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Eugen Fink (1905–1975) is increasingly recognized as an important figure in the phenomenological tradition, best known for his close collaboration with Edmund Husserl during the latter's final years in Freiburg. As Bruzina (2004) documents in his important volume, their philosophical interplay grew to a relationship of near-daily dialogue and “genuinely mutual contribution and intellectual exchange” (p. 51). As Husserl's last working partner, Fink played an important part in the production of late works including the *Crisis of European Sciences* (1970). Fink's own publications such as his *Kant-Studien* article describing the three egos (1970)--to which Husserl's unreserved endorsement was attached--as well as Fink's unfinished *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* (1995/1988) importantly influenced the direction of phenomenology in France. However, as Varga (2011) documented, even within Husserl's lifetime earlier students of his including Farber, Patočka, Levinas, and Stein questioned whether Fink had remained adequately true to the direction of Husserl's work. The value of Fink's contributions and their

place within the phenomenological tradition remain contested: in recent decades scholars have offered a variety of critiques of the quality of Fink's work, the degree to which he departed from a Husserlian path, and his incorporation of Hegelian, Heideggerian, and Neoplatonic themes (Crowell, 2001; Zahavi, 2003; Moran 2007). Two recently published edited collections demonstrate a growing interest in Fink (Stakland, 2024 and Apostolescu, 2025). In the context of this ongoing reconsideration of Fink, the *Sixth Meditation* and Husserl's textual notations in response document Husserl and Fink's alignment and divergences regarding the identity of the transcendental subject as well as the origin of, motivations for, and ultimate aim of phenomenologizing itself--all topics Džanić (2023) addresses in this valuable book.

Džanić (2023) charts the interplay and divergences between Husserl's and Fink's answers to the question, who is the phenomenologizing subject in transcendental investigation? Are the empirical or "psychological" ego---the "I" who is the protagonist in one's daily life within a natural attitude--and the transcendental ego--a more primordial dimension of I-ness discovered through the reduction--best regarded as aspects of an expanded sense of humanity capable of enriching one's everyday lifeworld, as Husserl came to argue (see for example Appendix XV in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, 1995)? Or is the disclosing of the transcendental ego through progressively freeing consciousness from what Fink called its "world-entanglement" (*Weltbefangenheit*) better characterized by Fink's term "de-humanizing" (*Entmenschlichung*)?

At first glance such matters might not appear relevant for psychologists whose phenomenological inquiries are by and large limited to the analysis of natural attitude experiences: that is, researchers whose primary concern is the life of the "psychological ego", in Husserl's (1973, §11) terms. However, some phenomenological psychologists, notably Davidson

(2021) in *Overcoming Psychologism: Husserl and the Transcendental Reform of Psychology*, argue that a psychology neglectful of transcendental subjectivity remains naïve to the ongoing constitution of--and therefore the meaning and ground of--psychological selfhood as such.

Džanić's (2023) work is therefore relevant for clinicians or research psychologists who would be in accord with Davidson (2021), and also for those who, from the perspective of consciousness studies including the cross-cultural study of meditative experience, view a transcendental perspective as invaluable in clarifying the way in which personal selfhood arises for consciousness. Moreover, Džanić's study bears importantly on the shifts in perspective an inquiring phenomenologist themselves takes on, in probing these further dimensions of conscious life—the life, not only of the psychological ego, but the also the constituting activity of transcendental subjectivity and the witnessing capacity of consciousness which has been recognized cross-culturally (for example, see Lahbabi 1964, Gupta 1998).

Džanić (2023) opens Chapter 1 with the problem of humanity in phenomenology: how the researcher understands the phenomenological enterprise and the shifts in consciousness they undergo in employing the reduction, transitioning from the natural attitude of mundane life to a transcendental attitude. Human's pre-reflective, everyday attitude Husserl (1983) termed the natural attitude (*natürliche Einstellung*); entailed within this attitude is one's habitual self-acquaintance as a psychological ego or "I-the-man" in Husserl's terms (1970, 1973, 1989 § 21). Fink (1972) calls this self-sense the human's "self-familiarity," one's "*mundane-ontological* self-understanding" (17).

