Chapter 1 - The “Subject” of Inquiry

Published by

McMullin, Irene.
Time and the Shared World: Heidegger on Social Relations.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/24960.

 nueschmuel7440333781

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/24960
The “Subject” of Inquiry

According to Heidegger, the traditional problem of other minds is in fact a false problematic because “the very being which serves as its theme repudiates such a line of questioning” (BT 206/191). In other words, Heidegger answers the problem of other minds by rejecting the modern conception of selfhood that gave rise to it and by insisting that any account of human existence in which it appears as a problem is misguided from the outset. Indeed, Heidegger’s use of the term “Dasein” is itself a protest against such accounts and their tendency to characterize the self as an atomic substance that is “initially worldless, or not certain of its world, and which basically must first make certain of a world” (BT 206/191). With the notion of Dasein Heidegger instead names a self that only is insofar as it is social and worldly. He repudiates demands for proofs of external reality because Dasein is not a self-contained substance independent of the world but is instead “being-in-the-world.” To be a self is to occupy a way of being characterized by relationality and responsiveness to the world and others. Though the notion of being-in-the-world may conjure images of distinct inside and outside realms, Heidegger uses this expression to characterize the way in which we do not live “outside” the world, only to find our way “into” it or “prove” that it’s really there. Rather, we exist embedded in its social, practical, and axiological meanings and we understand ourselves in terms of them. Indeed, this context of meaning is just what Heidegger means by “world”—which is not merely the totality of objects but is instead the network of meaningful references in terms of which we understand ourselves. Heidegger presents his account as an alternative to the modern philosophical tradition, which has tended to use the observation of physical objects as the paradigm for understanding all things. In contrast, Heidegger asks us to recognize the inappropriateness of this ontology for understanding the self. The self is not an object comparable to hunks of matter located at some particular point in space-time. Naturalistic presuppositions about the fundamental thing-status of all beings therefore preclude an adequate thematization of selfhood. Selfhood is a way of being characterized by directedness toward and dependence on the worldly context of meaning—not by a self-enclosed worldless independence. To be-in-the-world, then, means that we orient our lives according to the meaning frameworks that it
provides, not that we are just one more object positioned within a larger collection of things—the traditional notion of the “world.”

On this picture, Dasein’s relation to the world is not a contingent feature of its selfhood but is its very way of being: “In the customary, psychological representation of the ‘I,’ the relationship to the world is absent. Therefore, the representation of the ego cogito is abstract, whereas the ‘I-am-in-the-world’ lets the ‘I’ be conjoined with the world, that is, as something primordially concrete [ur-konkret]” (ZS 175). Being-in-the-world is relationality, dependence, and directedness—in Heidegger’s terms, transcendence.³ By “transcendence” Heidegger does not intend the popular philosophical meaning according to which “to transcend” means for something to exist outside or beyond the immanent sphere of subjectivity. Such characterizations simply return us to the isolation of the Cartesian subject. The original meaning of transcendere, Heidegger claims, “signifies literally to step over, pass over, go through, and occasionally to surpass.”⁴ Transcendence is the stepping over or beyond the “borders” of one’s internal life to be with or at the thing toward which it is directed: “The transcendsens, the transcendent, is that which oversteps as such and not that toward which I step over” (BPP 299). It is a fundamental openness to that which lies outside or beyond the immanent sphere of subjectivity—an openness that is not some kind of occasional activity of the self, but its very essence: “Dasein does not exist at first in some mysterious way so as then to accomplish the step beyond itself to others or to extant things. Existence, instead, always already means to step beyond or, better, having stepped beyond . . . The transcendence, the over-and-out-beyond of the Dasein makes it possible for the Dasein to comport itself to beings, whether to extant things, to others, or to itself, as beings” (BPP 300).⁵ Thus one might say that the confines of one’s inner life are porous; to be a self is to be fundamentally shaped by and directed toward the web of significance that is the world. “To relate itself is implicit in the concept of the subject. In its own self the subject is a being that relates-itself-to” (BPP 157). We are only selves insofar as we are engaged in the world’s meaning framework and understand ourselves in terms of it. Indeed, our capacity to comport ourselves to things—to choose, to love, to organize, to regret—relies on precisely this openness to the world. To be a self is to always already be “at” the world—transfixed and engaged and dependent on its network of meanings and significances. Thus Heidegger claims that transcending “does not only and not primarily mean a self-relating of a subject to an object; rather, transcendence means to understand oneself from a world” (BPP 300).

But what does it mean to “understand oneself from a world”? According to Heidegger, Dasein is worldly not simply because it exists in
relation to worldly things, but because through its activities and relationships it can understand itself as meeting the standards and filling the roles that give these practices their meaning. Though we will be discussing the nature of Dasein’s selfhood further in chapter 2, it is enough to note here that unlike many traditional accounts, Heidegger argues that to be a self is to be committed to the deeply personal project of understanding who one is to be. Thus Dasein does not have its possibilities arrayed before it as indifferent objects of choice; rather, to be a self is to be caught up in the fact that certain possibilities matter. Indeed, “care” is the term that Heidegger uses to designate this specifically human way of existing as a being that understands itself from the context of activities and meanings through which it plays out the possibilities that matter to it. We care about certain possibilities because they define who we will be. Our encounters with things are not “a rigid staring at something merely objectively present. Being-in-the-world, as taking care of things, is taken in by the world which it takes care of” (BT 61/57). To be a self is to be defined by care-laden openness to the world.

The problem, however, is that the philosophical tradition has tended to reify selfhood as a result of its failure to decouple itself from substance-oriented thinking. In contrast, Heidegger argues that the self cannot be understood as a type of substance—whether it be an object banging up against other things located in the world or a closed private arena of beliefs and representations. Such characterizations fail by portraying the self as either too “close” or too “far” from the world. The consequence is that such theories are then required to compensate—either by accounting for how a worldly object can be conscious and care-driven or by solving skeptical problems regarding the existence of world and others “outside” the sphere of my mental representations. Both responses are rooted in another misguided aspect of the philosophical tradition: its tendency to take the detached observation of physical objects as the basic model for understanding the self-world relationship. This characterization both obscures the fact that such observation is founded on our practical engagements with the world and encourages the view that the self is self-contained. Though our capacity to achieve the detached stance of a disinterested observer is an important human ability, it is a refinement of our basic oriented, directed, care-based ways of being and cannot be taken as primary. For Heidegger, practical immersion in one’s way of being in the world takes precedence in human existing; detached, contemplative, scientific modes of being are derivative attitudes that must be accomplished, despite philosophy’s fondness for pretending that they are the norm.

