

Steven Crowell

Normativity and Phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger.

New York: Cambridge University Press 2013.

321 pages

\$85.00 (Hardcover ISBN 9781107035447)

\$29.99 (Paperback ISBN 9781107682559)

In this book Steven Crowell develops the thesis that phenomenology is concerned with disclosing the space of meaning by exploring its connection with the concept of the normative. He argues that the space of meaning is norm-governed and that the source of this normativity is linked to the self's ability not only to respond to norms as norms, but to take responsibility for the normative force that norms carry. Thus the elucidation of the transcendental conditions of the constitution or disclosure of meaning necessitates an exploration of the subjectivity of the subject, and Crowell argues that this is part of the philosophical project of phenomenology.

This is a very good volume comprised primarily of essays published over the last decade. Despite this fact, the book coheres remarkably well overall. The essays are substantial, original, and well-argued. Though most of them could stand on their own, to truly appreciate the thematic sweep of the argument, the book is best read from the beginning.

The volume is organized into four parts. The first part locates phenomenology in a post-Kantian tradition of transcendental philosophy and offers an overview of the topics of meaning and normativity in Husserl and Heidegger. The second part is loosely organized around the theme of normativity in Husserl's work. In this section Crowell argues that the first person character of phenomenology is justified by the fact that philosophical inquiry is subject to norms of self-responsibility insofar as it is a form of rational agency. He also explores what is at stake in the notion of phenomenological immanence by situating it in relation to the internalism/externalism debate. The essays also consider the contributions Husserl's phenomenology might make to the philosophy of mind and to discussions about how perception can provide a justification for judgments. In each case, what phenomenology might contribute to these debates is discussed in terms of the issue of normativity. The third part discusses normativity in Heidegger, especially in *Being and Time*, and how this position continues the transcendental approach undertaken by Husserl, while moving in a more existential, practical direction. The chapters in this section present a more unified account of normativity, which I will discuss further below. The fourth part explores the implications of this analysis of the place of normativity in phenomenology for practical philosophy, particularly the contributions it makes to a phenomenology of agency and of action.

It should be noted that the meaning under discussion here is not linguistic meaning, but experiential meaning. On the phenomenological view, such meaning refers to intentional content. Intentionality involves taking something *as* something, and this *as*-structure indicates an interpretive sense in terms of which something is constituted as one thing or another. Crowell links this meaning to normativity, for to take something *as* something is to understand that thing in terms of a meaning, which then also functions as a norm for what it is for something to *be* a thing of that sort. So, for instance, to take something as a hammer is to understand it in relation to a norm, which not only sets the limit conditions on what might be considered a hammer at all, but which also allows it to be qualitatively assessed as a good or deficient hammer. Thus, by 'norm' Crowell means something very broad—not just an explicitly formulated rule, but 'anything that serves as a

standard of success or failure of any kind' (2). As such, the realm of the normative includes 'rules, measures, standards, exemplars, ideals, concepts, and so on' (2).

Thus the intelligibility of experience involves an engagement with the normative, such that things present themselves to us in terms of some understanding of what they are supposed to be or ought to be. This normative dimension is a transcendental condition for experience, and so any investigation into it will have to be considered transcendental, and Crowell considers all phenomenology to be transcendental on these grounds. This argument runs through the text as a leitmotif, and bears on current debates about the attempt to naturalize phenomenology. While it is sometimes argued that phenomenology is incompatible with naturalism on the textual ground of the critiques of naturalism found in Husserl or Merleau-Ponty, Crowell makes an excellent case that phenomenology is necessarily transcendental on the philosophical ground that it is concerned with meaning as the transcendental condition for intelligibility. Crowell's articulation of this intelligibility in terms of normativity initially sounds odd, but makes a good deal of sense and is very effective in drawing the contrast between naturalistic and phenomenological approaches. He stops short, however, of saying that phenomenology is incompatible with all forms of naturalism, claiming that it might be compatible with a 'soft naturalism'.

