

Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning: Paths Toward Transcendental Phenomenology, by Steven Galt Crowell. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001, 323 pp.
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Contemporary European philosophy, as Hans-Georg Gadamer records, emerged self-consciously from the Neo-Kantian tradition that dominated German philosophy from the 1870s to the 1920s. While phenomenology attempted to go beyond Neo-Kantianism by rejecting the dualism of appearance and thing in itself, yet in many ways it remained squarely within it, specifically in its suspicion of both speculative metaphysics (the Hegelian legacy) and naturalism. Husserl and Rickert, for instance, were in agreement that the common enemy was the 'naturalism of our time' (see Husserl's letter of 20 December 1915 to Rickert). An important—and still not fully documented—Neo-Kantian influence on Husserl was Paul Natorp, whose review of Husserl's *Prolegomena* recognised the need to move more in the direction of Kant. Natorp's *Introduction to General Psychology* with its account of 'awareness' (*Bewusstheit*), and of the ego as something that never can be objectified, influenced Husserl's developing conception of the transcendental subject. Even Husserl's conception of a radical epistemology as first philosophy has Neo-Kantian roots.

Given the enormous diversity of contemporary continental philosophy and its supposedly anti-logical stance, it is now hard to conceive that phenomenology, one of

the greatest philosophical movements of the twentieth century, had its origins in a puzzle over the status of logic as a science and the capacity of the new science of psychology to give a complete grounding to logic. Husserl's phenomenology, as announced in the *Logical Investigations*, begins by defending the ideal status of logical entities and laws in contradiction to the psychologistic approaches of both contemporary British Empiricism (J. S. Mill) and also certain versions of contemporary Neo-Kantianism. Husserl was in agreement with Lotze and some of the Neo-Kantians in opposing this psychologism and arguing for the independent 'validity' (*Geltung*) of logical propositions. Phenomenology, then, began by accepting some of the basic positions of Neo-Kantianism against positivism and empiricism (as Natorp's assessment of Husserl's achievement in the *Logical Investigations* recognised). However, as Gadamer records, phenomenology had a deep suspicion of theory of knowledge in its traditional form. Husserl had made a decisive move against the representationalism of the modern philosophical tradition of Berkeley and Locke, and Heidegger regarded it as a great scandal of philosophy that it had ever undertaken to attempt to 'prove' the existence of the external world. If traditional epistemology (understood as an answer to scepticism) had to be overcome, this required at least for Husserl a new conception of epistemology, a new inquiry into the transcendental conditions that made not just knowledge but all forms of conscious achievement possible, an inquiry into the whole domain of transcendental subjectivity (and subsequently, even transcendental intersubjectivity).

In a series of original, penetrating, and challenging essays, Steven Crowell traces the genesis and nature of Husserl's and Heidegger's transcendental phenomenologies, reading these two thinkers in proximity to each other and to the wider contexts of German philosophy (Lotze, Rickert, Lask). Crowell's central claim is that both Husserl and Heidegger are best understood as *transcendental* philosophers, occupied with the traditional transcendental problem of *quid juris*, concerned with *method* rather than substantive, speculative metaphysics. Husserl can quite clearly be understood as practicing transcendental philosophy consistent with, if much broader than, the Kantian conception. Heidegger, however, introduces a new and paradoxical conception: *ontological* transcendental philosophy, according to which the conception of *grounding* (*Begründung*) is moved from the purely cognitive, rational framework of the Neo-Kantians to the ontological frame of Being itself. Crowell convincingly shows how Heidegger's concern with ontology remains *within* the transcendental framework.

Contemporary continental philosophy, if it neglects this Neo-Kantian heritage, will inevitably present a distorted account of its pedigree, according to Crowell, who also defends the view that Heidegger's decisive contribution lies in his transcendental phenomenology, not in his hermeneutic attempts to break with the Western philosophical tradition, which inspire postmodernists. On the other hand, Crowell sees a certain continuity between the concerns of 'third-generation' Neo-Kantians such as Emil Lask and contemporary analytic philosophers such as John McDowell, in that both want to do justice both to the *ideally closed domain* of rationality, on the one hand, and to the fact that this rationality is practiced by historically and culturally bound human animals, on the other.

The book is divided into two sections. In the first half, Crowell tells a complex tale of the interrelation of the philosophies of Husserl, Lask and Heidegger in relation to the meaning of logic, a reflection known as 'transcendental logic' (a term that in Neo-Kantianism covered epistemological and metaphysical issues concerned with the genesis and structure of objectivity as such). The second half is a series of essays on the idea of phenomenology and the future of philosophy, including a final chapter that assesses the value of Eugen Fink's post-Heideggerian efforts to insert metaphysics into phenomenol-

ogy. For Fink, the phenomenological reduction lays bear the constituting subject and this is the starting point for genuine metaphysical questions concerning the nature of the phenomenological viewer. But Crowell argues that Fink's work falls into the domain of what Kant termed transcendental illusion and ends up as a 'gnostic phenomenology'.