According to Heidegger, it is their commitment to this “scientific”
model of knowing that ultimately causes him to break with Husserl and with Kant. Heidegger takes his stance in opposition not only to the traditional Cartesian picture of the self-enclosed cogito, then, but also to Husserl and Kant, whom he took to be Descartes’s intellectual children in this regard. This inheritance is evident, he thinks, insofar as they explain the indubitability of the I by attempting to “abstract from everything else that is ‘given,’ not only from an existing ‘world’ but also from the being of other ‘I’s’ (BT 115/109). But such an approach, Heidegger claims, will only lead the existential analytic into a “trap” (BT 116/109) because it assumes that such an abstraction is possible and conducive to uncovering the meaning of the I. To do so is to interpret the self as a type of self-enclosed unit—much as things are. Avoiding such a trap-like project, then, means accounting for the self in terms of the world and the others who share it. Thus Heidegger will reject the Kantian I “because it exists only as ‘I think’ and not as ‘I think something.’”

Of course, Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant and Husserl’s shortcomings can and should be questioned—especially insofar as the “I think something” is the essence of Husserl’s characterization of intentionality. Thus even if we were to grant Heidegger the legitimacy of this criticism of Kant (which is also questionable), it is difficult to see how Heidegger can claim the distance that he does from Husserl’s position. After all, it is a distortion of Husserl’s work to suggest that his account of the transcendental subject simply reiterated the Cartesian view of subjectivity as monolithic, solitary, epistemic I. The theory of intentionality was Husserl’s resistance to the isolation of the traditional subject; an impulse that he only continued to develop with his analyses of the lived body and the Lifeworld. Thus characterizing Husserlian intentionality as worldless is a misunderstanding at best, insofar as intentionality is Husserl’s attempt to designate the way in which the self always exists immersed in its relation to the world.

Despite interpretive claims to the contrary, then—including, in some cases, Heidegger’s own—Heidegger was deeply indebted to Husserl’s insights. Heidegger’s contributions to enriching phenomenology cannot be fully understood or appreciated without recognizing the manner in which they were a development of, and not a simple break with, Husserl’s work. Heidegger himself admits as much insofar as he too addresses the problem of what it means to be an I in terms of intentionality. Thus in Being and Time he asserts that “essentially the person exists only in carrying out intentional acts, and is thus essentially not an object” (BT 48/44–45). As Heidegger’s Marburg lectures of 1923 to 1928 reveal, Heidegger did not reject Husserl’s notion of intentionality so much as call for a more thorough elaboration of it in light of ontological con-
cerns regarding the being of the intentional subject and its object. This becomes clearer once we acknowledge that the kind of transcending toward the world dubbed being-in-the-world is already present in proto-form in Husserl’s notion of intentionality (since all “I thinks” are “I think something”) as well as in his account of the horizontal nature of experience—the recognition that objects are always given in terms of their unfolding relationships both to other objects and to the experiencing self.

Heidegger did not so much reject Husserl’s intentional I, then, as object to the tendency to characterize the intentional relationship as primarily cognitive. For Heidegger, the being of Husserl’s intentional object is simply presupposed as equivalent to the being of the scientific object. Understood as such, the object is characterized without reference to the social, affective and practical context that gives it meaning, relying, instead, on an account of knowing that tends to abstract from these dimensions. Thus Heidegger believes that Husserl’s approach inappropriately prioritizes the epistemic relation to the world; a misunderstanding most clearly evident in Husserl’s tendency to locate the source of intentionality in consciousness rather than in the rich contours of affective, practical, social life. The result of this approach, Heidegger claims, is that Husserl’s phenomenological descriptions of how meaning must be constituted in terms of the transcendental ego tend to sound too much like empiricist proofs for the existence of the world and other minds. Of course, the very essence of phenomenology is a rejection of the legitimacy of such metaphysical existence disputes in favor of analyses of how existence claims show up as meaningful within experience. Nevertheless, Husserl’s focus on the “sphere of ownness” and the “solipsistic” perceptual horizon lead Heidegger to conclude that Husserl did not recognize the import of his own discovery. Namely, how intentionality means that the self is only in terms of its interrelation with the world and those who share it. Because Heidegger believes that Husserl’s characterization of intentionality maintains this scientific stance, he rejects its viability for accounting for the worldly nature of selfhood. The notion of intentionality will have to be transformed if it is to accommodate the insight that Husserl was attempting to articulate—a transformation that will be examined in further detail in the following chapter.

Thus Husserl’s emphasis on phenomenology as “science” is a position that many Heideggerians view as fundamentally incompatible with Heidegger’s project. As one commentator puts it: “Whereas Heidegger aims at separating philosophical thinking from science, Husserl’s intention is the reverse. He wants to confirm scientific theoria as the highest form of human praxis.” However, though Heidegger rejects Husserl’s epistemological orientation and its implicit commitment to the tradi-
tional conception of the self, there is another sense in which Heidegger adopts the same scientific stance that Husserl does. This becomes clear once we recognize that Husserl takes “science” to mean all endeavors founded on self-responsibility—meaning that “nothing held to be obvious, either predicatively or pre-predicatively, can pass, unquestioned, as a basis for knowledge.” Such a stance does not mean that phenomenology confirms theory as primary or that it is a foundationalist project in the original Cartesian sense. Husserl is not trying to deduce an error-free view of the world on the basis of some indubitable truth, nor does he aim to replace praxis with theory (despite the problematic formulations that may promote this conclusion). Rather, Husserl’s call for a rigorous science means that philosophy must take responsibility for its claims. This commitment manifests itself in phenomenology’s methodological constraints, which prevent one from taking any claims for granted—most especially the natural attitude’s tendency to simply take given objects as straightforwardly there. In other words, striving to make phenomenology scientific means distinguishing between naive, thing-focused modes of thought—characterized primarily by psychologism and naturalism for Husserl—and the philosophizing that attends to the primordial lived experiences from out of which such modes of thought arise. Such an approach is the same one adopted in Heidegger’s “destruction” of the history of ontology, however, according to which the primordial lived experiences that gave rise to certain (distorting) philosophical concepts are uncovered once again. Thus Husserl’s fundamental methodological insight—the “to the things themselves” that lies at the heart of phenomenology—is adopted by Heidegger himself (BT section 7, 27–39/23–34). Phenomenology—Heidegger’s chosen method—is “to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself” (BT 34/30).19

Indeed, Husserl’s phenomenological demand that one ground one’s transcendental claims regarding conditions for the possibility of experience in one’s own concrete first-person experience was already a break with abstract Kantian-style transcendental philosophy insofar as it refused to deduce these conditions from some prior architectonic, but insisted that they could only arise in response to concrete existence itself. It is this impulse that Heidegger carries further by providing an existential grounding for Husserl’s analyses of meaning. Heidegger was concerned with the first-person experience of meaning despite the fact that his project aimed at transforming the way in which the meaning and the method of this “first-person” is to be understood—a point to be examined further in chapter 2. Allowing the nature of human existence to show itself from itself therefore involves both a commitment to the Husserlian phenomenological approach and a refusal to accept the
Cartesian baggage that prevented this approach from being as radical as it needed to be. Though Heidegger undeniably changed the focus of phenomenology, then, he is fundamentally a phenomenologist in the same scientific way that Husserl himself was.