Grasping world and one's self-identity as straightforwardly ontic is naïve because, in taking the world and one's identity as simply factual one does not recognize that both world and one's self-identity are the outcome of constitution, and that source of constituting acts of

consciousness originates in the transcendental, not the psychological ego. Hence, for Fink, the ground of selfhood “is never pre-given in a worldly way,” but rather “in a concealed way bears all pre-giveness of the world” (1972, 20). In contrast to “natural attitude,” Fink preferred to call naïve everydayness a condition of “world-entanglement” (*Weltbefangenheit*, see Cairns, 1976 95) in which transcendental subjectivity has, so to speak, enmeshed and lost itself in the world as a merely psychological ego.

As Džanić (2023) notes, phenomenology famously seeks to come to grips with the “paradox of subjectivity,” namely that of an ego both in the world but also, at its depths, the consciousness by means of which world and selfhood as such is constituted (p. 2). As he observes, the transcendental ego for both Husserl and Fink was “simultaneously the source and the only true field of disclosure” for the unique kind of knowledge that phenomenology aims to yield, a perspective revealed through the reduction (p. 2).

Hence, in the rest of the volume Džanić (2023) will follow Husserl and Fink’s evolving, sometimes aligning, sometimes diverging answers from the late 1920’s through the early 1930’s to the question “who exactly is the one ‘doing’ the transcendental experiencing” (p. 3)? What motivates the shift in an ego that hitherto has only recognized itself as mundane to discover the transcendental standpoint and transcendental self-recognition? As he documents, during this collaborative effort they at one stage explored a shared viewpoint regarding Fink’s meontic framing of phenomenologizing as a process of transcending the human, only for Husserl to reject this position, finding a fresh way to reaffirm the centrality of a more expansive sense of human personhood, arguing that phenomenology aims at yielding a higher humanity by accessing the transcendental (1995).

In Chapter 2 Džanić (2023) charts Husserl and Fink's collaborative effort to articulate a transcendental theory of method. For Fink, the transcendental reduction was not simply a method: rather, it yields a different form of being the life of the "phenomenon onlooker, non-participant in world constitution" (p. 36). Fink (1970) argued for three egos: the psychological ego of the natural attitude, absorbed in its worldly life, the transcendental ego which is actively engaged in constituting the world and psychological selfhood within the world, and the transcendental "onlooker" which allows for phenomenal witnessing (pp. 115-116). This discovery through the transcendental reduction "leads the phenomenologist performing it to the realization that they simultaneously encompass two specific and distinct roles – that of a mundane human being, and that of a transcendental constituting subject" (p. 38). Prior to distinguishing the witnessing onlooker from the constituting ego, there is not yet a full grasping of the meaning of the transcendental ego itself: there remains in other words, a transcendental naïveté mirroring that of the natural attitude but manifested at the transcendental level (p. 39).

Fink, engaging in the revision of the *Cartesian Meditations*, draws a more radical interpretation of the reduction: the reduction and suspension of the natural attitude he argues is motivated not simply by the drive to grasp previously ontified lifeworld objects in their givenness, but to probe constituting subjectivity itself--to inquire "about that which is *beyond* the being of the subject" (Džanić 2023, p. 41). If the inquiring subject remains, in its own regard, conceived of ontically as a still natural being and taken for granted as such--then for Fink the reduction has not yet gone far enough. For Fink, taking phenomenological inquiry to its limit requires a de-ontifying of the subject, shedding the layer of facticity that for Fink characterizes humanity as such, in order to explore the domain of transcendental subjectivity as non-being or pre-being (meontic). The meontic, Džanić writes, "does not imply "a dualism between being and

an ontically graspable non-being” but rather “between two different ontological planes, one of which can be phenomenologically grasped and described in ontic terms, and the other not” (p. 43). Džanić will describe this trajectory as Fink’s “epistemological anti-humanism” (p. 48).

