



## Fink's Speculative Phenomenology: Between Constitution and Transcendence

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### Abstract

In the last decade of his life (from 1928 to 1938), Husserl sought to develop a new understanding of his transcendental phenomenology (in publications such as *Cartesian Meditations*, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, and the *Crisis*) in order to combat misconceptions of phenomenology then current (chief among which was Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology as articulated in *Being and Time*). During this period, Husserl had an assistant and collaborator, Eugen Fink, who sought not only to be midwife to the birth of Husserl's own ideas but who also wanted to mediate between Husserl and Heidegger. As a result of the Fink-Husserl collaboration there appeared a rich flow of works that testify to the depth with which transcendental phenomenology had been rethought. Bruzina is the chief scholar of this material. This paper attempts both to disentangle the relationships between the phenomenologies of Husserl, Heidegger, and Fink and to assess critically the value of Bruzina's contribution.

### Keywords

phenomenology, metaphysics, Husserl, Heidegger, Fink

Ronald Bruzina's *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink*,<sup>1</sup> the deserving winner of the Ballard Prize in 2005, is intended to accompany a major edition, also edited by Bruzina, of previously unpublished texts by Eugen Fink (1905–1975), dating from the Freiburg 'workshop' days 1928–1938, *Die Letzte phänomenologische Werkstatt Freiburg: Eugen Fink Mitarbeit bei Edmund Husserl. Manuskripte und Dokumente*, 4 volumes (Freiburg: Alber), originally scheduled to appear in 2005. Bruzina, an established Fink-Husserl scholar, is already known for his translation of Fink's *Sixth Cartesian*

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<sup>1</sup> Ronald Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink: Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology 1928–1938* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Xxvii + 627 pp. Hereafter cited as *Beginnings and Ends*.

*Meditation*<sup>2</sup> as well as for articles that examine Fink's influence on philosophers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jan Patočka.<sup>3</sup> It is, moreover, entirely understandable why Bruzina's erudite book on the intimate personal and philosophical relationship between Edmund Husserl, the self-proclaimed founder of phenomenology and permanent 'beginner', and his loyal disciple Eugen Fink, the most speculative of his generation of phenomenologists, should appear in a series entitled Yale Studies in Hermeneutics. The tale of their complex interrelationship demands considerable hermeneutical contextualization and disentangling. As if there was not enough complexity in the Husserl-Fink relationship, their relationship is further compounded by the presence of Heidegger on the Freiburg scene from 1928 on.

Fink was a student in Freiburg when Martin Heidegger arrived in 1928 to take up the Chair recently vacated by Husserl. Fink was an early reader and admirer of *Being and Time*, which he read in Husserl's *Jahrbuch* in 1927, and was particularly struck by Heidegger's emphasis on being, finitude, and the historical nature of human being-in-the-world. Fink agreed with Heidegger that Husserl had not moved sufficiently beyond the epistemological paradigm to question 'the being of knowledge', i.e., the manner in which knowledge is an activity of a being towards being and about being.<sup>4</sup> From Husserl, Fink learned the peculiarity and exactness of the phenomenological way of seeing; from Heidegger, he learned to prioritize the question of being. Bruzina maintains, however, that Fink's intention was to draw the being-

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<sup>2</sup> Eugen Fink, *VI. Cartesianische Meditation. Teil 1. Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre. Texte aus dem Nachlaß Eugen Finks (1932) mit Anmerkungen und Beilagen aus dem Nachlaß Edmund Husserls (1933/34)*, ed. Hans Ebeling, Jann Holl and Guy van Kerckhoven (Dordrecht : Kluwer, 1988); translated with introduction by Ronald Bruzina as *Sixth Cartesian Meditation. The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method with Textual Annotations by Edmund Husserl* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). For an insightful review of Bruzina's translation, see Burt C. Hopkins, "Book Review: Eugen Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method*," *Husserl Studies* 14 (1997): 64–74.

<sup>3</sup> See Ronald Bruzina, "Eugen Fink and Maurice Merleau-Ponty: The Philosophical Lineage in Phenomenology," in *Merleau-Ponty's Reading of Husserl*, ed. Lester Embree and Ted Toadvine (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 173–200, and idem, "Jan Patočka-Eugen Fink, Gesprächspartner im Denken über den Schein hinaus," *Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 1 (1998), and "Leben in der Welt, Welt im Leben? Thesen zwischen Landgrebe, Fink und Patočka," in *Lebenswelten. Ludwig Landgrebe—Eugen Fink—Jan Patočka*, Publikationen der Reihe der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Phänomenologie (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 29–43.

<sup>4</sup> *Beginnings and Ends*, 458.

question back *into* transcendental phenomenology rather than to displace Husserlian phenomenology in favor of Heideggerian fundamental ontology.

Husserl in his prime had (not untypically for a German professor) a distinct sense of his own importance. For instance, in 1930, he had complained of his being placed with mere *Privatdozenten* on the program for the International Philosophy conference planned for Oxford.<sup>5</sup> He was also put out that Heidegger had clearly taken the limelight as the leading phenomenologist, and he was being regarded as the ‘old man’ whose time had passed. The wounded Husserl had a deep desire to reformulate his phenomenology completely to overcome what he saw to be the shallow misinterpretations current in his day. The young Fink arrived at just the right time to help realize Husserl’s plans. For the final ten years of his life (from 1928–1938), Husserl and Fink were almost inseparable, in daily discussion and collaboration, regularly walking together on the Lorettoberg mountain above Freiburg. Husserl saw Fink as his loyal disciple to whom he would entrust the task of completing transcendental phenomenology, thus securing his legacy after the ‘betrayal’ of his erstwhile protégé Martin Heidegger. Fink’s task was to take over his *Nachlass* and give it literary shape;<sup>6</sup> clarifying, ordering, and refining it into a finished system. Fink actively contributed to a planned draft rewriting of the *Cartesian Mediations* and the editing and re-organizing of material connected to what eventually appeared as the *Crisis of European Sciences* (see Husserliana, vols. VI and XXIX). Fink was extremely loyal, even if Husserl somewhat exaggerated how Fink had put his life on hold in order to bring to the light of day the material in Husserl’s research manuscripts. But, as Husserl himself came to acknowledge, Fink was actually not really suited to the role of assistant, and, in fact, such was his mastery of Husserlian themes and his deep insight into what was problematic in them, he quickly became Husserl’s creative ‘co-worker’ (*Mitarbeiter*) and even at times his ‘teacher’, who helped stimulate Husserl’s late phenomenology in a more creative, speculative direction.

Fink’s intense questioning gave renewed vigor to Husserl’s own thought. Husserl claimed that he carried on with Fink the most sustained philosophical conversation of his life, and he would even describe Fink as ‘the greatest phenomenon of phenomenology’. Fink, however, conscious of being cast merely as a follower, clearly sought to establish himself as an independent

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<sup>5</sup> See Karl Schuhmann, *Husserl-Chronik. Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977), 364.

<sup>6</sup> *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, xxv.

critical thinker. Fink saw himself as taking up ‘the thinking that is Husserl’s’ but also defining the ‘decisive distances’ between them.<sup>7</sup> Yet, despite his ringing public endorsements, it was not all admiration and assent on Husserl’s side; he vigorously contested Fink’s interpretations in his own notes on Fink’s work (acting as a ‘countervoice’ in Fink’s text, as Bruzina puts it, p. 511). He also seems to have been unhappy with Fink’s editing of the German rewrite of the *Cartesian Meditations*, since it never was sanctioned for publication by him. Husserl was sensitive to the accusation that he was taking on board Fink’s ideas, and so he insisted that they were his own although stimulated in him by Fink. It would be wrong, Husserl insisted, to see these new motifs as alien to the development of his own thought and imposed on him by Fink. Bruzina claims that Husserl’s later work should properly be seen as the joint output of both Husserl and Fink (and indeed French phenomenologists such as Gaston Berger did treat Fink’s published writings as genuinely Husserlian).

The dialectics of the Husserl-Fink relationship are indeed complex and hermeneutical. Did Fink do more than stimulate Husserl to work on themes such as *historicity* and *mundanization*? Did he in fact insert his own speculation into the heart of Husserl’s late work, thus skewing it in a different direction? For instance, Fink thought that ontology had to be integrated into phenomenology, and so went out of his way to seek a *rapprochement* between the philosophies (he calls them ‘systems’) of Husserl and Heidegger. At stake is the reading of late works such as the *Crisis* or the material Husserl left for his attempted reworking of the *Cartesian Meditations* (now Husserliana volume XV).

