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Husserl After Fink: Articulating Humanity in Transcendental Phenomenology

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Note on References

In cases where an abbreviation is used in reference to a specific volume, the first reference to the work will be accompanied by a footnote indicating the abbreviation. As there are relatively few such cases, I did not deem it necessary to compile a list of all the abbreviations used throughout the dissertation. In cases where an English translation is available, the first number refers to the page number in the original, and the second to the translation (e.g.: SCM: 157/142). The full bibliographic reference to the latter will always follow the reference to the original in the 'Bibliography'. The one exception to the general rule of indicating both page numbers are cases where the quotation only serves an illustrative purpose, but is otherwise not central to the argument (e.g., a single quotation from Nietzsche or Sartre's *Nausea*). In such cases, only the page number from the English translation is provided. Where no translation was available, I have provided my own. In cases where a part of the quoted text is emphasized (indicated by italics), the emphasis is present in the original, unless noted otherwise.

References to Husserl's published and unpublished writings are made in the customary way, i.e., by indicating the respective *Husserliana* volume followed by the page number, or by indicating the manuscript signature. I would like to thank the director of the Husserl Archives in Leuven, Professor Julia Jansen, for the permission to quote from Husserl's unpublished manuscripts, and Dr. Thomas Vongehr for the meticulousness with which he checked my notes and provided me with the full references.

Introduction

The Problem of Humanity in Phenomenology

„Es ist mir immer klarer geworden, [...] dass hier eine der grössten Aufgaben eines Systems der Philosophie liegt: die Aufgabe des rechten Anfanges, die Emporleitung des Erkennenden von der Stufe natürlicher Erkenntnis-Naivität zur Stufe des Anfangs „absolut gerechtfertigter Wissenschaft“, der der „Philosophie“.“¹

This little piece of meta-philosophical reflection presents us with a specific image of philosophy. It is an image that evokes a long tradition and a host of accompanying metaphors, aims, and ideals. Notions such as radical beginnings, architectonics, ground, and absolute justification are the building blocks of this kind of thinking about the role and scope of philosophy, and Edmund Husserl is rightly identified with this tradition, as well as often viewed as one of its most prominent representatives.

Yet this is not the only image of philosophy, nor is it the only one reflective of Husserl's phenomenological project. "The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated," – so opens Sellars one of his essays – "is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term." (2007: 369) Here, we are presented with a different understanding of the philosophical endeavor; one where it's not so much about building an edifice of knowledge as it is about 'knowing one's way around' various things and, perhaps, various kinds of knowledge of things. (ibid.) The former looks up to the ideal of verticality of knowledge, while the latter keeps an eye out for its horizontality. The telltale indicators of the latter are heightened awareness of the contextuality of knowledge and a deep sensitivity to historical circumstance and discursive formations. The two approaches may not be mutually exclusive, but there is certainly some tension between them. It is easy to see why: whereas the success of the former hinges on possessing the appropriate blueprints for building more or less in advance, the latter rejects that possibility as incoherent and opts for piecemeal investigative progress instead. This does not mean that the latter approach precludes philosophy

¹ From a letter written to Winthrop P. Bell on December 13, 1922. (Hua Dok III/3: 43) Henceforward, Hua Dok III will be referred to as (Bw).

from theory- or system-building altogether. It does, however, mean that such advancements can only come at a later stage, rather than serve as starting points for research. Their status of endpoints of research becomes equally precarious, and the philosopher must be open not just to making constant corrections on the fly, but also to the possibility that their thinking is an infinite task, rather than a straightforwardly attainable platform for all future problem-solving.

The stroke of genius that provided phenomenology with its conceptual breadth and range of applicability was the insight that these two approaches to philosophy were not merely potentially complementary, but rather necessarily supplementary. Thus, for Husserl, the kind of philosophy Sellars would define and pursue several decades later was already part of his research program, but only made sense insofar as it was tethered to the larger foundational idea of absolutely justified philosophy. Conversely, the latter regulative ideal developed separately, with no reference to the factual circumstances and limitations of the ones pursuing it, would be empty and indistinguishable from baseless speculation. From these various intersecting strands of vertical and horizontal research emerged a uniquely ambitious conception of philosophy with its own standards for scientificity, rigor, and evidence.

Its ambition was the product of two factors. The first one was the remarkable scope of this new science; as Husserl's thought evolved, his understanding of the range of applicability of phenomenological insight broadened. Framed as a universal platform for descriptively engaging almost all aspects of human experience, Husserl's phenomenology thus developed into the privileged tool, and necessary companion, of almost all kinds of reflective inquiry. This became especially clear during the last decade of his life, as he became increasingly interested in providing a phenomenological explanation of history, rationality, and teleology. In this way, phenomenology's distinct descriptive apparatus was enriched by some far-reaching normative potential, and the injunction to philosophers to serve as 'functionaries of mankind' became an essential component of phenomenology's self-understanding.

The second factor contributing to its ambition was its promise to deliver a unique and unprecedentedly universal kind of knowledge. For Husserl, the anchoring point of this promise was the transcendental ego; because it was simultaneously the source and the only true field of disclosure of such knowledge, finding appropriate means of access to it became the central methodological problem of phenomenology. This turned out to be no small difficulty, for the desired universality was a function of the transcendental ego's non-worldliness. As a consequence, much of Husserl's heavy methodological machinery was an attempt to bridge the gap between the natural attitude of the mundane ego and the special phenomenological attitude necessary for disclosing the transcendental egological structure behind it.

The difficulties with this general picture are both well-known and well understood. Some of them, like the apparent problem of solipsism, are relatively easily dismissed as mere misunderstanding. Some, like the more general problem of integrating intersubjectivity into the transcendental framework, take more effort and an attentive eye, but are not only doable, but in fact necessary. Some problems, however, are particularly obstinate, and resist interpretative removal almost entirely. The most famous example is Husserl's own. The so-called 'paradox of human subjectivity', explicitly referenced in the late *Crisis*, but discussed throughout many of his works, points out the puzzling duality of phenomenologically understood subjectivity: it is at once a worldly ego and a transcendental ego, i.e., an object in the world and a sense-bestowing subject for the world. Of course, the issue here is that they are not two distinctly individuated subjects, but one, and yet, on account of their contradictory positioning with respect to the world, seem to be at odds with each other. We will recall that Husserl talks of dissolving this difficulty in the very next section of the *Crisis*. (Hua VI, §54) Coming from a philosopher generally averse to paradox, this is perhaps not surprising. Yet, most readers will probably find that his proposed solution is not entirely satisfactory. Even if the section is taken merely as a condensed allusion to results reached elsewhere, a fundamental problem still remains. It seems, namely, that Husserl's formulation of the alleged paradox, as well as his solution to it, both depend on having already 'bought into' the transcendental project. It is unclear why there should be any tension between bestowing sense on our world and on others while still being an object in and of this world, *unless* one has implicitly decided in advance that 'sense-bestowing' was somehow at least partly a *non*-mundane process or activity.² In other words, pending full acceptance of the rationale behind transcendental phenomenology, its insights might be seen as nothing more than solutions in search of problems.

This is an oversimplification, and, to an extent, an exaggeration of the theoretical issue of the exact relation between the mundane and the transcendental ego. However, the problem sketched above is indicative of two serious practical difficulties looming in the background. Given the insistence on a radical difference between empirical and transcendental knowledge – mirroring the equally radical difference between the respective egos acquiring it – the first question that arises is who exactly is the one 'doing' the transcendental experiencing. The curt answer, that it is clearly the transcendental ego, does not suffice here, for it merely shifts the

² In a generally highly uncharitable reading of Husserl, Carman raises a similar point and points to the, as he calls it, 'vicious' Husserlian circle of methods presupposing results, and vice versa. (2003: 54) We shall return to this problem repeatedly over the course of our discussion and try to work out a solution. As it will turn out, the line between a vicious and a hermeneutic circle is an exceedingly thin one, and occasionally blurry in Husserl.

problem one step further. Obviously, phenomenologists and transcendental phenomenologists alike are human beings with careers, private lives, worries, moods, emotions, etc. Yet, Husserl insists, all of this psychological and existential make-up somehow gets suspended while doing phenomenology to such a radical extent, that the remaining investigator can hardly be called a human being anymore. Instead, they are now a transcendental ego, the only theoretical platform capable of thematizing and disclosing the transcendental achievements that have been taking place anonymously up until that point.

Breaking through this anonymity is, according to Husserl, an unnatural and highly contrived act. It involves a methodologically focused shift from the natural, everyday style of living to a special kind of theoretical attitude. However, what could possibly be the motivation for this shift? It cannot be desire to better understand the transcendental depths of experience, for those are by definition closed off in the natural attitude. In other words, one cannot have them as a hazy but visible goal of investigation and methodologically build toward them, as they can only appear *after* one has perfected the laborious methods and performed the shift into a completely new and unnatural attitude. In this sense, phenomenology appears as something of a self-fulfilling prophecy: its methods designed with the goal of finding a specific kind of structure are then legitimized with this structure, tailored specifically to them, and supposedly discoverable only by them. This is the bad kind of investigative circle, for it can never eliminate the possibility that phenomenology is a self-contained bubble with an entirely fictitious subject matter.³ Husserl was not unaware of these practical questions, although his interest in them ebbed and flowed over the years, and his answers to them, implicit and explicit, wavered over several occasionally contradictory positions. As we will see, these vacillations were in harmony with larger shifts in his understanding of some core commitments of phenomenology. Thus, when Husserl coyly speaks of the “event of the transcendental epoché” (Hua xxxiv: 312), a proper understanding of this event unlocks a deep understanding of the role and place of the human being in phenomenology.

³ Nor can the motivation to engage in the Husserlian kind of transcendental research be said to arise from supposed contradictions inherent in the natural attitude. At a very basic pre-scientific level, natural experience is very rarely plagued by contradictions, and even when such cases do arise (think of, say, discrepancies in visual perception), they are taken in stride and accounted for in the course of experience. Furthermore, regardless of the possible operative structures ‘behind’ the stream of experience, knowledge of those structures simply isn’t necessary for it to function properly. A sturdier case for motivation for transcendental investigation could be made by focusing on the kind of paralogisms, and especially the antinomies, described by Kant. However, even such highly sophisticated cases of reasoning could hardly account for the radical Husserlian move of suspending the validity of the world without knowing in advance that one will then find the ‘true absolute topic of philosophy’, i.e., the transcendental ego.

We have isolated two basic questions that should be unequivocally answerable within the framework of transcendental phenomenology: *who* engages in phenomenological activity, and *why*? The long and convoluted history of Husserl's attempts to answer these reflects his repeated attempts to confront the various strands of Ancient Greek, Cartesian, and German Idealist legacies operative in his version of phenomenology. Particularly limiting in this context was the inherited ideal of a presuppositionless philosophical science, for it greatly reduced the scope of phenomena that could be used in accounting for the motivations of the philosophical beginner. This, coupled with Husserl's highly critical view on the limitations of empirical knowledge, meant that most of the historical and existential reality of the philosopher had to be ignored, if not entirely effaced, in order for the shift to transcendental knowledge to be executed. However, as we will see, this somewhat ambiguous stance on the humanity of the phenomenologist would ultimately develop into an emphatic phenomenological affirmation of possibilities that are intrinsically human.

This dissertation explores this development against the backdrop of Husserl's close collaboration with Eugen Fink, which took place during the last decade of Husserl's life. This choice is not arbitrary; the historical circumstances of Freiburg in the late 1920s and early 1930s make for a suspenseful story, and Fink was one of its main protagonists – not only as Husserl's new, highly talented protégé, but also as a student of the rapidly rising philosophical star, and, incidentally, Husserl's old protégé, Martin Heidegger. In this highly charged philosophical climate (a foreboding climate, with an imminent political and personal catastrophe for Husserl looming just around the corner), Fink was in some ways a link between two understandings of phenomenology. But our interest in him goes beyond historical circumstance. His highly original recasting of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology in terms of a *transcendental theory of method* was, among other things, an attempt to explicitly address our two guiding questions, namely the 'who?' and the 'why?' of phenomenology.

Because Fink perfectly catalyzed and amplified that strand of Husserl's thinking which was grounded in the Cartesian ideal of absolute radicality of beginning, his answer to the two questions was as counterintuitive as it was unequivocal. According to Fink, phenomenology was decidedly not a human activity, but rather a caesura in worldly history, lying outside the scope of human possibilities altogether. If the goal of phenomenological methods for Husserl was something like a de-naturalization of experience, for Fink it was a full de-humanization of the phenomenologist. This position, we shall see, did not come about *ex nihilo*. Rather, it was a reaction to, and in some ways a reaction against, Husserl's rather unsuccessful articulation of transcendental philosophy in contrast to psychology from the late 1920s. One significant boon

of Fink's radicalization of phenomenology was that it allowed him to elegantly and rather effortlessly circumvent the problem of motivation by introducing the notion of 'transcendental fore-knowledge'. This served as a copula between the two registers of experience, and provided the initial push in the direction of the phenomenological reduction. Additionally, the radicality of Fink's approach coincided and usefully aligned with Husserl's ongoing disputes over the true sense of phenomenology in the early 1930s. This was, by then, primarily a debate with Heidegger, and, for Husserl, a debunking of what he saw as the corrosive anthropologism of Heidegger's position. At that particular moment, a theoretically charged distancing from the praxis of human beings must have seemed like a good idea to Husserl, and for a brief moment in mid-1931, he seems to have almost conceded to the Finkian de-humanizing interpretation of phenomenology.

It wasn't long before Husserl realized that such a thoroughgoing revision of the basic impulses behind his philosophy was not tenable after all. Thus, already in late 1931, a crucial break with Fink took place, as Husserl managed to find other conceptual means for explaining the relation between the mundane and the transcendental. This allowed him to transform his understanding of who was phenomenologizing, and with what motivation, and ultimately to recast phenomenology as the philosophical way toward attaining what he referred to as 'higher humanity'. By the completion of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, – the crowning achievement of the Husserl-Fink collaboration – Husserl's recoil from Fink's conception of phenomenology had already been complete. The phrase 'higher humanity' which appears there, however, is only really understandable if we understand its prehistory, which is at least as old as Fink's first attempts to build upon Husserl's differentiations between psychology and transcendental phenomenology.

This does not mean that the notion of humanity is tied exclusively to the context of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. In fact, as we will try to show toward the end of our discussion, in articulating the idea of a higher humanity, Husserl was drawing upon and revising some of the concepts which had appeared as early as the important *First Philosophy* lectures. There, as in the later writings characteristic of Husserl's *Crisis*-period, 'humanity' does not simply refer to a collection of human beings, but evokes a nexus of intertwining and normatively rich concepts such as history, rationality, teleology, ethics, science, and cultural renewal.⁴ But there is some

⁴ In much the same way, 'Europe' is for Husserl not simply a designation for a continent, but the name for an entire tradition which gave birth to these regulative ideals. For a discussion of Husserl's phenomenological reflections on this topic, cf. Miettinen 2020. For a more general discussion of Husserl's, Heidegger's, Patočka's, and Derrida's views on the philosophical concept 'Europe', cf. Gasché 2009. A brief but useful reference to the different ways Husserl uses the word 'humanity' is found in Moran & Steinacher 2008: 337f., n.48.

play with double meaning in Husserl as well, particularly in the period of his commentaries on Fink's work. There, 'humanity' in the aforementioned broad sense intersects with the more local sense of the humanity of the individual phenomenologist. Indeed, their singularly important vocation, benefitting all mankind, is only conceivable if they themselves are human, and can therefore establish a meaningful rapport with non-phenomenologists.

The fact that Husserl had already had similar, if not entirely developed, thoughts shouldn't be taken to mean that no progress has been made, and that no evolution of thought has taken place. Fink's meta-phenomenological intervention was instrumental in introducing an additional layer of self-awareness into Husserlian phenomenology. It was the kind of self-awareness that made it possible to see phenomenology as taking part in the "dramatics of history" (Waldenfels 1995: 10) without falling into historicism, to see it as an eminently human endeavor without crossing into anthropologism, and, finally, to see it as a practical undertaking without succumbing to irrationalism. In that sense, although it must be conceded that the Husserl-Fink collaboration was ultimately a failure, – insofar as the project of drawing up a phenomenological systematics eventually petered out, and that which came out of it Husserl in the end rejected – it was that interesting kind of philosophical failure which enriches and furthers the debate.

So, the story we will be telling here is a complex and complicated one, but it can be summarized in two simple joint claims: Husserl's philosophy of the 1930s is best understood as an attempt to articulate phenomenology as a human, practical endeavor, and his collaborative work with Fink is key to understanding the nature of this attempt, and the motives behind it. In arguing for these claims, we will be using the questions of the 'who?' and 'why?' as our guiding thread, and will be revisiting them as they appear in various contexts throughout the discussion.

Although it focuses on a relatively short period of only a few years – beginning with Husserl's plans for a new systematic work and ending roughly with the completion of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* – this discussion does not always allow for straightforward exposition. The reasons for this are varied. On the one hand, the timeframe we are focusing on was a veritable explosion of influences on all sides. The increasing dissatisfaction with Heidegger and the parallel exposure to a relatively alien way of thinking with Fink, a rethinking of the relation to Dilthey and a growing need to present his work to foreign audiences, plus a quickly approaching political upheaval, were all factors that led Husserl to reevaluate the core tenets of his philosophy. On the other hand, almost every idea or conceptual innovation of this period, whether by Husserl, Fink, or even Heidegger, was a reaction to some existing issue or thought. Finally, for all the changes of course – occasionally major but brief, and occasionally minor

but with staying power – Husserl nevertheless managed to stay relatively consistent throughout his career. In other words, no change is too small to be ignored, but even the apparently biggest changes should not be exaggerated, for their provenance is not always philosophically transparent. All of this makes an accurate hermeneutic snapshot of this particular moment – which is what the present investigation tries to accomplish – exceptionally elusive. In order to provide a stable point of reference and orientation between these fluctuating and intersecting currents, this dissertation is structured around the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. That book, with its unique vision of a transcendental theory of method couched in ontological and metaphysical terms, will serve as a springboard for our discussion of Husserl’s different attempts to account for the ‘who and why’ of phenomenology. This strategy seems prudent and advantageous for two reasons.

Firstly, although these questions do appear in Husserl’s earlier work, they are very rarely the focus of his attention, and usually crop up as a side-effect of some other concern. It is with Fink that they become crucially important in their own right, as his focus on the nature and role of the phenomenologizing ego introduced the idea that phenomenological activity must itself be subjected to phenomenological investigation. This shift in focus then becomes tangible in Husserl’s work from these years and later as well. But, it also clarifies some of Husserl’s earlier, usually muddled reflections on these issues. In that sense, the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* acts like a large beacon, illuminating both that which immediately preceded it, and that which came immediately thereafter. Secondly, the collaboration which led to this book was decisive in preparing the last big development of Husserl’s career, insofar as it forced him to develop a richer account of the factual reality of the phenomenologist. An account of the phenomenologist’s humanity led to the insight that the transcendental attitude is necessarily intertwined with, rather than separate from, the historical subject and its various mundane attitudes and their corresponding habitus. The *Crisis*-stage of Husserl’s thought, based around the historical-teleological categories such as ‘humanity’ and ‘mankind’, would not have been possible without the prior historical opening of the category of ‘phenomenologist-as-human’.⁵

⁵ In that sense, the immediate context of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* can be seen as a preparatory stage for the *Crisis* and the texts related to it. By choosing to focus our investigation on this stage, and effectively ending our discussion with late 1933/early 1934, we are giving ourselves more space to explore the exceptionally intricate development of Husserl’s thought within a relatively short timeframe. Unfortunately, this also means that we omit detailed discussion of that part of Husserl’s thought many scholars find to be the most exciting, fecund, original, or indeed, most relevant to today’s times, namely, the period of the *Crisis* and complementary writings. This late stage of Husserl’s career has attracted considerable scholarly attention which has, in turn, led to a more general reevaluation and rejuvenation of Husserl’s large body of work. We shall briefly discuss some broad consequences of the ‘late Husserl’s’ thinking, as well as mention some avenues it opens up, in the concluding part of this work.

Thus, there is considerable explanatory force behind the contention that the specific period we are focusing on illuminates much of what would come after it. While scholars have certainly been correct to point out that the problem of history was the true novel development of Husserl's late philosophy (Carr 1987: 71; Mohanty 1995: 73), this claim must be followed by the qualification that Husserl's later interest in history itself had a history. This interest, as we shall see, properly germinated during Husserl's collaboration with Fink.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The scene-setting first chapter will open with a brief overview of the scholarly reception of the Husserl-Fink collaboration, and then provide the historical context leading to the inception of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* project. At this early stage, our discussion will be moving at a very general level; once we establish the reasons and the logic behind Husserl's plans for a systematic presentation of his philosophy, we will turn to Fink's arguments for the uniqueness of phenomenology. These arguments will turn out to hinge on his understanding of the radicality of the phenomenological science, which, in turn, is rooted in an original reinterpretation and expansion of its ontological commitments. We catch a first glimpse of this reimagining in some scattered references to the philosophical unity of ontology and meontics from this period. Although the text of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* does not explicitly refer to 'meontics', the idea of a specific kind of 'being' outside of ontology is clearly central to understanding that work. It is this idea that allows Fink to solve the aporia of "... whether and how the horizon from which 'being' [„Sein“] is finally to be understood is itself 'existent' [„seiend“]." (Hua Dok. II/1: 184/2)

Fink's unambiguously negative answer to the question above forms the backbone of his understanding of phenomenology. The centrally important distinction between transcendental and mundane being can also be put as a (me-)ontological difference between the origin of the world and the world itself. (157/143) This crucial move accomplishes two things. By casting phenomenology as a science of the 'origin of the world', it reflects Husserl's own insistence on the centrality of 'world' in phenomenology. Simultaneously, it also provides Fink with the

Let us, however, mention a few scholarly sources that will certainly prove useful to any reader looking to enter the complex field of Husserl's *Crisis* book and of the massive literature in its wake. For a general and helpful overview of the main arguments of that work, as well as of some of its surrounding context, cf. Orth 1999, Dodd 2004 and Moran 2012. For more focused discussion of specific problems, cf. the volume edited by Hyder & Rheinberger 2010. Excellent explorations of the issues on the intersection of phenomenology and history and of the rich historical and philosophical context behind the *Crisis* can be found in Carr 1987; 2014. Heffernan explores the ambiguous sense of the notion of 'crisis' in Husserl in a recent paper. (2017) Steinbock's overview of the complementary volume of manuscripts and research notes to the *Crisis* volume of the *Husserliana* is still very instructive and useful (1994), and also does a good job of preparing the reader for Steinbock's own original contribution inspired by the last stage of Husserl's career. (1995) Among original contributions sharing this inspiration, Derrida's early volume focusing on a short supplementary text to the *Crisis* is perhaps particularly noteworthy, and has become a true philosophical classical in its own right since then. (1962)

conceptual tool for explaining the entire movement of knowledge implied in phenomenology, ranging from initial to transcendental naïveté, to absolute knowledge, and ‘back’ into the world. This movement is captured by the layered notion of ‘enworlding’. In the second chapter, we first expand on the rich historical context which influenced the development of the key issues of ‘world’ and ‘worldliness’ in phenomenology. A better understanding of this context will prepare us for a discussion of the complex issue of primary and secondary enworlding, and of Husserl’s reaction to it. The rest of the chapter traces the genesis of that notion in Fink, and provides a first glimpse into its depth, i.e., into the twofold ‘transparency’ of phenomenological knowledge entailed by it. The insight that gradually emerges from this discussion is that the notion of enworlding is not merely an account of the ‘ontification of the Absolute’, but also an account of the *knower* of this constitutive process.

A look into this account reveals that the phenomenologizing ego is, properly speaking, not a human being at all for Fink, and we refer to this position as his ‘epistemological anti-humanism’. At this point, transcendental theory of method merges with metaphysics, and this counterintuitive conclusion becomes the core claim of the Finkian vision of transcendental phenomenology. In the third chapter, we demonstrate how this claim serves both as a function of, and a basis for, the self-expression of the Absolute. There is a distinct sense of metaphysical inevitability here: if the otherwise entirely ineffable absolute knowledge is to be attained, not only should phenomenological methods distance the phenomenologist from their humanity, but they in fact must do so. The phenomenological reduction thus becomes the source of the most radical transformation imaginable, insofar as it produces an ontologically heterogeneous aspect of the phenomenologizing ego, and simultaneously discloses it as its true nature. In this sense, Fink’s phenomenology is not merely non-human; if true knowledge is to be attained, it has to actively suppress the human dimension of the phenomenologizing ego, and is thus *anti-humanistic*. To be sure, there is a tinge of hermeticism to this position, and various questions inevitably arise. How could the human being ever undergo such a transformation, and what exactly would it entail? After undergoing it, how and why would they ‘return’ to the natural attitude? A specifically scientific problem concerns the language in which these non-mundane insights would then be communicated to people outside of this epistemologically privileged position: could a mundane language even serve this purpose, and could non-phenomenologists even understand these insights? Finally, the problem of motivation resurfaces in a particularly pressing form; given the unprecedented radicality of transcendental science as well as the fact that it lies entirely outside the scope of human possibilities, no mundane reasons could fully account for pursuing it. All of these questions are answered by Fink’s complex doctrine of

primary and secondary enworlding. Whether those answers are satisfactory is another issue, dependent on a number of metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological presuppositions. In any case, what seems clear is that Fink's thinking leads Husserl's phenomenology to a precipice where an explicit decision between speculation and phenomenological evidence is necessary.

Before addressing Husserl's various ways of responding to this Finkian challenge, we round off the overview of the context of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* with a brief look back at a time immediately before Fink would start working as Husserl's assistant. In the second half of the 1920s, we find Husserl trying to articulate the path into transcendental philosophy via psychology. The issues raised there, as well as the stumbling blocks encountered, would shape much of the ensuing debate between Husserl and Fink, as well as provide a general blueprint for Husserl's later rejection of Fink's position. As we trace these developments, the important notion of 'parallelism' – of psychology and transcendental phenomenology, as well as of the mundane and the transcendental ego – emerges and starts playing a progressively more important explanatory role for Husserl. However, we will see that this notion, sitting awkwardly at the crossroads between descriptive metaphor, epistemological insight, and metaphysical postulate, does not quite succeed in explaining the nature of the radically new science of phenomenology, nor the motivation for pursuing it. Considering how influential these relatively unsuccessful manuscripts were in shaping Fink's initial perspective on phenomenology, it is no wonder that the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* tackled precisely these issues with great focus.⁶

The upshot of our examination of the context behind the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, coupled with an overview of its main themes, is the surprising insight that Husserl and Fink started their collaboration with the same concerns and goals, responded to the same criticisms, and worked with the same tools, and yet ended up arguing for contradictory positions within that collaborative project. This divergence is best seen on the question of who engages in the radical science of transcendental phenomenology. Whereas for Fink there is no doubt that this

⁶ Given the scattered and somewhat confused nature of Husserl's early (which, in this context, means pre-Fink) reflections on the issue of motivation, it is perhaps not surprising that subsequent scholarship has tended to view this question as one primarily raised and explicitly discussed by Fink. His 1933 paper, in which he summarizes Husserl's phenomenology and defends it against some contemporary criticism and misunderstanding, has been particularly influential in this regard. (1966: 110ff.) One of the most famous references to this paper, and to the fact that the natural attitude contains no motive to go beyond itself, is found toward the very end of Sartre's almost contemporaneous *The Transcendence of the Ego*, where he contends that the epoché can only appear as a miracle in Husserl. (1966: 83/49) Sartre's perspective and his criticism of Husserl's vagueness on this topic were certainly hindered by limited access to numerous manuscripts on precisely this issue. For an insightful analysis of some of Husserl's earlier thoughts on the relation between the natural and the transcendental attitude from *Ideas I*, and of how they foreshadow much of what would occupy Husserl later in his career, cf. Staiti 2015.

science implies a shedding of the horizon of human possibilities, Husserl understands it as an eminently human undertaking on the road to a ‘higher humanity’, thus unequivocally rejecting the Finkian notion of secondary enworlding. What exactly does this mean, and how is this development to be explained?

