it is not pointless. We have a sense of purpose for all of our actions, whether we are aware of it or not. In all of our practices there is a ‘for-the-sake-of-which’, which not only informs us about our motivations and purposes, but also discloses our world in the appropriate terms. Thus, for a student, entering a classroom comes with a specific ‘for-the-sake-of-which’ (to follow a class in order to complete a course, which in turn allows for the acquisition of a degree, through which one can embark on a professional career, and so on) which discloses the room in a specific way. For the professor, the same room discloses itself in terms of a different set of ‘for-the-sake-of-which’, including being a professor, providing for the family, etc. For the caretaker, obviously, the same room would disclose itself in quite other ways.

This brings us to the third theme of relevance for this analysis: Dasein’s encounters in the world. In our everyday coping we grasp our world on the basis of our familiarity with it. This grasping usually is not cognitive at all – when walking on the streets, opening doors, or using equipment like hammers routinely, most of the time we are hardly aware of the ways in which we engage with the world. The world presents itself to us as completely transparent in its use – it is ‘ready-to-hand’.<sup>21</sup> We don’t have to think when using a hammer, for instance: it comes to us complete with all its functions, including a referential totality in which it makes sense to hammer in the first place: the existence of wood and iron, purposes for building things, nails, workshops, and so on. This referential totality is of course not an individual matter: it comes out of cultural shared cultural understandings, through which whole communities can have access to practices such as hammering. It is when this order of things ‘breaks down’ (for instance, when the hammer we use proves to be too heavy) do we become cognitively aware of the way we are dealing with the world around us. The entities in the world then present themselves as ‘present-at-hand’, as objects with properties, and allow us to study them as such. However, as Heidegger argues, knowing entities as present-at-hand is never to grasp them as they ‘are in themselves’ – understanding a hammer as a physical object (wood, steel) with properties (weight, size) does not get us any closer to what ‘hammer’ means. Only in use, not in cognition, do we experience the world authentically.

In short, our being-in-the-world is a being of Dasein, in which we are already part of, and familiar with, our world when we engage with it. This engagement is takes the form of dealing with the world on the basis of our own purposefulness (‘for-the-sake-of-which’). Through this engagement, the world discloses itself to us already in terms

<sup>19</sup> Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence*, p. 60.

<sup>20</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

of our familiarity and for-the-sake-of-which. Normally, this makes us grasp whatever we encounter in the world as ready-at-hand, that is, noncognitively, through practice, and in the context of a referential totality. Only if we withdraw from our everyday for-the-sake-of-which and start grasping things in the world cognitively, will they present themselves as present-at-hand, outside of their referential totality, as objects with properties.

For the case of the international, this suggests that we can know it in two different ways: noncognitively, in our ongoing coping, and as an object of knowledge, outside of the referential totality of our average everydayness. In the next sections, the implications of these different ways of knowing will be explored deeper.

### The international in our everyday lives

Before developing a phenomenology of the international, it is important to get a sense of what should be understood by the 'international' itself. Obviously, giving a definition or a set of ontological claims about the nature of the international will not work here, as they would go against both the hermeneutical and phenomenological character of a Heideggerian social scientific approach. Instead, the international can be approached through what Heidegger called 'formal indication', that is, by pointing out a phenomenon, without fixing the understanding of that phenomenon permanently.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the phenomenon at hand can be approached hermeneutically without reducing it to an idealised form or a set of objects. It is a method of 'letting a thing be seen' in such a way so that it can be explored, even though that may eventually lead to a different understanding of what it is.<sup>23</sup>

For the analysis at hand (but much in line with Heidegger's own etymology-inspired style of hermeneutics),<sup>24</sup> formal indication will start with the concept of the international itself. The 'inter-national' suggests forms of life ('nation'), which are somehow separate from one another ('inter'). These forms of life thus come with something of a horizon, marking the end of the 'this form of life' and the beginning of the 'that form of life'. Transcending the horizon by moving from 'this' to 'that' form of life then becomes intelligible as 'international relations'.<sup>25</sup> Or, to put it in more simple terms, the 'international' conjures up an image of 'heres' and 'theres', in which the 'there' is not simply an extension of the 'here'.

This formal indication of the international connects with Heidegger's phenomenology in a specific way. For Heidegger, Dasein is always local – it is a being-here, a being that is somehow interested in, and familiar with, its surroundings. This 'locality' of being is not geographical – it is existential.<sup>26</sup> As William Blattner puts it, the material and geographical articulations of our local world comes from our dwelling in it: 'My familiarity is a familiarity with places; my home, neighbourhood, my place of work. These places are not objective geometrical phenomena, but rather existential locales.'<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 152; Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence*, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Dahlstrom, 'Heidegger's method: Philosophical concepts as formal indications', *Review of Metaphysics*, 47 (2004), pp. 775–95.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew King, 'Heidegger's etymological method: Discovering being by recovering the richness of the world', *Philosophy Today*, 51:3 (2007), pp. 278–89.

<sup>25</sup> Rob Walker, *Inside / Outside* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>26</sup> Dillon, *Politics of Security*, pp. 43–52.

<sup>27</sup> Blattner, *Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 75.