Why, according to Fink, must phenomenology address the meontic in order to properly found itself as science? Fink argues that if a phenomenologist, employing the reduction, then proceeds to ontify transcendental subjectivity--conceptualizing it as merely another kind of being--then they will be tacitly reaffirming a “mundane ontology” and remain trapped in transcendental naïveté (Džanić 2023, p. 68). More than just a relapse into naïveté, in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* Fink critiques the ontification of transcendental subjectivity as a “dogmatism after the reduction,” an “unparalleled hubris” that “in religious terms” would be equivalent to “the usurping of creation by putting oneself in the place of God” (p. 112).

Džanić (2023) provides ample evidence from Fink’s writing to demonstrate his aim to disclose the “non-ontic, transcendental-constituting and phenomenologizing dimension of transcendental life” (p. 44). To fulfill phenomenology’s already implicit direction means, on Fink’s account, fully taking to heart that “the transcendental subject is, in fact, outside the realm of ontology altogether” (p. 45). Fink’s meontic direction departs from what most readers would today recognize as Husserlian, despite Husserl’s close involvement in the process of Fink’s drafting of the *Sixth Meditation*. Džanić seeks to carefully lay out the paths taken by each thinker and how Husserl ultimately came to articulate his alternative.

In Chapter 3 the author seeks to account for Fink’s development of the meontic direction as a response to core problems of phenomenology with which both Fink and Husserl were grappling. He frames Fink as “a point of refraction and diffraction” between Husserl and Heidegger (p. 52). Quoting Fink’s statement that “Husserl is blind to transcendence, Heidegger

is blind to constitution,” Džanić argues that Fink sought to integrate Heidegger’s “speculative impulse” with “the field disclosed and disclosable” by taking a Husserlian path of phenomenological inquiry (p. 53). He warns against an overly simplistic view of philosophers like Husserl as having been committed to unchanging assumptions, which might result in a too neat, exclusive ascribing of concern with historicity to Heidegger.

The author argues that for Husserl, phenomenology was distinguished from the other sciences--perhaps first and foremost psychology--by its *epistemological* focus on the eidetic. Fink, in contrast, offered an *ontological* criterion. For both Husserl and Fink the world and its pre-givenness are never left behind, nor is the phenomenologist left cut off from or alienated from the world once they have bracketed its facticity; rather, the world remains present but with its meaning transformed as the phenomenologist gains access to a transcendental perspective and recognizes “world” as constituted. For Fink, Džanić (2023) writes, the implications of reduction and discovery of constitution are not mere epistemological achievements: they entail a bracketing of the taken-for-grantedness of *worldly being as such*, that is, mundane ontology *itself* must be regarded with an epoché. For Fink phenomenology’s unique contribution rests on this shift from the ontic toward the meontic, the generative pre-being or non-being that is the field upon which “world” as the “horizon of beings” is constituted (p. 69).

Both Husserl and Fink were seeking to clarify the impetus for someone inhabiting a natural attitude to suspend the reflexive positing characteristic of that attitude? Husserl acknowledged this suspension as a difficult task (for example Ideas I §31, 1983). Fink, however, reads the motivation for the reduction as radically disconnected from the motivations of the mundane life of the empirical ego. In other words, for Fink the phenomenological shift that yields recognition of an anonymously constituting transcendental subjectivity cannot be

psychologically motivated, in stricto sensu. Yet there must be some motivation present even in a mundane attitude that leads in the direction of transcendence. The transcendental onlooker, he argues, is that always-already-present feature of consciousness that, ““awakens in man”” and in so doing counteracts human’s reflexive enworlding (p. 74). Effecting the reduction reveals the always-already-occurring “constitutive becoming or genesis” occurring through a process of the “ontification of transcendental subjectivity” which Fink terms primary enworlding (pp. 73-74).

In Chapter 4, the author continues examining two complementary questions for phenomenology: what would motivate someone in a mundane attitude to awaken via the reduction? And secondly, why would transcendental subjectivity ontify itself in the first place, in a sense losing its connection with its origin? Fink’s answer regarding the reduction is that inquiry within a natural attitude, when taken to its limit--and Fink’s example in the *Sixth Meditation* is someone engaged in “pure inner psychology” --brings the inquirer to a horizon upon which “transcendental cognition can flash out” (1988 34).