The rest of the dissertation tries to answer these questions, this time by focusing much more closely on Husserl, and the evolution of his thought parallel to the unfolding of his work with Fink. The fourth chapter explores one crucial aspect of this evolution, namely, Husserl’s contemporaneous dispute with anthropologism and, in particular, with Heidegger. In exploring how this dispute was an extension of Husserl’s earlier debates with historicism, we will also see how his usual responses and counterarguments to it turned out to be ineffective against Heidegger’s reimagining of phenomenology, and blunted by a richer philosophical concept of phenomenological theory and practice. The peak of Husserl’s resistance to what he perceived as anthropologistic perversions of transcendental phenomenology was his mid-1931 lecture *Phenomenology and Anthropology*. This lecture, as I try to show, was also the moment of his greatest proximity to Fink’s anti-humanistic vision of phenomenology, but even then, this proximity was only a partial one. That the unprecedented methodological radicality of Fink’s position was a useful ally in the debate against an opponent as dangerous as Heidegger is not surprising. However, Husserl never quite shared the metaphysical commitments behind that radicality, and thus couldn’t uphold its consequences in the same straightforward way Fink could. This becomes clear even during the course of the *Phenomenology and Anthropology* lecture itself, which ends on somewhat opaque notes on the ‘intrinsic affinity’ between mundane sciences such as psychology and anthropology, and phenomenology. This ultimately leads Husserl in an unpromising and confused direction, and further obfuscates the issue of the relation between the mundane and transcendental ego. This is again illustrated on the example of our basic question of the ‘who and why’, as it becomes clear that phenomenology flounders between a striving for absolute radicality and transcendental insight, and the need to retain a meaningful relation to the worldly situation of the transcendental knower. In particular, the problem that plagues Husserl’s attempts of this time is how to set up the phenomenological project without falling into the trap of some kind of circularity, while at the same time avoiding simply presupposing the rationale and the results of that project.⁷

⁷ This difficulty becomes especially obvious once Husserl’s work from this period is contrasted with Heidegger’s hermeneutically charged phenomenology. Heidegger’s explicit embracing of a certain kind of ineliminable explanatory circularity seems to eliminate much of the problems Husserl was forced to grapple with. Further investigation of this topic would possibly show that it is not merely a matter of accepting circularity, either; perhaps an embracing of a certain kind of special presupposition, or decision, might also be necessary. Whether

Husserl was clearly aware of the mounting difficulties along the Finkian path, and he must have been aware that the philosophical public that would be open to being convinced by Heideggerian ‘anthropologicistic’ arguments would hardly be persuaded otherwise by an even sharper turn away from the factuality of the human being. Thus, by late 1931, we can identify a significant change in his approach, and find a noticeable step away from Fink’s direction. In the fifth chapter, we trace the steps of Husserl’s definitive break with the anti-humanistic thrust of Fink’s evolving thought, and demonstrate how this break also led Husserl to an emphatic reaffirmation of the humanity of the phenomenologist. Their humanity, it will turn out, flows into a broader notion of higher humanity, which, by the end of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, is explicitly articulated by Husserl as the *telos* of transcendental phenomenology. The crucial conceptual innovation that enabled this shift was the notion of the *coincidence* of the mundane and of the transcendental. This notion may appear at first to be identical with Husserl’s older concept of ‘parallelism’. However, as we argue, it was conceptually richer insofar as it introduced a historical component into the relation in the form of a *retroactive localization* of the transcendental. This innovative approach, it is argued, finally enabled Husserl to adopt a more comprehensive perspective on the uniquely ambiguous situation of the phenomenologist, who is not only a reverberation of the ‘paradox of subjectivity’ like any other human being, but also finds himself in the precarious situation of having to transcendently reflect on that paradox while expressing his findings with mundane means.⁸

that decision can be made *by* the philosopher, or whether it is, in some way, made *for* them, is a question the answer to which seems to depend on one’s philosophical sensibilities. There is perhaps a kind of an unavoidable circle there, at least in the sense that there can be no proper reason to philosophize that is itself outside of philosophy. Heidegger expresses this point well in his book on Nietzsche, when he speaks of the problem of philosophy’s self-grounding:

“It concerns the fact that, whatever philosophy is, and however it may exist at any given time, it defines itself solely on its own terms; but also that such self-determination is possible only inasmuch as philosophy always has already grounded itself.” (1961: 24/16)

It is impossible to read these lines and not be reminded of Husserl’s thoughts on the nature of the ‘absolute calling’ of philosophy, on its status as a vocation in the truest sense of the word, as opposed to a mere job or career. But much like in the case of Heidegger, this kind of a unique determination of philosophy carries with it the sense of ‘being called upon’. In what sense is the philosopher free to choose the pursuit of philosophy, then? Husserl is generally uneasy about this sort of inner tension and tries different things in order to alleviate it. We will return to this question in much more detail later in our discussion. For an interesting discussion of the general logic of this kind of interplay between the decision *for*, and the event *of*, – albeit from a Heideggerian perspective on language – see Derrida 1987: 147-54, n.1. Derrida speaks there, echoing Heidegger, of this ‘always already there’, and of a kind of originary acquiescence, an originary ‘yes’ which must be in place in order for language to ‘speak’ and be spoken. It is only a small jump from this to the theme of philosophy’s self-grounding, and one could easily see how the Heideggerian notion of an originary *Zusage* could refer to philosophy itself.

⁸ A wonderful collection of essays exploring various facets of this complex issue is found in Landgrebe 1982.

This richer phenomenological perspective on the humanity of the phenomenologist and of their peculiar science, articulated in terms of a philosophical quest for ‘higher humanity’, lets us reconstruct phenomenologically satisfying answers to the two questions guiding the discussion. A heightened phenomenological awareness of the historical and existential context determining the natural attitude shows that that essential background cannot be simply ignored, ‘turned off’, jumped over, or suspended in one go and without remainder. It may be tempting to read Husserl’s very late critical reflections on *Ideas I* as a wholesale rejection of his earlier efforts in favor of an exclusively “historical way” into transcendental phenomenology. (Hua xxix: 425) But that would be a mistake, for the difficulty described there is primarily a practical one: introducing the epoché and the reductions into the natural attitude “*in einem Sprunge*” cannot work because that would mean that phenomenology omits discussion of all the factors determining both that natural attitude and the circumstances which led to suspending it. For that reason, the reduction cannot mean a suspension of history, à la Fink, but is rather a way of illuminating the ways an attitude is embedded in history. “It therefore becomes palpable,” Husserl tells us, “that a complete systematic introduction that leads one into phenomenology begins as a universal historical problem, and must be conducted as such.” (426)

Thus, *contra* Fink, whatever phenomenology ultimately ends up disclosing, the starting point of its research must be the human being. However, *contra* various forms of historicism or anthropologism, it does not have to claim that the human being is also the endpoint of its research. This is where its claim to transcendental insight becomes centrally important, and its specific methods of uncovering anonymous constitutive mechanisms decisive. Yet, breaking through the contingency of historical, worldly existence does not mean abandoning humanity or unmasking it as an imperfect way of truth-appearing in the world. On the contrary, Husserl argues, it means transforming humanity into a more advanced and more rational form of itself, now aware of its unique place in the universe, straddling two distinct but inextricably linked registers of experience. A better understanding of the ‘who’ equips us with a more profound understanding of the ‘why’ in this case. As we try to show toward the end of our discussion, the question of motivation for pursuing transcendental phenomenology can only be answered if we recognize that it is never merely a question of *epistemological* motivation for Husserl. Rather, whatever epistemological motives there may be, they must be underpinned and driven by an *axiological* motive, since a striving for a higher rationality, and, consequently, a higher humanity, is for Husserl ultimately a striving for the good. It is no wonder that Husserl’s idea of science is thoroughly determined by notions such as radical responsibility, honesty, eternity,

new life, and harmony; his understanding of the scientific endeavor is primarily an *ethical* one.⁹ To be sure, there is an element of philosophical hubris here, and the specific pathos of Husserl's phenomenology that became more and more pronounced over the years, clearly discernible already in the early 1920s, is the dominant force holding these strands of thought together. Yet, for all its unabashed ambition and occasional bathos, Husserl's phenomenology, especially in later years, does exhibit an almost irresistible philosophical optimism. The legitimacy of this optimism and its correlate ambition, we argue, hinges on recognizing phenomenology as a properly human and humane endeavor.¹⁰

Of course, the interpretative question that forces itself on this argument, and on the dissertation as a whole, is to what extent these claims reflect what Husserl (and Fink) 'truly' believed when thinking about the 'who and why' problem. In the case of Fink, it is clear that the position sketched out in this discussion presents only a small subset of his thought, limited to a few years very early in his career. That we find there a thinker with an intimate knowledge of Husserl's work, as well as a thinker of staggering ambition and originality, is a testament to Fink's philosophical genius. However, he was no more immune to the intricate context of the time than Husserl, and no less prone to philosophical radicalization in the face of criticism. In any case, the somewhat unfavorable picture of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* that we end up painting will nevertheless hopefully show that that book was a product of a highly specific philosophical moment. This also means that it is not representative of Fink's later thought, the discussion of which we omit completely, as it is irrelevant to our discussion of Husserl.

In the case of Husserl, however, the situation is more complicated. Taken separately, the claims we will be exploring and arguing for against the backdrop of various manuscripts are relatively modest, and occasionally appear even before the work with Fink. However, when

⁹ See Bernet 1979: 129ff. for a brief but instructive formulation of this claim. "The practical motivation at work in Husserl's philosophical theory is the ethical demand for *absolute responsibility*", Bernet writes, the latter being "a responsibility which extends not only to theoretical statements and investigative activities, but also to human life as a whole." (131) We shall have more to say about the genesis of this kind of ethical demand in Husserl in the last chapter of our discussion.

¹⁰ In this dissertation, we are ignoring entirely the meta-philosophical (but also sociological and historical) question of the genealogy and coherence of supposedly universal concepts such as 'humanity', 'mankind', and 'rationality'. It is easy to see how these operative concepts betray the very specific worldview of an educated European from the turn of the century, etc. Put differently, any philosophical concept with pretensions to universality necessarily reflects a specific and relatively localized history, and is therefore in a sense parochial. The question of whether some such concepts *should* become absolutely universal is a difficult one and goes well beyond abstract ethics or axiology. The fact that even the most rarified philosophical concepts reflect a much larger economic, socio-political, and historical context is itself telling. An aspect of this issue is perhaps discernible in phenomenology's fraught relationship with presuppositions: although transcendental phenomenology wants to set itself up as a presuppositionless science, the very ideal of such a science is a product of history based on a set of presuppositions. What Husserl correctly understands toward the later part of his career is that transcendental science should work on carefully selecting the presuppositions it wants to adopt, instead of trying to eliminate them altogether.

taken together, these claims – that the transcendental ego is a specific theoretical-practical mode of the mundane ego and that the motives for adopting it develop from existential and ethical concerns, for example – do point to a somewhat ‘softer’ understanding of transcendental phenomenology. This ‘softening up’ has usually been understood as dangerous flirting with existentialism or anthropology, and seen as undermining the basic transcendental-scientific impulses of Husserl’s project. Any such ‘anthropological interpretation’ of phenomenology, it has been argued, “... was a complete misreading, possibly the most serious misinterpretation ever made in the field of phenomenology.”¹¹ (Kelkel 1991: 35) Some commentators have held that any existential reading of Husserl’s project was similarly misguided, and have argued that such interpretations were “incredible” and in need of challenging. (Embree 1999: xi) However, it is possible to avoid the pitfalls of such overly reductive approaches to Husserl’s philosophy while still maintaining that transcendental phenomenology must be able to understand itself as a human undertaking, regardless of its possible focus on formal sciences and philosophy of science. Indeed, as we try to show, the only way to fully understand that focus and the methods accompanying it is by adopting a broader perspective on the role and scope of philosophy itself. This is something Husserl understood better than most philosophers of science.

To be sure, accommodating the broader human reality in such a philosophical project means allowing for the possibility of imperfect explanation, ineradicable ambiguity, and open-ended goals. As a consequence, the phenomenological reductions are no longer understood as a philosophical ‘coming back home’ to transcendental subjectivity, because a partially obscure starting point of research cannot yield any particular knowledge in advance, least of all any knowledge of the structures disclosed only after taking a radical philosophical plunge. Some unclarity is thus installed into the very concept of motivation for phenomenology, but this unclarity is reflective of the peculiar starting point of the phenomenologist. Husserl and Fink decisively showed that this peculiarity of the philosophical beginning must itself become part of phenomenological systematics. In what follows, we turn our attention to the twists and turns of their many attempts to shed light on this moment on the brink of philosophy, and see how they, in turn, illuminate both phenomenology and those pursuing it.

¹¹ It is worth pointing out that Kelkel is echoing Derrida here, and does indeed make sure to point out that Husserl’s relation to anthropology was in fact somewhat ambiguous. A more detailed discussion of this issue with respect to Derrida need not concern us here, especially considering the fact that his (and Kelkel’s) criticism is actually aimed at anthropologism, rather than anthropology. We will see how Husserl partly navigated between these two positions in the fourth and fifth chapter.

I Husserl and Fink:

From Philosophical Systematics to a ‘Phenomenology of Phenomenology’

There are many reasons why Husserl’s intensive ten-year long collaboration with Eugen Fink is a particularly apt point of departure for a reading looking to clarify Husserl’s crucial notion of ‘humanity’. Whether the fact that those ten years turned out to be the last years of Husserl’s life imbues their collaborative work with a special kind of testamentary value is an open question; however, reasons for its peculiar importance and place within the Husserlian corpus, as well as within the wider context of phenomenology, go well beyond mere statement of historical and biographical fact. While their collaborative efforts started as an attempt to introduce some much needed systematicity and methodological uniformity into Husserl’s numerous and diverse phenomenological analyses, they also exposed phenomenology to a new, different set of questions and problems. In this regard, Fink’s contributions were instrumental, helping unearth deeply-rooted and difficult issues in need of further phenomenological clarification within transcendental phenomenology. On Husserl’s part, much of this were inadvertent consequences of working with his ardent, but also highly original research assistant. For that reason, Husserl’s relation to Fink’s interventions into his (Husserl’s) own work is much more complex and nuanced than their straightforward and warm personal relation. This tension is especially noticeable in the context of the question regarding absolute beginnings in phenomenology, i.e. the question of its speculative dimension, and its place within Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology.

The chief aim of this chapter is to demonstrate *how* exactly the development of a ‘transcendental theory of method’, which is the catchword of the Husserl-Fink collaboration, leads to an exploration of the speculative elements of phenomenology, and of its ultimate ontological commitments. This path, it turns out, is by no means straightforward, and occasionally brushes against the outermost limits of phenomenology as it is conventionally understood. The liminal problems encountered on this path are not merely minor points relegated to the esoteric realm of meta-phenomenology, however. They have the potential to significantly contribute to, and in fact transform, our understanding of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. In order to understand how they can do this, one first has to

understand the *motivation* and the *arguments* behind Fink's unique and bold reworking of transcendental phenomenology. These are the focus of this chapter.

In what follows, we will first provide a brief survey of the place Fink's collaboration with Husserl occupies in Husserl scholarship and within general history of phenomenology. As we are primarily interested in how Husserl's thought was affected by it, however, we will not be dealing with Fink's later work, slightly more distanced from Husserl and heavily inspired by Heidegger, Hegel, and Nietzsche. We will then turn to presenting the main motivations behind their collaborative work, both on Husserl's and on Fink's part. Their primary and common goal was to develop a clear, systematically consistent higher-level phenomenology – a goal motivated, as is well known, primarily by methodological concerns. As it will turn out, they had different ideas of how this goal was to be achieved. This difference is perhaps nowhere as obvious as in the question of relevant ontological presuppositions to which phenomenology would then have to commit. The third and fourth section will focus on Fink's take on this issue. First, we will summarize his presentation of the transcendental theory of method and show how it organically leads the phenomenologist to conclusions which are eminently ontological in nature. More specifically, it leads the phenomenologist to the discovery of an ontologically productive dimension of the phenomenological reduction. Thus, the phenomenological reduction simultaneously produces and discloses a specific kind of ontological dualism. Finally, the fourth section will explore this dualism in some more detail and show how it leads to the positing of a meontic supplement to ontology within phenomenology, and, ultimately, necessitates a concept of the absolute in phenomenology. These peculiar arguments, we will argue, can be read as Fink's way of addressing the phenomenologically disclosed 'paradox of subjectivity'.

This chapter will mostly focus on Fink's arguments, and it will be based primarily on the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. It will serve as a very general contextual introduction to that dense and important work, and as a gateway to the puzzling question of the epistemological and ontological status of the transcendental in Husserl.

1.1. *Between interpreting and transforming phenomenology*

History's relation to Fink, both from a philosophical and a scholarly point of view, is mostly one of cautious, subdued appreciation. This seems to hold especially true with regard to the ten-year span of his work as Husserl's research assistant, starting in 1928 and lasting until Husserl's death in 1938. While the last decade of Husserl's life has long been recognized as a particularly fruitful period, leading to some of his most original, complex, and long-lasting insights,¹² rarely has his work with Fink been recognized as an important contributing factor. Rather, the figure of Fink that has emerged is that of a devout and patient student, gifted interpreter and, finally, editor and one of key founders of the Husserl-Archives.

Particularly telling in this regard are some of the classical and most widely-used introductions and synoptic presentations of the history of phenomenology. Spiegelberg's monumental historical overview thus devotes a few cursory pages to Fink, mainly highlighting his efforts in preserving Husserl's *Nachlass*, as well as his "interpretative and apologetic essays", before concluding that Fink's critical work will require further study. (1994: 242f.) We find a similar sentiment in Moran, who, while recognizing that the lack of a detailed discussion of Fink is an unfortunate omission caused by time and space constraints (2000: 4), nevertheless sees in him little more than a "loyal assistant" (61) who "carried on Husserl's work in a relatively unchanged manner." (190) In a later and more extensive discussion of Fink, Moran more or less repeats this general assessment, this time with less underplaying of Fink's originality, but with a generally harsh conclusion. (Moran 2007a) He points out not just Fink's "weaknesses as a philosopher, both in his ability to express himself clearly and in his ability to complete his planned systematic works" (7), but also the rather unenviable status of Fink's work within history of philosophy and even phenomenology. (30) This figure of a valuable, but ultimately inessential interlocutor emerges again in the *Historical Dictionary of Husserl's Philosophy*, which additionally, and curiously, implies that some of Husserl's explicit acceptance of Fink's interpretative work might not have been motivated by philosophical concerns at all, but personal ones, – perhaps despite philosophical disagreements – with reference to Fink's unwavering friendship and support during a "dark time in Husserl's life." (Drummond 2007: 74) The reference to the dark years is repeated in Mohanty's detailed account of Husserl's mature work (2011: 147) which, unsurprisingly, discusses Fink's

¹² Cf., for example, Moran, who praises Husserl's mature philosophy for its highly interesting, but also difficult aspects, such as "his conception of constitution, the role of the ego, and the problem of intersubjectivity" (2000: 164), all issues that Fink was also highly involved in.

contributions in more detail. While Mohanty offers a very level-headed, albeit relatively short overview of the collaboration, not only does he generally avoid discussing Fink's own philosophical views, which is understandable, but he also, somewhat surprisingly, eschews any detailed discussion of the (in)compatibility of Husserl's and Fink's positions. (429ff.) His presentation, however, does tend to highlight the differences and imply incompatibilities between the two, underscoring Fink's own philosophical agenda seeking to incorporate Hegelian and Heideggerian influences into a Husserlian framework. "These are", according to Mohanty, "laudable efforts that deserve serious consideration on their own, but we must be aware of not ascribing the resulting positions as constituting the goal of Husserl's thinking." (430) The controversy and the need for further consideration combined with acute awareness of the subtlety of the subject matter are also emphasized by Bruzina in the *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology's* entry on Fink. (Bruzina 1997a) Bruzina opens with the claim that, while "[t]he historical linkage of Fink to phenomenology is undisputed", "[...] there is considerable uncertainty about attributing to him any kind of essential place in phenomenology's development." (232) His appraisal, both detailed and appreciative of Fink's originality, ends on a rather ambiguous note regarding the compatibility of Fink's own approach with that of Husserl, calling for further investigative efforts that should help us realize "what Fink contributed to Husserl's phenomenology, and therefore perhaps what that phenomenology itself really comprises." (237) Indeed, Bruzina himself offers a glimpse into what the nature of this contribution might be, when he references Fink's insistence on "precisely the critical moment intrinsically required by Husserl's own work." (ibid.) We thus read:

"Part of what Husserl never did or could do was to make it possible – even necessary – to go *beyond Husserl!* In a sense one could say that Fink, the Other within phenomenology who was faithful to Husserl to the end, became at the same time the Other without – and faithful there to the impetus of phenomenology Husserl had founded." (ibid.)

We find a similar, but this time even stronger claim in Bruzina's later major work on Husserl and Fink, – which has, in the meantime, become the gold standard with regard to the historical details of their collaboration – where we read the following startling claim:

"It is not enough to recognize the influence of Husserl upon Fink as unquestionable and profound – after all, Fink learned phenomenology from Husserl. Beyond that, if Fink's work with Husserl was a matter of helping to develop a dimension essential to the very program of

phenomenology itself, then Fink worked an intrinsic influence upon Husserl in return. Succinctly put, while Fink is clearly not intelligible without Husserl, reciprocally, in the last decade of his work, Husserl – that is, Husserl’s *phenomenology* – is not explicable without Fink.” (Bruzina 2004: 32)

We shall return to this idea of a peculiar, Finkian brand of critique which seeks to retain all the foundational tenets of Husserlian transcendental phenomenology while, at the same time, going beyond it, and try to explore it and its merits in more detail later. What has to be pointed out here is that any such approach, to an extent reveling in the tensions between the two thinkers, will be heavily indebted to the French reception of Fink’s work.¹³ Examples abound; Sartre’s *The Transcendence of the Ego*, written as early as 1934, already makes heavy use of Fink’s *Kantstudien* article and employs Fink’s reading of Husserl as part of its attempt to articulate a critique of Husserl’s transcendental idealism. But Fink’s influence in France would turn out to be much more profound than that: he would help shape much of the phenomenological discourse there in the following decades by contributing to the rich and dense vocabulary of phenomenological philosophy,¹⁴ and his own appropriation of Husserlian phenomenology would direct further attention to the idea of *limits* of the phenomenological endeavor. In a sense, much of Merleau-Ponty’s¹⁵ or Derrida’s¹⁶ work, for example, would unfold as an attempt to explore the ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ limits of the phenomenological method. This interpretive strategy of pushing Husserl’s phenomenology to its limits, which would become a staple of its French reception, has brought about a wealth of original and phenomenologically relevant insights. Of course, those insights drew their appeal precisely from the fact that a continual pushing of

¹³ For an instructive overview of the interesting history of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* manuscript and its first French readers, see the chapter on the ‘Resonance of the *vi. Meditation* in France’ in van Kerckhoven 2003: 79–84.

¹⁴ As Waldenfels points out, terms such as ‘operative intentionality’ [*fungierende Intentionalität*], ‘radical reflection’, and ‘archaeology’, which would play such an important role for Merleau-Ponty, were introduced into French phenomenology via Fink’s work. (2010: 42)

¹⁵ There are many excellent explorations of Merleau-Ponty’s complex relation to the Finkian legacy. Some of them highlight the continuity of that lineage (Bruzina 2002), while others insist on the fundamental incommensurability of their projects. (Smyth 2011) Others note a certain Finkian ambiguity in Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of the reduction. (Heinämaa 2002: 140ff.) Particularly insightful and philosophically interesting is Richir’s exploration of the notion of philosophical architectonics with respect to the distinction between the ‘phenomenological’ and the ‘symbolic’ and the place Fink and Merleau-Ponty occupy within that distinction. (Richir 1993)

¹⁶ Derrida’s early, highly enthusiastic review of Fink’s phenomenological studies (1966) indicates that Fink was a formative influence. Lawlor 2002: 11–23 and Terzi 2018 go into some more detail on that topic. For a more detailed exploration of the links between Fink’s meontic reinterpretation of phenomenology and Derridean deconstruction, cf. Bruzina 1997b.

methodological and investigative boundaries ultimately *was* a deeply Husserlian (and Finkian) impulse. We shall occasionally refer to some of these advancements throughout this discussion.

However, the French reappropriation of Husserl and Fink notwithstanding, there generally hasn't been much support for any kind of a strong 'ecumenical' reading in the recent literature.¹⁷ One possible reason for this might be the fact that Fink's contributions from this time are routinely read and evaluated against the backdrop of pronounced Hegelian and Heideggerian influences, evident practically from his earliest writings onwards.¹⁸ In yet another major contribution to the Husserl/Fink scholarship, Luft challenges any such hasty dismissal based purely on apparent incompatibility, pointing to the fact that much of the content in Fink that seems to be driven solely by Hegelian and Heideggerian concerns, actually stems from, and touches upon, problems and questions posed by Husserl himself. (Luft 2002: 188) However, while Luft's highly informed and nuanced reading of the Finkian challenge to transcendental phenomenology acknowledges its deeply Husserlian impulses, he is ultimately more reserved and cautious in his final verdict, regarding both its faithfulness to Husserlian phenomenology and its originality, than Bruzina. Fink's 'provocation', according to Luft, is fruitful primarily because it clearly shows that any thinking driven by aspirations to systematicity cannot dispense fully with speculative thought (306) – an insight certainly not completely alien to Husserl himself. We shall return to these issues later in this chapter.

The ambiguity of Fink's relation to Husserl's phenomenology has proven to be a fecund topic within phenomenology, and, coupled with a relatively recent renewal of interest occasioned by the appearances of a number of primary and secondary sources, has led to a renewed interest in Fink's actual contributions to phenomenology. These contributions were Fink's answers to certain questions posed by, and within transcendental phenomenology. However, in order to better understand the nature and scope of these answers, we have to clarify the corresponding questions first, to which we now turn.

¹⁷ For example, cf. Leichtle 2001 and Varga 2011. For a highly detailed, informative and subtle account of the differences between Husserl and Fink, cf. van Kerckhoven 2003. For an insightful reading of "an apparently small, but in reality decisive difference" between the two, see Taguchi 2006: 137ff.

¹⁸ See Mohanty 2011: 430, for example. Additionally, cf. Gorner's review of the original, German publication of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, where he is highly skeptical of any attempt to introduce Hegelian speculation into Husserlian thought, finding it fundamentally incapable of accommodating any kind of a speculative absolute. "It is significant", we read, "that Fink himself eventually abandoned phenomenology as this was understood by Husserl." (Gorner 1990: 293) Similarly, Moran maintains that there is "something hopeless about Fink's project of reintroducing a Hegelian speculative moment into the very movement that began by repudiating such speculation." (Moran 2007a: 31)

1.2. Toward the idea of a transcendental theory of method

Husserl famously insisted on maintaining the attitude of a ‘perpetual beginner’ in philosophy throughout his career. Perhaps equally famous is his insistence on eschewing ‘die großen Scheine’ of great philosophical systems and instead changing them into philosophical ‘Kleingeld’. Not only do these two demands paint a vivid picture of Husserl the philosopher, but they also mirror the basic injunction of his phenomenology: staying true to the things themselves, as they are given to us, all the while recognizing the essential openness of this task.¹⁹ At a first glance, these guidelines would lead one to believe that there might be a fundamental incompatibility between the philosophical ethos of Husserl’s phenomenology and the overarching, systematic tendencies of Fink’s work, marked by “speculations so murky and outlandish that they often sound like a parody of Derrida.” (Crowell 2001: 244)

However, it would be a mistake to regard Husserl’s phenomenology as being methodologically limited to an endlessly proliferating sequence of singular analyses, bound by nothing more than general, vague similarities in approach. On the contrary, Husserl, while being highly critical of ambitious, system-driven philosophies of old,²⁰ had continuously underlined phenomenology’s striving toward systematic self-exposition, and not just with regard to its mere academic presentation, but to the nature and content of its findings as well. He’s particularly clear on this matter in his personal correspondence, which clearly shows that the questions of systematics and of phenomenology’s possible universality span at least a decade before Fink’s arrival at the scene. The ever-expanding and transforming framework of phenomenology, coupled with Husserl’s work habits and regular dissatisfaction with earlier

¹⁹ These basic principles were present and discernable already in the *Logical Investigations* and remained operational throughout Husserl’s career, but they find their standard and explicit expression in *Ideas I*; most famously, of course, in §24, but also, e.g., in §§74-75, where Husserl aims to differentiate between different classes of eidetic sciences, contrasting the descriptive procedure of transcendental phenomenology with the functioning of exact sciences, of which mathematics, and geometry in particular, is Husserl’s go-to example. Because phenomenology is a descriptive science, it deals exclusively with ‘morphological essences’, which, at best, asymptotically approach the ideal essences of the exact sciences which are akin to “ideas in the Kantian sense”. (Hua III/1: 155/166) Given that the exact sciences and phenomenology belong to fundamentally different classes of eidetic science (158/169), it would be unfruitful to even try to ground or conduct phenomenology analogously to the way exact sciences are grounded and conducted. Importantly, it would also be pointless to expect the same type of results from phenomenology. While it might be plausibly argued that the distinctions Husserl draws here are insufficiently precise, and even that he later abandons them in favor of a different understanding of ideality, there is no doubt that these paragraphs were crucial in forming the idea of phenomenology as an essentially open scientific undertaking, and the picture of Husserl as a “philosopher of infinite tasks.” (cf. Natanson 1974)

²⁰ Both the presuppositions and the consequences of these, according to Husserl, betray a deeply-rooted methodological misguidedness. The 1911 article *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*, with its two-pronged attack on naturalism and historicism, is a classical statement of Husserl’s position on this matter. (Hua xxv: 3-62)

work, made this task very difficult to complete, however. For example, he writes to Ingarden in late 1921 that he's, for the last couple of months, been "working through his overly long manuscripts and planning a large systematic work that ought to be able to serve as the foundational work of phenomenology, building it from the ground up." (Hua Dok III, 3: 213) This work would later become the lecture course titled *Einleitung in die Philosophie*,²¹ a "basic outline of a system of philosophy in the sense of phenomenology, and in the form of meditationes de prima philosophia", as he writes to Ingarden on 31. 8. 1923. (Bw 3: 217) Husserl obviously wasn't very happy with the groundwork he laid there, however, because almost a decade later, his correspondence is still brimming with references to the problem of systematic presentation of phenomenology, "a most difficult task" owing its difficulty to the "unnaturalness" of phenomenological radicality, aimed against the naïveté of natural science and philosophy. (Bw 9: 76)

The attempts to systematically unify both the methods and the findings of phenomenology were, from Husserl's point of view, never merely driven by desire to neatly present a new philosophy. Much more importantly, they were always inextricably linked with the spirit of criticism and self-criticism structurally embedded within phenomenology itself, partly inherited from Kant's transcendental philosophy²² and partly from the Neo-Kantians of Husserl's time,²³ and then radicalized by Husserl.²⁴ Luft points out (2002: 4) an important affinity between Husserl's understanding of the relation between criticism and system and that of Paul Natorp, as presented in his 1922/23 lectures on 'Philosophical systematics'. This affinity deserves to be pointed out. Here is how Natorp formulates the issue:

"The topic of these lectures is philosophical systematics. Systematics, not system. Critical philosophy seriously challenged the pretensions of systems. A philosophy that takes Kant as its starting point will not easily forget this. Whether a system, the system, that which is definitively valid or the only thing valid – and it seems that 'System' does indeed imply definitiveness,

²¹ Cf. Hua xxxv.