This interpretation of Heidegger goes against the grain of much contemporary Heidegger scholarship, which takes Heidegger’s relationship with Husserl to be a radical break rather than an enrichment and development (though one often characterized by bad feeling on both sides). According to the former account, Husserl was trapped in a traditional characterization of subjectivity that resulted in the solipsism and idealism characteristic of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. Heidegger’s genius, so the story goes, lies in his radical rejection of the Husserlian subject in order to produce the notion of Dasein—in which no trace of the traditional subject is to be found. This transformation only continued throughout Heidegger’s career, according to this interpretation, and ultimately culminated in an understanding of Dasein-analysis as a dead-end on the road to the real philosophical matter: the happening of Being.

The primary difficulty with such approaches, however, is their methodological commitment to the belief that Being or “Seyn” is open to philosophical examination without the first-person evidence requirement of Husserl-style phenomenology. This commitment is evident in the many claims one encounters in the literature about Being’s “swaying,” “jointure,” “sonority,” or “en-owning eventuation”—claims often put forward with little effort to unpack how these terms designate something that shows up as meaningful in first-person experience. But if one interprets Heidegger’s work as proceeding without the methodological grounding of Husserlian phenomenology, it is difficult to see how his claims are anything more than metaphysical speculation. For a philosopher who appreciated Kant as much as Heidegger did, such speculation is incompatible with the meaning of philosophical thought. And it is clear that Heidegger was a philosopher deeply concerned with the legitimacy of philosophical method: his corpus was dedicated to both the philosophical articulation of the conditions for the possibility of meaning and developing a rigorous understanding of the norms governing such a philosophical endeavor. Thus Heidegger’s stance as a phenomenologist is expressed most succinctly in the claim that “ontology is possible only as phenomenology” (BT 35/31)—a claim revealing his commitment to the idea that any study of the meaning of being cannot be considered in isolation from the existence of the being who is engaged in the study or the first-person Evidenz that is made available thereby. This is a commitment he maintains regardless of changes to how he thinks about the
Dasein/Being relationship—evident, for example, in his later analyses of how Dasein engages in a genuine “thinking” of Being. As Heidegger recognized, phenomenology must be existential if it is to succeed in understanding how philosophy itself is possible—but existentialism must be phenomenological if its claims are to be grounded in anything other than speculation and construction.

It is for this reason that Husserl has little patience when Heidegger appears to wander into speculative waters with his talk of “Being” in the absence of any reference to how such Being is experienced as such. This type of account cannot possibly be justified, Husserl thinks, since philosophical self-responsibility demands that we refrain from making ontological claims about things that transcend the bounds of possible experience. If it does not show up within the field of possible experience, how do we even know to speak of it—let alone have any standard for assessing the legitimacy of what we say? Indeed, to read Heidegger’s work as lacking in such phenomenological commitments is to do him a disservice, since it presents his work in the absence of the methodological principles that give it legitimacy as philosophical inquiry.

Thus Husserl insists on the first-person nature of phenomenology—all ontological claims must be traced back to an analysis of how they show up as making the claim that they do in the lived experience of transcendental subjectivity. This does not mean that transcendental subjectivity creates all meaning or that in Husserl’s search for the ground of beings he “interprets this ground as itself a being.” The concept of transcendental subjectivity is introduced precisely to avoid presuppositions regarding entities and to speak only of the field of experience within which meaning comes to manifestation. To speak of the metaphysical status of this field of experience, then—to claim that Husserl understands transcendental subjectivity as a type of “entity”—contradicts the entire phenomenological project as Husserl knows it. The purpose of the Epoché is to bracket any presuppositions or assumptions regarding the metaphysical status of who or what is doing the lived experiencing. The focus, instead, is on the experiencing itself as it is lived.

Despite Husserl’s methodological worries about Heidegger’s approach, however, it must be recognized that Husserl himself was not entirely consistent in the application of his own method. As Steven Crowell makes clear in “Does the Husserl/Heidegger Feud Rest on a Mistake?” Husserl’s rejection of Heidegger’s so-called anthropology fails to recognize the implicit naturalism of Husserl’s own view that subjectivity is still part of the world in a psychological sense. This unrecognized commitment is what necessitates Husserl’s second reduction—a commitment that Heidegger realized had already been overcome in the original phe-
nomenological bracketing of ontological presuppositions, which necessarily included those applying to the subject doing the bracketing. This misunderstanding is a consequence of the fact that Husserl believes that even if one brackets everything worldly with which the subject being reflected on—oneself!—is concerned, the reflecting philosopher still posits that subject as a worldly entity. Even when one brackets its objects, one takes the field of consciousness as a “real” worldly psychic stream. Why does he hold this view? It has nothing to do with the phenomenological reduction, for on this matter everything is quite clear: the phenomenological reduction brackets all worldly commitments, every worldly positing. Rather, it is because Husserl imagines that the reduction is carried out not by a philosopher but by a scientist in the naturalistic attitude—namely, by the putative pure psychologist.

In this case, however, Heidegger understood Husserl’s method better than he himself did, and Dasein is the name for the self and its field of experience understood in the absence of any such presuppositions or commitments. As we will see in the remainder of this chapter, Heidegger’s understanding of this point manifested itself in his greater focus on the preconceptual and non-theoretical dimensions of lived experience. Heidegger moves Husserl’s phenomenological project forward by recognizing the practical and affective modes whereby preconceptual dimensions of lived experience manifest themselves first-personally, thereby expanding and enriching the Husserlian analysis of subjectivity to include those dimensions excluded by the third-person naturalistic stance implicit in some of Husserl’s commitments. Heidegger’s understanding of intentionality as transcendence is not so much a rejection of Husserl as a call for Husserl’s position to be fully consistent with the method he endorsed. Heidegger’s development of phenomenology, then, involves re-conceptualizing intentionality to prioritize the pre-cognitive and practical engagements with the world from out of which any theoretical knowledge of scientific objects can arise.