This locality of Dasein has implications for our experience of the international. If the world is local for us, in an existential sense, then the international both reaffirms and challenges our experience. It reaffirms our being by offering an organising principle for the division of the local and the nonlocal, so that wherever we are, there is always a category of ‘localness’ that we can relate to. In this sense, the international provides us with an inventory of localities, which allows for the creation of shared identities, understandings, and practices. It can be contrasted with the ‘global’, which offers us a more unified picture of the world, but one in which the local remains completely undefined.<sup>28</sup> Simultaneously, however, the international challenges our local experience of the world by imposing boundaries to the local. The ‘being-local’ comes with a horizon, a delineation of that locality from the outside, the nonlocal. Obviously, we can travel across that horizon and find ourselves in a new, different locality: the foreign. However, we would still experience the world in terms of the local, albeit a different locality. The horizon would still be on the horizon.

This implies that in our experience of the world, something of the international remains undisclosed. We are given a mode of experiencing the world in ‘heres’ and ‘theres’, but always in local terms. The ‘inter’ part of the international, the element of transcending the local, does not present itself to us in that experience, though. It simply is not local. In our everyday Dasein, therefore, international reveals itself to us only partially, disclosing its local character in terms of the ‘here’ and the ‘foreign’, but keeping the horizon or transition between them veiled. The international, in other words, only partially discloses itself in our daily, local, familiar engagements with the world.

This undisclosedness of the international has often been pointed towards in IR, yet mostly in an indirect way. For instance, by highlighting the ways in which banana-consumption in the US has been intricately interwoven with diplomacy, international trade, and postcolonial relations, Cynthia Enloe shows how ‘the personal is international’ and ‘the international is personal’.<sup>29</sup> The purpose of her analysis is to reveal the international nature of, amongst others, local consumption of food – a purpose that makes sense only if the buying of a banana doesn’t present itself to the consumer as buying into, and reproducing, mechanisms of international power. Instead, from a phenomenological perspective, our doing groceries is part of our ‘being-in-the-world’ on the basis of familiarity. And in our daily familiarity with doing groceries, that which presents itself as meaningful is related to the for-the-sake-of-which of doing groceries – feeding the family, for instance, if our Dasein is that of a caretaker.<sup>30</sup> As a consequence, buying a banana is not usually disclosed to us as partaking in global politics, but rather as a local (in existential terms) practice – the international has been ‘lost in transaction’, so to say.

### *Disclosing the international*

The undisclosedness of the international in our everyday lives does not imply a natural or unalterable state of things. There are three set of circumstances in which the international can be disclosed in our being-in-our-world: in cases of break-down, when the international is already part of the world we dwell in, and through what Heidegger calls ‘thinking’.

<sup>28</sup> R. B. J. Walker, *After the Globe, Before the World* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 19–26.

<sup>29</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 196.

<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 116.

The first way through which the international discloses itself to us in our being-in-the-world is through what Heidegger calls 'breakdown'. Breakdown occurs when everyday dealing with the world (for instance, using a hammer) is disturbed.<sup>31</sup> In breakdown, that which is 'ready-to-hand' (the hammer) suddenly becomes visible as 'unready-to-hand' (the hammer being broken, for instance). As a result, we take a distance from the hammer – instead of wielding it in a nonreflexive way, we now observe it as an object, but still in light of the referential totality of hammering. As a result, our 'knowing' of the hammer comes through a transformation: all of a sudden a thing that we were not 'aware' of, became an object of cognition.

For the case of the international, an example of breakdown would be a disturbance in our daily engagement with the world that would direct our attention towards the international aspects of our world. An example would be a sudden rise of the price of gasoline, which might draw our attention to political tensions in the Middle East while filling our cars at the gas station. Normally, filling our car discloses the world in line with the for-the-sake-of-which in which it is a meaningful activity (for instance, driving to work). However, the observation of the rise in gas prices, and the concomitant realisation that pumping gas is form of international practice (connecting our locality to the Middle East), takes us out of the transparency of that situation. As a consequence, we experience something of the international, but in a very specific way. Phenomenologically speaking, the 'there' of the Middle East suddenly permeates the boundaries of our local world, making us suddenly experience our activity as part of international practice. Simultaneously, however, this goes at the cost of the transparency of the situation. Whereas the filling up of our car was an acting on the basis of our for-the-sake-of-which in our familiar world, our grasping of the international nature of that practice is much more cognitive – it is like taking the hammer and seeing it as an object. The international, in these kinds of situations, is not grasped experientially, but rather at a distance.<sup>32</sup>

The second way in which the international can disclose itself in our everyday life is when it presents itself as an already meaningful element of our disclosing of the world. Such situations would occur when elements of the international have come to be important markers in aspects of our daily experience. Take the example of buying an apple, for instance. Generally, we buy apples in the context of our everyday engagement with our world, on the basis of mundane purposes such as 'providing for our family' or 'buying food that is healthy and nutritious'. In this experience, the international dimension of the apple doesn't impose itself on us whatsoever. In the case of an international boycott, however, such as the Dutch boycott on Chilean Granny Smith apples during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–89), buying an apple presented itself no longer primarily in terms of our everyday experiences, but also in terms of international solidarity. This was so successful that the sale of Granny Smiths only picked up again only several years after the return of democracy in Chile.<sup>33</sup>

A more contemporary example comes from 9/11 and the American coping with terrorism. As Andrew Mitchell argues, terror is a form of 'attunement', a way of experience 'at the abandonment of being', through which Dasein itself becomes

<sup>31</sup> Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: a Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), pp. 70–82.