In other words, penetrating reflection at the edge of the natural attitude yields in Fink’s words the “flash” of recognition of a distinction between one’s “psychic *representation of the world* and the *world itself*” (1988 p. 35). It dawns upon the inquirer that their experiencing of a world centered on the psychical “*as a human life in the world* is a belief-construct [*Meinungsgebilde*] which originates precisely in that life, and which that genuinely experiential life has kept quite hidden from me, then the *breakthrough to that questionability* is achieved the meditative mastery of which represents the *performance of the reduction*” (1988, p. 35). Džanić (2023) notes that for Fink the discovery the reduction is not simply a cognitive accomplishment belonging to a being who remains identified as a natural self; rather it is an awakening that de-ontifies its performer, placing him or her “wholly outside the realm of ontology” (p. 82). Were

this not the case Džanić observes, “transcendental phenomenology would amount to nothing more than existential philosophy” or “eidetic anthropology,” that is, the inquiry would remain centered in the natural attitude and psychical subjectivity (p. 82). In parallel he examines Husserl’s varied statements regarding psychology and its relationship to transcendental phenomenology, observing that in contrast to empirical psychology, a “pure” or “eidetic psychology” for Husserl sometimes seems almost indistinguishable from a transcendental perspective and can serve as a “propaedeutic or...entryway into” the transcendental (p. 102).

Džanić (2023) explores the consequences for the inquirer of this claimed shift in perspective. On Fink’s account, through the reduction transcendental subjectivity awakens to itself, leading to a secondary enworlding, a kind of return to the world but with a radically different perspective. Džanić describes the one returning through secondary enworlding as neither a pure transcendental ego distinct from their being-in-the-world as this particular inquirer, nor one who reaffirms their psychological ego-identity cut off from recognition of their transcendental origin, but rather a subject who is simultaneously both transcendental and worldly, an instantiation of the Absolute. That would appear to be someone who is no longer fully human, if “humanity” implies being entirely subsumed in the natural attitude. Džanić argues that Fink’s appropriation of Hegel informs how his “explicit questioning of the being of the transcendent takes him “down the path of absolute philosophy, which ultimately absorbs transcendental phenomenology as a moment within the broader movement of the subject on its path toward absolute knowledge” (p. 95).

In contrast, Džanić (2023) usefully draws attention to Husserl’s lengthy response to Fink (1988) in a comment on *Sixth Meditation*: there, Husserl maintains that the breakthrough to transcendental cognition, counter to Fink’s meontic framing, is the recognition that one’s

transcendental ego previously had “objectivated itself as man” and in awakening through the reduction yields “the possibility of a new, higher humanity,” a “transcendentally clarified humanity” for the inquirer, in which “his life is a new life” (pp. 129-130, n469). So according to Džanić, whereas for Fink the “who” of the phenomenologizing witness is a kind of “deeper self,” an “impersonal, un-humanized, meontic subject,” for Husserl the reduction is a step toward enriched, holistic humanity encompassing the entire person (p. 77).

Chapter 5 explores Husserl’s account of how the reduction is motivated within historical life, critically following Husserl’s efforts in several texts including the Amsterdam lecture to express why phenomenologizing would arise in mundane life, coming close to Fink’s position. What is at stake is whether the stimulus for phenomenologizing can be fully accounted for within the factual, history-bound life of the natural attitude? A parallel question is whether the specifically transcendental dimension of phenomenology is, as Husserl maintained, a necessary foundation for grasping the meaningfulness of the full range of human phenomena including the mundane? And how to account for the relationship between mundane and transcendental life? In this context Džanić (2023) discusses Husserl’s ongoing engagement with historicity--which the author demonstrates is not reducible to a response to Heidegger, but rather, a reflection of Husserl’s longstanding dialogue with Dilthey. The author’s careful weighing of the merits of Husserl’s responses to Heidegger and Dilthey are valuable in and of themselves, though they cannot be treated in detail here.

Just as Husserl was unwilling to commit to the what Džanić (2023) characterizes as the anti-humanist direction of Fink’s meontology, Husserl was likewise committed to combatting what he saw as Heidegger’s one-sided emphasis on concrete being-in-the world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) as “primordial ground [*Urboden*]” (p. 135). Husserl came to make the argument that values

are intrinsic to human being as such--therefore not simply relative to a particular historical/cultural context, so in an ideal sense, they are timeless. And simultaneously, such values are lived within history, hence they are not strictly extratemporal; thus, Džanić argues that for Husserl “the locus of this intersection of history and ideality is mankind” (p. 119). This is a counter-position to what Husserl termed “anthropologism” which threatens to collapse the transcendental into the merely factual/historical dimension of worldly human being.