Undoubtedly, Ronald Bruzina, with excellent German and firsthand familiarity with many previously unexplored sources, is well qualified to undertake the task of tracing these interrelationships in what he terms the Freiburg ‘workshop’. He has an excellent sense of both Heidegger’s and Husserl’s concerns and is able to chart Fink’s course between these two master figures. Overall, *Beginnings and Ends* is a major research accomplishment, a painstaking piece of scholarship and detective work tracing the evolution of Fink’s work in the phenomenological decade (1928–38) that also saw the breakdown of Husserl’s and Heidegger’s relationship against the backdrop of the calamitous rise to power of the National Socialist Party in Germany. Drawing extensively on unpublished material in the Fink-Archiv in the Pädagogische Hochschule in Freiburg and in the Husserl-Archief in Leuven, he charts in great detail the personal, academic, political and philosophical

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<sup>7</sup>) *Beginnings and Ends*, 539.

events in the lives of these philosophers during the period between 1928 and Husserl's death in 1938. Despite the length of the book, there are key issues that are left unaddressed. In fact, Bruzina leaves out Fink's own reflection on politics, especially in his notebooks of the thirties. Unfortunately, he also does not discuss Fink's contribution to the theory of imagination, an important theme in Fink's own philosophical development, and his treatment of that difficult Husserlian concept of the neutrality modification. This is a pity, because Fink's discussion of this area is surely at the heart of his philosophical evolution.

Overall, Bruzina is very much on Fink's side, even though Fink clearly had weaknesses as a philosopher, both in his ability to express himself clearly and in his ability to complete his planned systematic works. Fink, rather like Husserl, drew up grandiose plans for systems he could never actually bring beyond a few lectures and talks. He identified deep problems in Husserl's presentation and was excellent at critique, but less so at articulating his own contribution. Bruzina is particularly good at ordering the progress of Fink's engagement with the major themes of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology (itself a relatively uncharted domain, given the manner in which Husserl took up and dropped threads of thought), but he is less successful in offering a succinct and clear presentation, philosophical interpretation, and critique of Fink's own philosophical achievement.

The material is very interesting, but its presentation is clearly not intended for the non-specialist. The structure of the book is excessively complex, and the book is not an easy read. Chapters One and Ten consist of two detailed chapters on the personal circumstances surrounding Fink's fateful apprenticeship under Husserl and Heidegger at Freiburg between 1928 and 1946, and in between are sandwiched eight chapters, some with ungainly titles, that explore Fink's analysis of 'fundamental thematics' (world, time, life, spirit) in phenomenology and his attempt to develop phenomenology in an original manner (the meontic). Chapter Two, "Orientation I: Phenomenology Beyond the Preliminary," details how Fink developed Husserl's phenomenology in a systematic and self-critical manner. Chapter Three, "Orientation II: Whose Phenomenology?" examines the tension in Fink's writing as to whom to regard as the true phenomenological innovator—Husserl or Heidegger. Chapter Four, "Fundamental Thematics I: The World," examines the concept of world and Fink's conception of our 'captivation by the world' (*Weltbefangenheit*). Chapter Five, "Fundamental Thematics II: Time," examines Fink's interpretation of Husserl's investigations into time-consciousness. Chapter Six is entitled "Fundamental Thematics III: Life, Spirit and Entry

into the Meontic,” and Chapter Seven is “Critical-Systematic Core: The Meontic—in Methodology and in the Recasting of Metaphysics.” Chapters Eight and Nine deal with ‘corollary thematics’, notably: language, intersubjectivity and the community of monads.

This book does offer considerable illumination for those willing to undertake the arduous journey through its thickets. A major problem for those desperate for orientation is that there is no clear-cut exposition of Fink’s main beliefs, his development, departures from Husserl, and so on. Much of this crucial information has to be ferreted out from the extended endnotes. Difficult concepts such as the ‘meontic’ are not fully introduced or contextualized sufficiently early in the work. Admittedly, the book is intended to complement the companion four-volume Fink *Nachlass*; and without those texts, it can be difficult to follow. One has to surmise from hints as to what Fink’s actual position is on a variety of topics. (We are left trying to see them under the palimpsest of Husserl’s own writing.) There is a great deal of cross-referencing and some unnecessary repetition. The book lacks a proper bibliography of *secondary* material (although there is extensive referencing in the footnotes). Footnotes are also accompanied by more extensive endnotes which is a relatively cumbersome method of arranging information. But let us move to the philosophical issues.

Fink’s phenomenology begins by accepting the necessity of carrying out the reduction such that the being of the world is put in question and the world itself is revealed as a product of constitution, ‘end-constitution’ (*Endkonstitution*). He wants to produce a ‘cosmogony’<sup>8</sup> of how the world is constituted. He further characterized Husserl’s basic problem as ‘critique’, but thought that phenomenology in order to be fully critical had to undergo a radical self-investigation. The critique of phenomenology required that its central concepts be put under interrogation, ‘thematized’ rather than merely employed ‘operatively’. Accordingly, Fink raises the issue of the *being* of the transcendental ego and the paradox that it is both *in* the world and *for* the world, themes that re-emerge in Husserl’s *Crisis*.

Husserl had come to see that one had to ascend to the transcendental standpoint from our ‘natural possession of the world and of being’, but he did not emphasize to the same extent as Fink that the *natural attitude*, for Husserl the bedrock for all further attitudes, is itself the outcome of transcendental constitution and is ‘relativized’ in the reduction.<sup>9</sup> This leads him

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<sup>8</sup>) *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, 142.

<sup>9</sup>) *Ibid.*

to see constitution in a rather more complex manner. Constitution is double-sided or bi-directional. On the one hand, the world is constituted as world; on the other hand, we are constituting ourselves as human selves with our own streams of experiencing. Fink is led to speculate that there is an underlying 'Absolute' that is to be thought of as the union of both constituted being and the 'pre-being' of the constituting process itself. In thinking the Absolute as the combination of constituted and constituting, as the unity of the passage from non-being to being, Fink is moving in a decidedly Neoplatonic or Hegelian direction to the extent that he even characterizes phenomenology as 'the *self-comprehension of the Absolute*'.<sup>10</sup> It is the *self-comprehension* of the Absolute because Fink takes seriously the view that in the reduction one strips away everything human. The natural attitude is the human attitude and once suspended, the phenomenological subject has to become one (in a kind of Hegelian synthesis) with the Absolute process itself.

Fink and Husserl agreed that philosophy is really a kind of life-long self-meditation (*Selbstbesinnung*) whose enactment itself enriches lived life. Fink regarded his meeting with Husserl as his greatest good fortune, although it would damage his career and indeed his personal circumstances (24). He described their relation to be 'like two communicating vessels' (51), and told Herbert Spiegelberg that Husserl liked him to act as his 'devil's advocate',<sup>11</sup> the two philosophizing together in that spirit of *symphilosophiein* that Husserl himself always advocated, and which he had failed to enact with Heidegger. Fink worked dutifully to type up Husserl's notes and also produced drafts explaining Husserl's thinking in his own words. But he was also careful to document his disagreements and departures. He saw his approach to be that of 'inner kinship', but that meant essentially 'to be other':

Only as an other, and not as a mimicking ape, can the one who asks a question expect an answer.<sup>12</sup>

Fink wanted to be his own man, to be the genuine 'other Husserl'. What Bruzina calls the 'scintillating speculative character' of Fink contrasts with

<sup>10</sup> See *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, 152. See also 146, where Fink writes: "The truth is that the Absolute is not the unity of two non-self-sufficient moments that, while indeed mutually complementary, also delimit and finitize each other, but is the *infinite unity of the constant passage of one "moment" (constitution) to the other (world)*."

<sup>11</sup> Herbert Spiegelberg with Karl Schuhmann. *The Phenomenological Movement. A Historical Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1994), 242.

<sup>12</sup> *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, xxix.

Husserl's 'sobriety' (451). Fink was a speculative thinker who understood speculation in a somewhat Heideggerian manner as an essential on-going, 'unresting' questionableness of a problem that cannot be solved by analytic means but can only be brought to a more pressing question.<sup>13</sup> He contrasted speculation with *analysis*, which is 'the power of spirit to distinguish'.<sup>14</sup> For Fink, though, phenomenology lives in the tension between analysis and speculation; if it were to surrender entirely to speculation it would no longer be *knowledge*; if it remained analysis, it would not yet be philosophy. Undoubtedly, Husserl too felt the need to go beyond phenomenology as pure method, and already in *Ideas I* he speaks of 'phenomenological philosophy', and, undoubtedly, the aim of his *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* was to bring about the reform of philosophy through phenomenology.