²² For insight into the relation between Husserl and Kant, including the topic of the nature and scope of criticism within their respective philosophies, also see Kern 1964, especially §16.

²³ Particularly important is the influence of Paul Natorp, who, according to Sebastian Luft, was "the decisive factor that led Husserl to develop both the phenomenological reduction and his later phenomenology." (Luft 2010a: 60) Luft's thesis is not simply historical, however – he also defends the stronger thesis, namely, that it was Husserl's notion of the transcendental reduction, as it was understood within his so-called 'genetic' phenomenology, that allowed Husserl to 'cash in' on the metaphysical questions regarding the nature of the ego posed by Natorp, but deemed ultimately to be unanswerable. (81) This conclusion seems to point in the same direction as the 'speculative' dimension insisted on by Fink.

²⁴ For a detailed discussion, cf. Luft 2002: 6ff. Luft's book positions the question of systematics and methodology within the context of Husserl's thought masterfully, and provides both a wealth of information on this topic as well as a careful estimation of Fink's contribution in this area.

singleness of validity – is possible is something that may under no circumstances be taken for granted before being investigated. Rather, it is precisely that which is to be questioned: If a system, if the system is at all possible, it's possible only as a system of *critique* itself.” (Natorp 2004: 1)

Now, since Natorp here accepts, and operates with, Plato's understanding of philosophy, according to which it's essentially a *striving* toward wisdom and knowledge, rather than knowledge itself, he concludes that a genuine philosophical 'system' is only that, which asks about the possibility of systems, i.e. – a philosophical systematics, a system of philosophical questioning, or, put succinctly: a system of *critique*. (2)

This sort of 'guided openness' is precisely what Husserl was trying to achieve, and the criticism that Natorp refers to, harking back to Kant, seems to have been 'hardwired' in Husserl's phenomenology from very early on.²⁵ However, actually formulating the way this critique was to be carried through turned out to be a more complex issue than perhaps originally thought. Part of the reason for this, certainly, was due to the fact that phenomenology, especially after its transcendental turn, was already by definition a critical philosophy – the transcendental reduction was, for Husserl, a philosophical way out of the naïveté of the natural attitude.²⁶ As he quickly realized, however, retaining the spirit of critical philosophy even after the natural attitude was, in a sense, 'overcome' through application of the methodological tools of the epoché and the reduction meant that a critique of a higher order was necessary. The aim

²⁵ Cf. here Husserl's letter to E. Parl Welch dated 17./21. 6. 1933 (Bw 6: 456ff.), again pertinently chosen by Luft as a closing statement of his book (2002: 307). In the letter, Husserl makes the following salient point:

“I beseech you not to refer to my philosophy as a 'system'. Because, forever ruling out all 'systems' is precisely its intention. It wants to be a rigorous science that systematically works out its problems, methods, and theories in an infinite progress.” (Bw 6: 459)

Given the context of the aforementioned letter, namely the chance for presentation of Husserl's thought to the American public, it is worth reading as a particularly clear document of Husserl's self-understanding and self-exposition at a mature age.

²⁶ For a discussion of the evolution of the concept of naïveté in Husserl, see Staiti 2014, and for a recent discussion of the motif of leaving naïveté behind through a transcendental 'awakening' in the context of the *Crisis* book, cf. Knies 2020. Whereas naïveté initially functions as something implicitly negative and restricting in Husserl (cf., for example, Hua xxv: 13), something to be philosophically overcome, it later assumes the role of an essential, positive precondition for phenomenology. This is a point touched upon by Fink as well, and he may have influenced Husserl's move toward a more positive and inclusive notion of naïveté. Fink was generally unhappy with Husserl's terminological choice of *natürliche Einstellung*, and preferred to use the term *Weltbefangenheit*, finding it more appropriate for expressing the universal nature of the natural attitude, while avoiding the ambiguity of Husserl's use of the term: “The Husserlian expression, natural attitude, is given to misunderstanding, and he himself uses it in two ways: 1) the immediate life-attitude, that is pre-theoretical, as opposed to the theoretical-reflective attitude; 2) the opposite of the transcendental attitude.” (Fink 2008: 138; Z-xi, iii/5a) For an account of what Fink understands under the term *Weltbefangenheit*, namely an 'ontic attitude', see *ibid.*, 214f., Z-xiii, xviii/2a; additionally, compare Cairns 1976: 95.

of this higher-level critique was to go beyond a certain ‘transcendental naïveté’ that remains well after we’ve stopped being “children of the world” and have abjured all the dogmatic guises of universal natural experience and knowledge. (Hua VIII: 169f./370f.) At its most basic, the question of transcendental naïveté is in fact a question of transcendental evidence. Positing transcendental evidence as a problem, and then resolving the difficulties it presents us with, is meant to quash a lingering danger of transcendental phenomenology: even after we’ve gone through the naïveté of the natural attitude and have opened up the field of transcendental experience, described by a transcendental *scientia universalis* (170/371), the question remains: “Couldn’t my entire transcendental past and future, ultimately, be a transcendental illusion?” The only way to eliminate this possibility from phenomenology would be to eliminate it with absolute certainty. “Thus”, concludes Husserl, “before us still stands the great task of the *apodictic critique of transcendental experience*.”²⁷ (169/370) The task of an apodictic self-critique was explicitly referred to and taken up, *via* Cartesian route, in *Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Hua xxxv: 75-246), and then again in *Erste Philosophie* (Hua VII; Hua VIII). This quest for apodicticity through self-critique was pursued at the very apogee of Husserl’s Cartesianism, and is dominated by discussions of the concept of the phenomenological reduction. While it could be argued he ultimately modified his views on Cartesianism,²⁸ Husserl nevertheless continued to insist on the principal necessity and singular importance of a critique of transcendental experience and knowledge. Almost a decade later, he differentiates between two levels of transcendental phenomenology. We thus read the following in the *Cartesian Meditations*:

“We see in advance that the scientific efforts for which we found the collective name, transcendental phenomenology, must proceed in two stages. In the first stage the *realm accessible to transcendental self-experience* [...] must be explored – and, at first, with simple devotion to the evidence inherent in the harmonious flow of such experience, while questions pertaining to an ultimate criticism, intent on apodictic principles governing the range of evidence, are set aside. [...] The second stage of phenomenological research would be precisely

²⁷ A short text from the same period titled *Ein schwieriger Punkt der Kritik Descartes’* (Hua VII: 335-43/419-30) also tackles the problem of transcendental evidence. Although this text was primarily meant to elaborate on the differences between Descartes’ philosophy and phenomenology, showing how Descartes’ *ego cogito* was, for the most part, an answer to the questions posed by ancient skepticism, it also illustrates Husserl’s general acceptance of the Cartesian road toward apodictic self-critique of the time.

²⁸ Which, as Luft argues, doesn’t necessarily mean (and it would in fact be mistaken to take it to mean) that Husserl later completely renounced his previous work. On the contrary, it could be argued that he recognized the inherent limitations of the Cartesian approach and transformed it, thereby expanding and enriching his earlier work. (Luft 2002: 8-15)

the *criticism of transcendental experience* and then the criticism of *all transcendental cognition*.” (Hua I: 68/29)

In *Formal and Transcendental Logic*, a text from roughly the same period, we read the following:

“It was very late before I recognized, not only that the entire criticism of evidences, and particularly of judicative evidences (more precisely, the evidences included among categorial activities) should be carried on within the frame of phenomenology – in the present exposition that is a matter of course –, but also that this whole criticism leads back to an *ultimate criticism*: a *criticism of those evidences that phenomenology at the first, and still naïve, level carries on straightforwardly*. But that implies: *The intrinsically first criticism of cognition*, the one in which all others are rooted, is transcendental self-criticism *on the part of phenomenological cognition itself*.” (Hua xvii: 294f./288f.)

Obviously, then, the goal of a methodic transcendental self-critique was nascent within Husserl’s phenomenology from very early on, and intertwined with the systematic impulses driving his thought. Because phenomenology is a thoroughly critical philosophy from the very outset, this transcendental self-critique, meant to eliminate transcendental naïveté, is in fact *the critique of a critique*, i.e. a higher-level, or meta-, phenomenology. Husserl recognizes this, and in fact refers to it, viz. to this second stage of phenomenological research, as a ‘phenomenology of phenomenology’. (Hua xxxiv: 176)

The years 1930/31, in which Husserl officially tasked Fink with reworking his *Cartesian Meditations* and sketching out an outline of a “System of phenomenological philosophy”,²⁹ were marked by a confluence of factors which would prove to be pivotal for the ensuing collaboration between Husserl and Fink. On the one hand, while Husserl himself was somewhat undecided on what exactly he wanted to accomplish with the *Cartesian Meditations*,³⁰ there was no doubt that his aim was to “try to make them a more comprehensive, a more fully systematic statement of his phenomenology.” (Bruzina 2004: 106) At the time, Fink had already developed a deep understanding of what exactly this systematic statement

²⁹ Cf. Hua Dok. II/2: 3-10.

³⁰ That is, he seems to have been undecided between publishing the *Meditations* as the newest general statement of his position with a focus on the topic of the reduction, in which case an additional decision would have to be made with regard to the specific analyses that would then have to be either included or omitted, on the one hand, or publishing them as a work with a more specific focus, namely defending phenomenology against contemporary criticisms, on the other. (van Kerckhoven 1989: 81f.) Fink’s 1933 *Kant-Studien* article, ‘Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik’ is a robust attempt at the latter. (Fink 1966: 79-156)

was supposed to entail, as visible from his *Assistenzentwürfe zu Husserls systematischem Werk*. (Hua Dok. II/2: 3-105) Bruzina summarizes it in the following way:

“For Fink, Husserl’s ‘System’ was intrinsically ‘open’ and dynamic. It was not a totalizing plan but a dynamic interplay between concrete investigations and ‘speculative’ projections. Emerging from the investigations in the first place, the ‘speculative’ components gave sense and direction to those analyses, while the investigations of detail continually broke open the design of laid out in these ‘speculative’ comprehensions, thereby forcing their repeated interpretive recasting.” (Bruzina 1997a: 236)

‘Speculative projections’ notwithstanding, this description seems to correspond to Husserl’s own understanding of phenomenological systematics quite closely. The affinity between Husserl’s and Fink’s understanding of systematics and its place in phenomenology is further highlighted by Fink’s early recognition of the need for a methodical and methodologically driven meta-phenomenology. The task of this meta-phenomenology, or meta-reflection, would be to fully account for a naïveté which, for Fink, isn’t simply a temporary state within the natural attitude, but, in fact, a transcendental fact that has to be integrated into the system of phenomenology:

“Phenomenological investigation necessarily begins in a certain naïveté; not simply insofar as the investigation begins by thematizing originary life, whose having-a-world and being-in-the-world are brought to the level of a reflecting consciousness, but the ‘transcendental’ attitude itself is, in a profound sense, still naïve. It takes difficult methods to ground an integral philosophy.” (Fink 2006: 44; Z-I, 53b)

Fink’s *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* is an attempt at one such grounding.³¹ Written in the second half of 1932, it explicitly takes on and continues the Husserlian theme of a critique of critique, and does it under the heading of a ‘transcendental theory of method.’ Essential to this meta-critique is the recognition that it cannot proceed on its own and develop itself solely from within itself, but must in fact be traced throughout the very proceeding of phenomenology, as it is inextricable from the actual method and content of phenomenological analysis. Again, this is fully in line with Husserl’s understanding of the issue, and illustrates well just how close Fink

³¹ Cf. Hua Dok. II/1, henceforward referred to as (SCM). All the passages will refer to the German pagination, and will use Ronald Bruzina’s 1995 translation. For a full reference, see ‘Bibliography’ under the heading Hua Dok. II/1.

felt his own work was to the Husserlian transcendental project. This project culminates in a transcendental self-understanding of the phenomenological *scientia universalis*, which integrates the two stages, or levels of phenomenology, disclosed by Husserl. Here, the parallel between the two stages in phenomenology and the Kantian transcendental theories of elements and method is clear and explicitly (and repeatedly) referred to by Fink himself:

“The phenomenological system itself as the architectonic of transcendental philosophy cannot be drawn up ahead of time, but is only *to be obtained from the ‘matters themselves’ by passing through concrete phenomenological work*. It is the proper task of the *transcendental theory of method* to make phenomenologically understandable the whole systematic of phenomenological inquiry, the structure of methodological procedure, the rank and style of *transcendental cognition* and ‘science’. Its task, therefore, is to submit the phenomenologizing thought and theory-formation that functions anonymously in phenomenological labors to a proper transcendental analytic, and thus to complete phenomenology in ultimate *transcendental self-understanding about itself*. In other words, the transcendental theory of method intends nothing other than *a phenomenology of phenomenology*.”³² (SCM: 8f./8)

With this, the stage is set for a discussion of the difficulties regarding the ‘*schwierigen Methode*’ necessary for the ‘completion’ of phenomenology. In this respect, Fink’s *Sixth Meditation* does not disappoint: the text is a dense and intricate one, opening up a host of questions, and usually offering only partial answers and semi-formed opinions. Furthermore, these weren’t always shared by Husserl, making the question of delineation between the two even more difficult.³³

Deciding how much of Fink’s thinking was, at the same time, Husserl’s *own* thinking is a task that, practically speaking, may be impossible to fulfill. But this is not our goal just yet.

³² With regard to the phrase ‘phenomenology of phenomenology’, see Luft’s remark. (2002: 16) He challenges the opinion that this phrase is, at its core, a very un-Husserlian one, introduced into phenomenology by Fink. Husserl’s own use of the phrase dates from 1930 (Hua xxxiv: 176), and it therefore cannot be established who used it first. However, even if not in letter, the phrase is fully consistent with Husserl’s earlier discussions of a critique of a critique in spirit. In this respect, Fink’s use of the phrase in the *Sixth Meditation* is continuous with this goal.

³³ Secondary literature abounds with references to this puzzling problem of historical hermeneutics, and we’ve referred to some of these in the previous section. Husserl’s glowing praise of Fink’s *Kant-Studien* article is the most famous example, of course. (Fink 1966: vii) Also see Husserl’s letter to Daniel Martin Feuling from the same year, where he refers to the communal nature of his and Fink’s thinking, as, “so to speak, two communicating vessels.” (Bw 7: 89) On the other hand, Husserl’s personal remarks from the same period sometimes express vehement disagreement with some of Fink’s theses. This dissonance is occasionally so obvious, that one might have to wonder “just how fully Husserl really understood what Fink’s position was.” (Bruzina 2004: 108) However, as Bruzina adds, such disagreements within transcendental phenomenology are precisely a sign that it’s working as intended, so to speak.

We've seen how the idea of a higher-level critique, formulated as a phenomenology of phenomenology, organically emerges within phenomenology. This critique, unlike the initial one with which phenomenology begins, both starts and takes place at a transcendental level. Both Husserl and Fink, and for much the same reasons, believed it was decisive in the quest for a fully-formed transcendental phenomenology, although they seemed to have only a partial idea of what exactly a 'fully-formed transcendental phenomenology' ought to entail as they were going into the project of developing a transcendental theory of method.

This idea was gradually becoming clearer over the course of their joint work on the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, but it also seems to have led to a divergence of their respective understandings of where phenomenology ultimately ends. Fink's answer involved a turn toward a 'constructive' phenomenology, based on the concepts of the 'meontic' and of the absolute. Husserl, on the other hand, obviously leaned toward a more classically phenomenological conceptualization of the structure and style of transcendental cognition. It was in this context that a first approach to the 'limits of phenomenology' was made, both on Husserl's, and on Fink's part. Let us now take a closer look at the development and the arguments of the transcendental theory of method, and see how they transform and deepen the phenomenologists' understanding of phenomenology itself.

1.3. *The unique status of phenomenologizing activity*

The *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* is, without a doubt, the key document of the Husserl-Fink *sympilosophiein*, detailing their agreements and disagreements over various issues raised over the course of the book. It is also a highly ambitious text, wide in scope and far-reaching in its claims. As a matter of fact, the boldness of some of its claims, coupled with their occasionally highly speculative character, gives the text a highly unusual, and, at times, downright un-phenomenological flavor. Its occasional *un*-phenomenological thrusts, however, should not be taken to mean that the text is at times merely *non*-phenomenological; rather than simply failing to adhere to well-established principles of phenomenological research, it sometimes seems to radicalize them to the point of undoing the very logic behind them, thus exposing the phenomenological method as too limited or unfit for accomplishing what it itself has set to accomplish. In other words, it takes phenomenology itself down a phenomenological road, and brings it to the precipice of internal self-contradiction. This is why there seems to be something so disconcerting about the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* and the 'phenomenology of

phenomenology' it proposes, and why "this hybrid text [...] must have a chilling effect" on anyone who accepts the basic tenets of Husserl's phenomenology. (Crowell 2001: 244) This 'chilling effect' is owing to two separate factors. On the one hand, it is clear that Fink's careful reading of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, which at times almost resembles a 'deconstruction' of it, is highly informed and not at all random or based on misunderstanding. Husserl's general assent throughout the work, coupled with his earnest attention and careful probing at times of disagreement with Fink, confirms as much, and lends legitimacy to Fink's reading. In other words, "Fink's brilliant critique", which presents "a profound challenge [...] to Husserl's vision of a transcendental phenomenology" (Hopkins 1997: 73), is a work that deserves to be taken seriously and on its own terms, not least because its terms *are* the terms of transcendental phenomenology. On the other hand, the way Fink uses these terms seems to be designed to lead the phenomenologist out of their comfort zone. A reader need not be particularly attentive to notice that Fink's discussion, while nominally an essay in methodology, is in fact framed in terms and problems such as absolute beginnings, speculation, constructive phenomenology, and, perhaps most importantly, ontology. Understanding how a transcendental-phenomenological analysis of these deepest issues necessarily follows from investigations that are initially 'merely' methodological means breaking through the transcendental naïveté that remains after the initial naïveté of the natural attitude has been overcome. This breakthrough had already been announced in the 'Second Cartesian Meditation' as possible only via a radically new science of a peculiar and unprecedented nature. (Hua I: 68/29) Crucially, this science, the task of which is a laying open of the field of transcendental experience with respect to its universal structures (66/27), is already seen as a fundamental deviation from the Cartesian course heretofore taken not just by much of philosophy, but by phenomenology itself. (69/30) But how is this unprecedented science to be construed? In order to understand this, it is necessary to first take a closer look at what is understood by transcendental naïveté in this context.

The philosophical reduction is understood, both by Fink and Husserl, as the starting point of phenomenology, one that discloses the reductive givenness of transcendental life to the phenomenologist, and allows them to make the first survey of its being and its general structures. It is also, however, understood as the primal act of philosophy proper. This initial and striking act of letting go of one's entire set of beliefs and presuppositions, once described by Lyotard as a dismissing of an entire culture and history (1954: 4), does not, as is well known, signal the end of philosophy, but the possibility for a radically new philosophical beginning. Or, as Husserl himself aptly phrases it in 1924: "But perhaps things are just such that to

surrender everything means to gain everything.” (Hua VIII: 166/367) Now, if the reduction is the most radical and universal act of phenomenology, one which discloses transcendental subjectivity to the phenomenologist as his ultimate investigative goal, then one could indeed say that “*philosophy itself* would be nothing but the systematic unfolding of transcendental subjectivity in the form of a systematic transcendental self-theorizing on the basis on transcendental self-experience and its derivatives.” (167/368) The act of reduction thus opens up the possibility for philosophy, i.e. for the first stage of phenomenological research, as referred to by Husserl in the *Second Meditation*. (Hua I: 68/29) But “systematic transcendental self-theorizing based on transcendental self-experience and its derivatives”, while certainly grasping a part of phenomenological activity, has a certain ring of finality to it. Could it be that simply accepting this initial discovery of transcendental subjectivity, as it is, as the end result of phenomenological analysis would be an uncritical way of engaging with it, and would still constitute a certain transcendental naïveté? Rather than being the final, if endless, field of research, might not transcendental subjectivity as it was initially envisaged by Husserl be but one stop on the journey of phenomenological reduction? The entire *Sixth Meditation* is driven by this thought. The radicality of phenomenology, made possible by the reduction, ultimately demands a ‘phenomenology of the phenomenological reduction’, which is the principal and fundamental problem of the transcendental theory of method. (SCM: 32/29) Not following this path would mean succumbing to the transcendental naïveté which, according to Fink, “consists in our unfolding of and explicating transcendental life only in the *presentness* [*Gegenwärtigkeit*] in which it is given us by the reduction, without entering by analysis into the ‘inner horizon’ of this life, into the performances of constitution.” (5/5) While crucial, however, this particular formulation of Fink’s will quickly turn out to be somewhat misleading, or, at the very least, incomplete. The focus on the ‘inner horizon’ of transcendental life, i.e. on its *Konstitutionsleistungen* might initially lead one to believe that Fink is implicitly criticizing Husserl for focusing exclusively on describing the present structural side of things, while ignoring their constitutive background. But Husserl had already long been acutely aware of these different aspects of transcendental life and of the necessity to address them in methodologically appropriate ways,³⁴ and Fink, of course, knew this. However, the way Fink

³⁴ Hence the well-known methodological distinction between static, or descriptive [*beschreibende*] phenomenology, on the one hand, and genetic, or explanatory [*erklärende*] phenomenology, on the other. This distinction finds its earliest clear formulation in a research manuscript from 1921 titled *Statische und genetische phänomenologische Methode*. (Hua XI: 336-45/624-34) There and elsewhere, static phenomenology is understood as analysis of the noetico-noematic structure of different types of apperception, while genetic phenomenology serves to analyze the form and genesis of apperceptions according to the essential laws which govern them. In a sense, Husserl’s use of the concept of ‘genesis’ here is slightly misleading, because it has relatively little to do

aims to approach and question the concept of constitution is very different, and, as it will turn out, in a certain sense deeper, than that of immediately and straightforwardly phenomenologically disclosing the sediments implicit in the present “habituality of having the world” [*Habitualität der Welthabe*]. (6/6) Thus, the first steppingstone of a transcendental theory of method is to caution the phenomenologist against taking the solitary transcendental life, as it is initially disclosed by the reduction, at face value. Fink’s argument here is more or less a continuation of Husserl’s argumentation from the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation*. It is also framed in terms of subjectivity and intersubjectivity; namely, should phenomenological work, after carrying out the reduction and disclosing the transcendental ego, immediately press ahead to any of the numerous potential fields of research within static and genetic phenomenology, there is the imminent danger of overseeing “the hidden implications of the ego: co-existent transcendental intersubjectivity.” (ibid.) Rather, the methodologically correct way would be to explore the thematic field of the transcendental ego in its entirety, thereby gaining access to the final form [*Endgestalt*] of the reduction, viz. intersubjective reduction, which enables the phenomenologist to understand the intersubjective world as the correlate of a transcendentially communicating constitution.³⁵ Again, this was nothing new for Husserl, who had become explicitly aware of these issues quite early, even if his proposed solutions might have first been worked out differently, or not at all.³⁶

It is at this point that Fink’s understanding of phenomenology takes its first significant departure from Husserl. Whereas Husserl, at least the one from the first five *Meditations*, might have seemed content to continuously fine-tune the transcendental-phenomenological analyses of the transcendental ego, Fink submits that the familiar regressive style of phenomenology might have its inherent limitations. While intentional-constitutive analysis is a necessary precondition for reaching the “at first unresolvable ‘problems at the margins’ of regressive phenomenology” (7/7), it fails at analyzing the outer horizons of transcendental life. This failing, importantly, cannot be resolved by repeated phenomenological questioning – at least

with its ordinary meaning, e.g. with a becoming within a flow of time. He recognizes as much, and underscores that the genesis in question, this history of consciousness, doesn’t concern any factual apperception, stream of consciousness, or human being, but rather the primordial modi of genesis of apperception, from which individual apperceptions can then unfold. (339/627) We shall return to this complex issue later, and especially with respect to a third ‘kind’ of phenomenology, i.e. phenomenological approach, namely that of the so-called ‘generative phenomenology’. Particularly interesting and enlightening here are Anthony Steinbock’s contributions to this dimension of Husserl’s phenomenology. Cf. Steinbock 1995a for a condensed overview of ‘generativity’ in Husserl, and 1995b for a book-length discussion.

³⁵ This, as is well known, is the road explored not only by Husserl, but also by a number of philosophers working in his wake. See, for example, Schutz 1970: 51-84, Mensch 1988, Zahavi 1996.

³⁶ See, for example, §53 in *Hua VIII*: 169-81/370-81, dating from 1924.

not in any familiar way. In other words, it is not a matter of phenomenological inquiry going far or deep enough. What is needed, rather, is a change in the very *style* of phenomenologizing. It is a style going beyond reductive, intuitively demonstrable givenness, and into motivated speculation. Fink's name for this style of phenomenologizing is *constructive phenomenology*, an all-encompassing term for those phenomenological theories which, by way of 'motivated constructions', go beyond the reductive givenness of transcendental life. (12/11) Importantly, 'construction' is here understood as a necessary supplement to the central phenomenological concept of 'constitution'. The full weight of Fink's earlier references to the liminal problems and outer horizons of transcendental life is first revealed when we realize that construction begins where constitution ends. The task of a constructive phenomenology, we learn, is to first correctly ask, and then ultimately answer the transcendental questions regarding the 'beginning' and the 'end' of world-constitution. (ibid.)

This discussion is, of course, still very vague. What exactly is to be understood under the heading 'reductive givenness'? Are 'transcendental life' and 'transcendental ego' one and the same for Fink and Husserl here? To what degree is changing the style of phenomenologizing even possible before it means abandoning phenomenology? What are 'motivated constructions', in what way are they motivated, and how is 'construction' to be understood here? Finally, what is to be found at the outer horizons of transcendental life, and does it qualify as phenomena in the classical sense? A corollary question forces itself here: does phenomenology necessarily operate on an exclusive disjunction between being-a-phenomenon and not-being-a-phenomenon, or could there indeed be an in-between that necessitates an expansion of and in phenomenological methodology and vocabulary? We will try to offer plausible answers to some of these questions. Let us first follow Husserl and Fink a bit further in order to attain a firmer grasp on these issues.

Fink's proposal of a constructive phenomenology has led us, and for the first time in such an explicit way, to the controversial idea of the *limits of phenomenology*. Initially, the 'outer horizons' of reductive givenness, whatever was understood by that phrase, surely must have seemed to Husserl dangerously close to being beyond the grasp of phenomenology, and thus, *eo ipso*, beyond philosophy itself. Especially damning here must have been the close relation, proposed by Fink, between liminal phenomena and construction. Although Husserl doesn't protest Fink's initial use of the term 'construction' in the *Sixth Meditation* (7/7), and later treats it as an integral part of phenomenology, there is ample evidence that he had considered the term as being inherently opposed to the main ideas and principles of phenomenology. He mentions it as early as 1913, with a clearly negative connotation (Hua

III/1: 119/128), and later, precisely in the *Cartesian Meditations*, explicitly contrasts phenomenology with ‘metaphysical adventure’ and ‘speculative excess’ (Hua I: 166/139), opposing it to metaphysical construction laden with theoretical and historical presuppositions. (177/150f.) “It stands in sharpest contrast to all that,” we read, “because it proceeds within the limits of pure ‘intuition’, or rather of pure sense-explication based on a fulfilling givenness of the sense itself.” (ibid.) It is thus safe to say that the concept of ‘construction’ in Husserl truly appears almost exclusively with a negative meaning. (Luft 2002: 187) Yet this absolute rejection of methods transcending ordinary experience seems to have waned slightly around the time of the intensive work on the *Sixth Meditation*, and Fink’s influence here cannot be overstated. A manuscript passage of Husserl’s, titled ‘Going back to the transcendental theory of method. Possible experience: expanding and transcending it in transcendental phenomenology’ from this period illustrates this point well. Husserl starts here by first posing the general question of how phenomenology ought to approach the issue of world-constitution. After framing the discussion in the same terms as Fink, he goes on to point out the basic tension between a rigorously phenomenological approach, and the Finkian alternative:

“Isn’t 1) descriptive phenomenology (ultimately) the primal sphere of phenomenology, its beginning? 2) By further proceeding in the transcendental interpretation of the world-phenomenon and disclosing the transcendental infinitudes as existing in an absolute sense, phenomenology also oversteps the primal sphere of description. Thus, with an expansion of the concept of possible experience, it expands the primal sphere of possible transcendental experience into one such infinite sphere.” (90)³⁷

Now, while this modification initially doesn’t seem to interfere with phenomenological analysis, the expanded field of possible experience now allows for a wider array of mundane phenomena to be used as ‘transcendental guidelines’, i.e. to be analyzed with respect to their transcendental correlations to self-, inter-, and world-experience. The difficulty here is obvious – a widening of the sphere of what counts as possible experience presents the phenomenologist with the obligation to analyze phenomena they are by definition not equipped to analyze. These can range from liminal generative phenomena (such as procreation, birth, and death), to liminal

³⁷ Zurückführend auf die transzendente Phänomenologie. Mögliche Erfahrung und ihre Erweiterung und Transzendierung in der transzendentalen Phänomenologie (Husserl-Nachlaß, Msk. A VII 17/14b). This manuscript page is part of the A group of manuscripts (Mundane Phenomenology), subgroup VII (Theory of World-Apperception), convolute 17, all written between 1929 and 1933 and transcribed by Steven Spileers. All the quotes from the manuscript presented here are taken from van Kerckhoven 1989: 89f..

states of conscious experience (such as sleeping, dozing off, dreaming, hypnosis, pathological states, etc.), to problems which undoubtedly fall under the heading of metaphysics (i.e. absolute beginnings, teleology, pre-subjective and post-subjective states of affairs), and finally to theological problems (such as the experience of the existence of a deity). Husserl refers to these problems as belonging to ‘the realm of transcendence’, i.e. “the realm of that which is in principle unexperientable, not ‘representable’ by means of any analogy based on an intentional modification of originary experience.” (ibid.) Gaining access to this realm was, of course, precisely the idea behind Finkian constructive phenomenology.

