

I recall distinctly the mood of intellectual euphoria at my encounter with phenomenology. I was an undergraduate at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, a new philosophy major, and I was taking an introduction to the subject. Robert Sokolowski's *Introduction to Phenomenology* had recently appeared (as had Dermot Moran's *Introduction*), and I think the first text we read was another assigned source, David Cerbone's *Understanding Phenomenology*. In a few weeks, I had a vague sense of things. Heidegger had been Husserl's heir apparent, but then came philosophical disagreement between them, and eventually betrayal and a falling-out. Sartre was the one who most famously brought Husserl and Heidegger to France, but he didn't agree with either of them. And there also was this fourth guy, Merleau-Ponty, who was a friend of Sartre's for a time till they too had their own parting of the ways. There was personal and historical intrigue. But above all, there was an overwhelming sense that *this* was true philosophy. Phenomenology, I loved immediately, was a philosophy that allowed one to argue intelligently about whether a doorknob is a chunk of atoms arranged "doorknob-wise," or rather a "to-open-the-door-with." It was a philosophy that allowed, I soon saw, an approach to life's big questions through the quotidian things all around us. It was around this same time that I first encountered the work of Dan Zahavi, whose own work shed valuable light on the whole situation, as I embarked on my journey into the world of phenomenology. As expected, this his most recent work is one that will assist newcomers who are intent on beginning theirs.

It is not possible in the space permitted to discuss all thirty-seven chapters of *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Phenomenology*. Of necessity, I pass over many in silence.

As with any work, there is the question of its exigency: what has it set out to do and why? Here, the answer is straightforward. One reason to look to the past is to evaluate phenomenology's present in light of its legacy, with an eye toward its future. An historical orientation not only clarifies how phenomenology has become what it is, but also indicates where it thereby may be headed. One, however, might observe with good reason that things are wide-open. Indeed, as one of the volume's contributors has stated elsewhere, it is legitimate today to ask what perhaps is the most basic of all questions: "Is there a phenomenological research program?" Zahavi is himself sensitive to the question, noting in the introduction that after over a hundred years of transformations and reformations, one might wonder, as many do, whether there even is such a thing as one unitary movement deserving of the name.

It is worth recalling that if phenomenology has itself become something of an expansive tradition, the vastness of the philosophical tradition from which it initially emerged has contributed to it considerably. As the volume's Part I, "Traditions," accordingly emphasizes, the influences are rich, spanning from antiquity (Plato and Aristotle, of course, but others also), to the modern era (Descartes and Kant loom largest), then still on not just to the various systems of German Idealism and Neo-Kantianism, but also to the fragments of Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, along with the programs of Brentanian and Gestalt psychology. It is a well-known fact that Heidegger intended to undertake a destruction of the history of ontology, with emphasis on Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant. In "Aristotle in Phenomenology," Pavlos Kontos examines the role of Aristotle in Heidegger, but, perhaps even more interestingly, in Hans-Georg Gadamer also. As he notes, Gadamer's hermeneutics wrestles with insights in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* regarding practical wisdom, by explicating a difference between practical philosophy and practical rationality (18). But as Kontos shows convincingly, if one distinguishes practical

philosophy from practical experience as Gadamer attempts, the ultimate arbiter of truth is the *ethos* of what a “particular community happens to possess” (21). There hence is a question that one might have: what is the need then to philosophize? Given this understanding of the content of philosophical reflection, what does reflection on such content deliver?