Crowell understands transcendental phenomenology as a reflective attempt to understand the 'space of meaning', the space in which we as rational beings live and move and have our being. The concept of a space of reasons first emerged in the Neo-Kantian discussion of the 'domain of validity' (*Geltungsgebiet*), but receives its most famous formulation with Wilfrid Sellars' 'space of reasons'. The core idea (endorsed also by Wittgenstein) is that philosophy has its own sphere—meaning—a sphere that has to be grasped through a special mode of reflection. Husserl called this the sphere of immanence: it is the specific sphere in which we live and move and have our being as rational cognitive agents. In Husserl's and Heidegger's works this space of meaning is constituted by our acts and projects, and makes possible our encounter with objects as such. It provides the condition of the possibility of both subject and object. Husserl is therefore concerned with wider grounds than just the epistemic conditions with which Kant is occupied, as he had made clear even as early as the *Prolegomena* (see Section 65 in particular). For Husserl, the domain of immanence would become co-terminous with the domain of transcendental consciousness itself. Inquiry into the meanings we inhabit in our lives is thus already transcendental inquiry.

When Husserl replaced Rickert in the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Freiburg in 1916, phenomenology supplanted Neo-Kantianism as the dominant force in German philosophy. More than a decade later, Heidegger's 1929 Davos debate with Ernst Cassirer sounded the death-knell of Neo-Kantianism as a movement. Nevertheless, both Husserl and Heidegger retained many commitments to the Neo-Kantian heritage albeit in a radicalised form. Heidegger's own academic philosophical training took place squarely within Neo-Kantianism, despite half-hearted efforts to pass himself off as a Thomist. He was a student not of Husserl, but rather of Rickert, who opposed the psychologistic reading of Kant. It was only having completed his Habilitation that Heidegger met Husserl in Freiburg in 1916. He became Husserl's assistant for a time and spent the next decade in close intellectual engagement with 'the master' (as Edith Stein called him). Husserl himself at that time was engaged in developing his phenomenology into an overall philosophical system, a radical, founding science, the true *protē philosophia*. Heidegger published nothing during these apprenticeship years between 1916 and 1927, when *Being and Time* appeared like a bolt out of the blue. The recent publication of Heidegger's lectures in the years between 1919 and 1928 are therefore invaluable for tracing the intellectual links between Husserl and Heidegger during his silent years (in terms of published output), and showing the genesis of *Being and Time*. As these lectures attest, Heidegger's central preoccupation was the meaning and place of philosophy itself and here he took a transcendental position.

Both the Neo-Kantians and Husserl were wedded to the idea of making philosophy systematic and scientific, and, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger too retained this idea of scientific philosophy, even if he was more suspicious about the paradigm of the positive sciences which held many of the Neo-Kantians in thrall. At the core of the dispute is the issue of the autonomy of philosophy with regard to the sciences; with Heidegger emphasising the discontinuity, and the Neo-Kantians and positivists emphasising the continuity. Part of the motivation for the reduction was that Husserl had come to the realisation that the natural and mathematical sciences are determined by an outlook, a *Weltanschauung* that requires a deeper interrogation and ultimate grounding by

philosophy itself. Phenomenology, then, accepts the autonomy of the philosophical stance, but this stance is also the transcendental one.

Crowell interprets both Husserl's and the early Heidegger's projects as in fact concerned with the Kantian problem of 'transcendental logic', i.e. how does logical form make objecthood possible? It is not enough that logic specify the laws of making sense and consistency, but there must also be a 'logic of truth', a logic which specifies how the object comes to be reached in thinking. Husserl accepted the legitimacy of the Kantian idea of transcendental logic, although he criticised Kant's particularly narrow version of it. This transcendental project was also endorsed by Heidegger; for instance, in an early 1912 essay on modern logic, he sees transcendental logic as identifying 'a moment in the object that conditions its objecthood' (Crowell, p. 81). Despite the Cartesian gloss Husserl was putting on his project, Heidegger clearly recognised its ground-breaking character both in its characterisation of human nature as intentional consciousness and its methodology for giving an account of being in general (Husserl's material and formal ontologies). Heidegger quickly jettisoned the Cartesianism of Husserl and proposed a non-subjectivist structure of existence (Dasein). He also radicalised the ontological element in Husserl into his fundamental ontology, which he interpreted as an attempt to rethink the initial breakthrough of Greek philosophy and hence of the original meaning of philosophy itself.

