



Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame

By Dan Zahavi

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Can you be a self on your own or only together with others? Is selfhood a built-in feature of experience or rather socially constructed? How do we at all come to understand others? Does empathy amount to and allow for a distinct experiential acquaintance with others, and if so, what does that tell us about the nature of selfhood and social cognition? Does a strong emphasis on the first-personal character of consciousness prohibit a satisfactory account of intersubjectivity or is the former rather a necessary requirement for the latter?

Engaging with debates and findings in classical phenomenology, in philosophy of mind and in various empirical disciplines, Dan Zahavi's new book *Self and Other* offers answers to these questions. Discussing such diverse topics as self-consciousness, phenomenal externalism, mindless coping, mirror self-recognition, autism, theory of mind, embodied simulation, joint attention, shame, time-consciousness, embodiment, narrativity, self-disorders, expressivity and Buddhist no-self accounts, Zahavi argues that any theory of consciousness that wishes to take the subjective dimension of our experiential life serious must endorse a minimalist notion of self. At the same time, however, he also contends that an adequate account of the self has to recognize its multifaceted character, and that various complementary accounts must be integrated, if we are to do justice to its complexity. Thus, while arguing that the most fundamental level of selfhood is not socially constructed and not constitutively dependent upon others, Zahavi also acknowledges that there are dimensions of the self and types of self-experience that are other-mediated. The final part of the book exemplifies this claim through a close analysis of shame.

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Review

"There are several impressive features of this book. First and foremost, it presents a coherent, cogent, and nuanced account of how we experience ourselves and others as minded, embodied, and embedded agents, as individuals and as members of groups and communities. Zahavi's positions are both phenomenologically and textually very well-informed as he works through the contributions of key figures from the phenomenological tradition on the issues he addresses. Equally impressive is the range of figures from outside of phenomenology, be it from analytical and other traditions of philosophy or from empirical psychology it introduces and discusses." --Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews Online

"This book is an exemplar for those working on phenomenological approaches to mind...Highly recommended."

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"Self and Other should be recognized as an important text in contemporary philosophy of subjectivity and intersubjectivity...Zahavi is extremely convincing in his argument...This multi-faceted approach is one that all philosophers and thinkers can learn from." --Metapsychology Online Reviews

"Dan Zahavi's newest book, *Self and Other*, gathers together and expands on his rich body of work on selfhood and intersubjectivity. . . . The exegetical work alone makes this book valuable for anyone interested in the phenomenological tradition and its contemporary relevance. The book's value, however, exceeds its historical acumen by placing explanations of classical phenomenology alongside a comprehensive review of recent work from both empirical psychology and analytic philosophy. In short, this book will be of interest to anyone who cares about the myriad ways that our social existence shapes and is shaped by the mind." -- Husserl Studies

"While continuing the ongoing discussion of Zahavi's works, *Self and Other* presents his views in a rich historical light and offers a wide treatment of debates about selfhood." -- Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal

"The book is particularly interesting for those who have been following Zahavi's voluminous and important work for some time now..." -- Journal of Phenomenological Psychology

About the Author

Dan Zahavi, *University of Copenhagen*

Dan Zahavi is Professor of Philosophy and Director of Center for Subjectivity Research at the University of

Copenhagen. He was elected member of Institut International de Philosophie in 2001 and of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters in 2007. From 2001 to 2007 he served as president of the Nordic Society for Phenomenology, and he is currently co-editor in chief of *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. In his systematic work, Zahavi has mainly been investigating the nature of selfhood, self-consciousness, and intersubjectivity. His most important publications include *Husserl und die transzendentale Intersubjektivität* (Kluwer, 1996), *Self-awareness and Alterity* (Northwestern University Press, 1999), *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford University Press, 2003), *Subjectivity and Selfhood* (MIT Press, 2005), and, with Shaun Gallagher, *The Phenomenological Mind* (Routledge, 2008).

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