



Introduction

This book outlines and defends a new understanding of the philosophical importance of phenomenology, taking the work of Husserl and Heidegger as exemplary. The crux of this understanding lies in the connection between normativity and meaning, a connection that has been extensively explored in certain strands of analytic philosophy but has not been sufficiently appreciated in the phenomenological tradition. In one sense this is odd, since meaning (in the form of an analysis of intentionality) has been central to that tradition from the beginning. In another sense, however, it is perfectly understandable, since neither Husserl nor Heidegger (nor most of their followers) identified the theme of phenomenology specifically with meaning (*Sinn*). Rather, Husserl understood phenomenology to be a science of consciousness, while Heidegger understood it to be an approach to being. At the same time, both Husserl and Heidegger argued that phenomenology transformed the sense of previous philosophical concepts, so it is not altogether clear how we are to understand terms like “consciousness” and “being” in their writings. As I have argued in *Husserl, Heidegger, and the Space of Meaning* (2001), and continue to argue in this volume, a careful look at the particular descriptions, analyses, and interpretations offered by each shows that it is phenomenology’s focus on the transcendental conditions of the constitution or disclosure of meaning that upsets our understanding of traditional philosophical topics in the ways that exercised Husserl and Heidegger. It thereby also allows us to appreciate why the analytic treatments alone are not enough.

The closer examination of the space of meaning in its character as a norm-governed phenomenon, and of the self or subject capable of experiencing such meaning, is the primary aim of this book. That examination yields a conception of phenomenology that sees in it neither a one-off product of a largely defunct continental metaphysical tradition, nor an appendage that deals with marginal cases of “what it is like” to experience something. The phenomenology I have in view offers a deep and compelling approach to problems of philosophy. In this volume, issues in

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philosophy of mind, moral psychology, and philosophy of action provide the primary focus for illustrating this claim.

Before going further, a word should be said about the concept of “norm” that is in play here. The term is often used in a narrow sense, according to which a norm is an explicitly formulated rule – whether conventional or rationally derived – that serves as the basis for determining whether something (an action, mainly) is permissible or obligatory. When the term is understood in this way, the idea that normativity is central to Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology may well appear perverse. But there is a wider sense according to which a norm is anything that serves as a standard of success or failure of any kind, and it is in this sense that I understand the term here. Thus a legislated statute is a norm, as are rules of games like chess or baseball; but “unspoken” rules, satisfaction conditions, cultural mores, manners, what is “normally” done – in short, whatever it is that *measures* our speech and behavior – are also norms. Kant links the “exemplary universality” of our experience of the beautiful with the normative by invoking the “presence of a rule that we cannot state,” and we can understand Platonic *eide* as norms in this sense as well: as ideal exemplars, they stand in relation to the things that share their names as standards for being those things. Like phenomenological “essences,” such exemplars are not rules in any sense, but they possess a kind of normative claim that precludes our thinking of them simply as entities that turn up in the world, whether as part of the latter’s causal nexus, as social facts, or as elements of the subject’s psychological outfitting. It is this that makes the normative a basic concern in phenomenology, since it belongs squarely within the scope of the latter’s distinctive sort of anti-naturalism (or anti-objectivism).

Thus the normative is found wherever we can speak of rules, measures, standards, exemplars, ideals, concepts, and so on; wherever distinctions between better and worse, success and failure, can be made. I don’t pretend that discriminating between these various sorts of norm is not philosophically important; on the contrary, there is already a robust literature that essays this task, and if my argument goes through, tracing the differences and interconnections among these ways in which the space of meaning is constituted is a significant item on the phenomenological agenda. One example will be found in Chapter 10, where the distinction between the good and the right is touched upon. For the purposes of the general argument, however, only the wider concept of normativity is necessary.

The normative is at stake in the accounts of intentional content or meaning offered in both analytic and phenomenological traditions, and

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it guided both Husserl and Heidegger toward the insight that phenomenological investigation of intentionality demanded a thorough reorientation in philosophy. But neither thought it particularly striking that it was meaning's normative structure that accounted for this demand. Thus while each drew upon the tradition of transcendental philosophy since Kant to formulate the reorientation, and each contributed phenomenological analyses to the elucidation of meaning's normative aspect, neither formulated the issues in precisely this way. There are other philosophical agendas at work in their writings, and these vie for attention with the one I am trying to highlight here. I do not intend to minimize the importance of these other agendas for understanding Husserl and Heidegger, but for the present, appreciating the philosophical contribution of phenomenology requires that we not simply repeat the words and thought-figures that operate in their texts but disinter what *we* hold to be the "things themselves" at stake in their thinking – to the extent that that thinking is indeed phenomenological. Phenomenological adequacy serves as my standard of judgment, brought to bear on an examination of the normative conditions on meaning or intentionality.