In this context Džanić (2023) argues that Husserl’s account of the constitution of the world and the empirical ego is “a statement of the metaphysical primacy of transcendental subjectivity” (p. 142). Džanić’s case for constitution not being “metaphysically innocent and neutral” --that is to say descriptive rather than metaphysical--is that “the transcendental ego *necessarily* goes through the process of mundanization which necessarily terminates in the mundane ego” (p. 143). It is the ontological *necessity* of the relationship between the two egos that for the author represents a metaphysical claim; as is well known, the scholarly debate regarding transcendental phenomenology’s relationship to metaphysics is ongoing.

Several questions arise regarding Džanić’s (2023) contentions in this chapter regarding Husserl’s effort to resolve the “‘who’ and ‘why’” of phenomenology (p. 149). Regarding the “who”, he appears to argue that if the discovery of the transcendental ego is a radical and disclosive shift out of the attitude of mundane selfhood--a shift exemplifying an “alethic hierarchy” (p. 86)--then is it not the case that “transcendental insights” would “ultimately remain useless to the non-phenomenologist” (p. 150)? If properly understood, this conclusion of Džanić’s would appear to be necessary in two cases: (A) if the relationship between empirical and transcendental selfhood is conceived of in a way that does not allow for a degree of continuity-in-difference between the two egos as features of a singular, multilayered conception

of personhood, but rather is indeed “manichean” as Džanić characterizes Fink’s standpoint (p. 87), implying not just an important difference between the mundane and the transcendental subjectivity, but a fixed opposition between them that justifies the language of good and evil. Husserl’s idea of transcendental personhood discussed by Luft (2005) and Hahn (2012) would correspond to this more expansive conception. Or (B) if it is the case that transcendental insights are of no practical use for someone who has not personally performed the reduction and verified their access to transcendental subjectivity? But would it not be the case, as in the case of any type of experience yet to be verified personally, that transcendental insights might (and indeed would of necessity) be held out as a heuristic to students of phenomenological research who had not yet, in Husserl’s terms, “transcendentally awakened” (1995 p. 191)?

Finally, regarding the “why”, Džanić (2023) offers a thoughtful case that Husserl’s effort to account for transcendental awakening as due to an innate property of mundane consciousness was inadequate. This brought Husserl closer to Fink’s privileging of the meontic over merely ontical human and world.

In Chapter 6 the author presents how Husserl, after dialoguing with Fink’s meontics and refining his own sense of phenomenology’s relationship with historicity, reaffirmed human-centeredness and the prospect of phenomenologists awakening to a higher form of humanity through the integration of a transcendental perspective. Džanić (2023) describes this renewal of life as “the humanity of the mundane ego, now aware of its transcendental underpinnings” which then alters his or her presence in the world and informs their pedagogical mission (p. 185).

Husserl, he argues, aimed for an enrichment of the attitude of everyday life because “the transcendental grows out of, and builds on, the mundane” (p. 169). If the transcendental and empirical ego are constituents of a single more expansive sense of personhood, then the capacity

for repeated transitions between one perspective and the other are interdependent and reciprocal: the developing habitus of the transcendental ego is not sundered from the habitus of the empirical ego, hence the evolution of one impacts the other. Thus, even if the epoché and reduction are performed by the transcendental ego “this is only possible if the transcendental habitus has already been cultivated to some extent by the respective individual in the natural (and probably mundane scientific) attitude” (p. 177). Ongoing entering and exiting a phenomenological attitude, bracketing and re-entering one’s mundanity, reshapes the capacity of *both* egos; hence “the full-fledged subject of phenomenology...is uniquely determined by the coincidence of the mundane and the transcendental” (p. 194). Džanić describes this achievement as a “broadened natural attitude” which suggests that the “natural human being” can understand themselves as embodied beings who are in a sense *also transcendental*, and to recognize their personal existence as the outcome of ongoing constitution (p. 183). And not merely in isolation: as Džanić observes, Husserl now sees phenomenologizing as a process of “subjective and intersubjective *transformation*,” a vision familiar to those who have read his comments on the *Sixth Meditation* (p. 192). Thus, the outcome of Husserl’s engagement with Fink during these years was a more robust engagement with historicity and articulation of a liberatory intertwining of the transcendental and empirical ego, both being constituted and actively participating in constitution, within a communal, and ethically informed worldly life (p. 199).

