BOOK REVIEW

Robert C. Scharff's *Heidegger Becoming Phenomenological: Interpreting Husserl through Dilthey, 1916-1925*

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Robert C. Scharff, *Heidegger Becoming Phenomenological: Interpreting Husserl through Dilthey, 1916–1925*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2019. 213 pages.

In *Heidegger Becoming Phenomenological*, Robert C. Scharff proposes a complete reinterpretation of a dominant narrative in Heidegger scholarship. This narrative tells the story of young Heidegger, a Husserlian phenomenologist who, in his attempt to make a name for himself, moves beyond his master's teachings to create his own phenomenological tradition.[1] This story, as Scharff rightly notes, is a product of a time in Heidegger scholarship when the full picture was not available. With the recent publication of Heidegger's early works, a lot of new information has come to light which needs to be incorporated into the story. Scharff agrees with most scholars that Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology is distinct from Husserlian phenomenology, but he suggests we ought to reconsider whether Heidegger should ever have been called a Husserlian in the first place. In his evaluation of his own philosophical development in 1938, Heidegger himself claims never to have occupied the perspective of Husserlian phenomenology. That was not a viable starting point for him due to its inherent "Cartesianism and Neo-Kantianism" (GA 66: 412/366).

Scharff's investigation suggests that we take mature Heidegger's self-assessment at face value and instead look to another source for Heidegger's early inspiration: Wilhelm Dilthey.

Establishing a connection between Heidegger and Dilthey is not an entirely new development in the scholarship.[2] For years, Dilthey has been credited as one of the figures whose work influenced Heidegger to pursue a different form of phenomenology.[3] Scharff, however, argues that this account gets the story backwards (xiv). Rather than envisioning Heidegger as a Husserlian looking to Dilthey to overcome mounting criticisms from figures such as Paul Natorp, Scharff suggests we see Heidegger as a young Diltheyan who brings his perspective to bear on Husserlian phenomenology from the start. The first half of Scharff's book is dedicated to this project of uncovering the influence of Dilthey in Heidegger's early development.

At the outset of this project, however, stands a fundamental complication: what Heidegger appropriates from a philosopher and what that philosopher actually argues in his work are often two distinct things. Heidegger is known for his violent interpretations and reimaginations of canonical figures, and his interpretation of Dilthey is no exception. Scharff, keenly aware of this, is careful throughout this book to emphasize that the goal of his project is not an analysis of Diltheyan philosophy. Rather than figuring out what Dilthey *said* to influence Heidegger, Scharff is mostly interested in what Heidegger *took* Dilthey to be saying. In other words, this book is not really about Dilthey, but about Heidegger's Diltheyan intuitions.

Throughout the book, Scharff indicates many ways in which Dilthey influences Heidegger. Four significant influences include: (1) Dilthey's call to approach philosophy from the standpoint of life, (2) Dilthey's emphasis on understanding as interpretation, (3) Dilthey's view that philosophy cannot be done ahistorically, (4) Dilthey's method of philosophizing.

As noted above, by his own appraisal, Heidegger never saw himself as a Husserlian phenomenologist. This narrative seems to coincide with a tension found in Heidegger's early lectures (GA 56/57, GA 58,

GA 59, GA 60, GA 61, GA 63). In 1919, Heidegger expresses skepticism regarding the objectification (*Objektivierung*) and "de-vivification" (*Ent-lebnis*) found in Husserlian theoretical reflection (GA 56/57: 94/66). This skepticism is made manifest in Heidegger's concern with Paul Natorp's charge that phenomenology "stills the stream of experience" (GA 56/57: 101/78). Scharff suggests that Heidegger's skepticism is ultimately a product of his deep Diltheyan conviction that all philosophy must come from the "standpoint of life" (13). In other words, Heidegger does not see himself as a Husserlian phenomenologist because a theoretically distanced approach to philosophy is antithetical to his Diltheyan intuitions.

The second major influence comes from the hermeneutic aspect of Dilthey's philosophy, which leads Heidegger to approach understanding as something broader and more implicit than knowledge. Dilthey's views on understanding are most clearly cast in his contribution to the *Erklären-Verstehen* debate, but it is Count Yorck's assessment of how "understanding" should be envisioned that Heidegger eventually adopts. In this way, one of the central aspects of Heidegger's philosophy, that understanding is always an interpretation, can be traced back to Dilthey, or more specifically, Count Yorck's assessment of Dilthey. Regardless of the degrees of separation, Scharff sees this as another major insight gleaned from Dilthey.