<sup>32</sup> Dillon, *Politics of Security*, p. 160.

<sup>33</sup> Hans Beerends, *Weg met Pinochet: een Kwart Eeuw Solidariteit met Chili* (Amsterdam: Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek, 1998), p. 65.

terrorised.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, this ‘terrorised Dasein’ discloses the world according to its being, finding the international playing a prominent role in everyday life, particularly in the shape of a permeation of the American ‘homeland’ with an anti-American international.<sup>35</sup> In this manner, the everyday attunement to terrorism already discloses our daily world as containing the international. In contrast to breakdown cases, here the international does not present itself to us as intruding our everyday world, though. Rather, it presents itself as already there, as an inevitable background that gives meaning to our everyday experiences.

The third pathway through which the international can become part of our everyday coping with the world is through agency. Particularly in his later work, Heidegger points to our ability to resist the pressure of the ‘they’ and to think our way, at least partially, out of the conformity of our collective knowledge. Thinking, in this context, is not a cognitive action in a Cartesian sense – instead, it ‘... is a deed. But a deed that also surpasses all *praxis*.’<sup>36</sup> A ‘thinker’, by thinking, is ‘able to reconfigure the practices and so bring about a new shared style or understanding of being’.<sup>37</sup> This is done not through argumentation, but through the specific attunement of the ‘thinker’ to the cultural paradigm he or she lives in, which allows the ‘thinker’ to ‘speak from’ the margins of that paradigm. Thinking therefore is an articulation of being, in such a way that alternative ways of being come to the light: it is the ‘quiet power of the favoring-enabling, that is, of the possible’.<sup>38</sup> This power opens up new possibilities for being-in-the-world.

Thinking as a way of bringing the international into our daily, local experiences has considerable pedigree in IR. Reflexivist approaches have been pushing for the articulation of marginal knowledge as a way of resisting the practices that maintain the international undisclosed in our daily activities. Usually this is done through the alignment with particular, marginalised groups within society. This ‘thinker’ thus likens the ‘intellectual’, whose task it is ‘not to produce a detached or nonpartisan view of a situation, but instead to contribute to a social group’s activity by helping to clarify their existing commonsensical knowledge and to provoke reflection on it’.<sup>39</sup> Thus in the case of Enloe, to take side with and articulate the perspective of women, both at the production and consumption side of fruit trade, is to bring in the international as a real but undisclosed experience.<sup>40</sup>

The primary way in which ‘thinkers’ disclose the international to us is through our reading of their work. This should once again not be understood in Cartesian terms, in which our reading of books would be a form of appropriation of mental representations of the world. Instead, just as Heidegger understands thinking as a ‘deed’, reading the work of ‘thinkers’ should be understood as an experience, as a *praxis*. Reading is a practice of attunement. Through reading (and other cultural practices such as listening to sermons, seeing art, or playing music) we attune ourselves to the world in certain ways through what Heidegger calls moods. For Heidegger, moods are not subjective states of mind that colour our experience;

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Mitchell, ‘Heidegger and terrorism’, *Research in Phenomenology*, 35:1 (2005), pp. 181–218, 198.

<sup>35</sup> Mitchell, ‘Heidegger and terrorism’, p. 209.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Heidegger, ‘Letter on humanism’, in David Farrell Krell (ed.), *Basic Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 239.

<sup>37</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 192.

<sup>38</sup> Heidegger, ‘Letter on humanism’, p. 196.

<sup>39</sup> Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 176.

<sup>40</sup> Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*.



instead, they are ways of attuning ourselves to the world that are foundational for the way that we disclose the world. As Heidegger puts it: '*The mood has already ... disclosed Being-in-the-world as a whole and makes it possible, first of all, to direct oneself to something*'.<sup>41</sup> Through reading, then, we reattune ourselves to our world. This does not mean that we cognitively 'represent' the world differently in our minds, but rather that the world itself discloses itself to us in different terms. Our attunement through reading is constitutive, both of our Dasein and of the world it inhabits. Reading therefore should be understood as a 'worlding practice' rather than a cognitive mental process.

From this perspective, reading the work of 'thinkers' attunes us (obviously in individually different ways) in line with marginal ways of being in our world. As a consequence, our world discloses itself in slightly different ways, making visible the ways in which it transfers power and represses possibilities of being.

To put it slightly differently, working our way through a text is a transformative hermeneutical praxis, which is characterised by what Ricoeur calls 'productive imagination' and which he defines as 'the power of redescribing reality'.<sup>42</sup> While reading, we imagine the world according to our anticipation of the text. Simultaneously, we imagine the narrative structure of that text in the context of our imagined world. Through this imaginative praxis, we attune ourselves to the world in terms of our productive imagination. Consequently, our world discloses itself accordingly.