Husserl's breakthrough was his recognition of the universal character of signification (*Sinn*), extended beyond the linguistic to all acts, including perceptual and emotional acts. However, just as crucial is the recognition that the domain of meaning calls for a transcendental account. In this sense Husserl and Heidegger were in continuity with the Neo-Kantian tradition (especially of Rickert and Lask). Husserl's *epoché* ensured that he could focus on the structures of meaning-constitution without regard to existence. In *Being and Time* Heidegger put more weight on the existential and finite origins of transcendental inquiry as located in temporal and historical Dasein but he did not abandon the transcendental approach. Crowell underscores Heidegger's enigmatic claim that ontology can only be founded ontically, on existentiell not ontological foundations. In other words, it belongs to transcendental philosophy to acknowledge the finitude of the subject among the conditions that make knowledge possible. Husserlian act analysis will have to be supplemented by Heideggerian project analysis.

Indeed, there was an on-going tension in both Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenologies between their transcendental and historicist tendencies. The problem was to retain the transcendental approach in the face of temporality and historicity. How can one speak of an a priori of temporality? How can the haphazard, accidental dimension of human life fully get accommodated within an a priori transcendental field of possible meaning? Husserl struggled to keep the two in balance, but one has a feeling that the a priori structures won out over the 'mundane'. In building a science of meaning, Husserl and Heidegger were suspicious of trendy appeals to 'life' and to irrational lived experience (usually associated with Dilthey). Here too there was agreement with Rickert, who was suspicious of all attempts to introduce *Lebensphilosophie* (although Rickert includes Husserl among the philosophers of life) as leading to irrationalism. Nevertheless, the mature Husserl was concerned to complement phenomenological description with a recognition of the vital context of the life-world and of historicity, although Husserl is always looking for the *eidos* of historical development. Heidegger's *Being and Time* offers a much deeper and more sustained attempt to get at the nature of temporality in relation to meaning. In his early lectures Heidegger is particularly focused on 'factual life', where facticity has a different spin from that found in Husserl, being linked to the analysis of life in Aristotle, St. Paul, Luther and Kierkegaard. In other words, Heidegger recognised the inescapably

existential element to the question of phenomenological grounding and justification, but he was no less concerned to defend the ideality of meanings and the connection of logic with truth.

Crowell begins with a brief survey of the complexity of the Neo-Kantian scene in Germany, with special reference to the so-called 'Southwest German' Neo-Kantian school which included Rickert, Windelband and Emil Lask. He dates the founding of Neo-Kantianism to Otto Liebmann's *Kant und die Epigonen* (1865) where the phrase '*zurück zu Kant*' repeatedly occurs. But the focus is primarily on Emil Lask, a student of Rickert, who provides a kind of bridge between Husserl and Heidegger. Crowell clearly shows that Lask was a formative influence on Heidegger, who in turn acknowledges Lask in *Being and Time* as the only one who has taken up and developed Husserl's positive account of truth as identification (*Sein und Zeit* 218n. xxxiv).

Lask was a careful reader of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, but he also sought, as Rickert put it, to create a synthesis between Greek philosophy and Kant, by reinterpreting the categories as object-producing structures not located in the subject. Lask agrees with Husserl that logic is about meanings understood as unities, in Lask's case, unities of categorial form and material. Lask criticises Husserl's account of meanings in terms of acts, and instead focuses on the objects that secure meanings. For Lask, more emphatically than Husserl, meanings *are* objects in their own right; meanings are in essence objective. He criticised Kant for maintaining a two-world theory that separated knowledge from being, and inevitably led to logic being located in the subjective and thus psychologised. Lask wants to argue that the categories are entirely objective and are to be construed as a priori and entirely free of the synthesising functions of subjectivity, thereby rejecting all appeal to the transcendental subject and indeed all reference to the subjective. For Lask, transcendental logic is a logic of truth. He maintains the 'homelessness' of logic, it is in its own realm, a third realm neither in the realm of the real or the psychological. The region of logic is the region of *Geltung* (validity), drawing here (as Husserl also does) on Lotze's metaphysical account of judgements as relating to validities which 'hold'. He accuses Kant of confusing this logical domain with the supersensible domain of metaphysics. For Lask, to study the categories is to do ontology. Of course, this claim led critics to allege that Lask had abandoned the transcendental field and fallen back into pre-critical philosophising.

Heidegger was deeply influenced by Lask in his first writings on logic, but he does not, as Lask does, jettison the subjective entirely. Heidegger recognises that validity is not an absolute as Lask maintained, but is conditioned by intentionality. In 1925 he calls for an inquiry into the being of the intentional, and in *Being and Time* rethinks the subjective as a kind of being, *Dasein*. Heidegger also does not accept Lask's view that meanings are objects, rather meaning forms part of the backdrop, the world, in and through which things appear.