How did the Husserl-Fink relationship begin? As is well known, Husserl's philosophical contribution consists of both original, detailed phenomenological analyses (of perception, time-consciousness, imagination, embodiment, empathy, and so on) carried on primarily in his lectures and private research notes, and theoretical treatises, mostly in his published works from *Ideas I* to the *Crisis of European Sciences*, which attempt to set down the theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology as a radically new, presuppositional science, *first philosophy*. This already sets up a tension between the actual *elements* of phenomenological analysis (Fink borrows Kant's architectonic here) and the theory of *method* that accompanies and is supposed to underpin it. Husserl often seems to have made up his method as he went along and imposed it *post hoc* on his research analyses.

Moreover, Husserl had a plan for phenomenology as a science that envisaged it as cooperative work among a community of like-minded co-researchers. The term 'phenomenological movement' began to be used in the early part of the century to refer to the large number of brilliant students and followers whom Husserl attracted first at Göttingen (including Pfänder, Scheler, Ingarden, Edith Stein) as well as those who later joined him in Freiburg (Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Landgrebe, and Eugen Fink). Husserl's restless intellect never allowed him to stay satisfied with any single presentation of his philosophy nor to have the patience to bring into a unified systematic work

<sup>13</sup>) *Beginnings and Ends*, 458. Fink's sense of speculation is rather like Gabriel Marcel's conception of the nature of *mystery*, that is, a problem in which one finds oneself existentially involved.

<sup>14</sup>) *Beginnings and Ends*, 458.



his analyses of time, etc., despite the fact that from as early as 1906 onward he dearly wanted to construct phenomenology as a ‘system’. Moreover, despite his rejection of groundless speculation, as a traditional philosopher and as a devout convert to a non-confessional but broadly Lutheran Christianity, Husserl had the desire to address metaphysical ‘big issues’, including teleology, personal immortality, and the existence and nature of God. In his concluding word at the end of the *Cartesian Meditations* §65, he stated that phenomenology only excluded ‘naïve metaphysics’ and not ‘metaphysics as such’, and ought to address the ‘supreme and ultimate’ questions.<sup>15</sup> The problem of God is the ‘highest and last’ problem for phenomenology, he wrote in 1933.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, for him, phenomenology was *eo ipso* theology.

Husserl was heavily dependent (in a manner not unusual for German professors even to this day!) on his *Assistenten* to carry through the detail of his planned research. Thus his first assistant, Edith Stein, worked on his early time-manuscripts (which Martin Heidegger then revisited between 1926 and 1928 and had published), on the material that eventually became *Ideas II*, and on the revision of the Sixth Logical Investigation, before realizing she needed to get out from under the Master in order to continue her own work (incidentally, as Sebastian Luft has shown, she later disapproved of Fink’s interpretation of Husserl’s original intention).<sup>17</sup> Her letters to Roman Ingarden show that she found her work frustrating as she was unable to interest Husserl in her revisions of *his* manuscripts. In February 1918, she wrote to Ingarden that Husserl was giving her impossible instructions for arranging the manuscripts, and she felt stifled because she had no time to carry out creative research on her own:

And if Husserl will not accustom himself once more to treat me as a collaborator in the work—as I have always considered my situation to be and he, in theory, did likewise—then we shall have to part company.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge*, hrsg. Stephan Strasser, Husserliana I (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1950), 182, §65; translated by D. Cairns as *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1967), 156.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 445.

<sup>17</sup> S. Luft, “Phänomenologie der Phänomenologie.” *Systematik und Methodologie der Phänomenologie in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Husserl und Fink*, *Phänomenologica* 166 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 157 n. 40.

<sup>18</sup> See Stein’s letter to Ingarden, 19 February 1918, in Edith Stein, *Self-Portrait in Letters, 1916–1942*, vol. 5 of *The Collected Works of Edith Stein*, trans. Josephine Koeppel (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1993), 22. Hereafter cited as *Self-Portrait in Letters*.

A fortnight later she wrote again to Ingarden that

The Master has graciously accepted my resignation. His letter was most friendly—though not without a somewhat reproachful undertone.<sup>19</sup>

She complained to Fritz Kaufmann, in a letter of March 10, 1918, that “putting manuscripts in order, which was all my work consisted of for months, was gradually getting to be unbearable for me.” Her own interest at the time was in the “analysis of the person,”<sup>20</sup> whereas she had come to regard Husserl as someone who had “sacrificed his humanity to his science.”<sup>21</sup> Subsequent assistants were more patient.

In the late 1920s Husserl, as the leading philosopher in Germany, was able to get state support for a number of research assistants (primarily because the culture minister was an ex-student of his). He was also attracting attention from abroad, notably Boyce-Gibson, who translated *Ideas I*, and Emmanuel Levinas, who helped arrange his visits to Paris and Strasbourg in 1929. Husserl had been forever seeking successors and was permanently dissatisfied with the manner his followers (including the Munich school of realist phenomenology) interpreted his work. It was thus extraordinarily fortuitous that the young and brilliant Eugen Fink came to study in Freiburg in the years just prior to his retirement.

Ludwig Landgrebe spent years putting together the material drawn from Husserl’s lectures on passive synthesis and prepredicative awareness in a volume that eventually appeared as *Erfahrung und Urteil* (*Experience and Judgment*),<sup>22</sup> but his later position in Prague on completion of his Habilitation gave him breathing space away from the overwhelming presence of Husserl. Heidegger too spent a great deal of time in regular, personal discussion with Husserl, but his absence in Marburg from 1923 to 1928 meant that Husserl

<sup>19)</sup> *Self-Portrait in Letters*, 23.

<sup>20)</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>21)</sup> Letter to Fritz Kaufmann, 22 November 1919, in *Self-Portrait in Letters*, 37.

<sup>22)</sup> E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil. Untersuchungen zur Genealogie der Logik*, redigiert und hrsg. Ludwig Landgrebe (Prague: Academia-Verlag, 1938; 7. Aufl. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1999); translated by J. S. Churchill and K. Amerik as *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, revised and edited by L. Landgrebe (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973). For a detailed reconstruction of the manuscripts used by L. Landgrebe in the composition of *Experience and Judgment*, see Dieter Lohmar, “Zur der Entstehung und den Ausgangsmaterialien von Edmund Husserls Werk *Erfahrung und Urteil*,” *Husserl Studies* 13, no. 1 (1996): 31–71.

does not seem to have had more than a hazy impression of what Heidegger was up to. Even though Husserl actually helped to proofread *Sein und Zeit*, he did not get around to reading it until 1929, and by then it was too late, since Heidegger was already installed as his successor.

Husserl himself had earlier embarked on a disastrous attempt at collaboration with Heidegger for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* article. By 1929 their relationship had deteriorated into outright hostility, summed up by his bitter recitation of the classical formulation of Aristotle's leave-taking of Plato: *amicus Plato, magis amica veritas*, written opposite Heidegger's dedication to him on the title page of his copy of *Sein und Zeit*.<sup>23</sup> Husserl had been deeply upset by the portrait of both their work in Georg Misch's study (an issue not addressed by Thomas Sheehan), which Misch had sent him in May 1929.<sup>24</sup> (Heidegger insisted later that Husserl, not he, had initiated the break.) Despite the distance between these two master thinkers, Fink persisted in challenging Husserl to contemplate the being question. As a result, largely through Fink, a number of broadly Heideggerian themes have a parallel existence in Husserl's thought. Bruzina recognizes that Husserl's relationship with Heidegger is too complex to bring into the picture here. Nevertheless he sketches the outlines of the situation it created for Fink.

Fink was present in Freiburg at an extraordinarily creative and productive time when two of the leading figures of twentieth-century thought were defining their positions. Not surprisingly, Fink's own creative philosophical work in this period became an attempt to mediate between Husserl and Heidegger. Heidegger had just published *Sein und Zeit* (whose very title, Fink later claimed, would become "the watchword of the century")<sup>25</sup> and was seeking to articulate his relationship with Kant that would be his *Kantbuch* of 1929. Fink attended Heidegger's lectures on Hegel, which had a clear

<sup>23</sup> The collaboration and tension between Husserl and Heidegger is well documented by Thomas Sheehan in *E. Husserl, Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927–31): The Encyclopaedia Britannica Article, The Amsterdam Lectures "Phenomenology and Anthropology" and Husserl's Marginal Note in Being and Time, and Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. T. Sheehan and R. E. Palmer, in Husserl, *Collected Works*, vol. 6 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997), *passim*.