As we will see below, the affective, practical, and social dimensions of lived experience in terms of which the person carries out intentional acts are what Heidegger calls the existentials in Being and Time—dimensions of the self that are made pre-theoretically but first-personally manifest through their corresponding “modes of disclosure”: mood, understanding, and discourse. Heidegger’s contributions in this regard cannot be overstated. His re-characterization of transcendental subjectivity as Dasein succeeds in highlighting the manner in which care—the lived experience of attuned practical commitment to an existence that funda-
mentally matters—takes Husserl’s notion of transcendental subjectivity in a direction that it was required to go. And this is true regardless of whether Husserl recognized the profound import of Heidegger’s contributions or whether Heidegger acknowledged that he was making a contribution to the existing phenomenological project—and not simply overcoming it.

Thrown Project

To clarify the manner in which Dasein understands itself from the world, we must turn to Heidegger’s existentials and the modes of disclosure that reveal them. In terms of the former, Heidegger makes particular use of the concepts “projection” and “thrownness.” Thrownness refers to the sheer “thatness” of existence, to the fact that one aspect of the way we exist is to be always already cast into the world, burdened with the fact that we simply find ourselves in possibilities not of our own choosing. Dasein cannot simply define itself, then, because it is always already defined by the worldly situation in which it simply discovers itself to be.

This dimension of Dasein’s being is revealed to it in the mode of disclosure that Heidegger terms Befindlichkeit—a term he coins to suggest how this thrownness is disclosed to us as such. Various translated as “attunement,” “mood,” “affectedness,” “state of mind,” “situatedness,” and “disposition,” what one needs in translating this term is “an English word that conveys being found in a situation where things and options already matter.” This mode of disclosure reveals the whole of being-in-the-world insofar as it “assails Da-sein in the unreflected falling prey to the ‘world’ of its heedfulness” (BT 136/129). In other words, attunement reveals that the world I’ve been thrown into always has a particular orientation; I find myself in a situation where things and options already matter. I do not choose to be drawn to or repulsed by things; rather, the way I exist in the world is one in which I am “solicited and summoned” by it. A consequence of this disclosure of self and world through attunement, for Heidegger, is that it “first makes possible directing oneself toward something” (BT 137/129). Attuned existing means that things in the world are encountered primarily in a “circumspective” way: as useful, attractive, frightening, and so on. These “subjective” colorings are not somehow added on afterwards to raw data accumulated by an indifferent observer, but define Dasein’s very experience of things as meaningful. Circum-spective encountering is not just “a sensation or staring out at something.
THE “SUBJECT” OF INQUIRY

Letting things be encountered in a circumspect, heedful way has—we can see this now more precisely in terms of attunement—the character of being affected or moved” (BT 137/129). To be Dasein is to be moved by the world.

But Dasein is not merely a passive observer of the way the world matters to it. “Project” or “projectedness” refers to Dasein’s capacity to live into given possibilities of its worldly situation; to take over and own them as its own, regardless of the fact that it simply finds itself in them. Project is the appropriation of this thrown ground from and as which one must be, in light of that towards which one might be. It designates Dasein’s ability to commit itself to different possible ways to be itself. While attunement reveals Dasein’s being-in-the-world qua thrown, understanding discloses being-in-the-world in terms of projectedness; the fact that Dasein’s existence is suspended among possibilities into which it has been thrown and among which it must choose. As with attunement, the mode of disclosure Heidegger refers to as understanding must also be understood existentially—it is not a specific cognitive activity such as judging or explaining, but a way of being that makes such cognitive activities possible. By “understanding” Heidegger means a competence or skill—a “know-how” by which we act into the attuned mattering of the world.

Through understanding Dasein’s existence is revealed qua potentiality—as balanced amidst possible activities of existing—thereby enabling it to address itself practically to the options that attunement has revealed as mattering. Understanding discloses the fact that I exist among possible ways to be me and that I can choose to pursue or neglect these different possibilities. Understanding does not disclose Dasein’s being-possible in terms of definite options, however—“what is not yet real and not always necessary” (BT 143/135)—in other words, purely logical possibility or the contingency of some objectively present thing. Understanding does not simply observe a menu of possible selves; it is, rather, a skillful living into my possibilities that makes these possibilities possible for me.

Projecting has nothing to do with being related to a plan thought out, according to which Da-sein arranges its being, but, as Da-sein, it has always already projected itself and is, as long as it is, projecting. As long as it is, Da-sein always has understood itself and will understand itself in terms of possibilities . . . in projecting project throws possibility before itself as possibility, and as such lets it be. As projecting, understanding is the mode of being of Da-sein in which it is its possibilities as possibilities. (BT 145/136)
Understanding thereby discloses Dasein’s existence as one in which its being is always still open and incomplete; as “a potentiality of being which is never still outstanding as something not yet objectively present, but as something essentially never objectively present” (BT 144/135, emphasis mine). Dasein’s very “excessiveness” to definition, its projection into possibility is, in a strange sense, what defines it. We are not simply passive observers in the face of our own possibilities; we are our possibilities and how with live them.

If the Dasein is free for definite possibilities of itself, for its ability to be, then the Dasein is in this being-free-for; it is these possibilities themselves . . . It is the possibility it is only if the Dasein becomes existent in it. To be one’s ownmost ability to be, to take it over and keep oneself in the possibility, to understand oneself in one’s own factual freedom, that is, to understand oneself in the being of one’s own most peculiar ability-to-be, is the original existential concept of understanding. (BPP 276)

Because Dasein has no fixed “essence” it is an entity “whose what is precisely to be and nothing but to be” (HCT 110). As a result, Heidegger insists that we must be careful in our language; we cannot speak thoughtlessly of Dasein as an entity with the mode of being of Dasein, for example, because this implies a thing on hand in the world to which this mode of being has simply been attributed like a property. Avoiding such characterizations is, as we have seen, not only necessary for an accurate understanding of what the self is—it is also essential if we are to achieve a more accurate understanding of social relations between such selves. In other words, we must speak of Dasein not as a “what” but as a who; “the authentic entity of Dasein, the who, is not a thing and nothing worldly, but is itself only a way to be” (HCT 237). Who the self is, is fundamentally a matter of how I am to be—not what I am to be.