The classic Cartesian answer—or at least the one typically attributed to Descartes—is that philosophy affords, among other things, genuine knowledge of ourselves. *Prima philosophia* begins with radical self-questioning. As Sara Heinämaa and Timo Kaitaro note in their article on Descartes, philosophy as rigorous science, for both Descartes and Husserl later, means that we may consider ourselves as psychophysical systems subject to natural causality, but we must also be understood in personalistic terms (33). To be oneself is to be a person, not a machine. Just as Descartes will cast a long shadow over phenomenology, so too does Kant. Sebastian Luft’s chapter highlights some of the consequences of that Kantian legacy, paying close attention to Heidegger’s thought. Maybe the most interesting connection noted by Luft is how, starting with Kant’s idea of a transcendental critique of experience on to the Neo-Kantian notion of a critique of culture, Heidegger radicalizes things still further, with a hermeneutics of facticity. This transformation of the transcendental, notes Luft, likewise transforms the notion of human finitude, a matter that in turn comes up for discussion in many of the work’s later entries. Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant are the giants, yet Franz Brentano also is a pivotal figure in the development of phenomenology from Husserl on to Heidegger. Denis Fiset’s entry, “Phenomenology and Descriptive Psychology,” sketches some of the biographical and philosophical connections between Brentano and Husserl, which, by clarifying Husserl’s ambivalence towards Brentano’s theory of intentionality, sets the stage for Peter Andras Varga’s synopsis of Husserl’s early thinking. Besides the additional interesting biographical and historiographic details, Varga reconstructs Husserl’s theory of judgment and critique of psychologism. The thing sure to catch the reader’s attention is his contention that, properly understood, Husserl’s early notion of metaphysical neutrality implies that, far from being discontinuous as often thought, the *Logical Investigations* and *Ideas* are not so far apart (128).

One way to find a continuity between the early, realist period of Husserl’s thinking and his thinking after the subsequent transcendental turn is to appreciate that, ultimately, a notion of the “life-world” is operative throughout. Husserl’s transcendental idealism is consistent with a view that accommodates a prelinguistic, pre-predicative structure of meaning rooted in the world of perception. As Andrea Staiti helpfully notes, too often, ever since Langrebe, there has been a misguided equation of pre-predicative experience with the life-world, a view that Staiti argues cannot be Husserl’s actual view (156). As he goes on to show, the contrast between the pre-predicative and the predicative is “internal” to the life-world: when a text like *Experience and Judgment* describes a regression from the predicative to the pre-predicative, that is not the shift the *Crisis* describes from the idealized world of science to the everyday world. Our everyday experience, after all, is shot through with predicative meanings. If one of the lessons from Husserl is that the world cannot be understood as mere nature, it was perhaps his student Edith Stein who most creatively developed that insight. As Antonio Calcagno observes in his chapter, psyche, state, and other must be liberated from a merely naturalistic framework. For Stein, as Calcagno reminds us, “The process of sense-making is...enmeshed in a complex structure of body, psyche, and spirit—in the deep structure of personhood” (205). In reading his closing remarks on Stein’s legacy, one is led to wonder how Stein’s distinctive form of personalism

might respond to Heidegger's criticisms leveled against Scheler's own personalism.

After two respective entries on Heidegger's early and middle years, Tobias Keiling takes up his later thought. As Keiling underscores, the problem of history takes center stage in Heidegger's writings on thinking. And as he notes, here a paradox is at work: "Heidegger wants thinking to both kindle and settle the being question and with it, the dispute as to its proper matter" (260). There is a tension between Heidegger's historicism and transcendentalism. It is not Keiling's own point, but perhaps there is another problem too. The enigma of what calls for thinking—things for Heidegger are to remain open—cuts against thinking's very exigency: if "ontological pluralism" entails that there is no absolute truth about the human condition, if, that is, the world has come from nowhere, and is headed nowhere, and for no reason at all, then why care about it by trying to pose the question of the history of being?