These passages reveal that Husserl was clearly fully aware of, and perhaps slightly apprehensive about, the challenge this proposal of Fink’s presented for transcendental phenomenology. At the same time, however, they indicate a readiness to radically question the nature and legitimacy of phenomenology’s transcendental claims via a general discussion of its transcendental methodology, because “phenomenological theory itself must also be questioned with respect to its transcendental origin: being an absolute science, phenomenology must obtain an iterable self-understanding by referring back to itself.” (ibid.)

We’ve pointed out the idea of constructive phenomenology as the first considerable ‘innovation’ Fink proposes in the course of the *Sixth Meditation*. We now come to the second one, which concerns phenomenology’s self-understanding, i.e. the nature of its scientific reflexivity, or *Selbstbezogenheit*. While this topic certainly wasn’t new for Husserl, its appearance here constitutes a turning point for our present discussion.

The aforementioned conception of a constructive phenomenology is profoundly and organically tied to the question of phenomenology’s self-understanding for Fink. Both feed into the overarching project of a phenomenology of phenomenology, which in turn ‘completes’ the system of transcendental phenomenology by providing it with its architectonic. However, it is only through understanding Fink’s appropriation of Husserl’s model of phenomenology’s self-understanding that the true implication of constructive phenomenology reveals itself. Constructive phenomenology deals with the outer horizons of the immanent givenness disclosed by the reduction. These outer horizons encircle the transcendental givenness, i.e. ego, and are part of it, but their relation is problematic, insofar as it is not clear what, if any, type of access the transcendental ego has to them. This is why it might initially seem that the ‘problem’ of constructive phenomenology is, ultimately, still an *epistemological* problem, viz. a problem of first determining what falls under the scope of methodological method, and what doesn’t, and that analyzing it accordingly. However, Fink warns against understanding the proposed transcendental theory of phenomenological method as a scientific methodology in any

mundane sense, pointing out that it's neither an *ex post facto* reflection on existing research, nor an a priori projection of what counts as relevant research. (SCM: 21/19f.) It is, rather, a specific type of reflection which aims at thematizing the unthematized 'background' of phenomenological research – the background which makes all phenomenological research possible. It is in this sense that a phenomenology of phenomenology takes place at the transcendental level.

But, if this specific type of reflection is not simply reflection of a higher-order, i.e. if this transcendental 'reflection' cannot simply be compared to, or modeled after reflection in the usual or mundane sense (15/15), how is it to be understood? Fink's answer to this question is complex and, surprisingly, couched in *ontological*, rather than epistemological, terms. Let's follow his reasoning here a bit further.

The three general roads scientific self-understanding or self-reflection takes are that of self-relativizing (history and historical research being exemplary here) "through anticipation of *its becoming a theme in the future*", a "thematization that takes itself as a mere exemplary applied case" as in the case of logic, and finally, and, phenomenologically speaking, most interestingly, the recognition that established scientific facts are themselves relative to the domain of the science itself, like in the case of psychology. (17f./15f.) We read:

"Here is a science that refers to itself in that psychological cognition is itself something psychologically given, a psychological fact, and *as such* falls within the thematic domain of psychology. The theory of historical science and logic are sciences of the *straightforward attitude*, whereas the thematic domain for psychology is from the first only given in a *reflective attitude*. That also conditions the character of the self-reference proper to it. Its self-reference has the structure of a *reflection on a higher level*." (18/17)

It is clear why the parallel between phenomenology and psychology is a particularly interesting one, then: they initially seem to share a certain structural loop, insofar as the results of their investigations are inherently, ontologically and epistemologically speaking, of the same nature as their investigative process and methods.³⁸ Furthermore, this similarity might naturally lead

³⁸ Of course, Husserl returned to the difficult topic of the great proximity between phenomenology and psychology on many occasions, and had already extensively written about it long before Fink revisited the topic in the *Sixth Meditation*. To see how Husserl's thoughts evolved here, cf. some of the following sources: the 1917 text *Phänomenologie und Psychologie* (Hua xxv: 82-124); Chapter Two of *Ideen III* (Hua v: 21-76); an important collection of texts on this topic, including an entire set of lectures from the summer semester of 1925, the so-called Amsterdam lectures, as well as the highly controversial Encyclopædia Britannica article, is found in Hua ix; finally, the 1930 text titled *Über Ursprung. Die reine Psychologie und die Aufgabe einer Ursprungsklärung*

us to believe that psychology is the ideal model for grasping the nature of self-reflection in phenomenology. This is particularly important for the task of forming a transcendental theory of method for the following reason: if psychology did indeed present us with a model for understanding the *Selbstbezogenheit* in and of phenomenology, it might also provide a model for solving the, methodologically and epistemologically, potentially devastating problem of infinite regress. Both psychology and phenomenology make an ongoing functioning of the ego thematic by reflecting on it – but ought there not be an additional reflection then, reflecting on the reflecting ego, and so on *ad infinitum*? This problem is easily avoided in the case of psychology, according to Fink, as soon as we properly grasp its scientific character, i.e. recognize its striving toward universal knowledge, which seeks not to latch onto any specific moment of ongoing experience and draw its conclusion from it, but instead looks at these as *instantiations* sharing a general structure. In other words, psychology tries to grasp the varied modi of experiences of the ego in their typicality and universality. In that sense, it could be said that psychology is a mundane eidetic science. As such, it has a built-in ‘safety switch’ against infinite regress, because psychology’s self-understanding through self-reflection reveals that, no matter the number of iterations within its reflection, it can never, by definition, uncover any *essentially new kind of structure*. (20/18) This is why psychology essentially plateaus at the first higher-order level of reflection, and remains a mundane science because it has no need to be anything else. For the same reason, the problem of infinite regress essentially doesn’t exist for psychology. Is it the same in the case of phenomenology? At a first glance, it would certainly seem so; especially since they both seem to share the general methodological approach to varied phenomena, i.e. analyzing them in their typicality, rather than as singular and specific instances.

Thematizing phenomenology from the perspective of phenomenology seems to be almost identical to thematizing psychology from the perspective of psychology. This is a parallel both Fink and Husserl recognize and acknowledge. (21/19; also consider the note 34 on the same page) Yet, they also both agree there is an essential difference between the two, big enough that the specific self-reflective character of phenomenology cannot in any way be grounded on, or modeled after, psychology. (22/20f.)

This *principal difference* between phenomenology and psychology, as it is introduced in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, is grounded in *ontology*. Whereas the very act of doing

unsere Idee (Hua xxvii: 129-64) is an illuminating look at some of Husserl’s later thoughts on the issue. We will return to this topic in a later chapter.

psychology and that which is with this act disclosed, or, as Fink puts it, the thematizing and the thematized, share “the very same *nature in respect to being* [*Seinsnatur*]” (ibid.), i.e. they are both psychic being, the same cannot be said of phenomenology. Here, it is not enough to say that the act of phenomenologizing is ultimately grounded in the same transcendental being as the being disclosed by transcendental phenomenology. Rather, the act of phenomenologizing, realized by performing the reduction, can be said to be *creative*, in a very special sense, in that it *ontologically extends* its own fields of research. We’ve already seen how the phenomenological reduction constitutes the starting point for phenomenological research both for Fink and for Husserl. However, Fink now submits a stunning new argument: not only is the act of reduction the starting point of phenomenology and philosophy in general, but much more than that: the chief insight of a transcendental theory of method is that the phenomenological, transcendental reduction is not simply one method among many, or even *the* method of phenomenology, but instead a veritable act of *ontological production*. We read:

“Transcendental being is not only ‘*discovered*’ and disclosed by the performance of the phenomenological reduction, it is also extended by a transcendental being [*Sein*] that has no homogeneity in kind of being [*Seinsnatur*] with the being [*Sein*] that is reductively disclosed. In other words, performing the phenomenological reduction breaks open a *cleft* in the field of transcendental subjectivity and sets up a *separation of transcendental being* into two heterogeneous regions. The transcendental theory of elements has to do with one of these regions, transcendental constitution (the formation of the world and being). The life of the phenomenologizing onlooker, ‘*non-participant*’ in world-constitution and *distancing itself* from it by the epoché, is the object of the theory of method. The distinguishing of the theory of elements from the theory of method is thus not a ‘scientific-technical’ one (e.g., antecedent or after-the-fact theory of method), but one between ‘*regions*’, and is grounded as such in a *dualism in transcendental life*.” (ibid.)

We see here for the first time that Fink’s Kantian distinction between a theory of elements and a theory of method actually mirrors a difference in ontology, referring to two separate, and, importantly, *heterogeneous* regions of being, one occupied by the world-constituting transcendental ego, and the other by an *unbeteiligter Zuschauer*. As Fink initially formulates it here, this phenomenological onlooker is effectively the phenomenologist after the successfully performed epoché and the reduction. It is worth noting here that the general idea of the phenomenological reduction being not just a negative methodological step, but a positive ontological step dates back at least as early as mid-1931, and possibly earlier, both in Husserl

and in Fink. We learn this from Dorion Cairns's *Conversations with Husserl and Fink*, where Cairns summarizes what Fink had told him on August 17, 1931 as follows:

“The phenomenological reduction is no longer regarded by Husserl as merely a step which frees the transcendental field for investigation. Its significance as making possible a naïve sort of act-analysis, such as one has in the *Ideen*, remains; but phenomenological investigation cannot, after the phenomenological reduction, proceed as if in a homogenous field, but must continually exercise further reductions such as those involved in the problems of ‘genesis’. The phenomenological field is not ‘there’ at all, but must first be created. Thus the phenomenological reduction is creative, but of something which bears a necessary relation to that which is ‘there’.” (Cairns 1976: 11)

This passage must, of course, be taken with caution, since it is Cairns's retelling of Fink's retelling of Husserl's stance on the reduction at the time. Still, the thought presented here, roughly a year before the project of writing the *Sixth Meditation* was taken up, can no doubt be seen as a predecessor, or announcement, of the deepened sense of the reduction as it is presented by Fink in the *Sixth Meditation*.

The relation between the two regions of being, as well as between the constituting I and the phenomenologizing onlooker is not at all obvious and easy to grasp, however. It is at this point that Fink and Husserl start to diverge in their understanding of the proper way of phenomenologically describing not just these relations, but the very nature of phenomenologizing activity itself. The divergence primarily has to do with the specific type of *transcendental dualism* Fink announces in the passage from the *Sixth Meditation* cited above. Let's flesh out some of these points further, still closely following Fink's line of argumentation.

1.4. *A deep-rooted dualism of mundane and transcendental being?*

Based on the ground we have covered by following Fink's and Husserl's reflections so far, we could say that the phenomenological reduction accomplishes four distinct things: 1) as the *basic presupposition* for philosophy, it opens up the possibility for phenomenologizing activity; 2) it uncovers transcendental being as its own specific field of research, and 3) it discloses the transcendental ego as both the locus of transcendental being, and the constituting force behind mundane being, and, finally, 4) it enables the phenomenologist to grasp the constitutive role of the transcendental ego by radically splitting the *phenomenologist* and the

accompanying *act* of phenomenologically grasping the constitutive process from the transcendental ego and the constitutive process itself. The latter is an ontological point as much as it is a methodological one: by radically distancing itself from the transcendental ego that is continuously and essentially enmeshed in world-constituting processes, the phenomenological onlooker is ultimately able to uncover the deepest driving force behind it: the *teleological tendency* of all constituting life – the *tendency aimed at being*. (SCM: 23/21) Now, it is not entirely clear here if this uncovered tendency toward being ought to be understood as the deepest insight of constitutive phenomenology, or as a central postulate of constructive phenomenology, or possibly as a bridge between the two. While leaving that question aside for the moment, it is important to note that the phenomenological discovery of a cleft between two regions of transcendental being serves to dissipate a central difficulty of transcendental phenomenology, which can be summarized as follows. Performing 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. This realization of own constitutive role, of course, cannot come *before* the world-constitution has taken place, and is, necessarily, always reached through and by the psychological acts of the mundane human being. Here, we are already approaching what Husserl would famously go on to dub the paradox of human subjectivity in the *Crisis*: the fact that human beings are simultaneously subjects *for* the world and objects *in* the world. (Hua vi, §53) While it might be argued that the recognition of the paradox is in itself an intrinsic part of phenomenologizing, both Husserl and Fink were interested in actually dissolving the paradox. We shall return to Husserl's attempts at dissolving it later; for now, let us focus on the argument put forward in the *Sixth Meditation*.

Once again returning to the cleft in transcendental being, the paradox of subjectivity can also be put in methodological terms: while a worldly structure is obviously a precondition for the act of phenomenologizing, does the therein uncovered 'field of transcendentality' (SCM: 13/12) in any way mirror this worldly structure? Fink and Husserl wrestled with this question during their reworking of the first five meditations, and we see it clearly formulated in mid-1932, just before Fink would start work on the *Sixth Meditation*, where Fink asks: "Is 'transcendental life', being the thematic object of the phenomenologizing theoretical I, given in a way analogous to an object in the world, that is, with a pre-knowing of the most general structure of its being?" (Hua Dok. II/2: 213) Does transcendental subjectivity share the specific structure of mundane human pre-giveness to itself? Or, more poignantly put: when the act of phenomenologizing discloses the teleological being-tendency, is the act of disclosing *itself* a

part of this tendency? It would seem that here, finally, we reach the central question and difficulty of transcendental theory of method:

“... is the activity of *constitutive interrogation* and *clarification*, the uncovering of constitution, itself a ‘constituting’ act? And is *reflection upon this activity* a reflection upon ‘something existent’ or upon the sort of something that at least stands in the constituting tendency toward being, in the *finality of world-actualization*? Does reflectively turning back upon phenomenologizing have the same act-intentional structure and the same ‘constitutive essence’ as reflection that is clarified thematically in the transcendental theory of elements (as an occurrence in the transcendentially reduced stream of experience)?” (SCM: 24/22)

Fink’s answer to these questions is unambiguously negative. There is a clear difference between constitutive becoming and the act of disclosing it, and this difference mirrors the difference within transcendental life between the constituting ego, whose *Leistungen* are the object of a transcendental-phenomenological theory of elements, and the non-participant phenomenological onlooker, the object of a theory of method. *The difference between them is primarily a difference in ontology*. Crucially, however, the constituting ego and the onlooker are not external to one another, but only clearly come into view through the performance of the phenomenological reduction. The reduction simultaneously uncovers transcendental life and splits it into two, and “[t]his dividing [*Entzweiung*] ... is the *condition of the possibility of coming-to-itself* of transcendental subjectivity”, because “[a]s long as transcendental life goes on in undifferentiated unity, as long as it is *only* world-constituting activity ... it proceeds in the mode of the natural attitude.” (26/23) Therein lies the unheard-of character of phenomenology’s self-relation. It cannot be understood on the basis of any mundane science, not even psychology to which it bears the most resemblance, because it doesn’t share their principal *monism of being*. (22/20) Still, the two distinct regions of being are not objects of two distinct sciences, but are united in transcendental phenomenology in a paradoxical way, thanks to “an antithesis and split *in transcendental life itself*, a setting of itself against itself: *identity in difference, antithesis in self-sameness*.”³⁹ (25f./23)

³⁹ This formulation, as Fink immediately notices, opens up a different, but closely connected type of problem for phenomenology. It is a problem that could be called methodological in the classical sense of the word, namely, that of a language adequate to express the findings of transcendental phenomenology. In other words, it is the question of the possibility of a *transcendental language*. This question certainly falls within the purview of a transcendental theory of method, and it touches on a different paradox inherent in phenomenology: phenomenological research, for all its scientific and highly disciplined methods of going beyond the mundane plane of being and into the transcendental plane, is still done by human beings, the phenomenologists. They, in turn, must not only clearly grasp and formulate their own findings, but also, importantly, communicate them to

This highly un-Husserlian way of formulating the paradox of subjectivity announces and anticipates the divergence between Husserl and Fink. The path to it has been an ontological one, and the divergence itself, again, will express itself in terms of accompanying ontologies to which the two philosophers were willing to subscribe. We will turn to the ‘Husserlian side’ of this divergence in more detail later. Let us first consider where this path led Fink.

For Fink, the phenomenological reduction is the act which rips the transcendental life out of its “deep ‘anonymity’”, marked by a blind teleological tendency toward being-constitution. This becoming-aware-of-itself proceeds by creating a countertendency to the unaware, ongoing constitution by creating, within transcendental life itself, a “movement back *against* this direction of life”, which is the phenomenological onlooker who finally discloses transcendental subjectivity as constituting. (26/24) This completes the basic framework behind Fink’s reworking of transcendental phenomenology. We might roughly describe it as follows. First, the mundane human being with its psychological states is motivated to go beyond its natural attitude, or *Weltbefangenheit*, and does so by assuming a phenomenological attitude. Then, by performing various reductive moves, it comes to discover the general transcendental structure of its world-experience. Still phenomenologically oriented, it is motivated to further radicalize the phenomenological reduction and go beyond the initial discovery of the transcendental structures, thereby shedding the last bits of transcendental naïveté; in this radical move, through the profound, “decisive *transformation*” (Fink 1966: 124), it finally splits the transcendental life itself into two realms, that of the constituting ego, and that of the phenomenologizing onlooker which itself isn’t part of the teleological tendency toward being. It is only through this last ‘step’ that the transcendental dimension is disclosed in its fullness,

others. Our language is, according to Fink, inadequate for this task, and this is especially true of the transcendental findings of constitutive and constructive phenomenology: “*Unity in division, self-sameness in otherness of being*, and similar turns of phrase are only figurative modes of expression that give no more than a mere *indication* of the persistent problem here.” (26f./24) The difficulties pertaining to the relation between the human being-phenomenologist, his transcendental findings, and the mundane language he is forced to use to communicate them have, however, attracted relatively little attention among scholars. One of the reasons for this may lie in the fact that Husserl himself never spent any time seriously tackling the issue. While he obviously recognized the legitimacy of the question, he thought it to be ultimately solvable, and obviously not that great of a difficulty as Fink had imagined it. Some relevant discussion on this topic is found in §10 of the *Sixth Meditation*, ‘Phenomenologizing as Predication’, particularly Husserl’s marginal note 295, where he comments on Fink’s concerns regarding expressing transcendental sense with mundane concepts:

“The miracle of the transformation of the mundane into what is preexistent [*Vorseiendes*] – that is precisely the problem and one actually solvable. A phenomenological language in principle only has sense, only has possibility, as transformed natural language, just as the transcendental phenomenon, world, only has sense as the transformed sense-of-being, world.” (96/86, n.295)

For a good discussion of the differences between Husserl and Fink with regard to the problem of transcendental sense and language, with a useful review of some relevant literature, see Kusch 1989: 87-92.

and that “the ultimate, apex level of phenomenologizing, the ‘phenomenology of phenomenology’” is reached. (Bruzina 1986: 7) Of course, these isolated ‘steps’ or phases of phenomenological research are not to be understood as singular moments taking place one after another, but, precisely in a Finkian way, as different elements which all form a single cohesive unity.⁴⁰ Properly developing and understanding this unity is only possible by properly developing and understanding the transcendental theory of method of phenomenology. The latter discloses the role of the phenomenological onlooker, but is, at the same time, disclosed by the phenomenological onlooker. This is the peculiar nature of self-reference in phenomenology, and of the project of a phenomenology of phenomenology:

“The whole characterization so far of the Idea of the transcendental theory of method *has been developed out of the structure of the phenomenological reduction*. But not in such a way that we lived *in its performance in actu*. It has been done rather in this way: we – already standing in the transcendental attitude – reflected on the reduction, more precisely put, on the *act of reducing*; our movement was one of explicating the activity of reductive phenomenologizing. In other words, we were acting – if in very primitive fashion – already in the *transcendental theory of method* in that we were outlining the Idea of that kind of project. This means the transcendental theory of method *presupposes itself*; we can only gain the concept of it if we already, in a certain sense, practice it. It therefore shares in fundamental structure of phenomenology as such: the self-conditioning of all phenomenological understanding.” (SCM: 29f./27)

This passage amplifies the point made repeatedly throughout: transcendental theory of method is decisively not about method or methodology in any traditional, mundane sense. It neither prescribes, nor reflects on what has already been done. Rather, as we have seen, it builds itself through phenomenological activity, only to ultimately loop back on itself by showing that its deepest insight had always already had to be presupposed.

This central insight, that the act of performing the phenomenological reduction is productive insofar as it ‘creates’ a cleft in transcendental being, is an ontological one, and it commits Fink to a radicalized view of the phenomenological reduction. According to this view, the reduction is more than simply a way out of the ‘natural attitude’, more than an *un-*

⁴⁰ This is, in fact, an oversimplification, but a more detailed analysis of this difficult metaphysical problem would lead us in a very different direction, especially at this early point in our investigation. We shall briefly return to this issue much later in our discussion, when we turn to Husserl’s possible historical ‘solution’ to the puzzle of Fink’s twofold concept of enworlding.

naturalization of the human being or of the human consciousness, which is the understanding he ascribes to Husserl. It was already in late 1928 or early 1929 that Fink, in his research notes, challenged this position as too limited and “first and foremost oriented at presence”, because, “[f]or the most part, the one attempting to do the reduction reaches the ‘immanence’, but not its *absoluteness*.” (Fink 2006: 284; Z-v, II/1a) It is in the same note that we come across a concept that was going to play an important role for Fink’s later, more mature interpretation of the phenomenological reduction: the reduction, if one understands it as mere un-naturalization of the consciousness, never quite succeeds in suspending our relation toward mundane being, including our own being – therefore, “the un-humanization has failed.” (ibid.) Obviously, *un-humanization* is for Fink the true, radical point of the phenomenological reduction. But how is it to be understood, and what are its implications for phenomenology? We find additional clarification in the notes dating from 1929 that served as preparation for the task of reworking the *Cartesian Meditations*. There, Fink talks of a new presentation and motivation of the phenomenological reduction, again understood as un-humanizing. Rather than interpreting the reduction as a bracketing that disinterestedly prepares noemata for analysis, it is important to point out two things: bracketing is not an act of disinterest, but precisely of eminent interest, but it only leaves the possibility for noematizing reflection which aims at “object *as* object in its How of subjective givenness”, which still leaves the “peculiar subjectivity of the subjective” in the dark. (Fink 2008: 118; Z-x, 9a) The reduction is meant to nullify this captivation by being, because it is fundamentally different from any mundane reflection. Rather than asking about the correlation, or unity of subject and object, it asks about that which is *beyond* the being of the subject. This is why the phenomenological reduction must necessarily be an un-humanization, rather than a denaturalizing change of focus: “Inasmuch as subjectivity is a *being*, it is still *human* (be it in the everyday or authentic manner of existing).” (ibid.) Questioning that which is beyond being, Fink continues, means asking about the origin of being, and philosophy (and, implicitly, phenomenology), is precisely the thinking of the origin. This is the point where all the motifs we’ve been tracking so far (constructive phenomenology, speculation, theory of method, reduction, cleft in being) come together, and we read Fink at his most speculative:

“The beginning of philosophy is the thinking of the Absolute (Hegel), is the free act of entrusting oneself to the origin, of shedding human homeland and all homelike worldliness, is the boldness and the dare of the leap into the Nothingness.” (119; Z-x, 9b)

This short passage clearly announces the general path that would be taken in the *Sixth Meditation*, and there is a lot of content to be unpacked here. First of all, here as well as in the *Sixth Meditation*, Fink's claims never really go beyond the level of 'basic, general indications', or of a certain 'predelineation' [*Vorzeichnung*] of the idea of a transcendental theory of method and of the issues that fall under it. The same goes for the idea of the Absolute itself which, when it is finally introduced in §11 (SCM: 155ff./141ff.), is only ever done in a very preliminary way. However, when read in the context of the transcendental theory of method, the passage we just quoted makes it abundantly clear that a certain phenomenological, or phenomenologically attained, concept of the absolute is both the ultimate goal and the ultimate result of a transcendental theory of method. More accurately put, it is obviously the central insight of the constructive phenomenology, the idea of which Fink systematically explores over the course of the *Sixth Meditation*. But how is this insight, that the absolute, which itself is beyond being, is the origin of being, to be accurately and adequately expressed? Does phenomenology have the necessary conceptual apparatus for this?

Questioning that which lies beyond being cannot be done by relying on a meta-ontology or metaphysics of origin, because "[t]he Nothingness of origin is the ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, the ἐπέκεινα πάντων νοημάτων." (Fink 2008: 119; Z-x, 9b) Because it is essentially non-intelligible, the transcendental notion of the absolute can only be understood via an analogy with the mundane concept of the absolute (SCM: 155/141), and Fink painstakingly follows the elaborate process of analogy at work here, and the difficulties it creates. Conceptualized in mundane terms, the absolute can be understood as the non-relative, self-sufficient substance, or being of the world. A reductive transformation of the mundane sense of the being of the world yields the knowledge that the world itself is relative to the constitutive accomplishments of transcendental subjectivity, and that the two are united within the more general notion of transcendental life. (156/142) But, as we have seen, and as it was made clear by the insights of the transcendental theory of method, phenomenology does not stop at the initial discovery of transcendental constitution. A deepened understanding of the reduction has made it clear that the process of transcendental constitution, when grasped phenomenologically, is always accompanied by the transcendental process of phenomenologizing – the counter-current to the teleological tendency toward being: "This division between constituting and phenomenologizing life determines now the concept of the Absolute: the Absolute is the synthetic unity of antithetic moments." (157/142)

This is speculative phenomenology hard at work, and the different and occasionally seemingly disjointed parts of its puzzling claims are starting to come together. Fink had

announced the transcendental cleft effected by the transcendental reduction early in the work, but it hadn't been immediately obvious what the two regions of being it referred to were. We now learn the true sense in which Fink referred to an ontological cleft: it doesn't merely mirror the difference between constituting and phenomenologizing activity, but in fact expresses an important phenomenological insight about the absolute – the non-mundane, phenomenologically relevant notion of the absolute, cannot be understood in purely ontological terms, i.e. it is not simply a new, more universal type of totality of being. It is here that we must again remember the radical sense of transformation and 'production' inherent in the reduction – it doesn't just widen the respective field of research, but transforms our understanding of being: "Through the recognition that something 'existent' has the constitutive rank of end-product, of result, the universal horizon of *all being* (the world) is set into the *universal context of world-constitution*." (ibid.) Here we find the expression of the *dualism of being* operative within phenomenology: the absolute is, according to Fink, the ultimate inclusional concept [*In-Begriff*], the unity of two heterogeneous regions, "of *the existent as such and the pre-existent* [*Vor-Seindem*] (of *mundane and 'transcendental'* being)", of *world and world-origin*." (ibid.) But is this dualism within transcendental life really a dualism? Fink himself insists on the heterogeneous nature of the two regions, and the region of the transcendental 'pre-being' cannot truly be represented nor fully phenomenologically grasped, but only thought of via an analogy to mundane being. The absolute, this dualism of two regions of being, "embraces within itself 'opposites' that are *not opposites of being*, and is in a non-ontic sense the '*coincidentia oppositorum*'." (157f./143) Fink's terminology here is carefully chosen: the dualism in place is not a dualism between being and an ontically graspable not-being, i.e. something that simply doesn't exist. Rather, it is a dualism between two different ontological planes, one of which can be phenomenologically grasped and described in ontic terms, and the other not. That is why a much more apt term for what Fink is trying to describe here is pre-being, or, alternatively, non-being. The latter formulation clearly evokes the ontological concept of $\mu\eta\ \acute{o}\nu$, and we find unambiguous references to it in Fink. In fact, Fink had good reason to prefer the term ' $\mu\eta\ \acute{o}\nu$ ' to 'pre-being', and make it a leitmotif of his philosophy. The following relevant passage, found among his notes from this period, is worth quoting in full here:

"As long as we try to interpret the absolute constituting subjectivity along the guidelines of a mundane concept of being (or of a concept of being in general; for the world is the universe of existent!), there is the inevitable danger that this interpretation will fail. So, for example, the

concept of ‘constitution’ cannot be made clear if we think of transcendental subjectivity as existing, and thus understand constitution as a relation between something existing and something already-existing or something that first had to be created. It is only the meontic understanding of absolute subjectivity that shows the constitution to be a me-ontic relation, as something non-ontic; not as a relation between existing things, but ‘between’ / world (being) and ‘Nothingness’; as a relation of origin [*Ursprung*] and originatedness [*Entsprungenheit*]. (Remark: Even if Husserl makes references to the meontic nature of absolute subjectivity without radically following them to their end and without recognizing the full consequences of a meontic philosophy, and even if he only grasped the meontic nature of certain *peripheral* configurations – his expression ‘pre-existent’ still signals the meontic nature; however, the term ‘pre-existent’ still betrays an ontic scheme of understanding (similar to the quasi-ontic concept of ‘becoming’ in Hegel), namely that here we have a case of a *chronological* relation. The ‘preexistent’ does not yet exist in a real sense, etc. Here, time still functions as the horizon of understanding! That is why we terminologically say: ‘me-ontic’!!!” (Fink 2008: 277; Z-xv, 26a-b)

The absolute, then, is to be understood as the synthetic unity of ontology and meontics, and the transcendental subjectivity, and the very notion of the transcendental in general, can only be truly understood with and through a meontic philosophy. This insight erases the last remnants of transcendental naïveté from phenomenology by fully fleshing out the point made early by Fink: transcendental in phenomenology cannot be grasped through ontological categories, although they serve as the starting point and the basis for analogy between them and the non-ontic ‘existence’ of transcendental subjectivity. It is a testament to Fink’s consistency on this matter that he had already reached this conclusion a few years earlier, because we find the same point expressed in a note titled ‘Toward the problem of ontification’:

“Ontification: meontic phenomenology takes this to mean the mode of emanation of the origin. ‘Phenomenology of the absolute’ is nothing other than showing the ontification of the absolute. Instead of constitution, we say ontification. (Fink 2006: 288; Z-v, III/6b)

It would seem that we have once again reached an important milestone within Fink’s argument. The introduction of meontics, the notion of the absolute, and, importantly, the pseudo-explanatory concept of analogy, all signal that phenomenology, here, has indeed reached its limits. We are now in the position to take a quick look back at the general trajectory of Fink’s interpretation of phenomenology. We have seen how the questions he started with

were in fact Husserl's questions, and how these questions led to an interest in developing reflection on the very nature and method of phenomenological research. This internal self-critique took the form of a 'phenomenology of phenomenology', and consequently led to a deepened understanding of the complexity of the phenomenological reduction. The reduction, as it turned out, was not merely a methodological act, but in fact an ontologically productive one, albeit not in the mundane sense of the word. The 'production' refers to the disclosing of a non-ontic, transcendental-constituting and phenomenologizing dimension of transcendental life. The ostensibly methodological question of how to unite the constituting and the phenomenologizing functions of transcendental subjectivity transforms into the question regarding its ontological status, and thereby of the general ontological background of phenomenologizing activity. "Fink's principal contribution," we read in Moran, "is to raise the issue of the *being* of the transcendental subject, an issue skirted in Kant, as in Husserl." (Moran 2007a: 23) His answer, as we've already hinted at, was aimed primarily at resolving a latent difficulty of Husserlian phenomenology, namely the 'paradox of subjectivity' – the difficulty of uniting the transcendental ego with a concrete, mundane, historical human individual. He resolves this difficulty by suggesting that Husserl's attempt at positing a 'coincidence' (*Deckung*) between the two is principally mistaken, and instead arguing that the transcendental subject is, in fact, outside the realm of ontology altogether. He therefore posits the need for a meontic, speculative philosophy of the absolute which, by reaching the very origin of all being, thereby completes phenomenology itself. Thus, one concludes that "[p]henomenology is the philosophical unity of ontology and meontics." (Fink 2006: 288; Z-v, III/6b) Fink's later famous formulation, that the basic question of phenomenology is in fact the question of the 'origin of the world' (Fink 1966: 101), echoes this same point. Disregarding the fact that very little of this is actually *done* over the course of the *Sixth Meditation*, and that it mostly remains at the level of formal indication or preliminary discussion, one crucial question now arises. So far, we have mostly been following Fink's presentation of these issues. Further, we have seen that the issues themselves are phenomenologically legitimate, and were certainly closely analyzed not just by Fink but by Husserl as well. But to what extent were they in agreement with regard to the potential *solutions* to these issues, as implied in the *Sixth Meditation*? The central interpretative question here concerns Fink's and Husserl's different ways of tackling the issue of the 'dualism in transcendental life', as presented by Fink. In order to properly understand and conceptualize the main point of disagreement, however, we will once again use a Finkian *Schlagwort* and, for our next waypoint, refer to a problem that we've systematically avoided in the discussion so far – the issue of 'enworlding' of transcendental processes.

