

Heinämaa, Sara, Mirja Hartimo, and Timo Miettinen
(eds.): *Phenomenology and the Transcendental*

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Phenomenology and the Transcendental brings together contributions from both established and younger scholars to offer a broad and varied portrait of the meaning and role of transcendental philosophy in phenomenology. The editors situate the volume as an alternative to naturalistic forms of philosophizing, arguing that transcendental phenomenology “does not simply leave behind the empirical reality but asks for its conditions of possibility in the experiencing subject, its correlates, and its manifold intentional layers. The task of transcendental reflection is to make explicit how the world, its objectivity and validity, depends on the constitutive functions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Correlatively, it must also ask to what extent these functions themselves are embedded in different worldly structures” (p. 11).

The volume contains diverse methodological approaches to these issues, and brings them into contact with other areas of philosophy in an effort to “outline new transcendental versions of phenomenology in distinction from the naturalistic, vitalist, and poststructuralist approaches that dominate philosophy at the moment,” contributing to the development of a rich methodology applicable in a variety of topical areas (pp. 3–4). Among the dozen essays that deal most directly with Husserl, for example, while there is excellent work in the vein of straightforward textual scholarship and exegesis, including ample use of *Husserliana* material and research manuscripts, the majority of the essays also attempt to re-frame Husserlian notions or to put them into conversation with other phenomenologists or other areas of philosophical inquiry not always closely affiliated. It thus extending the scope

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and influence of transcendental phenomenology in the context of contemporary debates.

In addition, the volume encompasses a wide historical scope, with coverage ranging from Husserl's contemporaries outside the phenomenological tradition (e.g., discussions of James in Cobb-Stevens and Avenarius in Carr) to present-day inheritors and critics of the phenomenological tradition (e.g., Crowell on Zammito and Barbaras; Tengelyi on Richir and Marion; Backman on Meillassoux; Loidolt on P. Strawson, McDowell, and Putnam). In addition, the volume begins with a valuable introductory essay (co-written by the editors) which surveys the development of transcendental philosophy from the medieval period, through Descartes and Kant, the post-Kantian idealists and the neo-Kantians, to Husserl—who marks, appropriately, the focal point of the examination—and beyond, concluding with a look at later phenomenological thinkers such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

As is fitting for a volume on *phenomenology* and the transcendental, the primary focus is Husserl, with multiple essays considering his relationship to either Kant or Heidegger (or both). Aside from the editors' introduction, there is relatively little discussion of Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, or Levinas, and—despite his inclusion in the introduction as a central character in the story of “Husserl's legacy” with regard to transcendental phenomenology—even less mention of Sartre. Thus the conception of the transcendental at play in the volume, while it undergoes a variety of interpretations and developments, is mostly limited to the version developed through Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger.

The essays are arranged topically in four parts. Part One, “Transcendental Philosophy,” contains the volume's most detailed considerations of the nature, scope, and continued relevance of transcendental inquiry in general. Crowell's essay focuses on Husserl and Heidegger to define a specifically phenomenological conception of “transcendental life,” defending it against various “detranscendentalized” philosophies of life, including not only traditional naturalism but also the post-positivist “new naturalism” of John Zammito and the “biocentric” phenomenology developed by Renaud Barbaras. Tengelyi's piece follows this discussion nicely and constitutes the volume's most compelling and informative take on the critique of transcendental phenomenology in recent French phenomenology (for whose international reception, it should be noted, Tengelyi's work has been instrumental). By developing a conception of categories of experience as *reflective* judgments à la Kant's Third *Critique*, Tengelyi argues for a version of transcendentalism immune to the de-subjectivizing—and thus, in an important sense, de-transcendentalizing—criticisms of more recent thinkers such as Richir and Marion. Obsieger's essay takes up similarly fundamental themes and is especially insightful on the transcendental role of correlationism in phenomenology—a theme that ostensibly recurs in Part Four of the volume but is in fact more directly treated here.