Where Heidegger's later work on the history of being leads to aporia, the next entry, "Schutz and Gurwitsch on Agency," brings things closer to home. As Michael D. Barber notes, from the phenomenological perspective, "instead of being a passive theater in which a sequence of acts unfolds" (276), agency is the work of someone who takes charge and initiates things. There can be dispute about how exactly to understand the essence of the one who so acts: is the agent an ego, as Schutz following Husserl suggests, or else is consciousness non-ego-logical, as Gurwitsch, following Sartre, will contend? Various arguments are on both sides, but Barber opts for Schutz's ego-logical view, concluding that "it remains unclear why the active ego must be excluded from the phenomenological reduction as Gurwitsch believes" (281). While the transcendental ego is not spotlighted in Jonathan Webber's overview of Sartre's transcendental phenomenology, in focusing as it does on the problems of emotion and imagination, that question surfaces obliquely toward the end. As he remarks there, to maintain with Sartre that the body is the unifying seat of consciousness, but that consciousness itself is a nothingness, leads to paradox: "How could consciousness be both insubstantial and embodied?" (299). It was problems as these that led Sartre, as Thomas R. Flynn notes, to search for a method that would reconcile a commitment to individual freedom with a theory of history. But if Sartre's later works met with mixed-results, is that not because, with the exception of certain remarks towards the end of his life in *Hope Now*, he always saw existence in terms of strife, violence, and terror? After reading Flynn's careful overview of Sartre's corpus, we are left to conclude that Sartre's thought might have made progress where it failed to had it made room for the possibility of true love.

James Dodd's "Jan Patočka's Philosophical Legacy" is among the handbook's most rewarding. That is owing to the fact that, as he himself notes, Patočka's life was as turbulent as his thought was ambitious and rich. Many aspects of his thought are worthy of mention, but probably above all is his attempt, not unlike Husserl, to see phenomenology as a corrective to nihilism: "Human beings," as Dodd summarizes Patočka, "are becoming subject to an unforgiving bondage to an ever-more meaningless and empty existence, in which the sense of something higher is being progressively erased" (404). Not without reason, it has been customary when examining the question of history to focus on texts like Husserl's *Crisis* or Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology*, but Dodd stresses why Patočka deserves a seat at the table. Patočka's vision of philosophy as a way of life—reminiscent of Pierre Hadot's notion of ancient "spiritual exercises"—offers a unique account of the relationship between philosophy and modern

culture's crisis of meaning. In the final chapter of Part II's "Figures," Christina M. Gschwandtner reports on developments in phenomenology in France, with particular emphasis on Jean-Luc Marion and Michel Henry. As she notes correctly, they and others like Jean-Louis Chrétien and Emmanuel Falque are most associated, in the minds of Anglophone readers anyway, with what Dominique Janicaud called the "theological turn." And as Gschwandtner further correctly observes, the question of phenomenological method and theology does arise for Marion and Henry. In a footnote, however, she remarks that of all these contemporary French figures, however, it is Jean-Yves Lacoste whom "keeps them rigorously apart" (449). A correction must be noted, since this characterization of Lacoste is inverted. As he says in *The Appearing of God*, one task of thinking is to *surmount*, not reinforce, traditional barricades between philosophy and theology.

The first entry in Part III, "Themes," is very good. In it, Karl Mertens takes up the burden of making sense of phenomenological method. Phenomenology since Husserl has preoccupied itself with the question, he notes. And despite the various nuances and disagreements among them, there are still general features worth highlighting. In highlighting the four that he does, his article will prove incredibly useful to students coming to phenomenology. Rudolf Bernet's "Subjectivity," which takes up a rich topic, unfortunately dwells too much on Husserl. In "Embodiment and Bodily Becoming," there is a very careful synopsis of key notions related to embodiment that revisits and deepens some of the material already introduced in the work's entry on Descartes. This chapter's "excursus" into sexual identity and sexual difference badly misfires, however. Taking up the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Heinämaa examines the generative structures of masculinity and femininity. It is now a commonplace, and rightly so, especially after the publication of the *Black Notebooks*, to flag Heidegger's disastrous intervention into Nazi politics. It is thus regrettable that something similar was not done here, since in her lengthy discussion of Beauvoir, Heinämaa makes no mention of Beauvoir's sordid involvement in sexually grooming students with Sartre, the abuse of Bianca Lamblin as told in the memoir *A Disgraceful Affair*, much less Beauvoir's public support for pedophilia. She was no hero.