2 Appearing in the World: On Radical Beginnings in Phenomenology

In the preceding chapter we explored the basic motivation behind the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, and surveyed some of the intricate arguments guiding Fink's discussion. The transcendental theory of method takes the form of a 'phenomenology of phenomenology', and it aims at attaining an understanding of the nature, style, and rank of transcendental knowledge. However, while this explains the main thrust of Husserl's and Fink's overall project in the *Sixth Meditation*, the form, scope, and the results of this proposed transcendental analytic remain vague.

Furthermore, we are still not in the position to understand why Fink's treatment of this complex topic took on the peculiar form it did. Some of the arguments he proposes seem to fly directly in the face of the usual Husserlian level-headedness and phenomenology's general theoretical parsimony. This is particularly true of Fink's answer to the question of the being of the transcendental: the postulated split within transcendental and the ensuing conception of the meontic seem more like solutions in search of problems, than like necessary premises or valid conclusions.

Nor are we yet in the position to evaluate Husserl's views on these issues, for they are deeply intertwined with the course of Fink's thoughts. It is in this sense that the *Sixth Meditation* exhibits its peculiarly Hegelian nature: almost no argument it contains can be isolated and analyzed on its own terms, because they all rest on the vast web of co- and interrelated concepts and further arguments. This is no accident, for not only did Fink engage with Hegel's thought throughout his years with Husserl (Bruzina 2004: 403), he actively sought out those elements in Hegel which he could fruitfully integrate into the Husserlian framework, as evidenced by his use of terms like the absolute, speculation, and nothingness. The Hegelian influence is perhaps most obvious in the references to the ultimate goal of achieving and securing the scientificity of phenomenology. Unifying phenomenological investigations with a transcendental theory of method is the precondition for phenomenology's attaining the rank of an *absolute science of the absolute*. Yet, this unity, as we recall, and as Fink's is at pains to constantly remind us of, is not pre-given, nor can it be deduced in advance. It must be reached through the painstaking process of continually supplementing new phenomenological analyses with reflections on those analyses, thereby 'completing phenomenology' by providing it with

“ultimate *transcendental self-understanding about itself*.” (SCM: 9/8) Importantly, ‘completing phenomenology’ is not to be understood here as drawing up a blueprint of a system which would then, as if it were amber, once and for all house and preserve the methods, presuppositions, goals, and approaches of phenomenology. Rather, the architectonic introduced here aims to preserve the openness and dynamic nature of phenomenological work. But how is this openness to be understood, and how does it relate to the concept of transcendental philosophy?

Given the Hegelian bent of the *Sixth Meditation*, it is not surprising that Fink’s discussion and development of a transcendental theory of method not only properly culminates toward the very end of the book, but also retroactively illuminates much of the previous discussion. Its last two chapters, dealing with the nature and scientific character of phenomenologizing activity and the nature of phenomenology’s self-identification with transcendental idealism, are thus the locus of some of Fink’s deepest and richest philosophical insights regarding transcendental phenomenology. The eleventh chapter in particular, detailing the ‘*Verwissenschaftlichen*’ of phenomenology, is also the locus of greatest disagreement between Fink and Husserl, however. The fulcrum of Fink’s account of phenomenology’s scientific character is his notion of enworlding [*Verweltlichung*]. Properly understanding its import is key to fully grasping the nature and scope of Fink’s challenge to Husserl’s phenomenology – challenge which, at least at first sight, seems to “signal a new direction and deeper dimension of the phenomenological problematic than that which Husserl had heretofore articulated under the rubrics of ‘static’ and ‘genetic’ phenomenology.” (Hopkins 1997: 69)

The aim of this chapter is to outline the context which led to this central notion of enworlding and clarify its role within Fink’s system, thereby also illuminating the specific type of critique he thus introduces into phenomenology. Parallel to this, we will explore the place the world occupies in Husserl’s phenomenology. We shall then see how this general discussion of the role of the world necessarily led Fink to adopt a peculiar doctrine that we will refer to as his ‘epistemological anti-humanism’. This will provide us with the foundation for a preliminary articulation and discussion of the concept of ‘enworlding’ itself, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

2.1. *Bringing the world into view*

A good way to approach the concept of enworlding is to lay out the philosophical context which led to its appearance in the *Sixth Meditation*. This requires us to once again adopt a somewhat wider perspective on the nature of the collaboration between Husserl and Fink for a moment.

2.1.1. *Heideggerian influences*

There are at least two distinct motivations that underlie and partly shape Husserl's work of the late 1920s and of the 1930s. The first of these is driven by historical as much as by philosophical reasons, and concerns Husserl's attempt, implicit and explicit, to come to grips with Heidegger's forceful reimagining of phenomenology exemplified by, and first clearly publicly expressed in, *Being and Time*, published in April of 1927. Of course, the topic of their divergence has been massively important for later phenomenological philosophy, and has heavily shaped subsequent scholarship. In fact, so great was Heidegger's influence, that his philosophy sparked additional interest in discovering Husserl's own later reflections on topics typically perceived as Heideggerian – such as being, historicity, and the world – even in those scholars who might not have been interested in Husserl per se.⁴¹ Yet there are two interpretative traps lurking within this 'original divide of phenomenology.' (Theodorou 2015) On the one hand, there is the danger of the kind of philosophical jingoism so well known to students of phenomenology.⁴² On the other hand, there is the subtle but ever present tendency to ossify the philosophical positions of past philosophers, and to view them as monolithic statements of their unchanging views. This tendency is particularly damaging in the case of Husserl and Heidegger, and it takes constant hermeneutic vigilance to combat it. In this case, a look into the early history of their divergence might reveal just how strongly the perceived 'betrayal' of

⁴¹ Tugendhat raises this point in his now-classical work on Husserl and Heidegger. (1970: 7) Although he mentions this specifically with respect to the relative lack of interest of that time in Husserl's work on the concept of truth, the wider point still stands. While the rapidly rising star of Heidegger's philosophy had once perhaps threatened to eclipse the comparatively fading transcendental philosophy of Husserl, it has also, at least partly, helped bring about a renewed interest in it, and reinstate it as a crucial interlocutor in the debates of which Heidegger himself was part. Naturally, this renaissance was greatly helped and sped up by the uninterrupted flow of previously unpublished materials written by Husserl. These revealed an extraordinary depth and richness of content incommensurable with the old Cartesian, narrowly epistemological picture of Husserl – picture to which Heidegger himself greatly contributed.

⁴² This is nicely put by Alweiss in her review of one of the better books on precisely this topic: "Anyone writing on Husserl and Heidegger knows of the danger of taking sides too quickly or of accepting at face value the derogatory comments each thinker made about the other." (2008: 65)

phenomenology on Heidegger's part influenced Husserl's own further research. Thanks to a wealth of materials available to us nowadays, we are able to accurately piece together a psycho-bio-bibliographic sketch of this influence. Husserl read *Being and Time* at least twice in the period between early 1927 and late 1929. The second reading was followed by a reading of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. (Sheehan & Palmer 1997: xiii f.) By the time of the second reading, the true width of the gap between him and Heidegger had become clear to Husserl, as evidenced by a change in the number, style, and tone of the accompanying remarks:

"Husserl's marginal remarks in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* clearly do not reflect the same intense effort to penetrate Heidegger's thought that we find in his marginal notes in *Sein und Zeit*. Merely in terms of length, Husserl's comments in the published German text occupy only one-third the number of pages. [...] This suggests that Husserl either read these pages with no intention of returning to the text or skipped large parts of the middle of the text altogether. His remarks often express frustration or a resigned recognition of the now unbridgeable, irrevocable gap between himself and Heidegger." (424)

These remarks paint a vivid picture of a philosopher trying hard to evaluate his life's work in the face of a philosophy that seems to share its starting point, but ends up going in the opposite direction. While this is no place to tease out the endless intricacies of the philosophical differences between Husserl and Heidegger – though we shall return to some specific points in much more detail later on – let us dwell on the importance of their disagreement for one more brief moment. Richard Palmer's introductory text to Husserl's remarks on the *Kantbuch* (Sheehan & Palmer 1997: 424-33) is highly instructive in summarizing and clarifying the major differences between Husserl and Heidegger, especially so in the context of the present study, since it essentially approaches the issue from Husserl's perspective.⁴³ The numerous technical

⁴³ For a fully committed Heideggerian view on the issue, see Carman 2003: 53-100. It is worth pointing out that Carman's overview of Heidegger's critique of Husserl delivers, at the same time, his own critical view on Husserl's philosophy, and what he perceives as its deficiencies. "... Husserl's phenomenology", we read, "is at once uncritical and incoherent ...", and "... caught in a vicious circle, for its results presuppose its methods and its methods presuppose its results." (54) Husserl's major fault, according to Carman (and according to Heidegger, according to Carman), is "his critical neglect of the intelligibility conditions of his own philosophical claims." (101)

While Carman might be guilty of some Heideggerian bias, he is not the first nor the last to accuse Husserl of being stuck in some sort of methodological deadlock. Cf., for example, A.W. Moore's admirable study of modern metaphysics, in which he levels similar criticism against Husserl, but with respect to his overarching position of transcendental idealism. Toward the end of the chapter, after sifting through the notion of idealism in phenomenology, Moore concludes that Husserl's position is burdened by self-stultifying metaphysical and methodological commitments. We read:

details and points of disagreement ultimately lead, according to Palmer, to two different visions not just of philosophy, but of man, based on “two very different sensibilities and sets of loyalties.” We read further:

“One vision seems to have affinities with metaphysical speculation and theology, Heidegger’s earliest study, while the other seems to long for the sureness of mathematical certainty, Husserl’s earliest field of investigation. Heidegger saw himself as overhauling the whole Western tradition of metaphysics, while Husserl felt that what philosophy was called upon to do at the moment was to analyze ‘the crisis of the European sciences.’ Philosophy as he saw it should have a facilitating and not merely critical relationship to science.” (432)

This passage sets up an important motif which was to prove decisive for Husserl’s work with Fink – the contrast between metaphysical speculation and scientific phenomenology. There is no doubt that Husserl, as he first came to grips with Heidegger’s ‘deviation’ from phenomenology between 1927 and 1929, saw these as two extreme poles of philosophy. This is clearly expressed in his 1931 letter to Alexander Pfänder,⁴⁴ in which he maintains that „Heidegger’s criticism, both open and veiled, is based upon a gross misunderstanding”, and, tellingly, that he “may be involved in the formation of a philosophical system of the kind which I have always considered it my life’s work to make forever impossible.” (Bw 2: 184/482)

It is important to note that Husserl’s evaluation of Heidegger’s overall project is not supposed to be taken as a blanket rejection of metaphysics. This is clearly expressed in the

“Husserl, like other transcendental idealists before him, finds that his attempt to make sense of our most basic sense-making threatens to lead him, despite his best efforts, to flout that very sense-making. The suspicion persists that his idealism is not ultimately tenable.” (Moore 2012: 455)

I find this criticism, positioned at the more general level of metaphysical commitments and implications of Husserl’s phenomenology, more convincing and more interesting than Carman’s, which is tied to, and driven by, an internalist interpretation of intentionality. For a recent critique of this interpretative strategy, cf. Zahavi 2017, chapter 3 and 4. Alweiss, on the other hand, suggests that the framing of the differences between Husserl and Heidegger within the internalism-externalism debate is the wrong approach altogether, because both philosophers stand on the same side of the debate, so to speak. (Alweiss 2003: xxv)

⁴⁴ This letter, written on January 6, 1931, is Husserl’s most detailed and most personal account of his realization of the enormous gulf between Heidegger and himself. (Bw 2: 180-84) While this particular document is well-known and quoted often enough, its immediate context is less known. The correspondence between Husserl and Pfänder includes dozens of letters written in the period between 1904 and 1931. The exchange in question occurs toward the very end of their written communication, and is triggered by Pfänder’s letter of January 2, 1931, in which he confronts Husserl about not mentioning his name when it had come to choosing Husserl’s successor for the philosophy chair at Freiburg. Husserl candidly responded by pointing out not just the issue of Pfänder’s age at the time, but also, and much more importantly, the fact that he had, by that time, become convinced that Pfänder simply did not understand the revolutionary nature of transcendental phenomenology. This was enough to open up a gulf between the two men and, apart from the two short courtesy letters that followed, effectively put an end to the rich correspondence between them. The letter has been translated into English by Burt Hopkins, in Sheehan & Palmer 1997: 479-83. The second number in the parentheses in the main text is a reference to this translation.

closing part of Husserl's central work of this period, the *Cartesian Meditations*, where it is stated that "phenomenology indeed *excludes every naïve metaphysics* that operates with absurd things in themselves, but *does not exclude metaphysics as such*." (Hua I: 182/156) Even less so is his rejection of what he perceived as Heidegger's philosophical system meant as a rejection of philosophical systems *tout court*, as we have tried to show in the first chapter.

Thus, it is necessary to once again point out how much hermeneutical caution we need to exercise when trying to evaluate the role Heidegger played in Husserl's philosophical development in the 1930s. We initially suggested that a look into the early history of their divergence would reveal unmistakable traces of Heideggerian influence. Now, where exactly are these traces to be found? One common answer would be to point out Husserl's alleged 'turn' to the (life-)world and history of his later years as having been triggered by his encounter with *Being and Time*. The writings of the 1930s, according to this interpretation, show Husserl realizing the error of his earlier transcendental-idealist ways, and feature a return to his early realism, this time enriched with notions of history, hermeneutics, and a robust notion of the life-world. The *Crisis* and related texts would then be the culmination of these efforts. Yet, this reading gets several things wrong. First, it lumps together distinct, if interwoven issues, such as the notions of world and history in phenomenology. As David Carr argues, what is radically new in the *Crisis* is precisely the problem of history, and tying it to the notion of the life-world overlooks the fact that, while the two are related, it is the problem of history which "calls forth a new conception of the procedure of investigation itself, a new conception of phenomenological method." (Carr 1987: 71) Secondly, this new conception of method, rather than constituting a break with earlier phenomenology, emerges organically from it, and is by no means some kind of a "deathbed conversion to existentialism", nor, on Husserl's part, "a renunciation of his earlier efforts." (72) We shall have more to say on the problem of history in phenomenology and its relation to method later. But let us not stray from the path which interests us here, and which leads to the centrally important notion of the world.

Clearly, the notions of world and life-world feature prominently in Husserl's work of the 1930s. Yet to think they first *appear* in Husserl's focus because of his reading of Heidegger would not only mean committing a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy; it would be factually wrong, as it would ignore the work Husserl had done prior to his encounters with Heidegger's transformation of phenomenology. As Donn Welton puts it, any approach that tried to argue that Heidegger fundamentally changed Husserl's focus and made him introduce the notion of the life-world is clearly misguided, for "... Husserl had introduced the notion of the life-world into his writings in the early 1920s and had devoted several studies to it well before he had

Heidegger's *Being and Time* in hand." (Welton 2000: 120) A similar sentiment is found in Carr, who points out that "... there is a way of considering the life-world which, although it greatly expands the scope of Husserl's earlier phenomenology, is entirely consistent with its program." (Carr 1987: 71)

We have broached the massive topic of the relation between Husserl's and Heidegger's conceptions of phenomenology, and have hinted toward the notion of the 'world' – so central to both of them – as the focal point of interest for our goal of understanding Fink's concept of 'enworlding' and its bearing on transcendental phenomenology.⁴⁵ Additionally, we have suggested that the issue of Heidegger's influence on Husserl might be of crucial importance in this context. However, this influence has proven very difficult to pinpoint, and it clearly does not manifest itself in any radically new themes taken up by Husserl, nor does it ever lead him to renounce his earlier positions. This might be a good place to tentatively introduce our own thesis regarding this issue: Heidegger's influence on Husserl, and his importance for the particular vision of phenomenology we wish to present here, is significant but mostly indirect, and is to be traced primarily via Fink's collaborative work with Husserl. This is because Fink is a point of both refraction and diffraction between the two philosophers.⁴⁶ The crucial point to recognize is that Fink's attempt at mediation between the two poles of phenomenology is an attempt to address their respective shortcomings, captured by a formulation that, at times, almost sounds like an incantation: "Husserl is blind to transcendence, Heidegger is blind to constitution." (Fink 2008: Z-x, 15a) There can be no doubt that, for Fink, the way to properly address this had to take a roughly Hegelian form: thinking the differences within phenomenology meant thinking *through* these differences and synthesizing them into phenomenology's "ultimate *transcendental self-understanding about itself*" (SCM: 9/8), a phrase we have already come across several times. Here is Bruzina:

⁴⁵ Leaving the complex issue of Fink's position in this cluster of connections aside for the moment, it is important to point out that the suggestion that the question of the world is a particularly important aspect of the Husserl-Heidegger relation is by no means new. In fact, according to Welton, one could argue that "... Husserl's most enduring and promising insight is [...] his characterization of the world", and that "[i]t is this notion that keeps Husserl and the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, contrary to their own acute feelings of difference, within the same field of discourse." (Welton 2003: 223) For recent in-depth discussions of Husserl and Heidegger on world, cf. Alweiss 2003 and Overgaard 2004. Also see Figal & Gander 2009, especially Gander's contribution on the phenomenology of the life-world. (137-58) Additionally, cf. Theodorou 2015 for a more general discussion of the differences between Husserl and Heidegger. This is, of course, a very limited and selective overview of the vast literature on the two philosophers. Given the sheer number of existing discussions, it is also not surprising that they contain varying degrees of charitableness to one or the other position. For more information of the secondary and tertiary literature, the reader may turn to any of the abovementioned sources for expansive lists of further readings.

⁴⁶ The indispensable scholarly source on this topic is Bruzina 2004, especially Chapter 3 of that book, titled, tellingly, "Who Is Phenomenology? Husserl – Heidegger?". The following discussion is greatly indebted to that work.

“To do philosophy in Freiburg in 1930 was, then, not to be simply a disciple either of Husserl or of Heidegger in dutiful following of some orthodox doctrine; it could only mean to *think* with them and to *question*, to engage in the questions that drove philosophy to take the form it had in phenomenology as a living movement that embraced both Husserl and Heidegger.” (Bruzina 2004: 131)

It is not a question of philosophers, nor even of philosophemes, then. Rather, it is a question of ideas and concepts, such as ‘transcendence’ and ‘constitution’, which are carried by, but also carry, the philosophers. However, while Fink’s approach is synthetic and *prima facie* non-partisan, Husserl does enjoy a certain primacy within it, if for nothing else, then for the fact that Fink clearly sought to integrate elements of Heidegger back into the systematic framework of Husserl’s phenomenology. This meant, above all, an appropriation of a speculative impulse of Heidegger’s philosophy of being within the field disclosed and disclosable by the conceptually robust and methodologically exacting phenomenology of Husserl. Let us again turn to Bruzina for a moment:

“The relentlessly self-critical moment of Husserl’s investigations was the methodological exigency driving Fink’s work for him; but needed in that drive was something Husserl did not provide, the ‘critical-speculative élan’ in which Heidegger excelled, not just in abstract general terms but in the way this ‘question of being’ could be articulated from within the concrete investigation of human being.” (130)

This is the source of tension we hinted at in the first chapter: the push in the direction of speculation is not driven by an external force, but rather by a possibility inherent to phenomenology. It pushes phenomenology to its outermost limits, but also risks leading it beyond itself, thus transforming it into something that is not phenomenology anymore. This particular kind of immanent, internal critique, which carefully probes and teases out its own limits before reaching the breaking point, foreshadows the complex reception of Husserl in the French tradition, but it also reflects Husserl’s own critical confrontation with Fink. Crucial for this confrontation, as we shall later argue, will be the recoil from a profound anti-humanism installed, by Fink via Heidegger, into transcendental phenomenology.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the French commitment to a certain kind of philosophical humanism in light of Heidegger’s philosophy, see Rockmore 1995. This work, however, is very light on references to Husserl, and makes no mention of Fink whatsoever, thus significantly downplaying, if not outright ignoring, their importance in the context of the discussion of humanism and anti-humanism in French philosophy.

But unraveling these claims is not easy. We have argued that Husserl's attempt at an *Auseinandersetzung* with what he perceived as a perversion of his phenomenology in Heidegger was one of the driving forces behind his collaboration with Fink. This, as we'll see, led to a narrowing of the gap between himself and Heidegger precisely through Fink. Now, this was not a case of Heidegger's influence slipping through the cracks in the metaphysical armor of a non-vigilant Husserl. Nor was it a case of Fink deliberately but coyly 'modernizing' a philosophy set in its old ways, all the while making sure that the master does not become aware of the change. Rather, for both Husserl and Fink, this transformation carried with it the sense of a necessary unfolding, according to the principles already secured through prior, painstaking phenomenological work. Whenever Fink insists on the inextricability of transcendental-phenomenological analysis and methodology (SCM: 8/8), or when he underlines the provisory and preliminary character of his discussion (SCM: 111/101; 184/2), he is in fact reiterating this point. But, in the previous chapter we have also already hinted at a tension between Husserl and Fink. Toward the end of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* it becomes clear that Husserl is not willing to follow the unfolding of phenomenology as far as Fink is willing to take it. The cutoff point, as we shall soon see, was Fink's recasting of the phenomenological notion of the world in terms of the process of 'enworlding'. In order to be able to further illuminate the speculative moment in this notion, and see how it leads to a transformation of both world and subject, let us first provide some more context for its emergence. To do this, we need to turn to the other motivating factor behind Husserl's work of the late 1920s and of the 1930s.

2.1.2. *Ontological and epistemological perspectives*

If the indirect Heideggerian influences were indeed to manifest themselves as nudges in the direction of metaphysical speculation, they wouldn't appear in a phenomenological vacuum, so to speak, nor would they necessitate a reinvention of Husserl's philosophy. Rather, they would have to be weighed and assessed against the backdrop of a long-standing striving for the explication of the systematic and scientific character of phenomenology, and of its relation to other sciences. Philosophical systematics, as we have seen, was not foreign to Husserl, but it was precisely meant to exclude philosophical systems built around unwarranted metaphysical principles and unmotivated speculation. However, does this mean that there could never be such a thing as 'motivated speculation' in phenomenology? If such a thing were possible and admissible, it would have to logically follow from transcendental phenomenology

itself. Importantly, it would not constitute a *source of metaphysical premises* of phenomenology, but rather a *result*, or one of the results, of phenomenological analysis, as it proceeds along its methodical path. Thus, we might say that a latent possibility of metaphysical speculation runs parallel to phenomenological work, occasionally overlapping with it in certain areas. Not surprisingly, these areas are usually clustered around phenomenological tools or notions of high importance, such as subject, world, time, reduction, or being. Mapping their role and position relative to each other and determining the span of their respective metaphysical radiation would, presumably, mean coming to grips with the unique scientific character of phenomenology.

But one has to be careful both with things that all of a sudden spring from within phenomenology, as well as with how one conceives of its scientificity. We have seen how Fink introduced an ontological criterion for demarcating phenomenology from mundane sciences, and, more specifically, from those sciences that allow for meaningful self-thematization. The crucial example for him, as had so often been the case for Husserl as well, was psychology. (SCM: §§3-4) Determining the difference between psychology and phenomenology, as well as demonstrating the irreducibility of phenomenology to psychology, was of crucial importance for both of them precisely because of their apparent similarities. Fink locates the decisive difference in the heterogeneity of being specific to, and disclosable by, phenomenology. This was a late, speculative result of transcendental-phenomenological research, already at the brink of meontic philosophy. It built upon previous achievements of transcendental phenomenology and expanded its theoretical framework by introducing the operative concept of pre-being. It is interesting to note that this *ontological expansion* of the transcendental register seeks to address a difficulty that the introduction of the concept of transcendentalism was originally meant to solve, namely, the question of the universality of phenomenological insights. For Husserl, especially in the years between the *Logical Investigation* and the *Ideas I*, this solution seemed to have been primarily an *epistemological* one. Let us briefly turn to some of Husserl's works that relate to this crucial period in the development of phenomenology.

The question that serves as the initial impulse for phenomenology is how to explain the universal validity of logical laws. Steven Crowell refers to this basic question as the *Geltungs-*theoretical, or normative, motivating strand of phenomenology. (2012: 27) This question is intimately tied to the question of the very nature of scientificity of science itself, as pure logic is here ultimately understood as a theory of science.⁴⁸ [*Logik als Wissenschaftslehre*] As such,

⁴⁸ Cf. the opening chapter of the *Prolegomena*, especially §6. (Hua XVIII: 27-32/16-19)

it cannot be answered by, nor based upon, empirical psychology. For Husserl, this is not merely a question of deflating the particular claims of various psychologistic philosophies of his time, but rather a matter of philosophical principle.⁴⁹ While there certainly is an anthropological reality to science, its empirical and psychological elements are not what guides the program of the *Logical Investigations*, nor, *eo ipso*, the inception of the phenomenological research program:

“We are rather interested in what makes science science, which is certainly not its psychology, nor any real context into which acts of thought are fitted, but a certain objective or ideal interconnection which gives these acts a unitary objective relevance, and, in such unitary relevance, an ideal validity.” (Hua XVIII: 230/144)

As is well-known, in the first edition of the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl frames this project of inquiry as a ‘descriptive psychology’, thus highlighting the philosophical influence of Brentano, and, importantly, aligning phenomenology with philosophy of mind, broadly conceived.⁵⁰ This early preoccupation with cognition was to become a permanent feature of phenomenology. However, phenomenology’s envisaged methodological and theoretical proximity to descriptive psychology would prove to be much more short-lived. As Husserl came to realize quickly after the publication of the *Logical Investigations*, these were, for all their originality and importance in setting up an initial path for phenomenology, still much too limited in their *philosophical* scope. We find a useful account of this transitional period in Husserl’s 1925 summer semester lectures on ‘Phenomenological psychology’. The *Logical Investigations*, which, according to Husserl, provided “a full development of Brentano’s suggestions” (Hua IX: 33/24), were an attempt to build up on Brentano’s central insight, intentionality. Certainly, intentionality was not Brentano’s invention, as the recognition that consciousness has the capacity to relate to objects is almost as old as philosophy itself. The crucial difference, already hinted at by Brentano, the “pioneer [*Wegbereiter*] for research in internal experience” (31/22), and fully seized upon by Husserl, is that intentionality is now understood as an essential characteristic of the psychic life. It might be said, without risk of overemphasis, that it was precisely this seemingly minor modification [*eine scheinbar geringe*

⁴⁹ For an excellent discussion of some of the motivating factors behind Husserl’s project guiding the *Logical Investigations*, with a focus on the often overlooked text of the *Prolegomena*, cf. Bernet 2002: 19-29. Additionally, see Kusch 1995 for a detailed socio-philosophical account of the psychologism controversy.