The essays of Part Two focus mainly on Heidegger, and Crowell's reading is complex but always illuminating. In Chapter Twelve, for instance, he contrasts the Kantian and Heideggerian approaches to transcendental philosophy. Whereas Kant focused on the structure of judgement, Heidegger focuses on the structure of questioning. Whereas Kant locates the ground of ontological knowledge in a priori synthesis, Heidegger places it in the pre-understanding of Being. The problem, for Heidegger, is that ontological inquiry is not a free-floating absolute science, but is ontically rooted in everyday, temporally conditioned human beings. Through the book Crowell offers assessments of recent Heideggerian scholarship, including Van Buren, Kisiel, and others. In general, he endorses Kisiel's view of Heidegger as a philosopher of philosophy whose basic question was: how is philosophy possible? But he is rightfully critical of the absence of the figure of Husserl from Kisiel's account. It is extremely significant how much the meaning of philosophy

as a task is itself a theme in Husserl's lectures (e.g. *Erste Philosophie*, 1923–4), at the very time Heidegger was conceiving and writing *Being and Time*. To my knowledge, the parallels between Husserl's and Heidegger's lectures of the mid-twenties remain to be explored.

Crowell reads *Being and Time* as a failed project, a project that collapsed on Heidegger (p. 224). The failure is due in part to a tension between phenomenology and metaphysics in the early Heidegger. Transcendental theory of knowledge needs to be completed by a 'metaphysical-teleological interpretation of consciousness' (*Gesamtausgabe* I 406), yet Heidegger soon moved to a hermeneutics of facticity and towards phenomenology as overcoming metaphysical pseudo-problems. This unease with metaphysics is signalled in *Being and Time* by the term 'metaphysics' usually appearing in quotation marks. Immediately after *Being and Time*, Heidegger engaged in a 'retrieval' of Kant. According to Crowell, Heidegger began to appeal to metaphysics to overcome the problems of *Being and Time*. Influenced by Scheler, Heidegger started to develop a 'metontology', an inquiry into being as a whole ('making beings thematic in their totality in the light of ontology', *Gesamtausgabe* 26, 200)—a metaphysical ontic by way of existentiell questioning. But what precisely is this unresolved problem and how is metaphysics supposed to solve it? I think Crowell could have offered more on the failed project of *Being and Time*.

The critique of Fink's aptly named 'gnostic' phenomenology in the final chapter is illuminating. Fink begins from the problem of the transcendental 'viewer'—what is its nature? In Husserlian phenomenology, it constitutes everything including itself. Is it, as Husserl thought, a kind of non-human subjectivity or is it precisely, the higher sense of humanity? While these issues are fascinating and difficult, Crowell is clearly correct that one should resist Fink's ungrounded speculative 'constructive' phenomenology.

Overall, throughout the book, Crowell is broadly defending both transcendental philosophy and the traditional project of phenomenology as describing 'what shows itself as it shows itself' (p. 263), as remaining true to the evidential situation. He recognises that, despite the efforts of favourable commentators such as J. N. Mohanty, R. Sokolowski, and others, there is still a strong suspicion of transcendental phenomenology as too idealist, foundationalist, and Cartesian, to meet the demands of current philosophy, and therefore he seeks to rehabilitate the transcendental approach in part by showing how pervasive it is in Heidegger's phenomenological work. His characterisation of phenomenology as concerned with *meaning* in the broadest sense (to include the acts that constitute meanings as well as the meaning clusters themselves), following Gian Carlo Rota, helps to demystify this approach and allow for comparison with the approaches of McDowell and Sellars, for example. But the question of meaning is also a question of ontology, and Crowell defends the legitimacy of the Heideggerian question of being, and moreover he does not divorce it from Husserl's concerns. As Dan Zahavi has recently argued—taking the reduction very seriously—Husserl's aim is to be uncovering not only the genuine meaning of 'subject', 'object' and 'meaning' but to be giving a characterisation of being itself, freed from absurdities of traditional speculative philosophical positions.

Inevitably the discussions in this rich book give rise to further questions. Some problems are presented by the fact that this book emerged from a series of related articles, spread over more than a decade. This means that there is at times a certain lack of clear focus on the central issues, as well as some repetitiveness. But primarily Crowell's book challenges because it raises deep and demanding philosophical questions concerning the nature of Husserl's and Heidegger's projects and their interrelation. How does transcendental reflection on the status of logic as science lead on the one hand to Husserl's descriptive science of consciousness, and on the other hand to the meditation on

the question of the Being of beings in Heidegger? Crowell has carefully explicated part of the story, usefully connecting Husserl's concerns with transcendental logic and Heidegger's attempt to focus not on beings but on the meaning of Being. But much more needs to be said about the complex relation between Heidegger and Husserl especially in terms of their respective understanding of the project of *protè philosophia* and its relation to the sciences of knowledge and being. Brentano and Aristotle need also to be woven into the story. Overall Crowell has made a major contribution to our understanding of the philosophical context and problematics from which phenomenology arose and which continue to inform the phenomenological vision of the nature of the philosophical enterprise itself.

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