<sup>24</sup> Georg Misch, Dilthey's son-in-law, sent Husserl a copy of the first part of his *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie: Eine Auseinandersetzung der Diltheyschen Richtung mit Heidegger und Husserl* (now 3rd ed., Stuttgart: Teubner, 1967), which treated of the relationship between Dilthey and Heidegger's philosophy. The second part would be about Husserl and Dilthey. Clearly, Husserl was being accorded second place to Heidegger by Misch.

<sup>25</sup> See *The Phenomenological Movement. A Historical Introduction*, 245.

influence on him, and indeed subsequently, *mirabile dictu*, there are echoes of the Hegelian notion of collective spirit in Husserl's *Crisis*. Consider the following passage for instance:

The spirit, and indeed only the spirit, exists in itself and for itself, is self-sufficient (*eigenständig*); and in its self-sufficiency, and only in this way, it can be treated truly rationally, truly and from the ground up scientifically.<sup>26</sup>

Thus (*via* Fink) spoke Husserl!

Eugen Fink was born in Konstanz in 1905 and completed his *Abitur* there before going to university in Münster in 1925 to study literature. A semester later, he transferred to Freiburg, where he took Husserl's 1925–26 course *Basic Problems of Logic* (lectures that form the basis for the 'passive synthesis' material, now edited in *Husserliana* XI)<sup>27</sup> and thenceforth enrolled in all Husserl's courses. Fink had wide philosophical interests, read Nietzsche and Hegel, and attended Julius Ebbinghaus' course on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as well as a course on philosophy of mathematics given by the phenomenologist Oskar Becker. Quite early on, Husserl noticed Fink in class, because he, alone among the other students, appeared to take no notes. In fact, Fink had an extraordinary memory and later wrote down and typed up very accurate summaries of the lecture courses he attended.

Fink wrote a prize essay competition on the topic of imagination in 1927 with an essay on the neutrality modification, an essay he eventually incorporated into his doctoral dissertation. Husserl himself read the essay and thought the analysis was sound. Fink went on to write his doctorate (defended in 1929 with both Husserl and Heidegger as examiners) entitled: *Vergegenwärtigung und Bild. Beiträge zur Phänomenologie der Unwirklichkeit* [*Representation and Image. Contributions to the Phenomenology of Unreality*].<sup>28</sup> On

<sup>26</sup> E. Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phänomenologische Philosophie*, hrsg. W. Biemel, *Husserliana* VI (1962; reprint The Hague: Nijhoff, 1976), 345; translated by David Carr as *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 297. Hereafter cited as *Crisis*.

<sup>27</sup> E. Husserl, *Analysen zur passiven Synthesis. Aus Vorlesungs- und Forschungsmanuskripten (1918–1926)*, hrsg. M. Fleischer, *Husserliana* XI (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988); translated by Anthony J. Steinbock as *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis. Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, vol. 9 of Husserl, *Collected Works* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> This doctoral thesis was originally published in Husserl's *Jahrbuch* 9 (1930) and is reprinted in E. Fink, *Studien zur Phänomenologie 1930–1939*, *Phaenomenologica* 21 (The Hague: Nijhoff 1966), 1–78.

completion of his doctorate, he officially became Husserl's second assistant in October 1928 (the 'first assistant', Landgrebe, had separate funding from 1928–30), funded for a two-year period. At the outset, Fink could not read Husserl's shorthand, *Gabelsbergerschrift*, and indeed he, unlike Landgrebe, never adopted it for his own note-taking. It was a busy and creative time for Husserl. Landgrebe was engaged in editing texts that would eventually become *Experience and Judgment*; and in November 1928, Husserl, inspired by discussions with Landgrebe, hurriedly composed *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, to which Landgrebe added the subdivisions and headings found in the published book.

Husserl was not only writing frenetically—"as in a trance," as Fink reported—he had also been on the lecture circuit, delivering his Amsterdam lectures in April 1928 and planning his Paris lectures for the following year. Around the same time, Heidegger was bringing out an edited version of Edith Stein's redaction of Husserl's early time-consciousness lectures, but Husserl himself thought these early efforts had been surpassed by his own 1917–18 Bernau manuscripts,<sup>29</sup> which he thought would become his *magnum opus*. Fink began to study these manuscripts with the aim of editing them into a unified systematic work. He also was charged with dividing the single continuous manuscript of Husserl's forthcoming Paris lectures into sections and doing some editorial work on it, before sending it to Strasbourg for translation by Levinas.

Heidegger arrived to take up his professorial duties in Freiburg in October 1928. Fink had read *Being and Time* as soon as it had appeared in Husserl's *Yearbook*, and approved its emphasis on philosophy as "finite possibility in a finite being" and part of human existence.<sup>30</sup> Fink embraced the concept of the necessary finitude of being and of the transcendental subject. He quickly began to see the need to develop a theoretical critique of phenomenology itself—in part as an attempt to reconcile Husserl and Heidegger. Between 1928 and 1931 Fink attended all of Husserl's and Heidegger's lecture courses. He even attended the famous Heidegger-Cassirer debate in Davos in Switzerland in 1929.

Fink also conducted his own seminars, including one on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He was deeply attracted to Hegel, and in the post-war years,

<sup>29</sup>) These manuscripts have only recently been published as Husserliana XXXIII: E. Husserl, *Die 'Bernauer Manuskripte' über das Zeitbewußtsein (1917/18)*, hrsg. Rudolf Bernet & Dieter Lohmar (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001).

<sup>30</sup>) Bruzina, *Beginnings and Ends*, 12.

it is somewhat imprecise to credit Gadamer with reviving interest in Hegel in Germany. In the late twenties Marcuse, Fink, and Heidegger were all reading Hegel. For instance, Fink's posthumously published book on ontological experience (the experience of being a priori), *Sein und Mensch: Vom Wesen der ontologischen Erfahrung* (Freiburg: Alber, 1977), begins from Hegel, whom he wants to reconcile with Husserl.

Fink was deeply drawn to the whole project of transcendental phenomenology. It was for him a form of radical critique: a radical philosophy of origins must question its own right to engage in presuppositionless philosophizing. What is the source of the transcendental-phenomenological attitude itself? How is the naïve human, captivated by the world, enticed to break the hold of the world and attain to the transcendental attitude? The transcendental subject is precisely that constituting power that is disclosed by transcending the world as given in the natural attitude. Transcendental subjectivity must be understood as a kind of world-transcending life.<sup>31</sup> This emphasis on a primordial life led Fink in the direction of Heidegger's existential ontology. Fink admired much of Heidegger's emphasis on the *finitude* of the human subject. He further saw Husserl as failing to recognize *transcendence* (a point Heidegger emphasizes in his own lectures). For Fink, however, Heidegger failed to appreciate constitution.<sup>32</sup> Fink also disagreed with the manner in which Heidegger conflated the imagination with originary temporality in his *Kantbuch*, a manner that entirely contradicted Husserl's own careful analysis of imagination as a modification of the presence that is perception.

From 1930 to 1934 Fink was engaged in important work on Husserl's phenomenological program. He drafted a sketch for a 'system' of Husserlian philosophy; he began revising the German draft of the *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl was unsatisfied with the published French version), and in a six-month period in 1932, he wrote an entirely distinct *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, meant to be, according to Fink's 1945 note, a "shared publication" illustrating their "collaboration." Fink even planned a Seventh Meditation on "the future metaphysics of phenomenology" (an area Landgrebe would also explore).

The *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* aims to set the stage for a second level of phenomenology by providing, borrowing Kant's terminology, a 'transcendental theory of method' (as opposed to the 'transcendental doctrine of

<sup>31</sup>) *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, 143.