Though Crowell insists upon the continuity between Husserl's and Heidegger's thought, he also wants to show that Heidegger's departure from Husserl is necessitated by his more radical investigation of the transcendental conditions of meaning and normativity. In Husserl, phenomenology is concerned with intentional analysis, in particular an elucidation of the structure of intentional experience. Since this structure is something that we simply live through and do not attend to in the natural attitude, a series of 'reductions' are necessary to redirect attention to the content and structure of this experience: an eidetic reduction that identifies a unified meaning given in a variety of phenomenal experiences, a phenomenological reduction that redirects attention from the object to its mode of givenness, and a transcendental reduction that exposes the conditions of the possibility of phenomena in absolute consciousness. While some interpret Heidegger as rejecting all of the reductions, Crowell reads him as really only rejecting the transcendental reduction. The reduction to absolute consciousness carries with it too many Cartesian implications, and Heidegger doesn't think that the conditions of the possibility of the meaningfulness of phenomena can be found there, but must instead lie in Being-in-the-world and the care structure. This means not only that the 'transcendental subject' for Heidegger isn't absolute consciousness, but that the meaningfulness of experience can't be explained solely by recourse to intentionality. More attention must be paid to the self as a practical, embodied agent, and so intentionality must be grounded in care, and Crowell argues that what emerges is a distinctive position on the source of normativity. One might think that this source is worldly practices, such that something is intelligible in terms of the norms for its use as defined by the practice. Something like this view is suggested by the pragmatist interpretation of *Being and Time*. On this view, something shows up for me as hammer because it belongs to a grouping of equipment that gets its meaning from the practice (carpentry) to which it belongs. This practice in turn gets its normative force for me because of my commitment to it as part of my 'practical identity'. That is, the norms for the practice of carpentry get their force for me by the fact that I aim to be a carpenter, which I take as a possibility of my being. Thus the norms for what I do get their force from the norms that govern what I aim to be. All of this is consistent with the pragmatist interpretation, and Crowell doesn't disagree with it, as so far stated. But he doesn't think it provides an adequate account of Dasein's self as the ultimate source of normativity because it doesn't account for how Dasein is required to take responsibility for its practical identity.

Thus the real difference with the pragmatist interpretation lies in the reading Crowell offers of conscience and the importance he attributes to it. He argues that the most important part of the extended discussion of authenticity in Division II is not Being-towards-death or resoluteness, but conscience. The call of conscience pronounces Dasein's guilt, but to *be* guilty Dasein has to do more than just fail to conform to norms; it has to be able to acknowledge the norm as normative. This moment is supposed to transform Dasein's self-understanding from that of being an anonymous follower of norms to one who can act in the light of norms, taking them as a standard of measure. But this amounts to making oneself the ground of the norms by being the source of their normative force. Thus Crowell argues that taking over being a ground means assuming responsibility for the norms to which one has been thrown, and that means achieving an understanding of oneself as the source of their normativity. It is important that what Dasein discloses here is not that it is the source of the normativity of one set of norms or another, but that it is the source of the normativity of any norms whatsoever. In other words, conscience discloses Dasein's being as care as the transcendental ground of normativity. Normativity is drawn back to the transcendental subjectivity of the subject as its source, but the subject here is not the absolute consciousness that Husserl described nor the reflective self-consciousness discussed by Korsgaard, but an embodied practical agency. Crowell goes on to argue that responsibility means that one is answerable for norms and the normative force that they have over one's actions, and this entails being held to account by others and being called upon to give reasons. Thus the openness to responsibility here entails a responsiveness to the norms of rational practical agency.

The effort to find an account of something like practical reason in Heidegger will surely seem heterodox, and Crowell readily acknowledges this. But the careful analyses that he offers directly challenges those interpreters who maintain that there is no normativity in *Being and Time* to think about this issue in a new light.

All in all the essays in this volume bear close reading by anyone interested in what phenomenology might contribute to a range of philosophical discussions, particularly in the area of practical philosophy and philosophy of mind.

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