When reading the work of 'thinkers', our imagination forces us to be, and experience, the world according to its own marginal perspective. This certainly applies to the ways in which the international discloses itself in our world. Reading the work of Rob Walker, to name one example, is *engaging* with sovereignty. It is not simply to imagine the temporal and spatial constitution of 'inside' and 'outside' in a cognitive form; rather it has an experiential dimension. It is, in a sense, a 'working ourselves through' the constitution of sovereignty through knowledge and power, and in such a way that the 'international' becomes accessible to us in an experiential fashion.<sup>43</sup>

This is not an individual or idiosyncratic practice, though. Dasein is always being-with, in the sense that all of our activities come forth of, and relate to, collective practices.<sup>44</sup> Just as the referential totality that comes with the practice of hammering is culturally and historically conditioned, so is the way in which Dasein relates to dominant and marginal understandings of the world. When I read Enloe's work, then, my subsequent reattunement to the world is the result of my alignment with alternative, yet equally collective, cultural practices that she and I are tapping into. My experience of the process may be individual, yet it takes place on the basis of a shared language.

### *Terms of disclosure*

As has been shown, the international rarely discloses itself in our average everydayness. When it does, it discloses itself mostly in two ways: as bifurcated between the local and the nonlocal, and through 'othering'.

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 176, emphasis in the original.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'The Bible and the imagination', in Marc Wallace (ed.), *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), p. 144.

<sup>43</sup> Walker, *Inside/Outside*, pp. 6–14.

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 154–5.

The bifurcation between the local and the nonlocal comes from the way in which the international usually remains undisclosed in our experience. As has been pointed out earlier, the ‘international’ suggests something more than adding ‘here’ to ‘there’ – there is an aspect of crossing that horizon that comes with the experience. When travelling from one country to the other, for instance, the experience of the journey (including the legal, cultural, and political aspects of crossing a border) can not be fully captured by adding the experiences of the country of departure and the country of arrival. In a phenomenological sense, the international therefore is irreducible to our local experiences – even if it is always experienced *within* them. In order to cope with this tension, ‘splitting’ is a tempting move, through which we stabilise the international as either the local or as that-which-is-not-local. On the one hand, we fix the international in terms of the purely local. This reduces the international to those local experiences that are situated outside our own being-in-the-world. This can be seen when we travel abroad and immerse ourselves in, for instance, Paris, such experiences become understandable as an ‘international experience’. Such an understanding reduces the international to a ‘distant locale’, privileging the ‘national’ over the ‘inter’. As will be seen, this experience of the international makes it a site for the inscription of the exotic and of difference.

On the other hand, splitting makes us experience the international by placing it outside of the local altogether. Here, the international becomes emptied out of its locality, and becomes the place in which we pass through, meet, and exchange, outside of any substantial locality. These are the conference rooms for international trade meetings, the corridors of the hotels in which international negotiations are organised, international airports, etc. They are what Marc Augé has labelled ‘nonspaces’, devoid of a proper identity or history, and merely facilitating scripted interactions and standardised ritualistic engagements.<sup>45</sup> As Mika Aaltola shows, these nonspaces present themselves as universalistic and neutral, while simultaneously they function as pedagogical spaces in which the international order is reproduced and naturalised as objective.<sup>46</sup>

The second way in which the international discloses itself in our everyday lives is through ‘othering’. Here, the distinction between inside and outside serves as a marker for the constitutive determination and delimitation of collective identities. The ‘self’ acquires its meaning from its association with the local ‘here’, while the ‘other’ is located ‘outside’. This ‘other’ can be two things. It consists of that what we find ‘outside’ (cultures, states, people) but also of the international itself. By placing the international on the ‘outside’, we come to understand it primarily in terms of difference.<sup>47</sup> As a consequence, the international is bracketed from our daily experiences. In other words, by understanding the international in terms of ‘otherness’, we exclude it from the way in which we experience our daily world. This is a self-sustaining process: through the exclusion of the international from our experiences we remain agnostic about its nature. In order to make sense of the international, however, we must ‘fill the gap’ by presuming such knowledge, usually through imaginative stereotyping.<sup>48</sup> When that knowledge fails, the international readily confirms itself as alien and unconnected to our lives.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995), pp. 75–115.

<sup>46</sup> Mika Aaltola, ‘The international airport: the hub-and-spoke pedagogy of the American Empire’, *Global Networks*, 5:3 (2005), pp. 261–78.

<sup>47</sup> Inayatullah and Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*, pp. 21–45.

<sup>48</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Malden: Blackwell, 1993), p. 145.

<sup>49</sup> Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence*, pp. 86–90.

## Knowing the international as present-at-hand

Even if the international remains mostly undisclosed in our world, we still are able to have knowledge of it – after all, how could we have a discipline such as IR otherwise? However, our knowledge of the international is very much affected by the ways it discloses itself. In order to grasp how it is affected precisely, it is necessary to turn to Heidegger's conceptualisation of understanding and interpretation.

As discussed above, Heidegger's phenomenology places knowledge firmly inside of practice, on the basis of Dasein's familiarity with the world. This does not imply that we cannot have cognitive knowledge about things. Heidegger's point is that knowing things cognitively, we need to 'undo them' from our 'being-in-the-world': we need to deworld them. As a result, they appear to us as present-at-hand, instead of ready-to-hand, and we can see them with properties, available for analysis. However, by seeing things in this way, not only do we lose sight of essential aspects of what it is that we study, we simultaneously draw from our local experience in order to make the international intelligible as present-at-hand.