Part Two, “Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity,” contains convincing treatments of topics in ethics, politics, and social philosophy—avenues that, as the editors note (p. 12), are often wrongly thought to be outside the supposedly exclusively epistemological purview of phenomenology. Jacobs' essay offers a reexamination

of the self-constitution of the subject in Husserl, arguing for a personalistic, “horizontal” account according to which the constituting subject “constitutes itself as an embodied subject in and through the way it acts in the world of which it is aware in a way that reflects its history” (p. 101). Pulkkinen’s essay takes up a similar line of inquiry, framing constitution as a process involving complex interplays of passivity and activity in which “historical-genetic” conditions supplement “morphological-static” conditions as part of an ongoing task of inquiry in which transcendental subjectivity is “dynamically entangled with the world that it constitutes” (p. 107). Noting—but rejecting—various Continental critiques of Husserl for the role accorded to infants and animals in his phenomenology, Heinämaa’s piece develops a conception of the cultural and historical world as one according to which “the sense of the world as the common ground and infinite field for different historical peoples is not a correlate of any conscious activities whatsoever, individual or communal, but is a complicated constitutional achievement that includes mutual recognition of communal subjects who are conscious of the temporal limits of their own lives” (p. 143).

Similarly, Miettinen’s essay proposes “a theory of social ontology that does not begin with the phenomenon of interaction but seeks to address its unconsciously constituted basis in different forms of passivity [...] extend[ing] from the very basic level of intersubjective experience to higher-order normative presuppositions, including all kinds of collective habitualities, styles, and convictions” (p. 152). It is this lower level of “interpassivity,” Miettinen argues, that allows a Husserlian *transcendental* social ontology to avoid the vicious circle that arises for accounts of intersubjectivity based exclusively on empathy (“How can others be both the *precondition* as well as the *object* of empathy?” (p. 153)) by recognizing that others appear in my everyday experience “not as objects to be constituted or bodies to identify with but as the *manifold of possible perspectives*” (p. 153).

This “open intersubjectivity” (Hua IX, p. 394) in turn explains how it is possible for there to be a more primordial form of community, a “transcendental we” that has characteristics normally attributed only to isolated subjectivities, such as will and intentionality, and whose intentional correlate is a single, identical world, a “concrete absolute” for social constitution prior even to the institution of socio-cultural meanings made possible by structures such as language and habit. Miettinen also links this to Husserl’s references to communities as “personalities of a higher order” (e.g., Hua VI, pp. 191–192). Miettinen is keen to emphasize the underappreciated political dimensions of phenomenology that follow from his account: “it is precisely on the basis of a ‘rigorous social philosophy’ (Hua 27, p. 57)—a *transcendental social ontology*—that one is able to do justice to the ‘constructed’ and political character of socio-ideological commitments” (p. 152). His grounding of this account in a deep genetic account of community and intersubjectivity is especially representative of the general strategies and strengths of the volume.

Part Three, “Mind and the World,” deals with traditional transcendental questions concerning the relationship between mind and world, subjectivity and objectivity, and empirical versus transcendental forms of inquiry. Carr’s piece presents an overview of the development of Husserl’s conception of world (and later

lifeworld), with special attention to its relation to the self and to natural science, including an insightful discussion of Husserl's use of the term *Allnatur* in the recent *Lebenswelt* volume (Hua XXXIX). Taipale's essay offers a nuanced evaluation of the relationship between psychoanalysis and transcendental phenomenology and examines ways in which psychoanalysis might contribute to phenomenological thinking about the role played by "the dimension of needs, desires, and fantasies [...] in the organization of bodily experiences and in the early formation of the self-other relationship" (p. 231). Cobb-Stevens' piece compares William James' notions of consciousness and experience to Husserl's transcendental account, and uses both to critique mind-brain identity theory in contemporary philosophy of mind.

Part Three also includes an original and insightful piece by Sophie Loidolt that embodies much of the strength and character of the volume as a whole. Loidolt sketches the project of an "object-guided" conception of transcendental phenomenology that respects Kant's critical insight concerning the correlational structure of experience: "that the possibility of objectivity coincides with the structure of subjectivity and that a transcendental investigation of experience directly correlates with an investigation of the structure of the objects of experience themselves" (p. 190). The essay focuses on crucial developments of this conception by Husserl (largely following Heidegger's reading in *History of the Concept of Time*) (1985), while at the same time arguing for a stronger objective focus to phenomenological inquiry—admitting a certain form of givenness at the heart of lived experience.