Because Dasein’s own mode of existing is itself a condition for the possibility of it experiencing entities as meaningful and accessible, disclosing the being of entities involves a co-disclosure of this being-in-the-world itself—the way of being that allows the world to show up as being the way it is. Like attunement, then, understanding also discloses or appresents (HCT 211) the worldliness of Dasein’s being-in-the-world—it reveals not only Dasein’s ability to pursue different abilities to be, but the world itself as arena in which this projectedness finds its significance. The world is disclosed in understanding as a totality of meaningful references grounded in Dasein’s care for its possible ways to be its self. In understandingly pursuing one or another of the options that matter to
me, I act in specific ways that serve to differentiate the world into articulated contexts of relevance.32

This meaningful context of things functions, for the most part, as an unthematized background; I do not explicitly attribute the function “driver of screws” to the screwdriver; simply using the screwdriver to drive screws as part of my project helps constitute it as such. When I am absorbed in the projects of my existing, understanding self and world, this context of referentiality is merely a “pale and inconspicuous presence” (HCT 189). It is in terms of the absence or breakdown of tools useful to my projects that these tools become prominent or conspicuous, a “distinctive disturbance” or “specific absence” that in turn “points to what underlies it as its possibility, that is, the always-already-there of a familiar continuity of references which is disturbed because something is missing, and which stands out through this specific absence” (HCT 189). For Heidegger, our everyday encountering of the world is in terms of this implicit context of reference that relies on—but does not make explicit—the fact that my being suspended among ways to be a self gives this context its shape and meaning. Understanding thus discloses the situation in which my existence finds expression and significance, revealing both the worldly constellation of meaningful roles, things, and activities, and Dasein’s status as the ultimate “for-the-sake-of-which” grounding the meaning of these referential structures.

Meaning

It is this structure of the world as background referential totality that is the essence of meaningfulness for Heidegger. Meaning is defined as “that in which the intelligibility of something keeps itself, without coming into view explicitly and thematically. Meaning signifies that upon which the primary project is projected, that in terms of which something can be conceived in its possibility as what it is. Projecting discloses possibilities, that is, it discloses what makes something possible” (BT 324/298). Understanding therefore reveals not only Dasein’s nature as entrusted with its own ways to be in the world, but reveals it as being so in a context of references in terms of which particular things reveal their possibilities. In understanding, “the world, qua world, [is] disclosed in its possible significance” (BT 144/135) and so too “innerworldly beings themselves are freed, . . . freed for their own possibilities. What is at hand is discovered as such in its serviceability, usability, detrimentality. The totality of relevance
reveals itself as the categorial whole of a possibility of the connection of things at hand” (*BT* 144–45/135–36). Meaningfulness, then, is this condition of there being specific connection possibilities, and does not refer to particular connections themselves.

It is important to note here that Heidegger describes understanding as freeing innerworldly beings for their own possibilities. Though the condition of meaningfulness is grounded in Dasein’s openness to possibility, Dasein does not simply project meanings onto things arbitrarily. Rather, Dasein’s ways to be in the world discover or reveal—disclose—potential connections among the things at hand. The potentiality of these connections means that they are characterized not only by openness to change and interpretation but also by a certain limit or resistance to my activities. This concept of resistance, however,

can only be understood in terms of meaningfulness. The authentic correlation of world and Dasein (if we can speak here of correlation at all, which is not my opinion) is not that of impulse and resistance or, as in Scheler, will and resistance, but rather care and meaningfulness. This correlation is the basic structure of life, a structure which I also call facticity. For something can be encountered in its resistivity as a resistance only as something which I do not succeed in getting through when I live in a wanting-to-get-through, which means in being out toward something. (*HCT* 221)

Dasein’s way of being gives rise to meaning through its interpretive encounter with that which it is not—and it succeeds in cultivating the inherent possible connections of meaning depending on the degree to which it attempts to impose an interpretive agenda resisted by the world itself. Dasein’s interpretive engagement with the possibilities it encounters can vary considerably; “draw[ing] the conceptuality belonging to the beings to be interpreted from these themselves or else force them into concepts to which beings are opposed in accordance with their kind of being” (*BT* 150/141).

Heidegger’s concern here is not simply the flexibility of meaning-possibilities, however, but the implicit condition of this flexibility: Dasein as the ultimate-for-the-sake-of-which, as the entity for whom possibility is its very way of existing. The meaning of meaning is, in a certain sense, Dasein—the being whose openness to possibilities makes their disclosure itself possible. It is for this reason that Heidegger ultimately defines the meaningful in terms of “Dasein itself, which has meaning in the primary sense” (*HCT* 211) and discusses a “secondary” sense of meaning: the significance of innerworldly things based on their location in the refer-
ental totality and which only have meaning insofar as they occupy the “place” of meaning. This place of meaning is Dasein itself, understood in the primary sense of meaning: the “formal, existential framework of the disclosedness belonging to understanding” (BT 151/142). This primary sense of meaningfulness thus designates Dasein’s way of being: its existing as the site of disclosedness: “Only Da-sein ‘has’ meaning in that the disclosedness of being-in-the-world can be ‘fulfilled’ through the things discoverable in it. Thus only Da-sein can be meaningful or meaningless . . . all beings whose mode of being is unlike Da-sein must be understood as unmeaningful, as essentially bare of meaning as such” (BT 151/142).

As we will come to see in the following sections, this way of existing qua primary meaning seeks to establish worldly or “secondarily” meaningful ways in which its being-in-the-world can be fulfilled: “Factual life develops ever new possibilities of meaningfulness in which it can bestir itself and can in that way be assured of its own ‘meaning.’” This distinction between Dasein’s inherent meaningfulness and the innerworldly things that are unmeaningful—but are encountered as meaningful in terms of Dasein—will be crucial for this discussion, particularly in terms of understanding how we encounter the other primarily meaningful beings with whom we share the world. In what way do such encounters differ from encountering secondarily meaningful things in the world? The answer, we will see in later chapters, lies in the fundamentally different relationship to time. Before we can reach such a conclusion, however, we must first lay the groundwork by turning to Heidegger’s account of how Da-sein is always already with the others with whom it shares the world.

Being-With

In addition to Thrownness and Projectedness, Being-with (Mitsein) is the third fundamental dimension of care and designates Dasein’s essentially social nature. For Heidegger, every possibility that human existence offers must be understood in terms of the presence of other people. Even when we are alone or solitary the others are present as an absence. Being-with does not mean that there are always others physically there with me but characterizes the way in which being in the world is always already permeated with the presence of others; it is an “existential attribute that belongs to Da-sein of itself on the basis of its kind of being” (BT 120/113). Heidegger’s emphasis is therefore not on a spatial notion of “with” but on an existential one: we exist in such a way that we are never alone but are always being implicitly referred to those who make our
clothes, write the books we read, act as role models, and so on. And like the other existentials—thrownness and projection—being-with must be understood not as a form of understanding human life but as a dimension of existing it.