Our cognitive knowledge of the world knows, according to Heidegger, two degrees of deworlding. Firstly, we can grasp things as 'objects' that we can study within their referential framework – what Heidegger calls 'interpretation'. This is what happens in 'breakdown' situations as described above, in which our unreflective activities are disturbed in such a way that we become aware of the items we as objects – for instance, when we notice that the hammer we are using is too heavy.<sup>50</sup>

Secondly, we can try to know the world in a scientific fashion. In contrast to the situation of a 'breakdown', in which the hammer is *too heavy* in the context of a referential totality, now the hammer is stripped from references to its context altogether, and is reduced to an 'aggregate of the present-at-hand'.<sup>51</sup> In other words, we strip the hammer from all of its contextual meaning (nails, woodworking, etc.), ending up with nothing but a material object with physical properties.

While neither of these accounts of cognitive knowledge map out on something like the social sciences in a simple fashion, they do provide with useful starting-points for analysing our knowledge of the international. For the case of 'interpretation' we place our knowing of the international on a metaphorical basis, making use of the local experience we have to disclose that which lies outside of it. When trying to grasp the international 'scientifically', in turn, we find ourselves balancing it as being 'meaningful but not scientific' and 'scientific but meaningless'. Both modes of operation are present in the ways in which IR seeks to study the international.

### *Interpreting the international*

The breakdown that makes us interpret the international begins with a situation in which the ready-to-hand suddenly presents itself to us as present-at-hand. Whilst Heidegger focuses on the use of material equipment exclusively, this does not imply that the ready-to-hand does not apply to other experiences we have in the world. Let us therefore go back to the example of the effect of world politics on oil prices. When filling the tank of our car, we are absorbed in an activity that comes to us as ready-to-hand, on the basis of a referential totality with which we are familiar, as well as our

<sup>50</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 200.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

‘for-the-sake-of-which’ of our being there. However, when realising (by watching the meter) that the gas prices have gone up significantly, we suddenly become aware of the ways in which international politics affect our daily being, and suddenly understand our activities at the gas station in terms of the ‘international’. How then, and in what ways, do we ‘know’ the international in such a situation?

Phenomenologically, the way in which the international discloses itself in this form of interpretation is twofold. Firstly, our fore-having changes. The ready-to-hand of the activity suddenly presents itself as a situation ‘*about which*’ to think or make assertions.<sup>52</sup> This does not mean that the ready-to-hand simply disappears. We may still continue to fill the tank while realising the international nature of our activity. Rather, the ready-to-hand is ‘covered up’ by the present-at-hand. We understand the situation in terms of something we can think, deliberate, and make assertions about. In other words, the undisclosed international nature of our familiar world suddenly presents itself to us, but only as an entity (in the broadest sense) that we can cognitively grasp. ‘Only now’, Heidegger points out, ‘are we given any access to *properties* and the like’.<sup>53</sup> While unfolding itself as part of our world, then, the international presents itself as something that lies outside the referential whole of our familiar world, and outside of the for-the-sake-of-which of our action; something to be grasped cognitively but not experientially.

The second element of this disclosing of the international is through the ‘as’ structure of understanding. As Heidegger argues, ‘that which is understood ... is already accessible in such a way that its “as which” can be made to stand out explicitly’.<sup>54</sup> In other words, we already have an ‘as which’ ready before beginning to understand an entity. This implies that before understanding the international, we already have something in terms of which we can interpret it. This does not necessarily imply that we will dissect it in parts and properties – we may simply see it *as something*. But what is that *something*? As has been shown in the previous section, we generally do not experience the international as part of our world. We therefore lack an experiential basis for the ‘as’-structure of the international. As a consequence, we cannot simply grasp the international ‘as’ an international that we have ready-at-hand experience with. Where then, do we derive this ‘as’ from?<sup>55</sup>

The answer to this question is twofold. On the one hand, we simply do not. To a large extent, the international remains both abstract and opaque to us, even if we are reminded of its impact when filling our car or watching the news. We understand it as something ‘far away’ that we can only get a sense of by making use of cognitive skills such as learning and reasoning. Meaning, in a Heideggerian sense, is then reduced to a form of cognitive knowing, bracketed from the fore-structure of understanding.<sup>56</sup> As will be seen below, the most extreme articulation this way of knowing would be neopositivistic IR. However, in daily situations in our world, in which the international suddenly discloses itself through a ‘breakdown’, still we experience the international as something remote from that world, which has to be given meaning to through relatively abstract reasoning, argument, and assertions.

On the other hand, we can use our local experience to give meaning to the international. This allows us to make use of our ‘as’-structure of our local experiences

<sup>52</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 200.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p.193.