Following Heidegger, Loidolt argues that Kant's conception of the correlational structure ultimately falls prey to a version of subjectivism that does not adequately account for the independent contributions of the objective side of the correlation: "the old concept pair of form and matter/stuff [...] has been incorrectly and misleadingly split according to the modern concept pair of the internal realm of subjectivity and the external world of objectivity. Since the internal and external realms are considered to be essentially separate spheres [...] the dominant question of classical epistemology arises how mind and world can get together" (p. 195). For Loidolt, in order for transcendental phenomenology to reject this problematic aspect of Kant's view while holding on to the underlying insight concerning correlationism, it must maintain a "transcendental tension" between the subjective and objective sides.

On this view (which Loidolt both attributes to and develops beyond Husserl and Heidegger) there is always a "true gap" between being as reality and consciousness, such that reality is never dissolvable into consciousness. This is the lesson of the transcendental-phenomenological focus on meaning (*Sinn*): "Its presence is a *meaningful presence that manifests itself as a certain structure of consciousness (als Bewusstseinszusammenhang)*. Consequently, justification (*Ausweisung*) of the evident as evident, as intended and itself present, is also only possible through and as meaning [...] *the correlation is thus nothing else but the opening-up or disclosedness of meaning*" (pp. 200–201).

Loidolt links this to the Kantian idea of the "border of the meaningful" (p. 197) recalling Strawson's linguistic reading of Kant in terms of the "Bounds of Sense" (Strawson 2007 [1966]). But whereas analytic interpretations of this Kantian-

inherited conception, such as those of Strawson or McDowell (1996), read Kant as defining the limits of intelligibility in terms of language or conceptuality, Husserl's move, as interpreted by Loidolt and, e.g., in Crowell's work on Husserl and Heidegger in terms of the "Space of Meaning" (Crowell 2001), differs in the primary role it accords to intentionality. Since according to this version, 1) "the objective side keeps its dignity," and 2) the transcendental approach to objectivity via subjectivity is maintained, phenomenology is regarded as "a strongly modified but successful continuation of the Kantian core-thought of object-guided transcendental philosophy, which does not fall prey to the Kantian violations that weakened the transcendental tension" (p. 201). Thus, perhaps more than any other in the volume, Loidolt's essay takes seriously the editors' claim, in the introduction, that phenomenology must take account not only of subjectivity but also of its embeddedness in "worldly structures" (p. 11).

The final part of the volume is much more of a hodge-podge and is in my view the least successful of the four. The section purports to take up the question of the status of transcendental phenomenology in light of recent critical positions that seek to move "Beyond Correlationism." Westerlund's contribution focuses on transcendental description, including a substantive argument against, and disagreement with, Crowell on phenomenological versus transcendental necessity, leading to a provocative conclusion: that we should consider giving up the language of "the transcendental." This piece would have made for a fitting and striking final essay for the volume. The two subsequent essays, however, move on in very different directions. Backman's piece summarizes the major claims of Quentin Meillassoux's *After Finitude* (2008) and clearly explains their relevance for the sorts of transcendental questions raised in the book, but it is primarily concerned with evaluating Meillassoux's claims regarding Heidegger's supposed "strong correlationism," marking a major departure from the focus of the previous essays. The greatest outlier by far, however, is the final piece by Keane on Heidegger. Keane's suggestion in the introduction to the essay—that Heidegger's *Kehre* represents a "deepening of the transcendental and not simply a rejection of transcendental philosophy"—is not returned to in a substantive way and appears in the end as little more than a pretense for another (albeit interesting) take on a theme internal to debates concerning the development of Heidegger's thought. While the editors' desire to include pieces covering the entire breadth of the transcendental phenomenological tradition from Kant to the present day is admirable, it seems to have led to a much greater disconnect in this final part of the volume and thus to compromise to some degree the coherence of what is otherwise a very tight and theoretically interconnected set of essays on an important phenomenological theme.

Considering the volume as a whole, these interconnections might have been further emphasized via cross-references within the essays. While the editors' introduction does some of this in its brief summaries of each selection, and while the volume as a whole is well indexed, more highlighting of the interconnections between the pieces (admittedly a difficult task) would have resulted in a much more powerful presentation of the volume's main themes.