⁵⁰ Cf. Fisette 2010, for an account of Husserl’s philosophical appropriation and criticism of Brentano. See also De Boer 1978, for a detailed, and still very relevant, discussion of Husserl’s development within the coordinates of philosophy, empirical sciences, psychology, and logic.

Wendung] that made Husserl's phenomenological breakthrough possible in the first place. It is, therefore,

“... fundamentally mistaken to say that Brentano has simply rediscovered an old scholastic doctrine; his great discovery and his true originality consist in this, that he – guided by the idea of a descriptive psychology which he still, naturalistically oriented, thought of as the foundation for psychology which would be explanatory à la natural science – sought for a descriptive principle for the distinction between the physical and psychic and thereby was the first to establish that intentionality is the essential descriptively graspable characteristic of what is specifically psychic.” (32/23)

The naturalistic underpinnings of Brentano's theory prevented him from fully appreciating the implications of his own discovery, however.⁵¹ His work, according to Husserl, never managed to go beyond the level of classification of lived experiences – an important task, to be sure, but still only a preliminary one. Truly descriptively, which is to say phenomenologically, grasping the intentional structure of experience meant accounting for the objects of experience in their a priori correlation to modes of cognition. Such description would be able to show that consciousness was not merely an object to be modeled after physical objects, nor an empty receptacle, but rather “a performance accomplished [*ein ... sich vollziehendes Leisten*] in multiple demonstrable forms and pertinent syntheses, everywhere intentional, directed toward goals, directed toward ideas of truth.” (36/26)

These are Husserl's words in 1925, describing the breakthrough made by the *Logical Investigations* in 1901, and while his retelling does sound distinctly whiggish at times, the foreshadowing here is important; the references to the ‘performance’ and the ‘accomplishments’ of consciousness that were first partially uncovered in the *Investigations* are a sign of things that were to come soon after, under the heading of transcendental phenomenology.

The ‘transcendental turn’ of phenomenology, from Husserl's perspective, was not a break with the work done in the *Investigations*. On the contrary, he describes the subsequent introduction of the transcendental into phenomenology as a “consistent expansion and

⁵¹ It should almost go without saying that such a strong claim can only be made from the perspective of the highly opinionated Husserl, which is the perspective we are currently trying to capture in this short historical digression. The literature on Brentano, and on Brentano and Husserl, is vast, and goes far beyond the scope of the present discussion. For a first encounter, with numerous references for further reading, cf. Jacqueline 2004 and Rollinger 1999. On Brentano's role as the ‘grandfather of phenomenology’, cf. Baumgartner 2003.

deepening of the question raised by the *Logical Investigations*.” (42/30) Thus, if “a patient reading would bring to light in the *Logical Investigations* the germinal structure of all of Husserl’s thought”, as Derrida argues (1967a: 1/3), it would make sense to search for the kernel of phenomenology’s originality already in this work. This new idea, “perhaps the most important and essentially novel of all” (Hua ix: 37/26), was to be found in the radical difference between empirical or naturalistically descriptive psychology of the time and phenomenology (recall that Husserl had still framed phenomenology as a principally new form of psychology at the time). Rather than seizing upon the biological and anthropological facts and historical contingencies of human existence, phenomenology was to deal with the *ideal essences* of cognition, be it that of humans, angels, devils or gods. (38/27) Again, here is Husserl in 1925, reflecting on this insight:

“The exclusive theme of the *Logical Investigations* was the psychic as correlative to the objectivities intended in each case (and especially the logically ideal objectivities), thus, the multiplicity of psychic modes in which, purely in the immanence of psychic life, concepts, judgments, theories, are formed as ideally identical unities of sense, with the respective modes of supposed or evidently true being.” (37/27)

Yet Husserl quickly came to realize that leaving phenomenology at this level, regardless of its postulated radical difference to psychology and its insights into apriority and essential structures, failed to attain the philosophical universality he strived for.⁵² Here’s how Welton expresses this:

“This can be put more forcefully: the categorial phenomenology of the *Investigations* is more of a prolegomena to philosophy than philosophy itself. Husserl realized between the *Logical Investigations* (1900-1901) and *Ideas I* (1913) that, while his investigations certainly supplied seminal studies into the phenomenological bases of a theory of logic and cognition, his method lacked the scope and universality required to make it genuinely philosophical.” (Welton 2000: 71)

What were the methodological limitations of Husserl’s phenomenology at the time? It seems there are two complementary ways in which the phenomenological account of the

⁵² The following couple of pages are greatly indebted to Donn Welton’s excellent, and much more detailed, account of the path from pre-transcendental to transcendental phenomenology in Welton 2000, especially Chapter 4, pp. 70-95.

Investigations could be expanded. On the one hand, Husserl was becoming increasingly aware that intentionality, the correlational a priori of experience, itself needed to be properly situated within phenomenology. Husserl's project started as an attempt to clarify the phenomenon of universal validity of logical laws, and in that attempt, he had to navigate a narrow passage: "Agreeing with neo-Kantians like Paul Natorp that logical validity cannot be explained through empirical psychology, Husserl nevertheless rejected the neo-Kantian claim that such validity is primitive." (Crowell 2012: 27) But leaving the phenomenon of intentionality as it was meant exchanging one explanatory primitive for another, for its foundational position in the analyses could only be explained at the cost of objectifying consciousness. However, as soon as we phenomenologically approach consciousness as an object of experience, we deflate its foundational function and risk falling back into empirical psychology, since we are then very clearly dealing with the human mind and cognition, as opposed to the structure of cognition in general. Welton is worth quoting in full here:

"While particular correlations can be apprehended in terms of their possibility and thus as pure essences (in the region of psychology), the single structure said to subtend *all* regions (and this must include psychology) cannot be given in a pure essence, as described thus far, for the following reason: this structure is not a region or a regional category, it is not the highest category over all regions, and it is not the formal condition of a single region or of the totality of regions. Rather, it belongs to another order, transversely situated, accounting for a certain coincidence between the edifice of knowledge and the order of being. To contrast the straightforward attitude with the reflective, and to say that reflection is sufficient to transform what is not an object into an object, either begs the question or simply avoids the issue of whether one should apply 'object-like' analyses to intentionality. Categorical phenomenology, therefore, seems to employ the notion of intentionality as basic, without being able to clarify or justify either the sense in which that which is no object is an object, or that special discourse required for its thematization." (Welton 2000: 72f.)

This was now clearly an epistemological problem for Husserl, and he was well aware of the difficulty. Rather than attempting to go upwards in reflection in order to attain as high a level of generality as possible, what seems to have been necessary was much more akin to a radical change of *attitude* of the phenomenologist, and, consequently, a change in the self-understanding of the scientific character of this radically new inquiry. For one, it became clear that this meant shedding the framework of 'descriptive psychology', even in its a priori mode of investigation, which "would seek to establish whatever is essentially necessary to the

psychic as such, without which psyche and psychic life is utterly inconceivable, contrary to sense.” (Hua IX: 43f./31) It is the task of the new science to ultimately ground and clarify this knowledge in non-empirical subjectivity, for “... no psychology, not even an a priori psychology, is so self-sufficient that it is capable on its own simultaneously to pose and to solve epistemological problems.” (44/31) Transcendental phenomenology is thus born as the philosophical science of subjectivity.

This need to deepen the understanding of, and further clarify, the correlational a priori structure of experience goes hand in hand with a parallel expansion of phenomenological interest. For, by 1907 it had also become clear to Husserl that transcendental philosophy had to go beyond the concern with concepts and judgments in science, and the ‘ideally identical unities of sense’ contained therein. This shift is already clearly expressed in the five 1907 lectures on *The Idea of Phenomenology* – a document critical for tracing the development of Husserl’s thought⁵³ – where philosophy is all but equated with epistemology. “Philosophical thought”, now understood as a bulwark against all forms of skepticism, “is determined by the position taken with respect to the problems of the possibility of knowledge.” (Hua II: 3/61) This formulation has a clearly transcendental ring to it, and it captures the complex relation phenomenology now has to other sciences; on the one hand, it is radically different from them, as it is non-empirical and foundational, but on the other hand, it must still be able to account for the grounding-grounded structure, i.e. the gap between this transcendental science and other mundane sciences cannot be unbridgeable.

“In the sphere of positive research, one science can readily build upon another and one can serve the other as a methodological model, although only to a certain extent determined and limited by the nature of the areas of research in question. *Philosophy, however, lies in a wholly new dimension. It requires a wholly new point of departure and a wholly new method, a method that distinguishes it in principle from every ‘positive’ science.*” (24/20)

Thus, recognizable terms such as ‘phenomenological reduction’ and ‘constitution’ are introduced into phenomenology.⁵⁴ These quickly lead the phenomenologist to recognize that the unities of sense of logical and scientific laws are just one layer on top of a more primitive,

⁵³ Cf. Walter Biemel’s editor’s introduction in Hua II: vii-xi.

⁵⁴ “Phenomenological reduction” and “constitution” are already enthusiastically employed in the 1907 lectures on *Thing and Space*, for which *The Idea of Phenomenology* served as a theoretical introduction. These lectures display Husserl’s constitutive analysis in full swing, and clearly show the expansion in scope of phenomenology. Cf. Hua XVI.

but also more ‘natural’ way of experiencing the world. This meant embracing a wider notion of ‘validity’ which would no longer be restricted to the sphere of exact sciences, but would rather be “... co-extensive with experience of the world, with experience of ‘transcendence’, as such.” (Crowell 2012: 27) By 1913, Husserl had introduced ‘pure consciousness’ as the new non-empirical point of departure, understood as the locus of “... *the absolute* mental process”, which, according to Husserl, “... is not a metaphysical construction but rather something which, in its absoluteness, can become indubitably demonstrated, given in direct intuition by a corresponding change in one’s attitude.” This absolute starting point anchors every empirical mental process, and serves “... as a presupposition for the sense of that process.” (Hua III/1: 119/128). Tying consciousness (both pure and empirical) to the notion of ‘sense’ finally enables Husserl to introduce the crucial concept of sense-bestowal [*Sinngebung*] which undergirds the concept of constitution. We shall return to this important and difficult cluster of topics later and discuss the ways Husserl expands it. For now, it is important to note that Husserl, as early as *Ideas I*, also operates with a notion of the ‘absolute’, tied explicitly to consciousness. We shall see how this changes and compares to Fink’s introduction of the absolute into phenomenology shortly.

As any reader of Husserl will know, his writings abound with references to the principal newness and originality of his philosophy, perhaps most famously in the ‘Introduction’ to *Ideas I*, but also in other works. These pronouncements, contrary to what some might have come to believe, also show a deep awareness on Husserl’s part of the historical context which lead up to phenomenology. We could also put it in the following way: while phenomenology for Husserl was in no way *historicist*, that does not mean it was not deeply *historical*. Its originality, in fact, can only truly be measured against the background of the history of philosophy which brought about its inception. For example, to return once again to the 1925 lectures, we read that transcendental phenomenology, “[a]ccording to its entire attitude of research, therefore for the most radical reason, [...] is distinguished from all the sciences which have come to their development in our European culture since Aristotle.” (Hua IX: 44/32) This clearly shows that Husserl was steeped in history at least insofar as he accepted the basic and very much historical strivings of philosophy as goals worth pursuing, and therefore as his own goals:

“... to realize the Western ideal of philosophy as a science; to clarify the relationship between philosophy and the natural sciences by way of a foundation for their respective constitutions;

to culminate the modern philosophical revolution set into motion by Descartes; to lead human existence toward ‘true humanity’ based on a practical life in truth.” (de Warren 2015: 82)

These are clearly tasks inextricably intertwined with the overarching project of establishing a *first philosophy*, a traditional Western ideal embraced by Husserl as well. Yet, this project had already been undertaken by numerous philosophers before. How does phenomenology fit within this tradition, and is it in any important way different from previous attempts?

Following Luft (2010), we can differentiate between two senses of ‘first philosophy’ as they appear in Husserl. The first, featuring prominently in the first two decades of the twentieth century, concerns the Cartesian project of philosophically grounding other sciences. Indeed, as we have seen, the contours of this project are discernible as early as the *Prolegomena* work. However, Husserl’s transcendental turn, coupled with his growing historical awareness, adds a new and deeper layer to the project of formulating a first philosophy, visible in the historically charged lectures of the 1920s, which now take the form of *Auseinandersetzungen* with earlier attempts:

“[T]he way he approaches it now, after having made the transcendental turn a decade before, changes vastly. It is not that the original purview is altered, but it, arguably, fades into the background. Instead, a new element gets added to the issue of what a first philosophy should accomplish; namely, to provide an absolute grounding of a new scientific discipline in its *own* right, namely, transcendental phenomenology, the eidetic science of transcendental subjectivity. Hence, rather than to focus on providing through phenomenology a foundation for other disciplines (‘second philosophies’), *transcendental* phenomenology is a self-enclosed, autonomous discipline with its *own* task, method, subject domain, and therefore, consequently, in need of its *own* grounding.” (Luft 2010b: 108)

We see here how the epistemological and theoretical questions, driving phenomenology’s internal changes and growth, seamlessly fuse together with the methodological question of self-understanding and of the peculiar self-relation of this new science. There is, however, an additional, and often overlooked dimension that becomes more and more prominent, and it concerns the *practical* dimension of transcendental phenomenology. Rather than providing the philosopher with a detached point of view, phenomenology must also be able to evince its own place and meaning in the world, and allow the philosopher to adopt, and live up to, his role as the ‘functionary of mankind’, to use

Husserl's apt and oft-quoted phrase. (Hua vi: 15/17)⁵⁵ This heady mixture of theoretical, methodological, and practical questions and concerns is what Luft refers to as 'Husserl's *second* first philosophy' (2010: 109), and it is in this context that Fink's *Sixth Meditation* ought to be read. Yet, as we shall see, it is precisely his dehumanizing reading of the transcendental subject which ultimately leaves him unable to address the practical aspects of phenomenologizing activity.

The developmental path of phenomenology we have followed so far might appear to host an inner tension, the fulcrum of which is the transcendental turn. One way in which this tension famously manifested itself was the rift between the 'Munich school' of phenomenology and Husserl and his followers. The two sides of this divergence seemed to mirror the sides of the realism-idealism debate, with one side clinging firmly to the strongly realist impulses of the *Logical Investigations*, and the other side going down the road of transcendental phenomenology which, at least in name, ended in a sort of non-subjective transcendental idealism. This rift seems to cast doubt on the internal consistency of Husserl's own philosophical project, as there seems to be an incompatibility between ontological grounding of other sciences and the epistemological self-grounding of transcendental science.⁵⁶ Yet this difficulty only seems to arise upon accepting a very narrow understanding of transcendental philosophy. Crucial for a productive expansion of this understanding is a robust and transcendently relevant notion of the world. To be sure, transcendental philosophy, especially in Husserl's early variant of it, often *seemed* to content itself with describing the structure of subjectivity, sometimes even going as far as implying ontological, rather than purely epistemological, antecedency of consciousness.⁵⁷ However, the early concept of intentionality, adopted from Brentano, was not discarded with the turn toward transcendentality. Rather, it transposed into the crucial phenomenological affirmation of the dependency, not just of consciousness, but also of transcendental subjectivity, on the world. We are still not in the position to ascertain the exact nature of this dependency, but we shall return to it later. What is clear, however, – and this was clear to Husserl as well – is that transcendental phenomenology *qua* first philosophy necessarily has to include an analysis of the world, as it is precisely the

⁵⁵ The cluster of topics relating to history, teleology, and the nature of Western rationality, is taken up repeatedly, most notably in the so-called *Kaizo articles* (Hua xxvii: 3-124), and the *Vienna lecture* (Hua vi: 314-48), but also in Husserl's late reflections on these topics, written mostly in 1937, i.e. after the publication of the *Crisis*. (Hua xxix: 343-426)

⁵⁶ For hints regarding strategies for dealing with this problem, cf. Luft 2010b: 109, n.2 & 3.

⁵⁷ Cf. the section on 'The Region of Pure Consciousness', especially the notorious thought experiment concerning the annihilation of the world in §49, and the thoughts regarding the possibility of a bodiless consciousness in §54, in Hua iii/1.

world that is the locus of the regional ontologies that are the object of the grounding function of transcendental subjectivity. Yet an ontological analysis of the grounded depends on an epistemological analysis of the grounding, as that is the only way to attain the universality of insight needed if phenomenology were to legitimize itself as the *letztbegründende* science. Here is how Welton puts this point: “For phenomenology to become *philosophy*, then, it must not only deliver a science of regions within the world but also give us an account of how our knowledge of the world itself is possible.” (2000: 74) This is clearly not a task that could be achieved from and within the confines of a subjectivity radically detached from the world, even if only as a thought experiment, but rather one that initiates a decisive push toward an enworlded subject. Phenomenology thus shifts the world into the transcendental register, where the world, which itself is not a being or object, appears as the locus of all beings and all senses tied to those beings or objects. It functions as an intricate and dynamic web of senses or horizons within which objects appear. In fact, according to Welton, this is precisely the greatest discovery of Husserl’s phenomenology:

“The horizon of all horizons is the *world*. The seminal insight of Husserl’s phenomenology, contrary to the standard picture, was not that it offered us an analysis of consciousness but that it saw that an analysis of consciousness simultaneously brings forth and is impossible apart from an analysis of the world.” (23)

We now have a basic picture of the cluster of theoretical, practical, and methodological issues which had preoccupied Husserl throughout the development of his thought, but proved to be particularly pressing in the context of his *Cartesian Meditations*, the work meant to serve as a mature and definitive introduction to his phenomenology. Fink’s *Sixth Meditation* was also an intervention in this field of interconnected issues. We have seen how a striving for systematicity drove Husserl’s collaboration with Fink in the preceding chapter, and we now have a better understanding of the other two important motivating factors behind it, one historical and one systematic. On the one hand, there was the set of historical circumstances which lead to the strife between Husserl and Heidegger, and which consequently and however faintly motivated Husserl to try to address some of his criticisms. On the other hand, there was the long-standing tendency to establish phenomenology as a first philosophy, i.e. as the ultimate grounding science. In these two respects, Fink proved to be invaluable source of help, but also of inspiration for Husserl. He was uniquely well positioned to help on both fronts, given his close relation to Heidegger, and his original and powerful synoptic vision of the history of

philosophy, and phenomenology's place within it. In our survey of these issues, we have seen how the notion of the world organically emerges and repeatedly resurfaces throughout, and how it is interwoven with the notion of science. Let us now see how Fink and Husserl further expand on these issues.

2.2. From the world back, and back again

2.2.1. Beginning in the (pre-given) world

One of the guiding questions throughout the years of Husserl's collaboration with Fink was, for both, that of phenomenology's beginning and end. Both of these can be understood in two distinct, but closely related ways. The question of the beginning of phenomenology refers not just to the starting point for phenomenological research, the pure field of disclosure set free by performing the epoché and the reduction, but also to the original motivation for performing them in the first place. Likewise, the end of phenomenology points not just to the regulative idea or goal of absolute knowledge which, while perhaps not attainable, can be asymptotically strived for, but also to the ultimate telos of phenomenologizing activity as such. Particularly in the latter case, the two aspects might in fact turn out to point to the same thing. Now, what immediately strikes us as important is that these fluid concepts of 'beginning' and 'end' in fact zigzag between the natural and the transcendental-phenomenological attitude. In other words, they weave in and out of the methodological brackets and around the dividing line of the reduction. The starting point, and thus the entire direction in which phenomenologizing then proceeds, seem to depend on, or at the very least be heavily shaped by, the empirical, historical makeup of the psychological human subject, i.e. a person, who is initially motivated to do phenomenology. Similarly, there could be no grasping of phenomenology's ends at the transcendental level without considering the teleological charge of phenomenology, which is manifested in personalistic, intersubjective, cultural, and, ultimately, historical spheres of life. Husserl refers to these through general concepts of 'humanity' and 'rationality', which obviously straddle different attitudes, from the natural to the phenomenological.

These are the first hints of what we will refer to as the *porosity* of the phenomenological reduction. By this, we mean to point to the peculiar fact that the reduction for Husserl, especially in the years which interest us here, seems to allow for some interplay and movement between pre- and post-reduction phenomena. More specifically, it points to the fact that more

and more previously bracketed phenomena were progressively creeping back in into the transcendently relevant context. Husserl himself was not unaware of this, and the label of ‘transcendental’ is subjected to an increasingly complex expansion of meaning in his later work. In Moran’s words:

“Through the 1920s and 1930s Husserl became increasingly wide-reaching, even baroque, in his conception of the transcendental. He speaks not only of the transcendental ego but of transcendental experience, of transcendental life, of transcendental facts, of a transcendental past and future, transcendental rationality and even transcendental irrationality, and so on.” (Moran 2003: 51)

Such conceptual expansion clearly points to the dynamic nature not just of phenomenological research, but also of the *objects* of phenomenological research, which leads us to the recognition that “[t]he transcendental domain is infinite, but also it is living, that is, it grows and accrues dimension which become sedimented in it.” (52) Considering this vast field of expansion and sedimentation, it is no wonder that the question of the proper beginning for phenomenology constantly re-emerged for Husserl and Fink as the central question of their work.

As we have pointed out, the notion of ‘beginning’ could plausibly refer to different things in this context. On the one hand, it could refer to the empirical phenomenologizing subject, the mundane ego initially deciding to do phenomenology. On the other hand, it could refer to the *motivation* for this initial decision, which is in itself an act worthy of phenomenological attention. Finally, it could refer to the subject after leaving the natural attitude, i.e. after the initial bracketing, which then serves as the springboard for phenomenological analysis. Here, again, we cannot fail to notice the motif of interwovenness, which has been emerging throughout our discussion: these different meanings are not entirely separable, and rather than point to different phenomena, they represent different aspects of one and the same subjectivity. Clearly, the notion of beginning is intimately tied to the notion of the reduction, which, as we have already noted, is understood as the inaugural act of phenomenology. Yet the reduction itself is by no means a self-evident act. How is it to be positioned with respect to the different meanings of ‘beginning’ we mentioned above? Are the world-situatedness of the subject and his motivation for phenomenology to be bracketed, and thus ignored, or are they to be allowed as transcendently relevant, and thus analyzed as

structural moments of the transcendental subject?⁵⁸ It is questions like these which led Fink to refer to the “phenomenology of the phenomenological reduction”⁵⁹ as the “*first problem* of the transcendental theory of method – ‘first’ indeed not only as the problem that necessarily introduces things, but also as the *fundamental problem*.” (SCM: 32/29) Husserl’s working notes and manuscripts from this period of intense preparation for a ‘systematic work’ show that he shared Fink’s opinion, and devoted much time to understanding and describing the sense and function of the epoché and the phenomenological reduction.⁶⁰ Yet even this agreement over the centrality of the reduction reflected deeper differences in approach.

A telling reference to these underlying differences is to be found in Jan Patočka’s recounting of the time he spent with Husserl and Fink. Recalling his 1933 visit to Freiburg, and the ‘philosophical walks’ with them, he writes:

“At that time, Husserl and Fink were primarily concerned with the issue of the phenomenological reduction as key to phenomenological transcendental idealism. Fink’s goal was to interpret this idealism as a creative one, and to emphasize the analogies between it and German idealism, which he knew extremely well, whereas Husserl never gave up on pointing out the importance of British empiricism, to which he was greatly indebted.” (Patočka 1976: x)

This highlighting of different aspects of transcendental phenomenology, and of the reduction, had already become clear three years earlier, and took its full form in the *Sixth Meditation*, with respect to the question of motivation for phenomenology. In the early draft for the introduction to the planned systematic work, probably written in late summer of 1930, Fink had originally intended to approach the issue of the beginning of philosophy through the idea of enworlded philosophy, i.e. of “philosophy in the world”.⁶¹ This would mean installing the notion of ‘world’ into the very core of philosophy, and making it an essential dimension of the ‘beginning of phenomenology’. He thus links phenomenology to a radical notion of universal knowledge of the world, as the very idea of self-determination and absolute justification is embedded in, or, as Fink prefers to call it, situated, in the *pre-given world*. (SCM/2: 4) Husserl, on the other

⁵⁸ We are ignoring here the open question of the differences between the epoché and the reduction(s) in Husserl. Whatever their difference, any type of phenomenological reduction presupposes the performing of the epoché, and they go hand in hand in any context in which there is talk of the reduction. In fact, Husserl himself occasionally uses the terms as synonymous. Cf. Andrea Staiti’s entry on the epoché in Gander 2010: 84.

⁵⁹ The phrase ‘phenomenology of the phenomenological reduction’ features in the title of one of the sections of Husserl’s lectures from 1923/24, edited by Rudolf Boehm. Cf. Hua VIII: 82/286.

⁶⁰ The *Husserliana* volume on the phenomenological reduction, edited by Sebastian Luft, is extremely instructive here. Cf. Hua xxxiv, especially sections II-V, which cover the 1929-1935 period.

⁶¹ Cf. Hua Dok. II/2: 4. Henceforward, this book will be cited as (SCM/2).

hand, – having a pragmatic outlook on the introductory role of the systematic work in question – preferred a different approach, ignoring the radical nature of philosophical knowledge for the time being, and focusing instead on the ideal of science as the *Leitidee*, the latter “admitting of a simpler exposition”, as he intimated to Cairns in 1932. (Cairns 1976: 81) This is reflected in Fink’s sketch of the introduction that followed after Husserl’s comments,⁶² which now opens with ‘philosophy as universal science’ (SCM/2: 10), and initially points to the totality, rather than radicality, of knowledge as motivating factor. (12) Yet, this nominal concession to Husserl’s preferred starting point doesn’t change much for the Finkian approach, for they aren’t truly diverging paths at all. Rather, as Bruzina argues, this was an “... opportunity for putting the guiding idea of science in its proper place in the scheme of phenomenology.” (2004: 182) It is important to point out here that Fink operates with a very broad notion of science from the outset, and this notion is intimately related to that of the world. It comes to its full expression in the *Sixth Meditation*, but it is clearly visible in all the surrounding manuscripts and notes as well. Thus, already in the 1930/31 sketch for the introduction to the systematic work of phenomenology, he writes of philosophy as the “universal human pointedness toward a last and radical self- and world-understanding”, which is then immediately linked to the “*true totality of knowledge*, the universal science.” (SCM/2: 12) The reference to the radicality of knowledge embedded within this notion of science, with radicality clearly being a characteristic of the transcendental attitude, tells us that the ‘science’ Fink refers to here is not to be understood in any mundane sense. Indeed, he follows through with this distinction immediately, insisting that the programmatic designation ‘philosophy as universal science’ “... points to a unique type of knowledge and a science that can only be comprehended from within itself.” (13) While this may initially seem to fall into the long tradition of attempts to present philosophy as a universal science, Fink further argues, none of those previous attempts managed to realize the nature of philosophical knowledge in its true universality. (14) This argument hinges on the meaning of this universality. According to Fink, the task of philosophy is not to *unify* and *ground* other sciences, or at least not primarily. Rather, it is to thematically pursue the foundational sphere that makes such grounding possible in the first place. (17) Clearly, what is being referred to here is transcendental subjectivity, and for philosophy to be able to thematize it, it must take the form of transcendental phenomenology. Crucially, however, Fink frames this foundational sphere as *Weltleben*, world-life or life-in-world. He thus circles back to the very beginning, where world, science, and radicality of knowledge are

⁶² Probably discussed during their stay in Chiavari in late 1930. Cf. Bruzina 2004: 181.

one, and offers this startling description of philosophy *qua* phenomenology, in a passage that typifies Fink's prose, both syntactically and stylistically:

"The inner screening and brightening up of this natural world-life, which – admittedly divided into an abundance of structural moments – seems to be an elementary irreducible primordial phenomenon, the analytic detection of the plethora of deeply forgotten preconditions concealed in it and thus initially outside of analytic grasp, the restitution and embedding of the relative and in truth limited 'universe' of the world, which is precisely the continual precondition of this world-life, into an absolute universe, as well as the elucidation of the absolute reasons for precisely this forgottenness and concealment; this is the task of philosophy as universal science." (17f.)