<sup>32</sup>) Bruzina, *Beginnings and Ends*, 128.

the elements' that was Husserlian phenomenology and consisted of the individual analyses of space, time, perception, etc) and 'a critique of phenomenological experience and cognition'. Fink characterizes Husserlian phenomenology as 'regressive', so that it needs to be complemented by his own 'progressive' or 'constructive' phenomenology. Of course, Heidegger too, in his 1928 lectures, was insisting that phenomenology required a 'construction' to offset its destructive phase. Presumably Fink was deeply influenced by Heidegger's thinking in this regard.<sup>33</sup>

In his *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* Fink is critical of Husserl's starting point and presuppositions. Even Husserl himself recognized that the import of the Fifth Meditation was to make one rethink the egological beginning of the Husserlian *Meditations* and to recognize the intersubjective constitution of the world, which was more problematic to investigate. Because of its communal nature, Fink thinks it cannot be bound by the same rules of apodicticity that govern egological experience. How are we to understand the intersubjective community of monads? How are we to understand their individuality, plurality, and ultimacy? Perhaps the monadic world too is a constituted world, and so on, as Fink spirals speculatively through some of the more shadowy areas of Husserlian phenomenology. Fink's attempted solution to these difficult questions is to emphasize that the strata of constituted layers cannot simply lie on top of each other but instead must be dialectically interrelated, and each taken as partial. More and more, Fink envisaged the Absolute as consisting of constituted world (being) and its constituting life (pre-being) as joined in a becoming. Hegel's dialectical logic of being, non-being, and becoming are clearly evident in his metaphysical speculation.

Critics are divided on how to interpret Fink's *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. Some see it as a work by Husserl-Fink that should be included in the corpus of Husserl's own work. Others treat it as an independent work that advances Husserlian phenomenology. Others (including, very perceptively, Van Breda) see it as a radical *critique* of Husserl.<sup>34</sup> First of all, it cannot simply be taken as

<sup>33</sup>) For an excellent study of the negative and positive connotations of 'construction' in both Husserl and Heidegger, see R. Bruzina, "Construction in Phenomenology," in *The Reach of Reflection: Issues for Phenomenology's Second Century*, Proceedings of Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology Symposium, Florida Atlantic University, 2001, ed. Lester Embree, Samuel J. Julian, and Steve Crowell, 3 vols. (West Harford: Electron Press, 2001), 1: 46–71.

<sup>34</sup>) For a discussion of these various approaches to Fink, see Sebastian Luft, "Phänomenologie der Phänomenologie." *Systematik und Methodologie der Phänomenologie in der Auseinandersetzung zwischen Husserl und Fink*, *Phaenomenologica* 166 (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002), 146ff.

an addition to the Husserlian corpus, as Husserl's own marginal notes on the text often indicate energetic disagreement with Fink's position. Fink also seemed to have adhered to the Nietzschean dictum that one repays a teacher badly if one remains only a student, and Fink himself was well aware of Husserl's designs for him. Bruzina takes the view that Husserl and Fink should be seen as two independent thinkers cooperating on the one project of making transcendental phenomenology self-critical and systematic. Van Breda espouses the third view: Fink is engaged in a severe, if somewhat masked, critique of Husserl, and not only of his 'Cartesian' self-presentation. Sebastian Luft is probably correct in his characterization of Fink as at once both Husserl's most loyal disciple and also his chief critic.<sup>35</sup> Fink saw both activities as belonging to the essence of the radical 'open system' that is phenomenology.

Fink had intended to submit the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* as his *Habilitationsschrift*, but the political climate in early 1933 made that impossible, and it was delayed until 1946. However, it continued to have a private circulation among phenomenologists, including Alfred Schutz, Felix Kaufmann, and Gaston Berger, who eventually gave it to Merleau-Ponty. In fact, Van Breda wrote to Merleau-Ponty in 1945 stating that he thought that his *Phenomenology of Perception* leaned too heavily on Fink's *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* and that Fink had not wanted his work circulated too widely as it was severely critical of Husserl.<sup>36</sup>

The years from 1934 to 1938 were exceptionally tough for Fink. He lost his assistantship funding and had to survive on funds provided from abroad. Nevertheless, out of stubborn loyalty to Husserl, he remained. When Heidegger became Rector of Freiburg University, he imposed the ban on Jews required by the state. Husserl was abandoned. Only Fink continued to visit and assist him (Landgrebe was in Prague). Moreover, Fink, very courageously, persisted in publishing an interpretative essay in defense of Husserl, "Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik," in *Kant-Studien*<sup>37</sup> which appeared in late 1933, well after the rise to power of the Nazis and during the enforced 'coordination' (*Gleichschaltung*)

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, lxxxiii n.119.

<sup>37</sup> This essay is reprinted in E. Fink, *Studien zur Phänomenologie 1930–39*, *Phaenomenologica* 21 (The Hague: Nijhoff 1966); translated by Roy Elveton as "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," in *The Phenomenology of Husserl. Selected Critical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Roy Elveton, 2nd ed. (Seattle: Noesis Press, 2000), 70–139.



required of universities and academic journals that forced out all Jewish-sympathizers. This essay includes a preface by Husserl himself endorsing it with the statement: “it contains no sentence which I could not completely accept as my own or openly acknowledge as my own conviction.”<sup>38</sup> Fink did manage to publish another essay: “Was will die Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls?” before he was effectively forced out of academic life since he had no Habilitation and no sponsor.<sup>39</sup>

When Husserl died on 27 April 1938, Fink gave the funerary oration to the small gathering. Only immediate members of Husserl’s family and three professors from Freiburg, including Gerhart Ritter, were there, along with two Catholic nuns. Heidegger, famously, was in bed with the flu! Husserl’s widow Malvine was unimpressed by the manner in which Fink collapsed after her husband’s death, but he soon recovered and was instrumental in helping the young Belgian priest Herman Leo Van Breda to smuggle the Husserl manuscripts out of Nazi Germany to their new home in the Husserl Archives at the Catholic University of Leuven. In March 1939 Fink joined the Husserl Archive and at the same time was appointed to a lecturing post at the Catholic University. In April he was joined by Ludwig Landgrebe, followed by Malvine Husserl in June. The first visitor to the newly founded Husserl Archives in Leuven was Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who arrived on 1 April 1939 to spend a week reading these recently transcribed typescripts. With Van Breda as interpreter, Merleau-Ponty and Fink had an intense and exciting conversation (*Beginnings and Ends*, 525). In the period between April 1939 and May 1940 Fink and Landgrebe transcribed an impressive 2800 pages of Husserl’s manuscripts handwritten in the Gabelsberger shorthand. Yet Fink did not abandon his interest in Heidegger either. His Leuven seminar on ‘German Philosophy’ listed 4 topics: Husserl’s reduction, Heidegger on *aletheia*, Hegel’s Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and a seminar on Rilke’s *Duino Elegies*.<sup>40</sup>

Germany invaded Belgium on 10 May 1940, and on that very day Fink and Landgrebe were arrested in Leuven. They were transported to a concentration camp in Orleans, France, then St. Cyprien near Perpignan. After a few months they were released, and Fink made his way back to Leuven,

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<sup>38</sup>) Ibid., 71.

<sup>39</sup>) E. Fink, “Was will die Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls?” in *Studien zur Phänomenologie 1930–1939*, 157–78; translated by Arthur Grugan as “What Does the Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl Want to Accomplish?” *Research in Phenomenology* 2 (1972): 5–27.

<sup>40</sup>) Bruzina, *Beginnings and Ends*, 525.

reuniting on the way with his wife, who had been interned in another camp near Bordeaux. They found their Belgian home bombed. Fink returned to Freiburg in November 1940. Following interrogation by the Gestapo, he was inducted into the army. In his quiet opposition to the Nazi regime, he deliberately refused the chance to train as an officer (an opportunity afforded him because of his education) and served as a common soldier in defense against aircraft in the Freiburg area throughout the war.

Liberation came when French soldiers entered Freiburg on 21 April 1945. Much to Fink's disgust, the De-Nazification committee exonerated many minor Nazi university officials, while ignoring Fink and others who had been genuine opponents. Fink wanted to return to lecturing but was required to have a Habilitation. He submitted his Sixth Cartesian Meditation under the title "*Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre*" (The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method), but, with the death of Husserl and Heidegger's suspension from the university, he was without an official sponsor. Eventually the Dean of the Philosophy Faculty, Robert Heiss, a psychologist, agreed to sponsor it, while viewing it disparagingly as the product of a bygone age. Curiously, given that the De-Nazification hearings had just forcibly retired him and removed his right to teach, Heidegger was consulted about Fink's Habilitation and stated that, as the work was fully authorized by Husserl, it needed no further attestation.<sup>41</sup> Fink finally received his Habilitation in 1946 and returned to lecturing at the university, although he had to wait until 1948 to be cleared by the De-Nazification committee.