The book aims at three interrelated goals: (1) to contribute to our understanding of what is distinctive about phenomenology as an approach to philosophical problems; (2) to present a reading of Husserl and Heidegger that emphasizes a continuity in both the problems they were concerned with and the solutions they proffered, while also highlighting (in the case of Husserl) the gaps in his position that made the Heideggerian move necessary and (in the case of Heidegger) the limits of standard interpretive approaches that make Heideggerian phenomenology seem irrelevant to philosophers who do not adopt his terminology and general outlook; and (3) to address certain questions in philosophy of mind (e.g., the conditions on possession of intentional content), moral psychology (e.g., the interdependence of self-responsibility, first-person authority, and norm-responsiveness), and philosophy of action (e.g., the way meaningful action hangs together with the practice of reason-giving).

Part I sketches phenomenology's place in the tradition of transcendental philosophy since Kant (Chapter 1), and it provides an overview of the phenomenologies of Husserl and Heidegger focused on the connection between normativity and meaning, introducing key technical terms and disputed problems (Chapters 2 and 3). Part I is thus an introduction to the argument elaborated in more detail later in the volume. Part II develops an interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology that shows how the normative character of meaning is explicitly addressed and also how Husserl's

identification of phenomenology with a philosophy of consciousness distorts some of his insights. Here topics are introduced that provide touchstones for the interpretation of Heidegger in Part III: Chapter 4 elucidates what it means to say that phenomenology is a “first-person” approach to philosophical problems; Chapter 5 distinguishes the phenomenological take on meaning from some standard non-phenomenological directions in semantics. Chapter 6 explores Husserl’s struggle to characterize the kind of normativity that, from the first-person perspective, informs perceptual intentionality; and Chapter 7 argues that “phenomenal consciousness” cannot, even on Husserl’s own terms, be intrinsically intentional.

What is missing from the Husserlian analyses can be found, as Part III argues, in Heidegger’s existential analytic of *Dasein*. The aim of these chapters is twofold: first, to show that Heidegger’s concept of care (*Sorge*) incorporates Husserl’s transcendental-phenomenological turn to the “subjectivity of the subject” in such a way that the implications of the latter’s understanding of the first-person stance as self-responsibility are fully exploited (Chapter 8); and second, to show how Heidegger’s analysis clarifies the possibility of responding to norms *as norms*, and so completes the transcendental project of delineating the conditions that make intentional content, the experience of something *as* something, possible (Chapters 9 and 10).

The most significant claim in Part III is that Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis of authenticity as responsibility has consequences for understanding what reason is. Far from presenting us with a picture of the self in which reason plays no role, or only a derivative one, Heidegger’s phenomenology shows how reason is inseparable from our being, even though we are not “by nature” rational beings. Some implications of this thesis are then explored in Part IV, with a focus on practical philosophy. In Chapter 11 Heidegger’s account of how norms take on normative force is compared with Christine Korsgaard’s, with which it has much in common. I argue that Heidegger’s conception of the subject as care provides a better basis than Korsgaard’s conception of self-consciousness for understanding why we are confronted by what Korsgaard calls “the normative problem.” The structure of practical intentionality is further explored in Chapter 12, where Heidegger’s distinction between trying to *do* something and trying to *be* something is mobilized to show the limits of any account (here Husserl’s) that proceeds on the basis of a combination of intentional acts (or propositional attitudes) such as belief, desire, and will. Finally, Chapter 13 addresses the vexed question of where moral reasoning belongs in Heidegger’s ontology.

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Taken together, these chapters are meant to marshal textual evidence and philosophical argument in support of an interpretation that seems to me productive for introducing phenomenology into the wider discussion of the philosophical issues at stake in them.

Many chapters in this volume were published previously and were written for very different occasions. Though they all contribute to the aims outlined above, I might well approach the issues differently were I starting from scratch. In preparing this volume I have occasionally modified the originals to make a more readable whole, altered a title, or added a reference, but I have not tried to update them, introduce new arguments, or engage in debates with the most recent literature. And while my argument is based on certain key passages in the texts of Husserl and Heidegger to which I return many times, the price paid in repetition brings with it a certain gain. The interpretation of these passages has so far been relatively neglected in the literature, or else developed in a way very different from the one I propose. Thus repetition can serve, in the different thematic contexts in which it is found, as a form of emphasis and reframing.