<sup>56</sup> Blattner, *Heidegger's Being and Time*, p. 97.

to project meaning on the international. Our knowing of the international thus becomes metaphorical, in the sense that we use what we already know in order to comprehend that which we do not know.<sup>57</sup> When thinking about banana trade, for instance, we may imagine practices of importation and exportation, of shipping and transport. However, we will tend to understand these in local terms. Thus, importation becomes intelligible in terms of the arrival of the shipment, while the transportation may be understood as the 'being on the ship'. We use our experiences with the social, political, and economic to project a referential totality on the international so that it becomes intelligible and meaningful to us. We use, so to say, a *domestic analogy* to make sense of the international – not one consisting of ideal-typifications about present-at-hand domestic orders,<sup>58</sup> but rather one based on our experiences in the social world.

Our interpretation of the international is thus based on understanding it both as present-at-hand and in terms of our domestic experiences. This makes us perceive it in specific ways. On the one hand, the international presents itself as abstract and disconnected from our daily experiences. On the other, when we are able understand the international in a more primordial way, we do so in terms of a set of local experiences. The result is that we use experiences of domestic order, authority, and relative social cohesion to make sense out of a phenomenon that we *know* to be violent and unsafe. This strengthens the alien understanding we have of the international: when projecting our local experiences of relative order and safety upon the international, it presents itself to us as their absolute negation. Simultaneously we experience alienation by an international that presents itself as distant and difficult to grasp.

### *Knowing the international scientifically*

Heidegger's analysis of the (natural) sciences focuses on the way it projects, deworlds, and objectifies the world as present-at-hand. For Heidegger, science does not equal cognitive or objective knowledge (which would be the interpretation in the Cartesian tradition), but rather a set of practices, through which knowledge presents itself to us as intelligible and becomes communicable to others – a point that has later been elaborated by sociologists and anthropologists of science.<sup>59</sup> Even in the case of theoretical or abstract knowledge, Heidegger still points towards the practical circumstances that make the world intelligible to us.<sup>60</sup>

The starting point for looking at the phenomenology of IR as a scholarship therefore is the way the field engages with the international through projection. Projection, Heidegger argues, is the way in which '[n]ature itself is mathematically projected' so that 'something constantly present-at-hand (matter) is uncovered beforehand'. 'Only 'in the light'', he argues, 'of a Nature which has been projected in this fashion can anything like a 'fact' be found'.<sup>61</sup> Mainstream IR largely supports the axiom of 'disinterested science', in which the scholar's purpose is to obtain knowledge

<sup>57</sup> Theodore Brown, *Making Truth: Metaphor in Science* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 2003).

<sup>58</sup> See Hidemi Suganami, *The Domestic Analogy and World Order Proposals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>59</sup> Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: the Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); G. Nigel Gilbert and Michael Mulkay, *Opening Pandora's Box: a Sociological Analysis of Scientists' Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>60</sup> Taylor Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in Being in Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 210–11.

<sup>61</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 413–14.

of the world that is as neutral and objective as possible.<sup>62</sup> From a Heideggerian perspective, though, ‘disinterested knowledge’ doesn’t exist – there is always some form of previous projection through which entities become intelligible. Studying an entity scientifically is not being ‘disinterested’ – rather, disinterestedness is the way in which we *organise* our interest. As Heidegger puts it: ‘Looking *at* something in this way is ... a way of taking up a direction towards something – of setting our sights towards what is present-at-hand.’<sup>63</sup> The scientific study of entities is not seeing them in a pure and unmediated way – rather, we add a ‘viewpoint’ in advance that withholds us from engaging with those entities as we normally would have. It is a ‘holding-oneself-back’ from utilisation, through which ‘the *perception* of the present-at-hand is consummated’.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, even while studying an entity as present-at-hand may be a legitimate and useful activity, it does not imply that we study that entity in some primordial way ‘as it really is’. Instead, we add projection through which ‘something constantly present-at-hand (matter) is uncovered beforehand’.<sup>65</sup>

Ironically, though, this perspective is reinforced by the way in which the international reveals itself in our world. As has been argued throughout this article, the international tends to keep itself undisclosed in our daily being-in-the-world. As a consequence, by remaining veiled as a part of our everyday life, the international presents itself all the more as present-at-hand. It is easily understood as an ‘object of study’ that remains far and disconnected from our being-in-the-world. Consequently, the international appears to us in a Cartesian way, with properties that can be studied in a scientific fashion unproblematically. We therefore readily understand the international in terms of institutions, material forces, and social interactions that take place outside of our world. Undoubtedly, this has contributed to the dominance of Explaining over Understanding in the field.<sup>66</sup> However, this is not uniquely a problem for neopositivist approaches to the field. Whether it be securitisation studies, liberal feminism, the English School or mainstream Social Constructivism, they all neglect the phenomenon of the international in our world in favour of its perception as present-at-hand.

Moreover, while Martin Hollis and Steve Smith present the Explaining/Understanding dichotomy as one of outside versus inside accounts of international relations,<sup>67</sup> the phenomenological difference between present-at-hand and ready-to-hand points towards something slightly different. One can attempt to ‘understand’ a social situation without experiencing it as ready-to-hand. For instance, social constructivists, discourse analysts, and social psychologists may seek to explicate social norms and meanings from political settings that they study, without trying to capture that setting as being part of their own world. Only if one takes the situation to be studied as intrinsically overlapping with one’s own social setting (as would be the case of participant observation) does the ready-to-hand become part of the experience.