Fink's inaugural lecture on 26 July 1946, "The Presuppositions of Philosophy," begins with the question as to how philosophy relates to the sciences. Husserl had placed in question the major presupposition of the sciences, namely, 'the being of the world'. Scientism is overcome by radical inquiry into the essence of science. However, philosophy is not just a reduction away from presuppositions; it must also be an active 'projection'. The horizons of inquiry are pre-given only as projections. Projection is of the 'being of beings', the 'thinghood of things', etc. Science therefore needs ontological projection.

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<sup>41</sup> As Bruzina records (529–30); just why Heidegger was consulted is not clear. When Husserl's son Gerhart heard that Heidegger was involved, he wrote an angry letter to Fink accusing him of collaborating with Heidegger. Fink was forced to write a clarificatory letter to Gerhart explaining that in fact Fink had not sought to involve Heidegger. The Freiburg Faculty had decided to invite Heidegger. For Fink it was an 'act of piety' to submit his Habilitation on Husserl to Freiburg University which had treated its former professor so disgracefully.

Bruzina does not attempt to cover Fink's philosophical development after 1946 as it would lead to areas far beyond his *Auseinandersetzung* with Husserl and into another beginning of distinctly Finkian phenomenology. In regard to that later development, at subsequent conferences such as that at Brussels in 1951, Krefeld in 1956, and Royaumont in 1957, Fink criticized many aspects of Husserl's program such as his failure to clarify his 'operative' concepts, including the concept of constitution. Nevertheless, he always remained true to Husserl in the sense that in 1950 he founded the Husserl Archive in Freiburg University and remained as its director until 1971.

Fink's later metaphysical horizons continued to be inspired by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Hegel. In 1946, influenced by Heidegger's emphasis on 'play' in *Being and Time* and in his lecture courses, Fink could proclaim that the essence of modern philosophy is *play*: "Play' as a speculative concept determines the constitution of the being of the human, his 'nature'!",<sup>42</sup> he already remarks in a note written around 1929. "Life as spirit plays; enthusiasm as the essence of play."<sup>43</sup> This concept of play went on to be a major theme of Fink's post-war philosophical research.<sup>44</sup> But let us return to Fink's own philosophical progress during his years with Husserl.

From the outset, Fink had been exposed to Husserl's mature transcendental philosophy and was himself absolutely committed to the transcendental project and to the task of securing transcendental phenomenology through a severe 'self-critique', a critique of its very pretensions to be radical, presuppositionless science. Fink aimed at moving phenomenology away from all naïveté and especially the naïveté of treating everything as an object (Jean-Luc Marion has a similar critique of the limited forms of 'givenness' in Husserl).<sup>45</sup> Fink was suspicious of what he saw as dogmatic phenomenology that pursued essence description unquestioningly. His aim was to retrieve and transform the phenomenological beginning, which is the experience of being assumed by the phenomenologist. He is advocating a 'phenomenology of phenomenology'.<sup>46</sup> The aim is to break decisively with the natural attitude and witness the transcendental 'constitutive becoming' of the world (this notion of being present at the 'birth of the world' is repeated by

<sup>42</sup> Bruzina, *Beginnings and Ends*, 532.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 462.

<sup>44</sup> See E. Fink, *Spiel als Weltsymbol* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960).

<sup>45</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Reduction and Givenness. Investigations of Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

<sup>46</sup> *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, 2.

Merleau-Ponty in his *Phenomenology of Perception*).<sup>47</sup> He wants to engage in an internal critique of phenomenology that would lead to its self-transformation.

Of course, the concept of ‘critique’ is deeply Kantian, and from the twenties through to the *Crisis*, Husserl himself had been defining his relation to Kant. In his address at Freiburg on May 1, 1924,<sup>48</sup> in celebration of the bicentennial of Kant’s birth, he stressed his “obvious essential relationship” with Kant.<sup>49</sup> Some eleven years later, in 1935, Fink would give a lecture to the Kant Society on the relationship between Kant’s and Husserl’s transcendental philosophies.<sup>50</sup> Fink wanted to articulate Husserlian transcendental phenomenology in particular against the backdrop of Neo-Kantianism. But Fink is perhaps the most thoroughgoing transcendentalist of all. For him, even more so than for the late Husserl, the natural world is not the final resting point of investigation upon which the transcendental builds, but it is precisely the other way round. Both the natural world (correlated with the natural attitude) and experiencing subjectivity are themselves the outcome of a more primordial transcendental constitution that has to be characterized ‘meontically’.

Fink’s principal contribution is to raise the issue of the *being* of the transcendental subject, an issue skirted in Kant, as in Husserl. For Kant, the transcendental ego is at best a formal organizing principle or condition of experience; for the mature Husserl it is also a concrete living I, a self with a history and a flowing temporal life (the ‘living present’), but Husserl’s efforts to explain just how this concrete transcendental self is at the same time the ordinary mundane self never arrived at any clarity. Fink’s claim is that the transcendental ego cannot be thought of as a being since it itself is the source of being; it is ‘pre-being’ (*Vorsein*). We cannot simply treat it as an actual

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 4: Merleau-Ponty speaks of philosophy shedding light on the “birth of being for us” (*la genèse de l’être pour nous*); see his *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 180; translated by C. Smith as *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 154.

<sup>48</sup> See E. Husserl, “Kant und die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie,” in *Erste Philosophie* (1923/24). Erster Teil: *Kritische Ideengeschichte*, hrsg. R. Boehm, Husserliana VII (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965), 230–87; translated by Ted E. Klein and William E. Pohl as “Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy,” *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5 (Fall 1974): 9–56.

<sup>49</sup> *Erste Philosophie* (1923/24), 230.

<sup>50</sup> See especially Fink’s unpublished article, “Die Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie bei Kant und in der Phänomenologie (1935),” which eventually appeared in E. Fink, *Nähe und Distanz: Phänomenologische Vorträge und Aufsätze*, ed. Franz-Anton Schwarz (Freiburg: Alber, 1976), 7–44.

being that produces all being from itself. He is therefore interested in developing a ‘meontic philosophy of absolute spirit’ where the ‘meontic’ means that which is original and transcendental and somehow before, beyond, outside being.<sup>51</sup> The meontic is precisely that which cannot be brought to intuition, and this means that Fink is thereby limiting the role of intuition in phenomenology. Husserlian phenomenology of course aims at the fulfilled intuition. Fink recognizes there are zones of life—birth, death, and so on—that escape the possibility of genuine first-person fulfilment. Hence a different approach is needed to gain access to these phenomena. Husserl himself had said as much in his own lectures. For example, can I, as an adult, really uncover what being a child of ten was like for me? My reflection will always be that of an adult seeking to make a synthesis of identification with the remembered viewpoint of myself as a ten-year-old. How can we bring this original, but now sedimented, past experience fully within the compass of a phenomenology of reflection? This is Fink’s problematic. Fink’s answer is in part to adopt Heidegger’s concepts of formal indication and of free projection, but he also drew these within the compass of a Hegelian conception of dialectical speculative reason. A very heady mixture indeed. Already in Leuven, he was working on ‘ontological experience: a treatise on the limits of phenomenology’ in favor of a speculative, meditative reflection (*spekulative Besinnung*).<sup>52</sup> An ongoing problem for him is the relation between description and speculation.<sup>53</sup> The task of phenomenology is to get philosophy going again. For him, phenomenology without speculation was “sheer psychology.”<sup>54</sup> He is more interested in the wider function of philosophy than Husserl, promoting its speculative vision.

For Fink, Husserl began from the epistemological position that prioritized the subject-object relation and thereby somewhat naively *presupposed*

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<sup>51</sup> As Bruzina points out in one of his extended endnotes (*Beginnings and Ends*, 567), there are considerable complications in both Heidegger’s and Fink’s conceptions of nonbeing. Fink wants to retain the Greek distinction between τὸ μὴ ὄν and οὐκ ὄν, i.e., between the qualified form of nonbeing and absolute nullity. The different levels of nonbeing encountered in Plato, Neoplatonism, Hegel, Heidegger (who speaks of a *nihil negativum*), and Fink are occasionally referred to by Bruzina, but there is no clear account of what ‘meontic metaphysics’ is supposed to be.

<sup>52</sup> *Beginnings and Ends*, 539.

<sup>53</sup> See his 1952 essay, ‘L’analyse intentionnelle et le problème de la pensée spéculative’, in *Problèmes actuels de la phénoménologie*, Actes du colloque international de phénoménologie (Brussels, 1951), ed. H. Van Breda (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952), 53–87.