As we have seen, Dasein exists immersed in the world; all encounters with particular others must therefore be understood in terms of this worldly way of being—not in terms of the inner confines of some self-enclosed subject. Dasein’s encounters with others are an existing along with other Dasein in the shared world. All varieties of being-with-one-another, then, are “understandable only if being-with-one-another means being-with-one-another in a world” (HCT 241). Being-in-the-world means that “Dasein initially finds ‘itself’ in what it does, needs, expects, has charge of, in the things at hand which it initially takes care of in the surrounding world” (BT 119/112). Similarly, Dasein “finds” other Dasein in what they do and have in the world; like the self, others are encountered primarily from the world. Because I exist immersed in a “referential totality of significance” through which I pursue my projects of existing (BT 123/115)—all encounters with others occur in and through this referential totality. Encountering other people, even in “the most everyday of activities, passing by and avoiding one another on the street, already involves this environmental encounter, based on this street common to us” (HCT 240). I do not encounter others in the total absence of a shared background context of meaningful things and activities; they are always driving a car, eating some food, lounging on the couch. When we encounter this or that other human being, argues Heidegger, “this being of the others is not that of the ‘subject’ or the ‘person’ in the sense in which this is taken conceptually in philosophy. Rather, I meet the other in the field, at work, on the street while on the way to work or strolling along with nothing to do” (HCT 240).

Like the self, then, experiencing others requires no “espionage on the ego” to take them as its object qua subject. Though we may treat them as such, others are never experienced as objects but only ever as other selves engaged in particular practices, tasks, and activities—the projects in which they pursue their possibilities. As William Schroeder notes: “One does not primarily see the Other’s body which hides his mind; one apprehends ‘what he is about,’ ‘what he is up to.’ For Heidegger, this is a direct and lucid experience of the Other’s existence since his existence is his being-in-the-world”—his being engaged in projects and practices similar to my own. The physical actions of the other’s smiling and waving aren’t experienced as the mere “appearance” of her inner desire to greet me—the smile and wave are a greeting. To see the greeting as “behavior” is to be engaged in a highly theoretical level of remove from our ordinary ex-
experience: typically, we do not see “bodies” to which we attribute “minds.” Rather, I understand the others with whom I share the world just as I understand myself: as pursuing projects within a shared world.

Though we typically encounter others from worldly things and activities, this does not mean that I first encounter “stuff” and then infer that there are others who could also be using it. On the contrary, Heidegger’s point is that there is never simply “stuff”; I only ever encounter anything against the background of meaningful contexts of relevance that are always already heavy with the presence of others: “The others who are ‘encountered’ in the context of useful things in the surrounding world at hand are not somehow added on in thought to an initially merely objectively present thing, but these ‘things’ are encountered from the world in which they are at hand for the others” (BT 118/111). The publicity and commonality of things in the world is definitive of them as the things that they are. This is particularly evident in the case of things like traffic regulations, whose very meaning demands that there be others. But Heidegger’s claim is that even solitary experiences—standing alone before a wilderness landscape, for example—involve the presence of others. Others are “there” as potential tourists, or as friends for whom you take a picture, or in the poem of which the scene reminds you—the presence of others is a feature of the experience, argues Heidegger, even insofar as I am delighted that there are no others there to ruin it. “The others, the fellow humans, are also there with the Dasein even when they are not to be found there in immediately tangible proximity” (BPP 289).

The others are present as absent. For Heidegger, then, coexistence with others is not simply a contingent feature of the world. Being-with does not refer to the fact that I am rarely alone in places with no traces of other humans; rather, “being-with existentially determines Da-sein even when another is not factically present and perceived. The being-alone of Da-sein, too, is being-with in the world. The other can be lacking only in and for a being-with” (BT 120/113).

Based on such a characterization of Dasein, then, it seems evident how the “problem” of intersubjectivity can be dismissed as a false problematic. Human co-being with others constitutes a structural characteristic of human existence itself and is not “something which occurs at times on the basis of the existence of others” (BT 120/113). The with-one-another implied in being-with is a way of being constitutive of selfhood—it is not a type of spatiotemporal proximity or a contingent fact about particular encounters with this or that other. It is an ontological, rather than ontic or factual feature of my way of existing: “We ourselves are determined through a Being-with the other.”36

Indeed, Heidegger claims that the presence of other Dasein in the
world helps to determine the possible ways that I can be. Thus this “having to do with one another in the one world” can also be described as a “being dependent on one another” (HCT 240). The publicity, commonality, and social interdependence of the world in which I exist are themselves essential features of my existing.

Das Man

In what way is this interdependence and publicity of the world definitive for my way of existing? How am I affected by the fact that the background of referential totalities against which I play out my projects is shaped not only by my own meaningful practices, but by the presence and projects of other purposive selves?

According to Heidegger, the everyday way that I exist in terms of the publicity of the world is fundamentally in terms of averageness. I understand myself and others in light of a context of social roles and meanings in which we are all, for the most part, engaged in behavior that is interchangeable and anonymous. “In utilizing public transportation, in the use of information services such as the newspaper, every other is like the next” (BT 126/119). This everyday form of existence—in which my way of being is simply the average way of being—Heidegger refers to as das Man. Variously translated as “the they,” “the crowd,” or “one,” these terms are designed to illustrate the way in which we understand ourselves in terms of anonymous social roles and practices infused with the interchangeability of those participating in them. Distinguishable and explicit individuals do not, primarily and for the most part, differentiate themselves or others from these general social categories, meanings, and standards through which they are encountered in the surrounding world. Thus Heidegger asserts that