The references to 'forgottenness' and 'concealment' here conjure up faint images of Heidegger's philosophy, and are in fact crucial for Fink, as we shall soon see. For now, it is important to point out that the description of philosophy as universal science quoted above points to what Luft refers to as 'the second first philosophy', i.e. grounding of transcendental science as a science in its own right. This peculiar character of phenomenology is clearly expressed in the *Sixth Meditation*, particularly in the fifth chapter, where Fink insists that

"[t]he idea of prejudice-free, ultimately grounded science can never be radicalized to the *transcendental* questioning of the presuppositions of the worldly Idea of knowing and science as long as one holds precisely to the mundane Idea of science, the mundane Idea of grounding and of freedom from prejudice." (SCM: 36/32)

But these quotes still don't truly help in understanding what type of scientificity is appropriate to phenomenology, nor what is truly radical in the knowledge it attains or expresses. In fact, a new difficulty now seems to have come to the fore: how is Fink's insistence on the disparity between transcendental science and mundane science to be reconciled with his insistence on the centrality and importance of the world as the starting point for phenomenology? This centrality is captured by Fink through the exploration and use of transcendental modalities such as 'pregivenness of the world' [*Vorgegebenheit der Welt*] and 'captivation in the world' [*Weltbefangenheit*]. What these imply is that phenomenology, while offering knowledge which is non-mundane in a sense, still in no way constitutes a *leaving* of the world. Rather, its "... unspecified kind of knowledge-seeking" is the kind of "... self-reflection that will determine its character by reinvestigating its inevitable *situatedness in the world*." (Bruzina 2004: 182)

But if the phenomenologist is inescapably entangled in the world, how could he ever create non-mundane models of anything, let alone of knowledge, which seems to be necessarily dependent on the whole of our worldly situatedness? In other words, how is transcendental knowledge even possible?

This was a problem not just for Fink, but for Husserl as well, and for phenomenology in general. We are still a long way away from being able to answer this question from Husserl's perspective. We now can, however, see how Fink responds to the difficulty. A first hint is to be gleaned from the position of the world within phenomenological research on his conception. We might say that its validity has now been expanded in the way that makes it instantly present on both sides of the reduction-fence, so to speak. In other words, bracketing and subsequent reductions never mean a temporary exclusion of the world which is then gradually regained in analysis and disclosed as a mere correlate of the ego. Rather, its quality of *pregivenness* and its validity as *always-having-been-there* are preserved even in the transcendental attitude. This important notion of the *pregivenness* of the world can only be properly phenomenologically disclosed if the central concept of the world, as Bruzina puts it, "... is presented in the meaning it gains from phenomenological investigations done *after* and *within* the reduction." (183) The upshot here is that *pregivenness* is now understood as a transcendental modality itself, rather than as something to be labeled as merely mundane and left behind after phenomenology begins. The world takes on the character of "an all-encompassing structure" and a "continuing, all-pervasive problem" for phenomenology, rather than being the initial hurdle to phenomenology. (ibid.) This is one way that the reduction becomes porous, for it starts allowing for more, and more varied, phenomena after its performance – phenomena with clear import from the natural attitude. The world straddles both sides of the reduction.

At this point, a quick remark might be warranted. Our current focus on Fink shouldn't be taken to mean that these insights were exclusive to him and that Husserl was oblivious to the immense importance and the particular character of the world in our experience. Yet, his most sustained attempts to deal with the problem of the world and its *pregivenness* start in the early 1930s and were clearly influenced by Fink. However, one could argue that Husserl had never quite risen, and perhaps never wanted to rise, to Fink's level of radicality with respect to this topic. This radicality in Fink was driven by presuppositions that would turn out to be very difficult to cash out phenomenologically, as we shall soon try to show. In any case, having what we have discussed so far in mind, we can agree with Bernet that the world is, for Fink as well as for Husserl, simultaneously the starting point and the end point of transcendental phenomenology. (2004: 95)

With this central importance of the world in mind, let us now see if we can sketch out a more detailed, but still provisional explanation as to why Fink was adamant in focusing on the radicality of knowledge as the guiding idea for phenomenology, rather than adopting the simpler approach of Husserl, and focusing on a more natural understanding of science instead. If we want to seize on the unique epistemic character of phenomenology, while at the same time retaining the world, not just as result, but as starting point for phenomenology, there is one major trap to avoid. It constantly resurfaces as the tendency to lapse back into mundane understanding of the world. This is why the reduction cannot be a one-time procedure in phenomenology, but must be continually carried out, as it is the only way in which philosophy can break through our natural attitude.⁶³ We read: “In truth, it [the reduction] never actually comes to an end and is never completed, but is rather the perpetual task of phenomenology.” (SCM/2: 191) Interestingly, Fink then employs a spatial metaphor, likening transcendental phenomenology to an ever deeper digging of meditative self-determination. (ibid.) The concept of *pregivenness* of the world we discussed above adds to the difficulty here, because it resists simple placement within this self-determining layering. Its ‘depth’ proves difficult to pin down because it is not a simple concept; the concept of *pregivenness* is multifaceted and encompasses several different senses of ‘*pregivenness*’: *pregivenness* of the immediate objects present in my experience; of my own subject, as it is present for myself; and, finally, the *pregivenness* of the horizons of time. (203) Where do these different senses of *pregivenness* stand with respect to the *epoché* and the reductions? This is a potential difficulty. On the one hand, all three of them have clear mundane validity, as all three are accessible, at least in a very simplistic way, to ordinary self-reflection. On the other hand, they also seem to ‘survive’ the initial *epoché*. As a matter of fact, they attain a structural quality – all three now appear as constitutive of the most general way anything at all is experienced, including the performance of phenomenological analysis itself. They thus frame the general horizon of experience. But the transcendental theory of method, as Fink envisages it, cannot content itself with this result, as it would quickly slip back into the “dogmatism of the natural attitude”, colored by a worldly understanding of being. (197) We are reminded here of Fink’s references to the profound naïveté of the transcendental attitude. As it is defined, it refers to the “... uncritical transfer of ways of cognizing that are oriented to beings onto the phenomenological cognition of formation (constitution) of beings.” (SCM: 184/2) This means that the phenomenological transformation of mundane experience

⁶³ The topic of the relation between philosophy and the natural attitude would continue to deeply interest Fink long after his years with Husserl. Particularly interesting is the lecture course held in 1955/56 in Freiburg, published in Fink 1958.

into the a priori correlation between subjectivity and world is not enough, as it remains anchored in a mundane ontology. A proper transcendental account of the constitution of experience should, on the contrary, be able to account for the “non-worldliness of the transcendental subject.” (SCM/2: 202) This means that “... it must be vigorously emphasized that the bracketing of the world doesn’t just mean an epoché of current experience and of actualized acquisitions of experience, but also an epoché of the *pregivenness*.” (203) Performance of the reduction, Fink tells us, is not just a transcending of the world, but also of the worldly idea of being. (197) This means that the only way to go beyond the *pregivenness* of the world is to go beyond the idea of being, i.e., beyond ontology in general. The leitmotif of ‘phenomenology of phenomenology’ now becomes even clearer, as well as the critique of transcendental naïveté. In its first phase, phenomenology discloses the field of constitutive achievements and analyzes it. It is only in its second phase, once it has reached epistemic maturity, that it is able to undertake a critique of the very nature of transcendental knowledge and evidence. As van Kerckhoven puts it,

“[t]he reduction of the mundane idea of being outlined by Fink implies a wide-reaching critique of the intentional *pregivenness* of the world, as it is taken up in analysis, as ‘thematic’, by the first phenomenology – an analysis which still hasn’t cut itself off from the preconception of the natural attitude, but is rather still moving within it. Fink defines this preconception as constitutive for the analytic situation of first phenomenology, which *exclusively* spans the correlation between human experience and its counterpart: the immediate surrounding world.” (2003: 254)

As we shall soon see, the sense of this critique of the highest level is rather ambivalent in Fink, and it was precisely this ambivalence which ultimately set him apart from Husserl. For now, let us take note of the fact that the world plays a very interesting double role in Fink’s discussion: it is at once the central point of phenomenology, its starting- and end-point, and its outermost limit which needs to be transcended in order for transcendental knowledge to reach its ultimate self-understanding.

We are not yet in the position to assess whether going beyond the concepts of the *pregivenness* of the world or beyond mundane ontology is actually a realistic, or even worthwhile goal for phenomenology, especially Husserl’s. However, in our first general overview of Fink’s arguments in sections 1.3 and 1.4, we argued that Fink proposes *ontological* arguments, and consequently ontological grounds, for grasping the uniqueness of

phenomenologizing activity. In arguing that the transcendental reduction is ontologically productive insofar as it creates the split between mundane and transcendental being (SCM: 22/20), Fink ultimately ends up arguing for phenomenology as the unity of ontology and meontics. The fact that this discussion is couched almost exclusively in ontological terms might lead us to believe that Fink eschews the epistemological question of self-grounding as it manifests itself in the quest for the second first philosophy. Indeed, our presentation so far has insisted on these ontological dimensions of Fink's thought. This point now seems reinforced by the insistence on the world as 'beginning and end' of phenomenology. Of course, the world is not understood as a being, but rather as the totality and horizon of all beings in transcendental phenomenology. But the fact that it now encompasses a latent validity of givenness means that it, at the very last, compounds the difficulty of avoiding mundanizing phenomenology and ontifying the world.

If this were the whole of Fink's reworking of phenomenology, it would have been questionable whether it was at all compatible with transcendental philosophy. In any case, it would have been unclear how these numerous ontological remarks and insights tie in with the general project of *Husserl's* transcendental phenomenology. Fink recognized this, and recognized that he needed an epistemological account of the *knower* in phenomenology, which included not just an account of the knower's relation to different types of knowledge, but also of his motivation for pursuing them. This account hinges on a very peculiar epistemological argument for the radical nature of phenomenological knowledge. The argument is unique to Fink, and constitutes a significant challenge to, and departure from, Husserl. We shall refer to it as Fink's *epistemological anti-humanism*.

2.2.2. *Between impersonality and un-humanization*

The doctrine of epistemological anti-humanism builds upon the argument for the general unnatural and difficult character of phenomenologizing activity, brought up repeatedly by Husserl throughout his career, and particularly in his published works.⁶⁴ The unnaturalness

⁶⁴ For example, cf. §3 of the Introduction to the second volume of the *Logical Investigations*, discussing "difficulties of pure phenomenological analysis", where the main source of difficulty is located in "... the unnatural direction of intuition and thought which phenomenological analysis requires." (Hua XIX/1: 14/170) This observation is made in the Introduction to *Ideas I* as well, signifying that the difficulties are not only present again in the transcendental version of phenomenology, but are in fact even amplified. The extraordinary difficulty lies in the fact that "... a new *style of attitude* is needed which is *entirely altered* in contrast to the natural attitude in experiencing and the natural attitude in thinking." (Hua III/1: 5/XIX)

of phenomenology is primarily tied to the fact that the world is the single most dominant presence in our typical, normal, everyday experience. The belief in the existence of the surrounding world is embedded in the structure of our experience in such a basic way, that removing it would threaten to unravel the field of experience entirely. *Suspending* this belief as part of an intentional methodological procedure would thus potentially have a profoundly transformative and disconcerting effect. Furthermore, tracing the whole, or even the majority, of experience back to the sense-bestowing function of the transcendental subject, thus disclosing the world as a nexus of constitutive achievements of the subject, would profoundly alter our understanding of us and our place and function in the world. Yet, on both of these accounts, there remains a gap of understanding, or, rather, something to be elucidated further.

On the one hand, the phenomenologist clearly *doesn't* have any trouble regaining and retaining the natural sense of the world after completing his phenomenological analyses that started by performing the epoché.⁶⁵ On the other hand, there seems to be a certain vicious circle in the structure of the reduction: in order to recognize the constitutive achievements of the transcendental subject, one has to have performed the reduction. But performing the reduction in the first place presupposes at least some of its results, not just as goal but also as motivating factor. This is reminiscent of an argument made rather early in the course of the *Sixth Meditation* – as we have seen, Fink insisted there on the interplay between phenomenological

The transcendental turn necessitates a differentiation of attitudes, and this differentiation operates on the claim that there is, indeed, a radical difference between the natural and transcendental attitudes. Moreover, as Husserl further points out, the change from one to another is not a simple switch that, once accomplished, secures the new field of research. There is a constant danger of falling back into the natural attitude again, and an entire methodological apparatus is needed in order to prevent this relapse: “To move freely in it [i.e., in the ‘new’ attitude] without relapsing into the old attitudes, to learn to see, distinguish, and describe what lies within view, require, moreover, peculiar and laborious studies.” (ibid.)

It is worth pointing out that Husserl's own understanding of the radicality of phenomenology seems to become more radical with time. One can catch a glimpse of this in §57 of the *Crisis*, for example, where Husserl argues that transcendental philosophy carries within it, essentially and necessarily, a certain unnaturalness and opposition to human common sense. This is because it constitutes “[t]he complete inversion of the natural stance of life”, and thus “... places the greatest conceivable demands upon philosophical resolve and consistency.” (Hua vi: 204/200) Thus the constant danger of lapsing back into the natural attitude cannot merely be understood as failure to adhere to the strict methods of phenomenology which are in place precisely to prevent something like that from happening. Much more than that, this danger designates an innate tendency of the human mind which needs to be combated constantly. This was an insight which proved to be very influential for Fink's own take on the unnatural character of the reduction.

⁶⁵ The journal written by Sartre's Antoine Roquentin from the novel *Nausea* chronicles his deep alienation from the world and other people, and serves as a plausible phenomenological description of the experience of someone who has trouble recovering the natural sense of the world after having lost it once. For Roquentin, the experience of the world is inseparable from sense itself, and the decomposition of sense leads to a fundamental shaking of his world. Nausea is not something Roquentin experiences in the way humans, as beings-in-the-world, normally experience feelings or emotions. Rather, the world itself takes on a different character and shapes his experience, engulfing him in nausea. His way of experiencing beings in the world changes: “His blue cotton shirt stands out cheerfully against a chocolate-coloured wall. That too brings on the Nausea. Or rather it is the Nausea. The Nausea isn't inside me: I can feel it *over there* on the wall, on the braces, everywhere around me. It is one with the café, it is I who am inside it.” (Sartre 2000: 35)

activity and its method, insofar as the transcendental theory of method is necessary for, and indeed conditions the practical performance of phenomenological analysis, but also, at the same time, presupposes it as the only grounds on which it can be developed in the first place. (SCM: 8/8; 30/28) This general insight is now mirrored in the more specialized case of the phenomenological reduction. (39/35) But Fink now expands on the idea of self-presupposition, and supplements it with the crucial notion of *radicality* of knowledge. It is not the case that the reduction, understood as the gateway to philosophy, presupposes itself as already having been explicitly performed. It is rather a preliminary response – or the first step toward responding – to a deeply entrenched propensity for *questioning*⁶⁶ which is, according to Fink, the first and basic way in which transcendental knowledge manifests itself, or appears, in the world for any subject. (40/37) There is something deeply mysterious and transcendent about the *whence* of this type of unnatural questioning: “The motivation for the action of reduction is the awakening of a questionableness that indeed enters the scene in the natural attitude, but which in principle ‘transcends’ the horizon of all questions that are possible within the natural attitude.” (40f./37) Accordingly, the notion of motivation is itself transformed into a transcendental-phenomenological one here, and decoupled from any mundane, psychological sense. What remains in this rarified concept of motivation is thus a certain “... phenomenological *fore-knowledge* that first makes it possible to pose the radical questions” (39/36), ‘radicality’ itself being understood “in a new sense” here. What is new about the radicality Fink describes here? It is the fact that the mysterious and transcendent character of this type of questioning is also, for Fink, a way of *self-transcending*. Importantly, the type of self-transcending he describes is markedly different from anything previously described in and by phenomenology.

“Transcendental radicalism”, Fink writes, “is of a nature that is different in principle: motivated by transcendental insight, it puts into question what can never be put into question at all in the natural attitude.” (37/33) What is put into question in and by this radicalism is, of course, precisely the world itself. But the radicalism in question, according to Fink, rests on something deeply inhuman, which drives the worldly human consciousness to ever try something as unnatural as phenomenology in the first place.

“This means that we can never bracket ‘*all*’ prejudices, were such a purpose even to occur to us in the context of worldly reflection, if we do not in some way already have the transcendental

⁶⁶ There is a clear proximity to the Ancient Greek concept of wonder [θαυμάζειν] here, discussed by both Plato and Aristotle. It is not surprising that it occupies such a central place in Fink’s thought, given the general importance of Greek philosophers for his own philosophy.

insight that the *being of the world* as a whole (including therefore my own human being) is a ‘prejudice’, i.e., an unexamined unity of acceptedness.” (39/36)

The limits of our own humanity would thus seem to be the limits of phenomenology in general, and would apparently restrict us to mundane philosophy. Yet they are not, and phenomenology does move about in the transcendental register. How is this possible? In the first chapter, we made some preliminary references to Fink’s notion of un-humanization, and briefly mentioned it constituted his response to the softer and, methodologically speaking, more neutral notion of denaturalization implied in the reduction in Husserl. We are now able to understand why un-humanization, for Fink, does not leave us with nothing to work with, but is precisely the beginning of phenomenology proper. It is because the reduction allows us to distinguish “... between ourselves (as a unity of self-acceptedness, of self-apperceptions) and a deeper self in whose life these concealing self-acceptednesses have their origin.” (40/37)

But the notion of the ‘deeper self’ Fink introduces here is somewhat misleading and leads to difficulties. Of course, the careful reader of the *Sixth Meditation* will always keep in mind the preliminary character of all of its descriptions, as well as the fact that the terms it uses – given the esoteric and difficult nature of its findings – are always only ‘*Verlegenheitsausdrücke*’ (48/44), wholly insufficient and only loosely analogous to their mundane counterparts. Yet, even with this in mind, Fink seems to vacillate between different senses of this primordial depth which is disclosed by the reduction. At times, it seems that he is pointing in the direction of something which is precisely not a ‘self’ in any sense of the word, but rather a blind impersonality of some sort. Yet, this way of presenting then quickly gives way to a more traditional doctrine of the transcendental ego, but framed in curiously non-egological and non-subjectivist terms. While this probably wasn’t wholly unintentional, – and the important late concept of “dialectical unity” (127/116) could serve as a way toward remedying this apparent incompatibility – there still remains a sense of a fundamental ambiguity in Fink’s discussion of the reduction.

On the one hand, transcendental phenomenology, according to Fink, seems to disclose some type of primordial epistemic movement which isn’t based on, or a product of, subjectivity in any capacity, but rather constitutive of it. In this sense, the notion of ‘life’ appears and takes center stage, as was the case in Fink’s reference to the forgotten, concealed primordial phenomenon of the natural world-life. (SCM/2: 17) We thus read:

“Transcendental reflection, fashioned into the phenomenological reduction, *does not objectify a knowing of itself by the transcendental I that is perhaps already there*. Rather, it *opens up and discloses* this transcendental life of the I for the very first time, it lifts it out of a hiddenness and ‘anonymity’ that is as old as the world. Obviously, then, the ‘anonymity’ that is here removed by the reduction has a basically *different fundamental sense* than in unthematic human self-openness prior to reflection on oneself. ‘Anonymity’ is a *transcendental concept* here and designates the way in which transcendental world-constitution proceeds precisely in the mode of *self-concealment and self-forgetfulness*, in the transcendental mode: natural attitude.” (SCM: 15/14)

The references to the ‘anonymity that is as old as the world’ and to the ‘proceeding of world-constitution’ here point toward a kind of a wild, pre-egological, impersonal *process*. This seems to be affirmed slightly later in the text, when Fink looks to clear up the classical, indeed the “grossest misunderstanding” of phenomenology, which consists in ignoring or denying the profound transformation of human immanence effected by the reduction. What is underlined here is that phenomenology *is not* in the business of simply disclosing a new region, or new field of being that would be occupied by a transcendental subjectivity. Rather, what must be understood as the object of phenomenologizing is the *constitutive process* itself. This constitutive becoming “... is not something that *goes on merely ‘attributively’* in transcendental subjectivity, as if that subjectivity first already were (as substance, as it were) and then would in addition engage constitution.” (49/45) Now, this understanding of transcendental subjectivity is a rather peculiar, non-egological one, and seems to equate it with the process of constitutive becoming or genesis [*das konstitutive Werden*]. Constitution, as it is presented here, is not something *done* by something (in however a transcendentially rarified sense of these words), but is rather the process itself, and subjectivity and the world are simply its two end points. As Fink puts it, what is primordial, or prior here, are not the correlates, but rather the correlation itself: “It is not that subjectivity is *here* and the world *there* and *between* both the constitutive relationship is in play, but that the genesis of constitution is the *self-actualization* of constituting subjectivity in *world-actualization*.” (ibid.)

But already at this point Fink seems to abandon the processual understanding he introduces moments earlier, and reverts back to the more familiar vocabulary of constituting subjectivity self-actualizing itself. From the processual point of view, wouldn’t it have made more sense to link the constitutive becoming with the seemingly more general concept of world-life, or transcendental life? Especially so given the fact that the notion of subjectivity is

heavily weighed down by its mundane baggage. An impersonal conception of the transcendental, if it wanted to be as consistent as possible, would probably want to steer clear of the notion of the subject as much as possible, or introduce it as late as possible in the constitutive process. While such an account of constitution would ultimately also have to rest on some type of speculation, it could take as its starting point the notion of constituting life and try to show how it conditions and constitutes subjectivity itself. But this was not the path Fink went down.

While he did try to keep as close as possible to the, phenomenologically speaking, more radical conception of the impersonality of the transcendental constitutive process, he ultimately placed transcendental subjectivity at the very start and source of this process, defining it formally as the *Wovon-aus dieses Werdens*, and the world as the *Wohin der konstitutiven Terminierung*. (49/45) There are several points to take notice here. First, defining the constitutive process as the movement from subjectivity toward the world means that Fink manages to preserve, in an important way, the profound meaning and central role of the world in phenomenology. Secondly, given that the whole process is teleologically oriented toward the world, this teleological tendency toward the world is, in fact, a tendency toward being. Fink's other name for this tendency toward being is *enworlding*. (23/21) The third point to take note of is that such an account of constitution still needs to explain the radical ontological difference between the mundane being of the world and the reductively disclosed non-mundane subject. In other words, Fink needs a way to explain the passage from the non-being of transcendental subjectivity to the being of the world in which the subject is fully enworlded. We can recall here his equating of the phenomenological concept of 'constitution' with the concept of 'ontification' (2006: 288; Z-v, III/6b) and say: the role of the concept of enworlding is to phenomenologically explain the ontification of transcendental subjectivity.

We now come to the position we named Fink's epistemological anti-humanism. We have reached the place where the references to the peculiar scientific character of phenomenology, its radicality, the unity of meontics and ontology, and the world all come to a single point. It seems that the only way for Fink to explain the motivation for the radical reduction, as well as for the countermovement of again enworlding the reductively disclosed non-worldly subject, is by employing a complex notion of *bidirectional tendency*. On the one hand, there is the tendency of the worldly subject to bracket or inhibit its natural relation to the world in order to disclose it as a nexus of constituted unities of sense. This is the reductive, or deworlding direction of this tendency. But the tendency goes in the other direction as well, and manifests itself as ontification, or enworlding, i.e. as a countermovement to the reduction. (Luft

2002: 208) This movement between the two directions spans the entirety of phenomenologizing activity. But positing this kind of duality of methodological direction still doesn't quite answer the main methodological question: how we can "... abstain from both a radical interpretation of transcendental phenomenology assuming a pure transworld consciousness and a naturalization which renders impossible the phenomenological reduction." (Rinofner-Kreidl, 2004: 259) This is why Fink goes one step further: precisely in order to avoid the mistake of positing a trans-world consciousness, while still maintaining the necessary non-worldly character of the transcendental subject, he embraces the notion of the un-humanized 'man'. Thus comes the important passage worth quoting extensively:

"We wish simply to indicate and emphasize that the reducing I is the phenomenological onlooker. This means he is, first, the one *practicing the epoché* and then the one *who reduces*, in the strict sense. In the universal epoché, in the disconnection of all belief-positings, the phenomenological onlooker produces himself. The transcendental tendency that awakens in man and drives him to inhibit all acceptednesses nullifies man himself; man *un-humanizes* [*entmenscht*] himself in performing the epoché, that is, he lays bare the transcendental onlooker in himself, he passes into him. This onlooker, however, does not first come to be by the epoché, but is only *freed* from the shrouding cover of human being [*Menschsein*]. The transcendental tendency *awakening in man* is nothing other than the transcendental onlooker's 'internal' *phenomenologizing that is already at work in the projection of motivation*. In that in his action (the universal epoché) the onlooker brings himself out into the open, he is also the *first* transcendental I (and transcendental life) that comes to itself as such. But the coming-to-himself of the phenomenological onlooker only makes possible *a more fundamental* coming-to-onself: in the cognitive life of the phenomenologizing I transcendental subjectivity comes to itself as *constituting*." (43f./39f.)

This passage contains the core claim of Fink's epistemological anti-humanism: that in order for phenomenology to fully explain the nature of transcendental knowledge, and consequently attain ultimate self-understanding, it needs to presuppose a non-human constituting subjectivity which lays dormant in man and is ontologically heterogeneous with respect to humanity.

This point, as we shall see, will turn out to be crucial for our discussion. Before we can understand how the question of the relation between the human being, the transcendental subject, and, ultimately, humanity, emerges as central for both Fink and Husserl, we need to better understand Fink's doctrine of epistemological anti-humanism. The only way to approach this doctrine is to explore the notion of enworlding. We now turn to that complex problem.

3 The ‘Who?’ and the ‘Why?’ of Phenomenology: Between Theoretical Claims and Claims of Concrete Reason

We have followed the path of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* from the very general level of its historical context and its main claims in the broadest sense, all the way to its more specialized assertions which respond to specific points from Husserl’s work of that time. On that path, we passed by several waypoints, and provided some preliminary contextualization for the notion of world in both Husserl and Fink. While both agree that it is central to phenomenology, its place and role turn out to be difficult to pinpoint. Fink and Husserl argue that the world is, in a qualified way, both the starting point and the end point of phenomenological research. A conceptual tool utilized by both is the notion of ‘pregiveness’ of the world. However, from the perspective of Fink, we saw how the notion of pregiveness, which is entailed in his concept of *Weltbefangenheit*, ultimately led us to a curious doctrine which we referred to as epistemological anti-humanism.

That doctrine, we have seen, was formulated as the only possible explanation for the strong conception of radicality of transcendental phenomenology Fink was developing. If that radicality is of a nature which is principally unachievable in the natural attitude, then transcendental insight is only possible if the phenomenologizing onlooker isn’t a human being at all, but rather something Fink refers to in passing as a ‘deeper self’. This is a difficult notion, and toward the end of last chapter we hinted at two possible readings of it, either as an impersonal process, or as an impersonal, un-humanized, meontic subject. Fink ultimately opted for the latter, which, at first, seemed to keep him closer to the letter of Husserl. Yet the more familiar vocabulary, as we shall see in this chapter, quickly turns out to be somewhat misleading: when taken to its logical consequences, Fink’s notion of the un-humanized transcendental subject takes him very far from Husserl. The crucial difference will turn out to be precisely whether one understands phenomenology as a deeply inhuman undertaking, or rather as a possibility inherent to mankind. In the latter case, transcendental philosophy turns out to be an essentially possible mode of human knowledge, carrying within itself a specific kind of transformative potential. This, we shall argue in the following chapters, was Husserl’s position. Fink’s position in the *Sixth Meditation*, on the other hand, insists on a radical decoupling of transcendental knowledge from humanity.

This idea commits him to a highly complex and subtle doctrine of phenomenologizing activity, which he, initially perhaps somewhat surprisingly, again chooses to frame in terms of its relation to the world. Yet it quickly turns out that there is an essential relation between the world and phenomenologizing activity as such. For that reason, understanding Fink's anti-humanism is conditional on understanding his notion of 'enworlding' in both its modalities.

In this chapter, we first turn to this central notion of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, and explore both its presentation, and the difficulties inherent to it. Any reader of this work will notice a certain kind of eerie quality to this concept: it is once both painstakingly faithful to Husserl's own thought, and immeasurably far from it. This ambiguity seethes under the surface of the book, and becomes more and more pronounced until it finally breaks through to the surface in several of Husserl's notes which finally reveal the level of his disagreement with the edifice Fink has built toward the end of the book. Finally, it allows us to crystallize the central point of contention: *who* is doing phenomenology?

We then turn to Husserl himself. The topics presented and discussed in the *Sixth Meditation* were not new to him, even if they were given a new coat of paint. Indeed, he had himself wrestled with them before Fink began working with him. A particularly fecund stretch for the discussion of related problems, as we try to show, was from mid- to late 1920s, i.e., in the years directly leading up to Fink's arrival as Fink's assistant. In those years, however, we find a different Husserl, one very much hopeful that psychology might light the path to transcendental phenomenology, and, in a contrastive manner, illustrate the unique and new nature of phenomenological research. A crucial concept for Husserl in those years was that of a *parallelism* between pure psychology and phenomenology, but also between the mundane and the transcendental ego. We shall explore this notion, particularly how it appears in several research manuscripts of the time and in the so-called *Amsterdam Lectures* of 1928, which play an important historical role in the development of Husserl's thought. As it will turn out, however, the notion of parallelism, which was supposed to carry quite an explanatory burden and solve the problem of the paradox of subjectivity even before it got formulated as such, was not as helpful as Husserl might have expected. In terms of explaining the nature of transcendental knowledge, and the motivation for trying to attain such knowledge, it was very limited.