Filip Mattens' "From the Origin of Spatiality to a Variety of Spaces" offers a very fascinating and scrupulous account of perception and action. Those acquainted with Husserl's analyses of embodiment in *Ideas II* will find nice discussions of familiar topics related to kinaestheses and the "I can." The discussion also clarifies the notoriously opaque term, in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, of "motivation." And there are a number of observations that are weighty in their own right, probably chief among them that, while phenomenology has understandably emphasized the practical significance of human embodiment, "bodily expressions...relate not to practical but to symbolic spatial qualities" (570). Any publication on phenomenology that did not save space for intentionality would be remiss, but because the theme recurs constantly throughout all the other chapters, Dermot Moran's "Intentionality" does not really cover anything not adequately covered elsewhere. In the entry after, Alessandro Salice gives careful attention to volition, desire, and intention. Philosophical distinctions sometimes can be pedantic, but not here, since as Salice goes on to show, clarifying the subtle differences between intention and volition helps us better understand the nature of rational and ethical action. Next, Walter Hopp's is one of the richest selections. Taking transcendental idealism as the guiding thread, he revisits well-worn territory concerning the similarities and differences between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty on perception,

yet breaks new ground. What emerges is a view recognizing the essential roles of truth and evidence in perception, but one accentuating how, because for Merleau-Ponty there is a kind of “perceptual faith” always already at work, Husserl’s ideal verificationism must be modified.

If the differences between these views of perception are commonly exaggerated or oversimplified, that can be because of a fundamental background ambiguity in what we mean by the world, for it can mean different things to different phenomenologists. Hanne Jacobs’ entry on the world of experience strikes a very nice balance between presenting the various issues accessibly, while doing justice to the inherent complexity and subtlety of the matter. Ever since Dreyfus’ influential reading that situated Husserl as the foil to Heidegger, there has been a tendency on the part of some commentators to caricature Husserl’s true position, thereby eliding some of the genuine points of agreement between Husserl and the later phenomenologists. Without denying that there are important disagreements, Jacobs locates Heidegger’s issue with the Husserlian conception of the world in its commitment “that the world is at bottom nature” (662). This is useful because it allows for a rapprochement between them: rather than seeing Heidegger as completely abandoning Husserl’s philosophical trajectory, by his claiming that Husserl was perhaps still *too* wedded to a latent naturalism, Heidegger on the contrary deepens the Husserlian attempt to break free from naturalism.

The meta-philosophical issue of phenomenological reason raised explicitly at the end of Jacobs’ chapter on the world, in turn, provides a lens through which we may read the volume’s next entry, Julia Jansen’s “Imagination De-Naturalized.” As with the earlier chapter by Mattens, hers does not offer mere exegesis; it also makes observations that are insightful in their own right. But it is maybe Sophie Loidolt’s entry on ethics that strikes a perfect balance between a summary useful for newcomers and what experienced readers will appreciate. Her division of phenomenological approaches into “a personalistic ethics of values and feelings, (b) an existentialist ethics of freedom and authenticity, and (c) an ethics of alterity and responsibility” (698), will seem obvious once readers encounter it, but there is nothing over-simplistic about it. Loidolt develops the schema powerfully, illustrating the motivations, strengths, and weaknesses among the approaches. Footnote eight contains slogans summarizing the ethical imperatives of Brentano, Scheler, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Levinas that are not just clever, but genuinely enlightening. There is one question, however, that might have been addressed directly but was not: how, if at all, might these three phenomenological ethics be integrated? Can they?

That brings us to the end of the volume. In finishing it, what will one make of the original question with which we began? What in light of phenomenology’s past does the future hold? The horizon is open, as yet undecided. It will be the task of those who are familiar with its historical figures, texts, topics, and themes to decide what phenomenology becomes. To do that one must *do it*. This text, should it prove successful, will have provided a definitive last word on what phenomenology is—or better, *was*. Henceforth, what will it now be?