“the others” does not mean everybody else but me—those from whom the I distinguishes itself. They are, rather, those from whom one mostly does not distinguish oneself, those among whom one is, too. This being-there-too with them does not have the ontological character of being objectively present “with” them within a world. The “with” is of the character of Da-sein, the “also” means the sameness of being as circumspect, heedful being-in-the-world. “With” and “also” are to be understood existentially, not categorically. On the basis of this like-with being-in-the-world, the world is always already the one that I share with the others. (BT 118/111–12)
As we have noted, the with of being-with must be distinguished from objective co-presence, from mere spatial contiguity. Thus my indistinguishability from the others does not mean that it is impossible to determine where I end and you begin; the sameness and indistinguishability of human beings existing in terms of *das Man* must be understood existentially: as a way of existing, as patterns of interpreting and behaving in the world that we all share. Because we all participate in, and understand ourselves from, these average and public understandings, Heidegger is designating a way of being in which the self is initially and for the most part not differentiated from the others. Self, others, and world are experienced through the lens of shared meanings and practices that are unquestioningly taken up. The existential nature of the way we are with others in terms of *das Man* refers not to some type of group subject, but to the way in which communal standards determine our engagement in particular activities and how these activities are carried out. Since selfhood is understood as a way of existing, not as a kind of substance, it becomes clear how I can become a seemingly indistinct and anonymous one among many: because the activities that define my existence are determined by shared public norms. Thus “the they” “are not definite others. On the contrary, any other can represent them” (*BT* 126/118). Insofar as I live out the standards of teacher, daughter, sailor, I too am “the they.” Everyday Dasein’s being-in-the-world takes the form of an engagement in the activities of its taking care, but these activities and the tools made use of are defined by the communal standards of what things are and how “one” does things: “We enjoy ourselves and have fun the way they enjoy themselves. We read, see, and judge literature and art the way they see and judge. But we also withdraw from the ‘great mass’ the way they withdraw, we find ‘shocking’ what they find shocking. The they, which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness” (*BT* 127/119). Anyone who has noted the profound conformity even within groups of those who are “rebell ing” against society—Goths, punks, hippies—will recognize the acuity of Heidegger’s characterization.

The creation and maintenance of averageness involves our tendency to adapt ourselves to the others. Dasein is caught up not only in taking care of the different things and projects in which it is immersed, but also in taking care of how this taking care compares to that of others. We recognize the unspoken standard of how one does things and constantly, unthinkingly modify our behavior to meet this standard, to control this distance between others and ourselves. This tendency to manage our distance from others is what Heidegger refers to as distantiality. While I pursue my projects in the world that I share with the others,
there is “constant care as to the way one differs from them, whether this
difference is to be equalized, whether one’s own Da-sein has lagged be-
hind others and wants to catch up in relation to them. Being-with-one-
another is, unknown to itself, disquieted by the care about this distance.
Existentially expressed, being-with-one-another has the character of dis-
tantiality” (BT 126/118). Though this urge to conform to the “normal”
and the “average” can be quite explicit, it generally operates on an un-
thematized level that infuses all of our activities: we immediately lower
our voice if someone whispers to us, we wait in line if others are doing
so. The implicit nature of this constant adjusting to the public standards
and understandings in which we are immersed is in keeping with Hei-
degger’s claim that we do not adapt to das Man standards only after we
have become full-fledged independent subjects—that we in some sense
autonomously choose to adapt to these standards. Rather, “in terms of the
they, and as the they, I am initially ‘given’ to ‘myself.’ Initially, Dasein is
the they and for the most part it remains so” (BT 129/121). The they is
a normative construction that determines the way in which one’s taking
care can manifest itself; it “prescribes the kind of being of everydayness”
(BT 127/119).

The manner in which das Man dominates my everyday way of being,
then, involves its tendency to delimit and control the possible interpre-
tations of self, world, and others that are available. Though the charac-
teristic of distantiality indicates a tendency to minimize and manage the
difference between self and others in terms of the socially defined mean-
ings and interpretations available, das Man itself determines their availa-
bility. “Thus, the they maintains itself factically in the averageness of what
is proper, what is allowed, and what is not. Of what is granted success and
what is not” (BT 127/119). I do not decide what makes for a successful
woman, philosopher, citizen; the social context that defines these roles
and interpretations does. My everyday way of existing is determined on
the basis of the easy and familiar patterns provided and encouraged by
the public meanings and standards in which I find myself. This tendency
for all possibilities to become average and general is what Heidegger re-
fers to as leveling down.

Attendant on this feature of our everyday way of being is the ten-
dency to conceal the possibleness—the possible nature—of these average
possibilities. The greater the extent to which leveling-down character-
izes das Man’s prescription of the range of acceptable meanings and
self-understandings—what counts as normal—the greater the sense that
these possible ways to be and the norms governing them seem to have
the determinate force of laws of nature. Under such an influence, we
can lose our awareness of ourselves as entrusted with our own possible
ways of being. Indeed, the structures of averageness, distantiality, and leveling down—all of which together constitute what Heidegger terms *publicness*—implicitly encourage the loss of this self-responsibility. The always already being-interpreted of the average and the normal—the everyday way I understand even myself—is “characterized by the fact that it is in fact not explicitly experienced, not explicitly present, it is a how of Dasein from out of which and on the basis of which the Dasein of each is lived.”37 Thus the averageness of the everyday is conducive to what Heidegger refers to as an inauthentic or “fallen” way of existing—when averageness inhibits and conceals the particularity and responsibility of Dasein’s being. As Frederick Elliston notes: “By prescribing in advance the way Dasein is to understand itself and its world, the public removes the burden each person has of deciding for himself.”38 Everyday Dasein is not only unaware that it is responsible for choosing its way of being, but the way of being of das Man actively discourages, punishes, or covers over Dasein’s attempt to act on this responsibility: “This averageness, which prescribes what can and may be ventured, watches over every exception which thrusts itself to the fore. Every priority is noiselessly squashed. Overnight, everything primordial is flattened down as something long since known. Everything gained by struggle becomes something to be manipulated” (*BT* 127/119). Such a reduction to the common, the determined in advance, the average, results in a phasing out of the possible as such. We are generally blind to this lack of possibility when immersed in our social context since social roles, meanings, and norms tend to conceal their own contingent nature. According to Heidegger, our tendency to inauthentic being-in-the-world involves just this type of blindness to possibility and a tranquillization with what is “real”; possibilities lose their possibleness by being socially interpreted as given in advance, as settled and prearranged.