What was the road not taken in Husserl’s centering phenomenology on a more expansive conception of human being? Džanić (2023) characterizes as “Finkian” the radical emphasis on transcendence, with which Husserl was partly in accord during the period chronicled by this book, within which human being is regarded as “a mode of the transcendental ego, rather than the practical source of all theory, including that within which the transcendental ego would

appear as a specific epistemological moment” (p. 159). Džanić’s valorizing of Husserl’s turn away from Fink’s meontics is reflected in the remark that “once a philosophy finds itself arguing against its being a human activity, something has gone awry somewhere along the way” (p. 155). This perspective is aligned with the apparent consensus in Husserl scholarship that phenomenology must be anthropocentric in order to maintain fidelity to its scientific and worldly mission. In contrast Fink held that “transcendental knowledge can...never be properly mundanized” (p. 161). If phenomenology were to affirm that the meontic--which exceeds being--is the ground of beings, this would de-center and devalue mundane life by framing it as a partly illusory and captivated state. For this reason, the terms “gnosticism” and “mysticism,” deployed somewhat polemically, occur both in this text and in eminent critics of Fink. Džanić takes a position that is at once sympathetic and critical, acknowledging that Fink was grappling with “something inevitable and absolutely transcendent” which Džanić characterizes as a not merely metaphysical but “mystic core” of Fink’s project that could not be justified on phenomenological grounds and abandoned the human-centeredness of Husserl’s phenomenology (pp 90, 93). That said, one must acknowledge that Fink countered that his meontic interpretation of the reduction yielded a more authentic self-understanding which “is in no way an occurrence somehow ‘mystically’ or ‘speculatively’ to be grasped,” but rather “is accomplished as the analytic, demonstrative phenomenological *explication of transcendental subjectivity*,” and thus “to be verified in a most rigorous sense” (1972, p. 22). One might need to resort to non-western ontologies, epistemologies, and largely implicit psychologies to argue that anthropocentrism is not requisite for depth philosophical and psychological study of human being (for example, Hā’irī Yazdi 1992, Nishitani 1982).

Džanić's (2023) Conclusion represents Husserl's prime achievement as having integrated the reduction and transcendental subjectivity with historical being-in-the-world. He credits Husserl with an inclusive vision of a continuum of multiple, interrelated habitus, a "sliding scale" of contextual attitudes ranging from the natural to the transcendental, informed by an ethical and communal vision. For Džanić this bridging of the transcendental and the mundane gives Husserlian phenomenology an "eminently human and humane flavor" (pp. 221-222).

Where Džanić (2023) departs from Husserl in his closing comments is in recasting the transcendental ego as "a specific theoretical mode of the mundane ego" (p. 222). This strong assertion appears to fly in the face of Husserl's own body of work by fully subsuming the transcendental dimension of subjectivity within the empirical ego of the natural attitude. If this is an accurate reading of Džanić, then his framing would be far more than an expansive notion of subjectivity capable of including both its psychical and transcendental dimensions and progressively awakening to that full range. Instead, it would appear to reduce transcendental subjectivity as such to a transient theorizing activity ineluctably centered on, and having its home ground in, the empirical ego. To his credit, Džanić acknowledges the likelihood of objections. In this light, it is useful to recall Merleau-Ponty's encouragement in *The Philosopher and His Shadow* (1964) to neither pay "superfluous homage" to Husserl to seek validation for one's own work, nor to reduce Husserl "too strictly to what he himself desired and said" (p. 159)! Such openness is required for creative participation in a tradition, and this volume should be a welcome contribution for those exploring the aims and ends of phenomenologizing.

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