<sup>54</sup> Bruzina, *Beginnings and Ends*, 541.

being, whereas Heidegger made being an issue and thus led phenomenology “to its first truth.”<sup>55</sup> Fink further attempted a ‘de-egoizing’ (*Ent-Ichung*) of transcendental subjectivity and a ‘de-temporalizing’ (*Ent-Zeitigung*)—where would Fink be without the German prefix ‘ent-’?—of originary or ‘proto-temporality’ (*Urzeitlichkeit*). The ‘I’ is only possible in a horizon of time and hence time-constitution itself is somehow ‘I-less’.

Besides the (non-)being of the transcendental ego, according to Fink’s reading of transcendental phenomenology, its major themes are *mundanization* (‘enworldedness’), the meaning of ‘horizon’ and the ambiguous status of horizontality, originary temporality, the plural and intersubjective nature of transcendental subjectivity. Fink was interested in the problem of how world with its infinite horizons emerges. Fink, for instance, thinks Husserl rather naively thinks that horizons can be characterized in terms of the objects within these horizons, whereas Fink, correctly, recognizes that horizons precisely allow objects to appear in the manner they do and hence that the horizons themselves are entities (or ‘non-entities’) of an entirely different kind.

Landgrebe had already criticized Husserl for never properly posing the question of the world and hence not having a proper account of transcendence. Fink sees the problem of transcendence as emerging on a higher level within immanence.<sup>56</sup> In line with the late Husserl who contemplated the meaning of transcendental life, Fink focused on existential situations—life, death, play, love, political power, and so on. Inevitably, Fink was preoccupied with the very issues in which Husserl too was interested in the late twenties, namely, the nature of transcendental constitution, the meaning of the transcendental ego and its ‘monadic life’, how phenomenology can be truly presuppositionless and thus justify its own beginning.

Fink saw the reduction as the center of Husserl’s phenomenology but thought Husserl misrepresented its true nature in *Ideas I*, where it appeared that it was necessary only to bracket the transcendent world to reach the absolute, apodictic self-giveness of immanent experience. In fact, for Fink, it is necessary to bracket both inner and outer, immanent and transcendent being. It is necessary to examine the subject’s self-objectification as a subject. Furthermore, one cannot know in advance what transcendental reflection means. One cannot simply treat it as the same as mundane reflection. This refers to the problem of how to relate the distinctively phenomenological attitude to the other attitudes. The natural attitude proceeds in self-concealment

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 583.

and self-forgetfulness.<sup>57</sup> But the ‘transcendental onlooker’ has to be reflected on in a very distinct kind of reflection. One is not here engaged in a new level of constitution. The transcendental onlooker cannot be constituting phenomenological reflection in the same manner as the transcendental ego is constituting the world. These dimensions cannot be construed as being (Jean-Luc Marion similarly wants to argue that not all constitution is object-constitution). The transcendental ego has a productive and poetic creativity; it also has a certain kind of anonymity. Husserl had already acknowledged the special kind of anonymity of functioning intentionality (the kind of intentionality that constitutes a world for me without its being in any sense *my doing*). The transcendental I is not a ‘being’ in the usual sense. As Husserl puts it in 1917–18, it is not “object” (*Gegenstand*) but “primal support” (*Urstand*).<sup>58</sup> This leads him to construe the transcendental subject and the transcendental onlooker in a ‘meontic’ way. In a sense, this original primal I is a living presence. Its self-awareness is not pre-reflective or reflective at all; it is immediate awareness, wakefulness. James Hart has persuasively argued that Husserl recognized that the original I cannot be elucidated in any form of intentionality or reflection. Fink sees it somewhat differently: it is a centerless field of meontic creative activity.

*Beginnings and Ends*, chapter four, focuses on the problem of world central to Husserl and Heidegger. For Fink, world is the ‘absolute phenomenon’, always ‘pre-given’ in a manner most difficult to characterize. The world emerged as a theme in *Ideas I*, but, in the thirties, both Husserl and Fink were fascinated by its peculiar *pre-giveness* (*Vorgegebenheit*), which is presupposed in all experience, actual and possible. Crucially, the world always appears with an extraordinary systematic organization; it is ‘always already’ ready and waiting. In the words of *Crisis* §37, it is the “universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon.” The world cannot be treated epistemologically as an object or as a set of objects; it is a *horizon* against which all awareness has to be measured. In a certain sense the world, like every horizon, is characterized by the phenomenon of ‘withdrawal’ (*Enthaltung*). At the same time, we as human beings are worldly (open-to-the-world) to the extent that we can even be said to be ‘captivated’ by the world. Fink recognizes the extraordinary paradox that the world and the natural attitude are both the beginning and the end of the phenomenological reduction. One begins from the natural attitude and is led back there. But the natural

<sup>57</sup> *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, 14.

<sup>58</sup> Husserl marginal entry quoted in James G. Hart, “Parts of the Husserl–Fink Conversation,” *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* I (2001), 285.

attitude, which initially is in ignorance that it is an attitude, eventually has to be circumscribed as itself a product of transcendental constitution.

Fink is aware that the natural attitude's commitment to the world is much more than a belief in the psychological sense:

It is not we as humans that perform belief in the world in our psychic life; for as humans we are already something believed in within belief in the world. In other words, it is not man that is the real performer of belief in the world, but rather *transcendental experiencing life*, which is laid bare by the method of the phenomenological *epoche*, to which the correlate is the correlation of man-to-object. World-belief is thus a *transcendental fact* (not a psychological fact).<sup>59</sup>

For Fink we have to overcome 'transcendental naïveté' that treats the objects within the reduction as if they continued to be simply objects in the natural world.

Chapter five, on time, shows that Fink follows Heidegger in wanting to link time with horizontality. Time is the condition of the possibility of everything objective but is not itself objective. The problem is to present time in its true dynamic nature not just as series of static now-points. In his early lectures, Husserl rejected a sense-data approach; it is not a matter of endowing neutral content with the temporality of an act of consciousness. Consciousness is temporal not only because its objects are temporal, but it has its own inherent deep temporal structure. Fink claims there is a reversal in the late C-manuscripts (from 1930) where Husserl came to realize that one cannot understand time by beginning with time-consciousness; rather, world time is what made both objects and the constituting subject possible. In Husserl's late manuscripts he put more emphasis on the 'living present' or 'original present'. Interestingly, Fink maintained that imposing the noetic-noematic structure on time consciousness masked its horizontality (although, already in Husserl, retention is described as 'the living horizon of the now').<sup>60</sup> Fink suggests that this absencing of the content is a 'de-presencing'. For Fink what is essential to temporality is its 'de-presencing' (*Entgegenwärtigung*).

Intimately linked to the problematic of time is that of *life*. Husserl had come to recognize that uncovering the world-constituting activity of subject-

<sup>59</sup>) Eugen Fink, *VI. Cartesianische Meditation. Teil 2. Ergänzungsband. Texte aus dem Nachlaß Eugen Finks (1932) mit Anmerkungen und Beilagen aus dem Nachlaß Edmund Husserls (1933/34)*, ed. Guy van Kerckhoven. *Husserliana Dokumente II/2* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), 186–88; *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, xxxviii.

<sup>60</sup>) Bruzina, *Beginnings and Ends*, 233.



tivity was not uncovering a stratum that was there once and for all; rather, one was encountering living, historical, developing, creative subjectivity, ongoing intentional *performance*, as he wrote in his 1927 *Nature and Spirit* lectures.<sup>61</sup> Fink, under the influence of Nietzsche, wanted to interpret this activity of life as play, developing a ‘metaphysics of play.’<sup>62</sup> Dilthey had also been writing on the issue of life, but Husserl thought it was anthropology and not going deep enough. However, feeling the threat of Heidegger (interpreted through Misch), Husserl felt the need to articulate his own sense of life, especially the ‘living present’. Human life under the reduction is disclosed as absolute flowing subjectivity, but it is also human life in the world (*Crisis* §72). This attempt to characterize his work relative to life philosophy is evident to the *Postscript to Ideas I* (1930). Phenomenological life philosophy is life taking possession of itself, the self-realization of spirit. Fink has a desire to move beyond the limitations of the ‘phenomenology of reflection’. He wants a *constructive*, and indeed a speculative, component to deal with existential issues. One cannot expect apodicticity in examining how the world comes to birth for the subject. Here one has (as Merleau-Ponty recognized) to make a creative leap. For Fink this is a matter of metaphysical ‘play’, emphasizing the creativity and plasticity of the life force itself.

