To many among us who have been raised on the legacy of the Cartesian revolution, human ontology seems to be grounded in independent individuals who then stand in need of socialization. In this light, Being and Time can be read as an attempt to do just this: to insist that any notion of individuality already entails a mit-sein, a social involvement. And, indeed, the general strategy of Heidegger's existential analysis together with its ontological grounding in temporality qua care, follows this road—even if he omits any explicit discussion of societal involvement or relations, even as he portrays from the outset an elemental involvement with other persons and with things. In Heidegger's insistence on the historical nature of the human self, in his undeveloped yet ever-present explication of what it means to-be-in-a-world, Heidegger's argument implies that sociality is ontologically prior: that the individual person is in essence an individuated social being, that individuality emerges in the process of individuating by means of interpretive efforts that ultimately find expression in the activity of resoluteness. In these efforts, the authenticity of the care structure is exhibited as the temporalization of temporality. This temporalization is "located" in the historic heritage in which one finds oneself. But this notion of "heritage" is merely named as foundational and then left totally unexplicated and unexplored. Nothing is said about its ramifications, how it appears, and how it is to be evaluated, incorporated into one's own interpretive understanding, or utilized in what one does.

What I propose to do here is to suggest some of the salient considerations that need to be addressed if we are to comprehend the ways in which our
individuated appropriations of a shared heritage exemplify our being-in-the-world. To do this is to focus attention, not on the individual as such, but on that context of be-ing in which he finds himself, a context that is at once both social and historical. Turning from the individual who is the center of his own experience, these considerations point out and illuminate an essential involvement with the cultural and political nexus of the period, in which each must find himself if he is to act in an authentic manner. These considerations are preliminary to a fuller discussion; they are meant, not to set out a list of those ingredients that constitute a heritage, but to help set out an agenda for further discussion.

I

In seeking the ground of Dasein’s authenticity, Heidegger has argued that it is grounded in that deliberate temporal orientation to futurity which is found in “resoluteness”: “In resoluteness we have now arrived at that truth of Dasein which is most primordial because it is authentic” (BT, 343/297). Each individual Dasein finds itself in a situation, a situation which is only through resoluteness and in it. . . . Resoluteness brings the Being of the ‘there’ into the existence of its Situation. . . . Resoluteness does not first take cognizance of a Situation and put that Situation before itself; it has put itself into that Situation already. (BT, 346–47/300)

And again,

The phenomenon of resoluteness has brought us before the primordial truth of existence. . . . It gives itself the current factical Situation, and brings itself into that Situation.” (BT, 355/307)

Dasein’s temporality, structured as a triune unity, is revealed in the structure of care, that “first showed itself in anticipatory resoluteness” (BT, 380/332).

One may perhaps be forgiven for reading such crucial passages in an almost Cartesian sense—the individual acting alone, seemingly alone constituting his world without precedent or cultural inheritance, so to speak, “out of his own head.” But, any situation in which we each find ourselves and into which we have been “thrown,” is inherently historical. This much any reader of Heidegger quickly learns. But what often escapes notice is that any situation is thereby intrinsically social. This is finally made clear in the notion of “heritage.” For sociality is not merely the face of the current situation; sociality is what binds one to one’s predecessors and successors.

II

Let us take a very close look at three sequential sentences in one crucial paragraph, the one paragraph in which the notion of “heritage” is intro-