The third major influence on Heidegger comes from Dilthey's treatment of history. Scharff notes that one of the limits of Husserl's approach is that he is unwilling to acknowledge the historical influence on phenomenology (53). Husserl was concerned that introducing historical elements into phenomenology would turn it into a form of relativism (37). Scharff argues that the very attempt to remain ahistorical is in fact a product of adopting the historical tradition of the Cartesian and Neo-Kantian perspective. Heidegger too shares this view and refuses to separate history from phenomenology.[4] Scharff interprets Heidegger's unwillingness to discount history's role in phenomenology as a clear sign that Dilthey is the dominant voice in Heidegger's philosophical development.

Lastly, for Scharff, it is the influence of Dilthey's method that seems most important for understanding Heidegger's development. Scharff suggests that from Dilthey, Heidegger learns to how to become philosophically self-aware (*Selbstbesinnung*) (131). From the outset of the book, Scharff calls on readers of Heidegger to refrain from reading his early works "backwards," or only in relation to *Being and Time*. Instead, Scharff calls on us to work through the original question of Heidegger's early work on its own terms. On Scharff's reading, the struggle we see in Heidegger's early lectures is evidence of his attempt to find an approach to philosophy which remains within the standpoint of life, is open to interpretation, and is aware of the historical. It is not so much what Dilthey says, but how he demonstrates the initial task of philosophy that Scharff takes to be the main point of inspiration in Heidegger (57). Scharff asks us to reconsider Heidegger's early lectures as "ways" which should inform us about our own practice and invites us to retrieve what motivated Heidegger in the first place: the question of "how do I become phenomenological?" (148). Scharff suggests that, as scholars, it makes sense that we get caught up in the details of who said what, but the greater task is to follow Heidegger and Dilthey and attempt to ask these essential philosophical questions anew.

While Scharff's work in this book goes a long way to correct the traditional narrative, I worry that his depiction of these early lectures might be a bit of an overcorrection. It seems like Scharff is right that Dilthey's influence is at least as important as Husserl's, if not more so. However, the influence of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Brentano, Aristotle, etc., seems to be understated by Scharff's tendency to present the debate in terms of a Husserlian/Diltheyan dichotomy. Furthermore, because the topic of discussion is not Dilthey's work but Heidegger's interpretation of Dilthey, I think it is fair to ask: what other influences are shaping these violent and imaginative interpretations? While Scharff does a great job of connecting the dots in a meaningful way, one sometimes wonders if the waters are muddier than Scharff suggests.

I'd like to evaluate this book in terms of what I see to be its two mutually informing but distinct goals. Firstly, it is a work of Heidegger

scholarship, and secondly it is a work of philosophy in general. As a work of Heidegger scholarship, I find Scharff's book to be a tremendous contribution to the secondary literature on early Heidegger. No doubt, anyone who spends time researching the early Freiburg period will have to contend with the narrative that Scharff lays out in this text. The sections on "retrieving" Dilthey and Husserl are well researched and connect the scattered evidence of Heidegger's Diltheyan influences into a singular and compelling narrative. But while Scharff's singular emphasis on Dilthey is helpful for undermining the standard narrative, it runs the risk of putting too much emphasis on just one influence. As a book on philosophizing in general, Scharff's text serves as a reminder that philosophy and scholarship are not necessarily the same endeavor. Given the current state of academia, and philosophy as a whole, Scharff's call to return to the question of "how do I become phenomenological?" is both refreshing and necessary.

NOTES

1 Scharff names Steven Crowell as arguing for this position. Scharff names Hubert Dreyfus and John Haugeland as adopters of this stance in general who favor Heidegger's phenomenology over Husserl's (73n1).

2 Scharff cites Theodore Kisiel, Thomas Sheehan, François Raffoul, Eric Sean Nelson, Scott Campbell, and Rudolf Makkreel as allies in this debate (74).

3 Martin Heidegger, *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings, 1910–1927*, ed. Theodore J. Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007); Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

4 For example, in GA 59, Heidegger dedicates a large portion of his lecture to the concept of "history."