Bruzina is correct to express the Fink-Husserl relation under the theme of ‘beginnings and ends’. Clearly there is the problem of how to begin phenomenology. Husserl began from his actual analyses and allowed his theory to build around that (ironically his publications were just the other way round—presenting theory first, with few actual analyses). For Bruzina, Fink marks a new beginning within Husserlian phenomenology. Fink himself believed the critique of phenomenology could not be *just* phenomenological; it needed another standpoint. Fink thought Husserl had a naïve view of what constituted a philosophical system—for him it was just the totality of the individual analyses. For Fink one has to justify even the conditions for the possibility of philosophizing itself. The theme of transcendental critique has to be the investigation of its own possibility—justifying the standpoint of the ‘detached, non-participating spectator’.

In the chapters on corollary thematics, Bruzina takes up the issue of language and intersubjectivity. Husserl was always aware of the complex relation between language and thought, but he never explicitly thematized language

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 316. See E. Husserl, *Natur und Geist. Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1927*, hrsg. Michael Weiler, Husserliana XXXII (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), 147.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 318.

as an issue for phenomenology. Of course, ordinary language belongs in the world of the natural attitude. The problem is; what happens to this language when we move to the transcendental in the reduction? True to his overall sense of the reduction, Husserl believed language continued but in an essentially modified way. There was not to be a new language but the existing language with some of its aspects bracketed or modified. Fink, on the other hand, under the influence of Heidegger, felt that the language needed to articulate transcendental phenomenology had to be different, could not retain its worldly character. Like Heidegger, Fink was entranced by the manner poetry functions to break with ordinary language. Bruzina even concedes that “much of what Fink writes about language... may indeed look like a straight adoption of ideas for which Heidegger was so famous.”<sup>63</sup> Bruzina points out that Husserl never essentially departed from the conception of linguistic expression of meaning that he had first formulated in the First Logical Investigation. This centered discussion around speaker meaning, wanting to mean. Fink, influenced by Heidegger, was interested in how language harbors an anticipatory understanding of being; language is an ‘already-standing by’ (*Bereitstand*) with an available public ontology.<sup>64</sup> For Fink, language reveals things but things are essentially such as to be revealed in language: language “is a *latent mode of the being-for-us of that which is*.”<sup>65</sup>

In chapter nine, clumsily entitled “Corollary Thematics II: Solitude and Community—Intersubjectivity,” Bruzina turns to Fink’s attempts to address the issues around transcendental subjectivity and intersubjectivity. In the Fifth Cartesian Meditation, Husserl makes the surprise move of discovering original co-constituting others at the heart of his egoistic meditations through his investigation of the sense that ‘other ego’ (*alter ego*) has for the meditating I. In the early thirties Husserl planned to revise the original text of the *Cartesian Meditations* with Fink’s help. Fink was asked to redraft it but eventually broke off, as Husserl wanted to send the text on to Schutz for his comments. Fink’s manuscripts towards the revision have been edited by Guy Van Kerckhoven.<sup>66</sup> Husserl himself, however, left behind a great many research manuscripts (now mostly published in *Husserliana XV*) relating to his proposed revision. Fink in particular felt that temporality, essential to the nature of the ego, had not been explicitly addressed. The

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 459.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 455.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 456.

<sup>66</sup> See the texts collected in Eugen Fink, *VI. Cartesianische Meditation. Teil 2*, 2:106–275.

entire description proceeds in the ‘now’ phase of the ego, ignoring issues of birth, death, etc., and indeed the whole “temporal range of the ego” (*Beginnings and Ends*, 488). Nor does Husserl address the issue of the ego’s humanness. Fink therefore envisaged a more extensive treatment of transcendental life. In this regard, Fink also thought that the monadic manner of carrying out a Cartesian-style meditation left one with a plurality of egos each performing reductions without any sense of the interdependence and interconnection of egos. This open plurality of overlapping egos leads Fink to seek to investigate ‘transcendental historicity’. Moreover, these others appear as familiars and strangers, but also differentiated by sex, relationship (father, mother), level of rationality, sanity, insanity, and so on. There are generations to the ‘we’. Subjectivity has a ‘generative’ dimension. We need to grasp the ‘self-development’ (*Selbstentwicklung*) of transcendental life and recognize that much of it proceeds instinctively. On the other hand, Fink mingles this phenomenology of life with a strongly Nietzschean sense of *amor fati*; there is no salvation, no transcendence outside the world; rather, what we need is ‘devotion to the world’, acknowledging death, etc.<sup>67</sup>

There is a remarkable revival of interest in Fink’s conception of phenomenology and his treatment of the themes he thought prominent in phenomenology, namely, the nature of the world, the source of the transcendental ego, the question of the relation between the transcendental and the mundane, primordial temporality, and so on. The late work of Husserl has been studied by Klaus Held and others, but recently Fink’s solutions to Husserlian problems has attracted attention (from Dan Zahavi,<sup>68</sup> Marc Richir, Natalie Depraz, Tony Steinbock, Nam-In Lee, Steven Crowell, and others). Bruzina must be credited for playing a central role in restoring Fink’s work. There have been a number of conferences focusing on Fink, including a Cérisy colloquium in 1994, and a number of articles in the *New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* in 2001 (including Steven Crowell’s study of Fink’s Gnostic phenomenology). Recent monographs include Sebastian Luft study on Fink’s collaboration with Husserl in the late manuscripts on the reduction.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Bruzina, *Beginnings and Ends*, 347.

<sup>68</sup> See Dan Zahavi, *Husserl and Transcendental Intersubjectivity*, trans. Elizabeth A. Behnke (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001), 66ff., and idem, “The Self-Pluralisation of the Primal Life: A Problem in Fink’s Husserl-Interpretation,” *Recherches Husserliennes* 2 (1994): 3–18.

<sup>69</sup> See *Eugen Fink*, Actes du Colloque de Cerisy-la-Salle 23–30 juillet 1994, ed. Natalie Depraz, Marc Richir (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997); Steven Galt Crowell, “Gnostic Phenomenology:

There is no doubt that Bruzina's book is an original work of phenomenology. It breaks new ground in its detailed understanding of Fink's development. But it is also the work of a true believer. Bruzina works with an implicit hermeneutical assumption that both Husserl and Fink were progressing intellectually to ever deepening insights. But sometimes we can go badly astray with that kind of assumption. It is also possible to hold that, after a late blooming in the years from 1929 to 1935, Husserl's thought went into decline and that many of his later ideas are quite daft and that Fink was worse to encourage him in that speculative direction.

Eugen Fink was undoubtedly an important influence on both Husserl and Heidegger (the latter especially after 1945) and also an influence on Merleau-Ponty, Alfred Schutz, and Jan Patočka. But there is a nagging doubt in mind: in what sense is Fink himself an eminent figure? How many of his suggestions are in fact provisional sketches (written as 'telegraphic notes' to himself) that depend heavily on a speculative reading in one way or other of Husserl's late uncertain and hesitant intentions? Who outside of phenomenology has ever heard of him? Even within phenomenology, he never achieved prominence. He participated in the major phenomenological colloquia of the 1950s and '60s, and yet he himself was moving away from phenomenology into his own speculation of world, game, time, play, technology. His post-war Freiburg students describe him as an extraordinarily obscure lecturer, while very supportive on a personal level. Admittedly, Fink certainly raises profound questions, but there must be a way of dealing with them that does not explain the obscure by the more obscure. It is also hard to find oneself drawn to Fink's vision of philosophy that requires endless retreating to questioning the starting-point. There is as well (despite itself) a certain almost religious fervor to his writing. Steve Crowell has justly diagnosed a *gnostic* element in Fink's theme of humans as captivated or ensnared by the world, but this strand of his thinking is in tension with his Nietzschean celebration of finitude and embracing the world, without salvation.

One gets the sense that Bruzina is still too close to the material to be able to take a synoptic and critical view. While it has been an extraordinary labor of love and dedication to bring to light the complex material in Fink's *Nachlass*, and while Fink does undoubtedly make brilliant and original inter-

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Eugen Fink and the Critique of Transcendental Reason," *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* 1 (2001), 257–77; and Sebastian Luft, "Phänomenologie der Phänomenologie."

ventions into Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology, there is still something hopeless about Fink's project of reintroducing a Hegelian speculative moment into the very movement that began by repudiating such speculation.