The second aspect of the academic study of IR is deworlding – the taking out of the referential totality out of the interpretation of an entity.<sup>68</sup> The point here is that

<sup>62</sup> Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 88.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 414.

<sup>66</sup> Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>67</sup> Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 207.

for most approaches in IR, deworlding presents itself as a legitimate and natural approach. It is the move that makes the production of variables and data possible, by securing the what is 'relevant' from the 'contingent'. This methodology is particularly popular among neopositivist scholars and game theorists. But it is also widespread among those who utilise ideal-typification as a method. For instance, when Jared Diamond explains human history in terms of 'Guns, Germs, and Steel', he necessarily has to separate these factors from their historical contexts in order to transform them into independent factors – even while he has to recontextualise them in order to historicise his point.<sup>69</sup> However, there is again a subtle difference between the Heideggerian approach and the practices that come from political science. For Heidegger, deworlding is something more profound than simple decontextualisation. Decontextualising would imply stripping an object from its social meaning. Deworlding, however, is understanding an entity without the fore-structure and 'as'-structure of the ready-to-hand which would render it intelligible in everyday life. It is not grasping the entity as it 'really is' outside of its social setting- rather it is rendering it *intelligible as unintelligible* by revealing it as an object with properties, rather than an entity in our world.

For IR, there are two lessons that can be drawn from Heidegger's critiques of deworlding and the social sciences. On the one hand, deworlding social facts can only take place up to a certain degree without rendering them completely unintelligible *as social facts*. Deworlding a hammer from a physical perspective may render one a particle cloud without any recognisable hammer-ness, but attempting to study something like international cooperation likewise would simply leave one with empty hands. The only choice then would be to find an 'intermediate gradation' somewhere between dealing with the ready-to-hand and a purely theoretic position on something present-at-hand.<sup>70</sup>

On the other hand, in positioning oneself between the ready-to-hand and purely present-at-hand, there is no way of determining where one is located. As Dreyfus points out, the mapping out of the referential whole is an infinite task, even if one attempts to delineate it.<sup>71</sup> Understanding a hammer simply as 'something to drive nails into surfaces with' still implies a profound knowledge about suitable surfaces for hammering, nails, contexts in which hammering is useful, how to know a hammer isn't too heavy for certain kinds of nails, etc. Even while recognising that doing IR may not be the same as doing phenomenological ontology, this still implies that we can never fully account for the choices we make when deworlding the international. There will always remain an indeterminate space of social referentiality in every attempt to delineate the social.

The third way in which Heidegger's understanding of science relates to the discipline of IR is through what he calls objectification. Objectification refers to the process through which deworlding is naturalised into unproblematic 'data' and 'facts'. Again, we encounter a slightly different understanding of the term in the Heideggerian understanding compared to the tradition of the social sciences. Phenomenologically, objectification should not be understood as some form of post-hoc naturalisation of something as something else. It is therefore not an act of representation, through which some social phenomenon (the object of inquiry) is represented as nonsocial

<sup>69</sup> Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: the Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999).

<sup>70</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 201.

<sup>71</sup> Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, pp. 118–21.

and ‘objective’ in the production of scientific knowledge.<sup>72</sup> Instead, for Heidegger, objectification comes out of our projection of the world *as present-at-hand*. It is the result of the specific form of Dasein that comes with scientific inquiry (‘Being-in-the-truth’), which ‘frees’ entities within the world in such a way that they become ‘objects’. In other words, objectification is a ‘*distinctive kind of making-present*’ through which entities become intelligible as objects.<sup>73</sup>

This perspective is useful for IR in that it allows us to overcome the unhelpful dichotomy between objects as ‘facts’ on the one hand and ‘social constructions’ on the other. In this dichotomy proponents of ‘scientism’ in IR celebrate the objectivity of facts and the reliability of data while radical social constructivists and poststructuralists reject those categories altogether.<sup>74</sup> Heidegger points towards a third position that supersedes the dichotomy. From his perspective, the question is not if an object ‘exists’ or not – but rather that in order to ‘see’ the object one has to ‘look’ in a particular way. Only by looking at the world in terms of objects, does the ‘objectness’ of reality ‘free’ itself and become visible – just like the world presents itself as a social construct when studying it accordingly. This has two implications. The first implication is that both ways of studying the international are legitimate – there is no way of adjudicating them on the basis of claims on the nature of reality. This does not mean that anything goes, though – as the discussion above on deworlding shows, to apply natural scientific methodologies on the social world may be profoundly problematic. However, in principle, there is no problem in seeing a hammer as an ‘object’, as long as one doesn’t lapse into seeing it as a ‘hammer’ simultaneously.