There are many topics relevant to my theme in Husserl and Heidegger that have not been taken up here at all. Nevertheless, I have sought to provide what is essential in a way that is not incompatible with any phenomenologically defensible thesis found in their writings. Thus, for instance, though I do not investigate Husserl's phenomenology of time in any detail, nor specifically address Heidegger's concept of truth as disclosedness or his interpretation of Dasein's historicity, closer examination of these themes should not seriously compromise my thesis. On the contrary, a proper understanding of them *presupposes* the account of the elements of Husserl's and Heidegger's thought I present here. Or so I would argue.

A final issue concerns translation. The original versions of these chapters were not consistent on this point – some quoting directly in German, some using standard English translations, some a mixture, and so on. For this volume I have eliminated almost all of the German and have retranslated, consulting existing versions but modifying them without comment. Important nuances have been lost, but because my intention has been to write about Husserl and Heidegger in a way that is maximally accessible to a broad audience, it seemed best to free the argument as much as possible from the particulars of the German language. While attention to the resonances of the original – especially in the case of Heidegger – can enrich our understanding of the issues, I am convinced that such attention would not undermine, but rather support, the thesis advanced here. But that is finally for others to decide.

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PART I

Transcendental philosophy, phenomenology,
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Making meaning thematic

1 Introduction: phenomenology and phenomenologies

Throughout this volume I shall understand “phenomenology” to be the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and of those philosophers who linked on to it by means of creative (even if often quite critical) appropriation. This defines a very large group, but among historical figures it includes at least Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida.¹ Husserl designated his mature thought “transcendental phenomenology,” but none of these philosophers adopted that designation for their version of phenomenology. Remarks can be found in the works of each that link them to the transcendental tradition, but in general the history of phenomenology appears to be a series of attempts to break free from the “intellectualism” (Merleau-Ponty’s term) of transcendental philosophy.

Some might argue, then, that the kind of project ventured in this chapter – an examination of the relation between phenomenology and the transcendental turn inaugurated by Kant – ought to restrict itself to those aspects of Husserl’s thought that either draw upon or directly criticize tenets of Kant’s Critical philosophy, and several very good studies of this sort have been carried out.² But even if later phenomenologists sought to distance themselves from Husserl, they often did so while adopting elements of his transcendental phenomenology. There are few studies that explore whether there might be aspects of transcendental phenomenology that are shared by these otherwise very different thinkers, but that is what I propose to do.

Since I cannot hope to establish such transcendental *bona fides* in a comprehensive way here, the approach will be a strategic amalgam of the

¹ The historical context is laid out in detail in Spiegelberg 1984. A more limited introduction, but one that highlights transcendental motifs, is Moran 2000. For an attempt to specify what such thinkers have in common as phenomenologists, see Crowell 2002b.

² See, above all, Kern 1964 and Brelage 1965.

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historical and the systematic. In historical perspective my focus will be limited to Husserl and Heidegger against the background of Kant and neo-Kantianism. But this examination will be “historical” only in a very attenuated sense, since I make no claim to exhaust even the most important historical connections relevant to an understanding of how Husserl and Heidegger belong to the transcendental tradition. Instead, the guiding thread will be systematic. I shall argue that phenomenology – all phenomenology – is transcendental insofar as it *makes meaning thematic* as philosophy’s primary field of investigation. Taking as its theme not things but the meaning or intelligibility of things, phenomenology transforms transcendental philosophy by expanding its scope to embrace all experience, not just the cognitive, axiological, and practical “validity spheres” addressed in Kant’s three *Critiques*. Thus phenomenology accomplishes a universal generalization of the transcendental turn: inquiry into the (normative) conditions for the possibility of knowledge becomes an inquiry into *intentionality* or “mental content” as such: our experience of something *as* something.

The phenomenological thematization of meaning involves (1) rejecting Kantian representationalism, (2) adopting the neo-Kantian idea that categories are normative, and (3) insisting on the first-personal character of philosophical method. The following section will suggest how these points emerge from Husserl and Heidegger’s shared diagnosis of Kant’s shortcomings. A similarly shared rejection of the neo-Kantian attempt to reformulate Kant’s project as a theory of science provides the background for three subsequent sections which explore the phenomenological approach to meaning systematically from objective, subjective, and existential perspectives.

2 Phenomenology in Kantian context

No doubt Dieter Henrich is right to insist on the ultimately practical or ethical motivation behind Kant’s transcendental project:³ faced with his failure to bring the details of the Transcendental Deduction to complete clarity, Kant warned against taking such details for the heart of philosophy. That lay, rather, in justifying the “idea of freedom” and providing a

³ I adopt the phrase “transcendental project” from Genova 1984, which argues that focus on transcendental arguments as the key to transcendental philosophy is misleading, since such arguments make sense only within Kant’s overall critical *project*. This point is important for understanding how phenomenology, which unlike Anglo-American approaches to Kant pays little attention to transcendental arguments, can nevertheless be considered a continuation of Kant’s project.