My major criticism of the volume, however, concerns the depth of treatment of contemporary figures and themes. Whereas several essays engage critically with two

or three contemporary figures or with a contemporary movement as part of a more general discussion, there are—with the exception of Backman’s essay—no pieces that focus in greater detail on the views of a single contemporary figure or concrete claim. Thus while the essays succeed in their exegesis and development of phenomenological ideas and their application to *general* problems of contemporary relevance, they are less successful at considering contemporary problems and figures with the fineness of grain necessary to convince critics or at least to serve as the starting point for nuanced critical exchanges.

This may be somewhat excusable with regard to ideas in contemporary Continental philosophy, where the exact meaning and import of recent moves against phenomenology is not always clearly articulated or even understood. But this case is much more difficult to make, e.g., in the contemporary analytic philosophy of mind, where there is continued emphasis on naturalization and yet where openness to phenomenological approaches is now part of a well-documented and developing research program. While an overemphasis in this direction would undoubtedly have changed the focus of the volume and made it much less unique and valuable (given the plethora of work already in print at the intersection of phenomenology and the philosophy of mind), the editors seem to me to have missed a unique opportunity to commission a treatment of specific work in this area *vis-à-vis* specifically transcendental phenomenological approaches (although, as noted, Cobb-Stevens’ piece does include some general-level discussion along these lines).

These criticisms aside, however, the great merit of this collection, and especially of the essays of Miettinen and Loidolt discussed in more detail above, is the way in which they not only assert but *demonstrate* transcendental philosophy’s relevance for contemporary philosophical concerns. Perhaps most important in this regard is the emphasis across many of the essays on the continued relevance of the transcendental focus on *meaning*, especially as a tool for making sense of phenomena of experience in a twenty-first century landscape no longer dominated by the representational and semiotic preoccupations of the linguistic turn. The volume does much, for example, to suggest new ways of considering meaning transcendently rather than linguistically or representationally, focusing on arguably more direct and “embedded” registers of lived experience such as the lived body and intersubjectivity.

The latter topic constitutes another, related success of the volume, due especially to the novel contributions of Part Two: it offers a major resource for rethinking communal practices and other intersubjective forms of intentionality on the transcendental-phenomenological model. Whereas the rejection of naturalism has often led thinkers in the Continental tradition to focus on intersubjectivity in the guise of language or empathy, the volume goes a long way toward showing how intersubjective structures might be understood—especially in the context of the recent emphasis on Husserl’s genetic thought—in alternative and perhaps more “primordial” ways.

Finally, the volume also contains what is to my mind a welcome *omission* regarding continued work in transcendental phenomenology: it avoids the temptation to rehash tired debates by focusing too single-mindedly on the notion of the transcendental subject or ego. While several of the essays deal persuasively with the

important theme of transcendental subjectivity, the volume is ultimately focused more on transcendental *inquiry* than on considerations of the status of the subject in transcendental idealism—considerations that have already occupied phenomenologists at great lengths in recent decades, and that have tended to alienate both proponents and critics of the Husserlian approach (a problem noted already, for example, in Philipse 1995). Instead, essays in the volume show convincingly how, as Pulkkinen puts it, far from being a “relic of transcendental idealism” (p. 106), transcendental phenomenology “conceives of world-constitution as a complex, multileveled, and multifaceted experiential dynamics that takes place in communion with other people and that corresponds to the rich meaningfulness of the experienced world” (p. 123).

Overall, *Phenomenology and the Transcendental* successfully demonstrates the relevance of phenomenology for a *variety* of contemporary philosophical concerns. Whereas other recent collections in phenomenology attempt to make contact with analytic philosophy *or* Continental philosophy, very few do both, or do so in such a breadth of ways. What little is lost in overall thematic rigor because of this breadth is made up for in the fruitfulness of the individual inquiries, and in the way the volume demonstrates not only the importance of transcendental phenomenology for contemporary issues, but also its centrality for the project of overcoming the Continental-analytic divide by taking *all sides* of contemporary work in philosophy seriously through engagement from a common transcendental-phenomenological standpoint.

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