Following Hubert Dreyfus’s classic account in *Being-in-the-World*, we can note, then, that there seem to be two senses in which Heidegger understands the role of das Man. There is the first, somewhat unproblematic understanding in which the they provides us with the possibilities of taking care from which we must choose our ways of being. How we understand ourselves is shaped by the fact that any possible self-understanding is acquired from public meanings and practices. However, there is also the sense of das Man as something that prevents us from being able to make choices about who we are to be. Thus Dreyfus claims that “Heidegger takes up and extends the Diltheyan insight that intelligibility and truth arise only in the context of public, historical practices, but he is also deeply influenced by the Kierkegaardian view that ‘the truth is never in the crowd.’ ”39
It is this latter view that Heidegger often seems to prioritize in his descriptions: “Because the they presents every judgment and decision as its own, it takes the responsibility of Dasein away from it. The they can, as it were, manage to have ‘them’ constantly invoking it. It can most easily be responsible for everything because no one has to vouch for anything. The they always ‘did it,’ and yet it can be said that ‘no one’ did it. In the everydayness of Dasein, most things happen in such a way that we must say ‘no one did it’” (BT 127/120). Though this has chilling reverberations considering Heidegger’s Nazi involvement, its accuracy is attested by that very involvement. The most frightening dimension of Nazi Germany is precisely the average person’s involvement in a monstrousness that had come to be the norm. Putting aside the already well-hashed out discussion of Heidegger’s Nazi involvement, however, we can notice everywhere—not only in Nazi Germany—this tendency toward loss of individual responsibility in the face of the overwhelming inertia of socially accepted norms. It’s not I who am these things—it’s just “the way it is.” “Thus, the they disburdens Dasein in its everydayness. Not only that; by disburdening it of its being, the they accommodates Dasein in its tendency to take things easily and make them easy” (BT 128/120).

Characterized as such, das Man is seen as responsible not only for providing us with possible interpretations of self, world, and others but also for encouraging us in our tendency to fall prey to the temptation of simply being immersed in the world and passively accepting the socially accepted public understandings and interpretations, rather than actively making them one’s own. It is tempting to fall into this inauthentic mode of being, argues Heidegger, because of the tendency of publicity to present itself as “having-seen everything and having-understood-everything,” which encourages “the supposition that the disclosedness of Da-sein thus available and prevalent could guarantee to Da-sein the certainty, genuineness, and fullness of all the possibilities of its being. In the self-certainty and decisiveness of the they, it gets spread abroad increasingly that there is no need of authentic, attuned understanding. The supposition of the they that one is leading and sustaining a full and genuine ‘life’ brings a tranquilization to Da-sein” (BT 177/166). The certainty of rightness characteristic of das Man—that its ways of being are the only ways of being, or the only ones that matter—promotes our desire to have our existence determined for us from without such that our own responsibility for this existence can be forgotten. “When Da-sein, tranquilized and ‘understanding’ everything, thus compares itself with everything, it drifts toward an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality for being-in-the-world is concealed” (BT 178/166).

According to Heidegger, this irresponsible drift or fall into such
THE “SUBJECT” OF INQUIRY

a condition of inauthenticity or fallenness is ultimately rooted in the
failure to distinguish different senses of being; to interpret all entities,
instead, according to an understanding relevant only to “occurrent,” or
“thingly” entities. The insidiousness of fallenness is that it takes its in-
terpretive cues not simply from the public modes of interpretation, but
that these public modes of interpretation take their cues only from the
mode of being of things. “Absorbed in taking care of things, Da-sein
understands itself in terms of what it encounters within the world . . .
the understanding of being in general initially understands all beings
as something objectively present” (BT 225/207). Falling is Dasein’s ten-
dency to live in this interpretative stance, the “tendency to understand
itself primarily by way of things and to derive the concept of being from
the extant” (BPP 272), rather than deriving the concept of being from
Dasein itself. The phasing out of the possible—Dasein’s tendency to fall
into thinking of itself as a settled, thing-like substance—conceals from
Dasein its own way of being as finite, contingent, and entrusted with its
own having to be. The temptation to misunderstand itself in this manner
derives from the fact that understanding itself as a type of thing allows
Dasein to avoid recognizing the responsibility for being with which it is
always entrusted. It is for this reason, Heidegger claims, that the fallen
mode of Dasein’s self-interpretation is “only a mask which it holds up
before itself in order not to be frightened by itself” (OHF 26).

When characterized as such, it is difficult to see how our everyday
being with others is anything other than destructive. This is hardly an
appealing conclusion, and if it is indeed what Heidegger advocates, any
account of intersubjectivity that he might provide only succeeds in avoid-
ing worries about the problem of other minds by articulating a necessar-
ily social dimension of being that is nevertheless profoundly negative. In
order to avoid this conclusion, I will argue that though the two senses of
das Man are intimately linked, fallen inauthenticity and average every-
dayness must be distinguished. While the latter is an immersion in the
worldly, average, publicly defined tasks that reflect me back to myself, the
former is a self-misunderstanding rooted in the failure to differentiate
between the various modes of being. In this regard, the ambiguity of the
term das Man—an ambiguity expressed in Dreyfus’s distinction above—
will encourage us to avoid it for the most part, emphasizing, instead, (1)
Everydayness—in which Dasein is neither inauthentic nor authentic, but
is immersed in average worldly activities with the others, (2) Falling—the
tendency conducive to misunderstanding or cultivating this averageness
in such a way that Dasein becomes (3) Inauthentic/fallen—a condition
in which Dasein can avoid awareness of the contingency and responsibil-
ity of its being by using interpretive categories appropriate for things.
These distinctions will be examined in much greater detail in chapter 6, where I will explicitly argue against the many interpreters who argue that Heidegger simply equates average everydayness with inauthenticity. At this point, it is enough to familiarize ourselves with the necessity of maintaining the distinction.

Even if we do maintain this distinction, however, Heidegger’s account of Dasein’s fundamentally being-with nature still faces a number of serious problems. First, if we are always immersed in the world—if we always understand ourselves in terms of average, anonymous roles and standards—what kind of self remains in the face of such anonymity? How can we accommodate our intuitions about the privacy of our first-personal, “inner,” lives? In what way can we account for the individuated first-person self-presence that we take to be definitive of selfhood? Second, if other Dasein are always encountered in terms of the publicity and averageness of the shared world, in what sense can we understand the other as such an individuated self? How do we experience the particularity and immediacy of the other if being-with only refers to this condition of being in a shared world—not to concrete encounters with this or that other person?

Chapter 2 takes up the first issue. There I will argue that though Heidegger is indeed claiming that my everyday self-understandings are in a certain sense not my own—since they are provided by the general inherited public meanings and norms according to which we all understand ourselves—he nevertheless leaves room for the fact that our everyday self-understandings are in some sense always our own. Chapter 3 examines the second problem—the fact that Heidegger must face a version of the traditional problem of other minds. In other words, though there can be no question that there are always already others shaping and sharing the worldly meanings in terms of which we understand ourselves, Heidegger must still account for the manner in which we experience the particularity of individual others, despite the averageness and anonymity that characterizes our everyday encounters with them.

Chapter 3 addresses this problem by examining its formulation in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, and the remainder of the book is dedicated to answering how the other is always encountered as a particular self—despite the fact that I always understand her in terms of the shared world.