Time and the Shared World
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Though many have been initially drawn to Heidegger’s reformulation of traditional concepts of subjectivity, his lack of an articulated account of the social dimension of the self—and the seemingly problematic form it must take as a result of this reformulation—has been off-putting for many. In contrast, this book has argued for the central role that other Dasein play in one’s temporalizing caring being-in-the-world—implying, thereby, that one can accept Heidegger’s account of selfhood without being committed to the negative social ontology that is often deemed to be its direct consequence. Though Heidegger himself did not develop a detailed theory of intersubjectivity to correspond with his new understanding of subjectivity, he provides the resources with which to do so and indicates the direction in which this development must occur. Using these resources and following these indications, my project has been to construct a Heideggerian account of interpersonal relations that is most consistent with Heidegger’s texts, with his general project, and—most importantly—with the social “things themselves.” In doing so, it has become evident that a much more complex position must be attributed to Heidegger’s account than is generally recognized.

Developing a Heideggerian theory of intersubjectivity required us to respond directly to the long-standing critique of Heidegger’s notion of Mitsein. This criticism—as expressed in Sartre’s Being and Nothingness—argues that Heidegger simply stipulates “being-with” as an a priori category of Dasein’s being, a category which—due to its categorial status—cannot provide for immediately experiencing others in their concrete particularity because they are always simply interchangeable tokens whose uniqueness is subsumed under the generality of the established category. In order to demonstrate that Heidegger is not committed to such a picture of intersubjectivity, it was necessary to indicate first how it is possible to understand Dasein as an individual self, despite the fact that (1) definitions in terms of substance are no longer available to Heidegger, and (2) he seems to characterize our everyday way of being in terms of a kind of selflessness. In response to such constraints, much Heidegger scholarship interprets the possibility of Dasein’s individuation solely in terms of achieving authenticity—a position that I have shown to be both unnecessary and untenable. Dasein’s individual, first-person self-
hood is always already its way of being—even when it is inauthentic—and this is the meaning of the existential mineness that Heidegger emphasizes throughout. Despite its inauthentic tendencies, Dasein is always already a self individuated by its existential commitment to its having to be.

In determining how I can encounter other such selves, it was necessary to (1) examine being-with in terms of how Heidegger understands the status of the a priori in general, and (2) analyze the implications of this understanding for characterizing Dasein-to-Dasein encounters. My argument proceeded by showing that the existential analytic follows Husserl in its phenomenological approach to the a priori as responsive to particular encounters in concrete existence. I further demonstrated that Heidegger also maintains a Kantian approach insofar as these existentials are all a type of responsiveness to temporal intuition, which provides the horizon within which all category-initiating and enriching encounters may occur. This temporal responsiveness of Dasein’s being was worked out in detail in chapter 5, where I showed that the temporality of being-with occurs most fundamentally in the transition from originary to world time, wherein Dasein speaks itself out into a time that it heedfully shares with others. All of the structures of temporalizing—spannedness, datability, publicity, and significance—are defined by this transcending that establishes and maintains Dasein’s relation with otherness. In publicity and significance, this relation takes the form of an accommodation of the other’s temporalizing expression through the establishment of common meanings and measures. In this discussion it became evident that the most fundamental level of Dasein-to-Dasein encounter is unmediated by worldly categories because it is through such encounters that the standards of significance and measure characterizing world are first constituted.

Like the other existentials, being-with is responsive to temporal intuition—but in the case of being-with, intuition does not give intratemporal things but announces the presence of “foreign” originary temporalities—other Dasein. And because this originary temporality is the fundamental expression of the other’s concrete care-defined way of being, such encounters are not characterized by categorial anonymity but direct particularity. Though Dasein generally experiences other Dasein in terms of shared innerworldly and intratemporal roles and meanings, then, the other Dasein’s responsive commitment to these worldly norms bespeaks the fundamental mineness of another self. In the encounter with the other’s commitment to his own existence I encounter him in his concrete individuality.

This recognition of the other can be forgotten or concealed to varying degrees, but it is never entirely absent. Despite the false self-
and other-interpretations with which Dasein may operate, it nevertheless continues to be characterized by the temporalizing structures that define its selfhood and necessitate the implicit acknowledgment of the other qua Dasein. Even when I leap in and take over the other’s care, I must encounter him as a being defined by it, though this acknowledgment occasionally occurs in such a way that simultaneously obfuscates or even destroys this way of being. Though Heidegger recognizes this possibility of refusing to behave in a manner consistent with the ontological status of the other Dasein co-constituting the world, failing to meet this norm of appropriateness specific to our being-toward-others does not undermine the recognition of the other underlying it. In this sense, the ethical resources that Heidegger’s fundamental ontology offers are not Platonic in bent because to know the good does not guarantee its performance—to encounter the other as Dasein does not ensure that one will act consistently with this acknowledgment. Though Dasein’s care for who it is to be propels it to act appropriately in light of the basic standards against which it can measure its success in being, the anxiety produced by this responsibility can also have the opposite effect insofar as Dasein seeks to flee understanding of its way of being. The possibility of adopting the opposing authentic stance—in which I acknowledge my way of being and explicitly take responsibility for it as such—is revealed in each of the modes of disclosure specific to authenticity. It is in the call of conscience, however, that it takes the form of an enabling summons to this stance. This calling is not only a possibility for self-calling, however, since we have shown that it can also occur between Dasein in such a way that one helps another resist the tendency to avoid responsibility for her existence. This calling of the other involves granting her the time and meaningful space in which to live more fully into her being, demanding that one resist the unjust tendency to insist on one’s own constant presence. Understood as such, we can recognize how—despite typical interpretations to the contrary—a Heideggerian account of intersubjectivity can indeed accommodate the entire range of human relationships, from murderous to loving.

There are, of course, many questions that remain. The role of the body is an obvious absence in Heidegger’s work and one that I could not address here. A further concern relates to the status of one’s desire to succeed at having to be—the desire underlying the sense of appropriateness that makes Dasein a norm-following being in everydayness and an authentic being in the face of the ontological inconsistencies of inauthenticity. Is this desire for consistency simply a derivative of the desire to succeed in being—and therefore a type of variation on Spinoza’s conatus? The implication of such a conclusion would be that my heedful-
ness of the others—my desire to treat them appropriately and thus not as worldly things—would therefore be derivative of my overarching desire to succeed in my own being. Such an interpretation would be more in keeping with most Heidegger interpretations. I hope to have shown, however, that despite the questions that may remain, reaching this traditional conclusion requires one to oversimplify and ignore a great deal of what Heidegger has to say. Insofar as the other is present as a partner on the most basic levels of temporalizing worldliness—and can act as a summons to my desire and ability for consistency and self-awareness—the other’s claim that I heed her temporalizing presence appears to be at least equiprimordial with Dasein’s care for its own appropriateness in being. Ultimately, I think that Heidegger’s reference to the joy that one can feel in accomplishing a connection with another person points to the profound fact that the desire for a genuine being-with others just is definitive of our existence. This, indeed, is the heart of what it means to be a thrown being-in-the-world—simply put, the world matters to me because I am a creature for whom things can matter, a mattering that does not arise from me choosing that they do, but comes from my responsiveness to the ways in which I am solicited and summoned. And in the case of the other persons with whom I constitute the temporal landscape of the innerworldly, these summons matter to me very much indeed.