

LILIAN ALWEISS *The World Unclaimed: A Challenge to Heidegger's Critique of Husserl*. Ohio University Press 2003. Pp. xxvii + 243. (Hardback: ISBN 0-8214-1464-X)

A story is commonly told in which Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (henceforth *SuZ*) overcomes the limitations of Husserl's phenomenology, thereby affecting a return to the world Husserl had unwittingly placed beyond our ken. *The World Unclaimed* inverts this story by arguing that *SuZ* has insuperable problems of its own and that the answer to these problems lies with Husserl. Heidegger thinks he has given us back the world but Alweiss argues that he has done no such thing: Heidegger's "world" is a world devoid of space, corporeality and sensuousness. His neglect of the material world results in paradoxes which can be avoided only once it is recognised that each of us is an essentially embodied creature. Our embodiment is something Husserl describes at length in his *Ideen II*. Hence, it is to Husserl's phenomenology that we must look to overcome the limitations of Heidegger's project, and not vice versa as has so often been supposed.

Alweiss' argument succeeds in denting our common conception of Heidegger's relation to Husserl. Unfortunately, Alweiss' style will make this book an intimidating read for anyone who is not already deeply enmeshed in phenomenological thought. This is somewhat counterproductive in a book which does so much to establish the importance and relevance of phenomenological ideas today.

Husserl's phenomenology studies that which is given to a subject's consciousness with complete certainty, and puts to one side any beliefs whose truth is not in this way given. It discovers that our conscious experiences do not stop short of bringing us into a relation with the objective world. Phenomenology uncovers the existence of the world that forms a backdrop to all our experiences. It brings to light how our belief in a unified and objective world is implicit in every experience we have.

Alweiss takes the latter points to highlight the error that is made when philosophers treat Husserl as a methodological solipsist. A methodological solipsist believes that the contents of experience do not require the existence of any objects or properties in the world. Yet there is also a strand in Husserl's thinking that allies him much more closely with the methodological solipsist. In his *Ideen I* Husserl argues

that consciousness would not be 'affected in its own existence' by 'an annihilation of the world of things' (Husserl *Ideen I*: 91).

Here, Husserl repeats a key move in Cartesian philosophy: he affirms the self-sufficiency of consciousness. Alweiss argues that Husserl's attempt to make consciousness into a self-sufficient realm ultimately fails. Husserl's account of the temporalisation of consciousness leads him to the discovery of something that is not given and can never be grasped completely: consciousness as 'a standing, streaming self-presence'.

Alweiss is not entirely clear what implications she takes her argument to have for Husserl. One could read her argument as demonstrating once and for all that Husserl is not a methodological solipsist: that consciousness always includes a moment of transcendence. Alternatively, her argument could be read as exposing the limits of Husserl's phenomenology. I suspect she takes her argument to have both implications. If so, where does this leave Husserl? Her arguments in the final chapter may indicate a possible way out of these difficulties for Husserl. However, the exit route she identifies, while indebted to Husserl, may not be one open to phenomenology.

Heidegger's *SuZ* describes the kind of existence distinctive of human beings, which he gives the name *Dasein*. By stressing the unity of *Dasein* and its world, Heidegger achieves what Alweiss describes as a 'dis-location' (*Ortsverlegung*) of subjectivity. *Dasein* is said to be 'in' the world through the understanding it has of the world. *Dasein* is not located in the world in the way that material things are physically located in space.

While Alweiss finds herself in agreement with *SuZ*'s dis-location of subjectivity, she also finds in Heidegger what she describes as a 'Resistance to Thinking Resistance' (see §56). Heidegger argues for a priority of meaningfulness over materiality that Alweiss thinks cannot be sustained. In *SuZ* he argues that we only ever become aware of a thing in its materiality after we have understood its significance. Alweiss points out that such a priority has the paradoxical consequence that something can show up as meaningful only by withdrawing from us, into the background. Anything that withdraws into the background becomes invisible. Thus, Heidegger has to say that a thing shows up for *Dasein* and thus becomes *visible* only by withdrawing into the background and becoming *invisible*.

Heidegger ignores Dasein's embodiment and materiality, Alweiss claims, because of the threat that acknowledge of our embodiment would present to Dasein's primordial freedom (see §87). Dasein would always be bound to its body in the here and now, before it was projected into the future in accordance with its possibilities. Yet the paradox just described can be avoided only if we recognise that Dasein's materiality precedes its circumspective engagement with the world.

It is this conclusion that leads Alweiss to give the last word to Husserl. Dasein, she says, is always already 'here' before it is 'there': the possibilities open to me are always preceded by my 'rootedness in the world' (p.165). Husserl's *Ideen II* introduces the idea of the subject as a lived body (*Leib*). Alweiss claims to have identified, in the idea of the lived body, a means of dis-locating subjectivity while at the same time recognising our existence in the material world. The lived body is always sensing the world before anything is sensed. It is that which is always experiencing a subject's experiences but is never itself experienced.

However, once we think of the sensing body as that which remains latent in consciousness, it is unclear whether it can any longer be claimed to be something available for phenomenological description. The phenomenologist describes that which is given to consciousness, but Alweiss maintains that the sensing body is always on the scene before anything is given to consciousness. Thus, the sensing body is something that is not available for phenomenological description. This is not the conclusion that Alweiss draws but it is unclear to me why not. Her arguments seem to demonstrate that phenomenology is led back to something that is not available for phenomenological description. If this is so, one wonders where this leaves phenomenology.

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