The second implication of objectification is that it highlights the role of ontology in IR research in a new way. In IR, ontology is usually understood as a claim or set of assumptions on the nature of reality, functioning as a starting-point as well as an ordering principle for the conduct of inquiry.<sup>75</sup> Heidegger’s concepts of projection and objectification point towards the practical as well as relational nature of ontology. From this perspective, ontology is not a starting point or a position that one can simply take. Instead it is a praxis, a ‘making-present’, that through its continuous action frees the world accordingly. Through ‘ontologising’, so to say, do entities become visible, do methods present themselves as optional, and do specific epistemologies become accessible. Simultaneously, this perspective locates ontology firmly within the relation between the researcher and the world. More than a cognitive understanding of the world, ontology becomes part and parcel of the involvement of the researcher with the world, while it becomes itself visible through the encountering of entities on the basis of it.<sup>76</sup> Understanding ontology in this way (which is not the way, it should be stressed, that Heidegger viewed it), we can understand it to be profoundly relational. In part, this has already been pointed towards by Pätomäki and Wight when they introduced the concept of ‘philosophical ontology, consisting of the ‘hook-up’ between the researcher and the world.’<sup>77</sup> However, their approach shows the relational aspect, but not the *praxis*-based nature of ontology.

<sup>72</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), pp. 21–31.

<sup>73</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 414–56.

<sup>74</sup> Steve Smith, ‘Positivism and beyond’, in Steve Smith, Ken Booth, and Marysia Zalewski (eds), *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 11–46.

<sup>75</sup> Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 191.

<sup>77</sup> Heikki Patomäki and Colin Wight, ‘After postpositivism? The promises of critical realism’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 44:2 (2000), pp. 213–37.



One way of getting a sense of ontology as *praxis* is by reinvoking Ricoeur's understanding of reading as 'productive imagination'. Just like, from this perspective, reading is not a form of 'absorbing data', but rather an experience of production and imaginative 'worlding', so does ontology come from a consistent yet imaginative engagement with the world. Similarly, just as reading is always hermeneutic, so is ontology, as Heidegger suggests when claiming that '[p]hilosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein.'<sup>78</sup> Thus, rather than seeing the world through a static 'ideal-type', a perspective through which actors, relations and processes become visible, ontology is a hermeneutic process of imaginative attunement. Through this attunement, actors, relations, and processes indeed come to 'life', but as a constant source of negotiation and reinterpretation. Simultaneously, the hermeneutical nature of such 'worlding' (which, by the way, would include the 'deworlding' element of theoretical assertion) makes it irreducible to cognition or mental schemes. There *is* no thing as 'an ontology', therefore, as each *praxis* of ontology is irreducibly tied to the Dasein whose hermeneutics give life to it.

## Conclusion

Zooming out a little from these more detailed aspects, there is a particularity to the way we – IR scholars – understand the international. On the one hand, and in contrast to most people, the international is included in our for-the-sake-of-which of much of our everyday lives. The international therefore becomes much more visible and meaningful to us, as we actively engage with it on an almost daily basis. On the other hand, as has been argued above, the international discloses itself to us almost exclusively as present-at-hand. We do not wield the hammer of the international such that it 'withdraws' itself from our circumspection and becomes 'ready-to-hand quite authentically'.<sup>79</sup> Instead, we turn it over and study it as if it were a 'Being-just-present-at-hand-and-no-more'.<sup>80</sup> Obviously, there are gradations in our dealings with the international: a neopositivist will be more explicit in grasping aspects of the international as 'entities' with 'properties' than a historically or anthropologically oriented IR scholar. Nevertheless, for practically all of us, our relation with the international is profoundly inauthentic (in the Heideggerian sense, by no means indicating an ethical judgement),<sup>81</sup> even though it forms a substantial part of our 'average everydayness'.

This tension has three main implications for the ways in which we disclose the world of the international. First of all, it weakens our ability to understand the 'inter' of the international, as we will tend to grasp the international in terms of its splitting between a 'here' and a 'there'. As a consequence, our study of the international reinforces processes of othering. In other words, because of the way the international discloses itself to the scholar, the practice of IR research tends to sustain a conceptualisation of the international in terms of insides and outsides, rather than in terms of translation and transformation.

Secondly, and connected, we disclose the international as an alien and strange phenomenon, which does not become visible in our 'existential locales' and rather is

<sup>78</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 62.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

located at a distance. This image is reinforced through the ways in which IR projects, deworlds and objectifies the international.

Finally, the tension between the international being part of our for-the-sake-of-which and its present-at-hand way of disclosing itself to us, makes us unreflective of the peculiarity of that disclosure. By dealing with the international inauthentically on a daily basis, we tend to naturalise grasping it outside of our referential totality. As a consequence, a projected, deworlded, and objectified international presents itself to us as natural and authentic. While it should be stressed once again that grasping the international as present-at-hand is by no means a negative thing, Heidegger shows us that this disallows us to catch the phenomenon in its primordial being-in-the-world.

This is not necessarily a problem. As has been mentioned in the beginning of this investigation, a Heideggerian approach towards social science is (and should be) a precarious undertaking. It does not simply mean to put hermeneutics central or to resist Cartesian dualism; it also demands that rather than looking for causes or explanations, the phenomenon itself should be put central. Moreover, it would call for an ontological, rather than descriptive, approach, and emphasise, in some way, existential 'thinking' over *technè*. All of this is not easily combined with the disciplinary practices and expectations of a social science such as IR, and Heidegger himself would certainly not be optimistic about the prospects of such an endeavour. Nevertheless, there is some gold there that is worth pursuing, even if it may be located at the end of the rainbow: to let international politics be seen, not as an entity or an object of study, but rather as part and parcel of our own average everyday dealings with the world – even if it resists revealing itself to us in a ready-at-hand fashion.