That does not mean that it was useless, however. It forced Husserl to rethink the relation between the two realms of knowledge, and again positioned the world as the crucial binding element of their relation. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it led him to ask how transcendental knowledge affected mundane knowledge, thus opening up the question of

phenomenology's transformative potential. This will be the topic of the following chapters. But, in order to get there from here, we first need to explore how the notion of enworlding forced Husserl's hand in this cluster of topics.

3.1. *The two senses of enworlding*

As our previous discussion has shown, the appearance and development of concepts such as the Absolute, meontic philosophy, and constructive phenomenology in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* was ultimately driven by the singular goal of explaining the nature and being, to the extent those words are appropriate, of the transcendental, phenomenologizing ego. This, in turn, for both Fink and Husserl, amounted to phenomenology's attaining complete self-understanding. This self-understanding, at least for Fink, was reflected in grasping the structure and logic of what he refers to as the Absolute.

Two core notions, key to comprehending the nature of transcendental phenomenology, as we have seen, were those of 'radicality of phenomenology' and of 'enworlding'. The latter plays a complex role. On the one hand, it captures the essence of the process of ontification of transcendental subjectivity. In this context, it stands for the transcendental-phenomenological discovery of the worldly tendency of transcendental life. This tendency, rather than belonging *to* transcendental subjectivity, in fact *is* transcendental subjectivity in an essential way, and it manifests itself as the constitutive process of ontification which, in Fink's formulation, terminates in the world. This termination, again, is not to be understood in the mundane sense of finality, but is rather meant to capture the active directedness of transcendental subjectivity which is both teleological and ontological in nature. There is an important sense in which this teleological tendency toward being remains deeply mysterious. For the phenomenologist, it appears as a continuous stream of constitutive achievements, which are themselves layered in various levels of constitution. These make up the field of phenomena accessible via the usual phenomenological methods of research, what Fink usually refers to as 'regressive' phenomenology. Now, as the ontification, or enworlding, of transcendental subjectivity can always only be phenomenologically grasped *in medias res*, i.e., it has always already begun and is underway, the question of transcendental beginnings unavoidably asserts itself. Yet, the further back the methods of regressive phenomenology take us ('back' in the constitutive, rather than historical sense), the more apparent the limitations of regressive phenomenology become. This is why the transcendental origins of the constitutive process remain obscure. We

recall that Fink refers to this obscurity of absolute beginnings in terms of concealment, forgetting, and anonymity.

But this cannot be the whole story of phenomenology, according to Fink. For, the anonymity pervading our current notion of enworlding is misleading and, in an important sense, possibly deceptive. While the phenomenological discovery of the transcendental field where the process of ontification takes place is a transcendental insight of central importance, this concept of enworlding is

“... above all ... characterized by the fact that the life that constitutes itself as ‘worldly’, in having its term in constitutive end-products, *forgets its transcendental origin, knows itself only as man*, and does not reach behind its own humanness in its return to itself in self-consciousness.” (SCM: 128/116)

The forgetting of transcendental origins thus potentially leads to fallacious reasoning and conclusions regarding phenomenology. On the one hand, it might lead one to believe that the entire project of transcendental phenomenology stems from “outright arrogance”, or is based on “unparalleled hubris” where the discovery of world-constituting subjectivity might be seen as “... the usurping of creation by putting oneself in the place of God.” (123/112) While this argument is mostly affective, there is a possible counterargument which seems to be much more substantive.

Following Fink, we might dub it ‘existential criticism’ of phenomenology, which amounts to a consequent naturalistic reading of phenomenology. According to it, transcendental phenomenology would be nothing more than one among many historical instances of philosophy, shaped and driven by the circumstances of its particular time and place of inception, but also reflective of the wider context of more or less typical human concerns and interests. As we shall see, this loose formulation, which we shall try to sharpen as we go along, will soon prove to be important for shaping our understanding of Husserl’s project, which we are trying to sketch out in this work. Thus, phenomenologists may indeed be right about many things, and even be more right, or right about more things, than other philosophers, but they are ultimately in possession of no special kind of non-worldly, epistemically more valuable, knowledge. For Fink, this type of understanding misses the whole point of phenomenology. Phenomenology is neither flight of fancy, nor idle rumination in absence of real-life concerns, nor, indeed, a ‘flight from finitude’, a desperate attempt to escape the absurd and senseless nature of human existence. (123/112) It is important to note, as Fink does, that

these existential or psychologistic arguments against the unique character of phenomenology do have their rationale. In a sense, nothing could be more obvious than the fact that phenomenology is an eminently human activity. Yet this conclusion would betray a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of the phenomenological reduction, a misunderstanding which would amount to remaining captive in the naïveté of the natural attitude. We thus read in Fink that, "... *despite* the perfectly obvious way it all looks – phenomenological knowing and its *habitus* do *not* represent a *human attitude*." (124/113) Here we circle back to his conception of the radicality of phenomenological knowledge, what we referred to earlier as his epistemological anti-humanism. Overcoming the natural attitude, the *Weltbefangenheit* specific to us humans, means first recognizing myself as the transcendental subject. Yet, we recall, there are layers to the naïveté uncovered and overcome by phenomenology. While the performance of the epoché and of the reductions might, in a best-case scenario, disclose our *Weltleben* as transcendental in a limited sense, and even provide valuable insight on its own, there is still a fundamental limit to the depth of this insight. This limit is reflected in the transcendental naïveté which must then be addressed. The true force of the existential criticism of phenomenology is thus revealed through the following potential argument. Let us grant that phenomenological methodology discloses something essential about the character of human action in the world, viz. that it is transcendental in some sense. Let us also grant that this transcendental nature of human existence in the world is wholly concealed in the natural attitude, and that it is *only* disclosable through the employment of phenomenological methodological devices. Even after accepting both these premises in the most charitable way, it still does not follow that transcendental subjectivity is anything other than human subjectivity. "In other words," Fink writes, "the construal of phenomenologizing as a human action (cognitive practice) does not arise from a *naive captivation* in the natural attitude that would be got rid of and could be annulled by performing the phenomenological reduction." (122/111) We could perhaps add, in order to make this formulation slightly more precise, that this erroneous understanding of phenomenology does not arise *solely* from a naive captivation in the natural attitude. A first reduction is undoubtedly necessary in order to break out of the originary 'unrecognizable hiddenness' of transcendentality, and it can only be effected in the natural attitude. What is crucial for Fink, however, is that the reduction, as we have already pointed out in the previous chapter, is not a onetime procedure. For, it serves to combat not just "... a *dogmatism before the reduction*, but a *dogmatism after the reduction*" as well. (ibid.)

The only way to break with the dogmatism after the reduction, then, would be to recognize that what is made by the transcendental-phenomenological reduction is a “decisive caesura into the ‘history’ of world-constituting life.” (125/113) It is thereby that the insight into the true nature of the phenomenologist, and of phenomenologizing activity, is reached: “... that the proper (ultimately actual) subject of phenomenologizing is the *transcendental* onlooker” (124/113), and not the human subject. Consequent performance of the reduction thus culminates in the un-humanization of the subject, and it is only through this un-humanization that phenomenology reaches full epistemic maturity regarding its own scientific status. This insight forms the kernel of what we refer to as Fink’s epistemological anti-humanism. However, we have now reached an additional layer of complexity that needs to be addressed.

In the first chapter, we sketched out the very basic contours of what Fink formulates as meontic philosophy. It is predicated on his fundamental insight that the transcendental onlooker, as the true subject of phenomenology, is ontologically heterogeneous to the mundane, human subject. Fink presents this insight in terms of the interplay between being and pre-being. Phenomenology is thus a dialectic unity of ontology and meontics, i.e. of the mundane being of the human subject and the transcendental pre-being of the onlooker. The pressing matter to resolve now, clearly, is how the two are united. We have already suggested that the transcendental theory of method presented in the *Sixth Meditation* can be viewed as an elaborate discussion of the paradox of subjectivity. Fink himself seems to have understood it in that way, given his repeated insistence that the question of the being of the transcendental onlooker is the central topic of that work. But the meontic Finkian theory we have sketched out so far does not seem to resolve the paradox at all. In fact, it seems to add to the difficulty. If the relation between the human and the transcendental ego has seemed problematic so far, now it seems to have become impossible to clarify. Let us consider what the doctrine of epistemological anti-humanism, as we have been following it so far, seems to imply. A mundane, psychological human ego has a latent, more or less completely unconscious intimation that the very being of the world it finds itself in is an unexamined prejudice. This is the kind of hazy transcendental insight that Fink refers to as “phenomenological *fore-knowledge*”. (39/36) This latent transcendental insight has the potential to motivate particular human subjects to perform the phenomenological reduction, and thus disclose their function of world-constituting transcendental subject. Through this procedure, which constitutes a “... *primal event* in the life of transcendental subjectivity”, the clouds of oblivion regarding its transcendental nature and origin clear, and “... it *comes to itself*, it ‘awakens’ - to speak in a metaphor – out of the age-old ‘sleep’ of *being-outside-itself*; it passes from the stage of sheer

‘*being-in-itself*’ into the stage of ‘*being-for-itself*.’” (124f./113) This is now the critical juncture: the crucial point is to understand that the thereby ‘awakened’ subjectivity does not exist in the mundane sense of the word. It is not a worldly being, but is rather wholly outside the realm of ontology. Otherwise, as we have seen, transcendental phenomenology would amount to nothing more than existential philosophy, or some sort of eidetic anthropology.

But this seems problematic. There are at least two questions that demand addressing. First, how are we supposed to understand the passage from being to non- or pre-being? Secondly, if doing transcendental phenomenology means retreating to a non-mundane sphere of non-existence, how is it possible that there is phenomenology at all? In other words, why is it that the discovery of non-being is not a point of no return for the phenomenologist? The first question could, depending on the answer, be construed as either a methodological, or a metaphysical one. The second question, at least at first glance, seems to be unequivocally methodological. In fact, it seems to expand on a point we briefly mentioned earlier regarding the difficulty of expressing transcendental insights in mundane language. But while there is a structural resemblance between the two problems, it will turn out that the answer to the second question mentioned above ultimately rests on a metaphysical, rather than methodological, claim.

For their answers, both questions unequivocally point to, and are in fact derived from, Fink’s doctrine of secondary enworlding. At the beginning of this chapter, we mentioned that the concept of enworlding plays a complex role in Fink’s system. This role is in fact double. On the one hand, enworlding denotes the initially concealed process of ontification of the transcendental subject. This process, analyzable into a vast network of constitutive achievements, is first accessed through the phenomenological reduction, and Fink refers to it as the ‘proper’ [*eigentliche*], or ‘primary’ enworlding. (108/99) We have seen how this only presents one half of the story, however. For, phenomenology cannot amount to a counter-tendency to the worldly directedness of transcendental life, as that would leave it stranded in a permanent state of incommunicability. Rather, the dynamics of transcendental life dictate that its movement be

“... a *circular turn into itself* inasmuch as phenomenologizing is itself *taken along* [*mitgenommen*] once more by the world-aiming tendency of the life of constitutive process. The transcendental operation ‘phenomenologizing’ is thereby *made mundane*, is carried back into the natural attitude of which it had rid itself.” (125/113f.)

The secondary enworlding thus allows for mundane interpretation of phenomenologizing, only this time with the transcendental insight that the world itself is a transcendental correlate of subjectivity.⁶⁷ The broadly Hegelian impulses behind this theory of movement of transcendental life are easy to discern. The natural attitude precisely is the general thesis of the pre-given world that is out there, of which we are a part. This general thesis is first suspended by the performance of the epoché, and then transformed through transcendental insight via the various reductions, which is to say it is disclosed as the nexus of constitutive achievements and transcendental correlate of subjectivity. But neither the world nor the general thesis of our *Weltbefangenheit* are thereby negated. Rather, they are returned to once again, this time with the awareness that the natural attitude itself is a transcendental phenomenon, "... precisely as a specific *restricted life-situation* on the part of the transcendental subjectivity not aware of itself." (109/100). Driving the Hegelian point home, Fink then adds that "[t]he natural attitude is 'in itself' transcendental, but not 'for itself'; it is in a way transcendental subjectivity's *situation of 'being-outside-itself'*." (ibid.) This circular movement of transcendental subjectivity, resembling the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, takes the following form:

enworlding (primary) → deworlding (reduction) → enworlding (secondary)

"The natural attitude is", thus, "not only the *wherefrom* [*Wovon-aus*] but also the *whither* [*Wofür*] of philosophizing." (109/99)

There is an interesting side-argument for transcendental intersubjectivity that Fink mentions in passing here. Given the general character and original nature of the *Sixth Meditation*, it is easy to forget that it explicitly understands itself as a continuation, if highly modified, and expansion of Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*.⁶⁸ One way in which the latent legacy of this work is taken up again in the *Sixth Meditation* is in references to transcendental

⁶⁷ Cf. Husserl's marginal note, n.392, ibid.

⁶⁸ The fact that Fink's primary task had been to rework the *Cartesian Meditations*, which later turned into the different task of writing the *Sixth Meditation*, should, of course, not be seen as a tacit rejection of the entire course of Husserl's previous work on the *Meditations*. Rather, when Fink refers to the limitations of the previous meditations (cf. SCM, §1), this has to be understood primarily in the sense of the approach starting from the apodicticity of the 'I am' of the *ego cogito*. (SCM/2: 152ff.) By the time of late 1932, Husserl seems to agree, and refers, in a marginal comment to Fink's criticism, to the old approach as "... sheer muddle, and wrongheaded as a course of reflection." (155, n. 111; translation taken from Ronald Bruzina's *Translator's Introduction* to his translation of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, Bruzina 1995: xxxvii) Again, while great, the importance of this quote still shouldn't be overstated, nor should it be taken to signify a definitive rejection of the original *Cartesian Meditations*, neither on Husserl's nor on Fink's part. Bruzina correctly points out, however, that Husserl's honest self-criticism is indicative of the general thrust of the larger context of the debate surrounding it, specifically with regard to the relation between the reduction and the world. We shall soon expand on that further.

intersubjectivity. While the book does pick up where the *Fifth Meditation* left off by pointing to the methodological importance of *first* disclosing transcendental intersubjectivity, and *then* turning to ‘egologically restricted’ constitutive analyses (6/6), it is not until relatively late in the book that we get a glimpse of what this means for Fink. Here, as in the rest of the book, the ostensibly methodological observation rests on a deeply metaphysical foundation. In a possible attempt to soften the blow of the anti-humanist core installed into phenomenology by the aforementioned argument, he argues that the ex-mundanization effected by the performance of the reduction in no way condemns the philosophizing individual to a “*monstrous solitude* of transcendental existence as ego.” (109/99f.) Quite on the contrary, the radical move of un-humanization turns out to be the most humane act imaginable, not just for myself but for others as well, as it leads us down the path of pure knowledge, on which the philosopher serves as the ‘functionary of mankind’.⁶⁹ This path leads the phenomenologist to the insight “... that *others* as *transcendentally coexistent* others remain in an unbroken *community of life* with him.” (109/100) There is clearly something foundational about this community of life, for it conditions the very act of doing phenomenology: it belongs to the very nature of philosophy that it tends toward expression, and solitary phenomenology would thus be both unimaginable and pointless. This is a difficult point to integrate within the architectonic of phenomenology, as it seems to straddle the domains of the mundane and of the transcendental and poses, once again, the question of the possibility of a transcendental language. Fink recognizes this himself, and wrestles with the difficulty.

“Is a consistent life of knowledge conceivable that, while constant in holding to the transcendental attitude, would never pass into linguistic self-explication? Certainly – there is *no reason* and *no compulsion* for predicative outward expression lying in phenomenologically theorizing experience as such. And yet predicative outward expression is in a definite sense *transcendentally necessary*.” (108/99)

There is a sense of a fundamental experiential paradox here. This is why its resolution, which has to take the form of a dialectic unity, has to be metaphysical. The necessity of intersubjective communication of phenomenology, Fink tells us, “... is thus first grounded in the *communicative tendency* of all philosophizing, the deepest source of which arises in the

⁶⁹ This is, of course, Husserl’s phrase, made famous by its appearance in the *Crisis*. But Fink clearly alludes to it here, referring to the phenomenologist as the one who is “... *von vornherein Funktionär*.” (SCM: 109/99) Bruzina translates it, quite aptly, as ‘performing an official service’.

‘*metaphysical*’ unity of all transcendental life.”⁷⁰ (109f./100) The unity in question is clearly the unity of the concrete and the transcendental subject. This unity is in constant interplay between the human subjectivity teleologically driven toward self-understanding and transcendental subjectivity looking to respond to this teleological drive. Secondary enworlding is ultimately “... a tendency that seems to grow out of *transcendental pedagogical impulses*: a tendency to a universal becoming-for-itself on the part of an all-inclusively communal transcendental life.” (110/100)

In the previous chapter we went into some detail in our attempt to contextualize the central, indeed decisive role that the phenomenological concept of ‘world’ plays over the course of the *Sixth Meditation*. We have also carved out a preliminary notion of ‘pregivenness’ as a crucial transcendental modality of the world. Now we see how the short detour into the problematic of intersubjectivity, while only hinted at by Fink, fills the pre-given world with others as well.⁷¹ While the other subjects populating the world may not be aware of their transcendental nature, they are revealed to the phenomenologist as transcendental monads “... with whom the ego stands in a community of constitution, but *not* in a community of transcendental self-knowledge.” (135/123) Phenomenology is, then, an eminently worldly science insofar as doing it is not just philosophizing about others, but also, in the crucial sense of performing an official, public service, a philosophizing *for others*. Here we catch a glimpse of the mundane, practical nature of phenomenologizing activity. The stark contrast to the strong inhuman, or un-humanized, undercurrent of the ‘true’ nature of phenomenology is again immediately apparent, and Fink’s solution, again, will point us in the direction of the Absolute toward which we are working our way.

⁷⁰ There is an interesting insertion on Husserl’s part here to take note of. As Fink concedes that a demonstration of the metaphysical necessity of communication of phenomenology is outside the scope of his present discussion, Husserl adds that such a demonstration would require a clarification of the phenomenologically genuine sense of the metaphysical. This indicates two things. First, he clearly does, contrary to one popular opinion, leave room for a phenomenologically legitimate sense of ‘metaphysics’. Second, he views the present discussion, as does Fink, as being *in need* of a metaphysical solution, or at least leaves the problem open to such a solution. As we shall shortly see, Fink does in fact come up with a working solution, his conception of the absolute dialectic unity of the transcendental and the mundane subject. This solution, however, clearly isn’t Husserl’s.

⁷¹ Zahavi (1994), however, argues that Fink profoundly misunderstands and misrepresents intersubjectivity in Husserl, because he argues for an originary ground of being, or an originary life that precedes differentiation between ego and other. These would then be constituted by a process of self-pluralisation of this primal life. Zahavi, on the other hand, argues for an irreducible transcendental plurality, i.e. intersubjectivity from the ground up. This is a complex topic which is not pertinent to our current discussion. See Zahavi 1996 and 2003: 109-25 for a good basic overview of his views on intersubjectivity in Husserl.

3.2. The ambiguities of enworlding

Secondary enworlding, we have seen, allows phenomenology to reemerge, or appear [*erscheinen*] in the natural world again, after having ‘left’ it through a radical change of attitude toward it. Fink’s choice of the word ‘*Erscheinung*’ is not arbitrary, and is meant to preserve a link to the Kantian notion of ‘*transzendentaler Schein*’.⁷² Like the Kantian notion, it points to a fundamental ambiguity; here, it’s one of the puzzling status of phenomenology, and of the phenomenological onlooker himself, which manages to be both transcendental and mundane at the same time. In fact, it seems we are dealing with two levels of ambiguity here. On the hand, the relation between the registers of the mundane and of the transcendental is problematic as the two are antithetical but necessarily united. Thus, the notion of dialectic unity, which appears at key points throughout the work.

On the other hand, we are presented with an ambiguity of a higher order as well: how do we, as phenomenologists, account for the interplay between the transcendental and the factual? Do we understand them as two irreducible moments of a single phenomenological truth? Or do we posit an epistemological or alethic hierarchy between the two? Fink’s answer is complex, but very clear, and continues the line of argument for the non-mundane sense of scientificity of phenomenology. Mundane appearance is a necessary moment of phenomenology, because transcendental truths alone do not suffice for the integral phenomenological concept of truth. (147/134) It is an integral part of phenomenology’s mundanization that the phenomenologist, driven by “worldly motivations”, philosophizes as “a functionary of the human community”, that he “transmits, lectures, publishes, etc.”⁷³ (145/132) And yet mundane truths do not share the epistemic status of transcendental truth, but ultimately amount to forms of *seeming truth* [*Scheinwahrheit*] or ‘appearance-truth’. Secondary enworlding localizes phenomenology both spatially and temporally, but the mundane interpretation of it that is thereby made possible is still only a limited analogy; both phenomenology as a historical event and the phenomenological onlooker as a concrete human

⁷² For a short but accurate overview of the Kantian impulses behind the *Sixth Meditation*, cf. Smyth 2011, particularly pp. 669-80. We have already made some passing references to Fink’s close relation to German Idealism, especially to Kant and Hegel. For a definitive insight into Fink’s mature *Auseinandersetzung* with Kant, cf. the three tomes of his philosophical seminars on Kant held at the University of Freiburg, spanning the years 1962-1971. (Fink 2011)

⁷³ Husserl, of course, agrees. In a marginal note to this sentence of Fink’s, he writes: “The world and mankind and we in it – all that is still actuality in the transcendental universe of being in its transcendently true sense of being.” (SCM: 145/132) His attempts to soften some of Fink’s stronger claims regarding the “seeming truth” of worldly existence, scattered in the last few chapters of the book in the form of minor interventions, are numerous, and telling.

being remain ‘mere’ appearances, seeming events or people. (119/109) Further, ‘man’ as the subject of phenomenology is a “seeming subject” [*das ... scheinbare Subjekt*]. (126/114) There is a limit to how much truth can be extracted from the factual world in this context: “... *every mundane interpretation falls short*, it touches only the outer form, ‘appearance’; the inner (transcendental) essence remains necessarily closed and inaccessible to it.” (125/114) As in the case of Kant’s transcendental illusion, it is important to resist understanding the notion of ‘*Schein*’ and its connate concepts in terms of a value-judgment. Rather than denouncing some epistemological failing, it serves as a statement of transcendental fact, and is thus itself integrated within the broader synthesis “... between the *transcendental characterization of phenomenologizing and the reference to a transcendental condition for phenomenologizing that documents itself in ‘appearance-truths’.*” (148/134) Therefore, it cannot truly be said that anyone is *deceived* by this particular instance of illusion. (Although we shall soon see that this is not entirely true, on Fink’s interpretation.) Phenomenologists do attain a privileged understanding of it, though. Fink refers to this understanding as ‘transparency’. The transparency is twofold, as it comprises transcendental knowledge of both primary and secondary enworlding, i.e., both of the anonymous transcendental constitution, and of the disclosure of that constitution in form of mundanized or ‘seeming’ phenomenology. Such, then, is Fink’s doctrine of the unique *Verwissenschaftlichung* of phenomenology, and of its scientific method. Again taking a cue from Kant, he refers to the ‘secure mastery’ of the distinction between seeming and proper transcendental truths as the transcendental canon of phenomenological reason. (111/101)

However, his best efforts to make ‘seeming truth’ and ‘appearance’ into technical terms of phenomenology notwithstanding, it is difficult to ignore the deeply manichean undertones of Fink’s phenomenological canon. To be sure, he insists on the essential character of the ontic category of ‘world’ throughout: full explication of transcendental cognition, on which phenomenology’s self-understanding is ultimately predicated, is only possible “... by virtue of the fact that ontic categories and concepts function meaningfully in ‘transcendental analogy’.” (162/146) The dialectic unity that is so often mentioned is meant to be taken in a very real sense, and the constitutively necessary elements it comprises are part and parcel of the system of phenomenology. Here is an exquisite formulation to that effect:

“The *full-sided subject* of phenomenologizing is neither the transcendental I (sticking to its transcendentality), nor ‘man’ closed off against the transcendental, this closure being what constitutes the naiveté of the natural attitude; the full-sided subject is rather *transcendental*

subjectivity ‘*appearing*’ in the world – by non-proper enworlding. I.e., the ‘who’ under inquiry is a theorizing subject that must be characterized *both as transcendental and as mundane*. What is involved here is a ‘dialectical unity’ between the spheres of the transcendental and the mundane, and that is what comprises the ‘concrete’ concept of the ‘phenomenologizing subject’.” (127/116)

The Hegelian card that Fink has been hinting at for a long time is finally revealed toward the end of the book: “... the thesis: man phenomenologizes, as well as the counterthesis: the transcendental ego phenomenologizes, are both *sublated in the absolute truth* that phenomenologizing is in itself a cognitive movement of the Absolute.” (166f./150)

It would be an understatement to say that the *Sixth Meditation* does not offer a satisfying theory of the Absolute.⁷⁴ We must constantly bear in mind that Fink’s work in this book is *not* a theory of the Absolute, nor of phenomenology as absolute science, but rather only a sketch, or first draft, of such a theory. This is made clear throughout the book, and the last three chapters in particular are replete with examples of problems mentioned only in passing, their extensive elaboration being left for a different time. This, in itself, is not an illegitimate strategy, and there is a lot to be said for such careful probing of complex and often confusingly self-referential issues. It is also telling that Husserl generally goes along with the speculative vocabulary introduced and used by Fink. But here we once again return to the tentative, but all-pervasive manichaeism of Fink’s doctrine. Although the mundane and the transcendental truths are not competing, are not even on the same alethic level, there is still a clear sense in which transcendental truth is epistemically superior. That claim still fits within the dialectic framework of the absolute science, as it doesn’t imply that there is something ‘defective’ about mundane truth. In fact, it being a constitutive moment of transcendental truth coming to full self-transparency, there are no grounds to claim that mundane truth, or ‘seeming’ truth, is in any way a worse or deceptive kind of truth. Yet this claim, which teeters on the edge separating epistemology from axiology, does occasionally shine through in between the lines of Fink’s text. Thus, for example, in a formulation which clearly implies a sense of deception to be avoided, he refers to the transcendental philosopher as someone who “*sees through the*

⁷⁴ That the account of the Absolute is probably going to leave the reader slightly wanting is made particularly clear toward the very end of §11, where a closer determination of the relation of the Absolute to the absolute science of phenomenology is supposed to take place. This determination, Fink tells us, “... may be done in a threefold respect, by characterizing absolute science 1) with regard to the *object*, 2) with regard to its ‘*subject*’, 3) in the *mode* of its knowing.” (163/147) Somewhat disappointingly, Fink then proceeds to inform us that 1) the object of absolute science is the Absolute, 2) that its subject is the “Absolute itself”, and 3) that the mode of cognition of absolute science is, itself, absolute.

‘appearance’” [“*Er durchschaut die ‘Erscheinung’ ...*”] of mundane truth, as opposed to the dogmatist who takes it for ultimate reality. (126f./115) But surely it would be wrong to call someone a dogmatist simply because they are living their everyday life in the natural attitude, perhaps without even being aware of the existence of transcendental phenomenology? The next claim, immediately following the previous one, is even more puzzling: “To the ‘child of the world’ [*Weltkind*] appearance is not transparent, is just not given him *as* appearance; and so he falls into a deception which he is quite unable to detect.” (127/115) This is a very surprising way of putting the point about the transparency of transcendental cognition and the relative opacity of the natural attitude. Isn’t the *Weltbefangenheit* of every human being, *the fact that each of us is a ‘child of the world’*, precisely the originary situation from which phenomenology (not constitution) develops? There is no sense in claiming that the child of the world has fallen into any kind of deception, since it knows no prior non-deceptive state. Nor can it be claimed that this implies a falling away from the forgotten transcendental origins of primary enworlding. Recall here that there was never a mythic beginning where there was only perfectly self-transparent transcendental subjectivity before it concealed its own nature through ontification: “... subjectivity is not something that first is and then constitutes, but ... it is in the constitutive process in which the world comes about [*Weltwerdungsprozess*] that it constitutes *itself* for the first time.” (107/97) Yet, Fink seems to be claiming that this very character of subjectivity is inherently limiting with respect to its possibilities. In this sense, the primary enworlding of subjectivity, which brings about the originary worldly situation of human beings, is the ‘original sin’ of transcendental subjectivity. Indeed, it takes special methods to make him cognizant of this sin, and to remove its shroud of deception:

“Man cannot *as man* phenomenologize, that is, his human mode of being cannot perdure through the actualization of phenomenological cognition. Performing the reduction means for man *to rise beyond* (to transcend) *himself*, it means to *rise beyond himself in all his human possibilities*. To express it paradoxically, when man performs the phenomenological reduction (un-humanizes himself), he carries out an action that ‘he’ just cannot carry out, that just does not lie in the range of his possibilities.” (132/120)

The answer to this riddle, of course, is that it is not really ‘man’ who is doing phenomenology at all, but rather “... the transcendental subject that, awakening within him, presses toward self-consciousness.” (133/121)

A charitable reading of these and similar formulations would insist that they are purely epistemological in nature, and that they are meant to capture, in a preliminary and mostly analogous way, the special cognitive status of transcendental claims and of the motivation for pursuing such claims in the first place. We named this doctrine epistemological anti-humanism. The question still remains, however: are these claims purely epistemological, or do they reflect an ontological structure of the world? Fink's doctrine of the cleft in being, and of the duality between ontology and meontics, suggests that these claims in fact reflect a structure which goes *beyond* ontology and ventures into the vague field of pre-being. This is a direct consequence of his tying the notion of being to mundane being. He thus operates with a constricted concept of being, but with an enlarged concept of knowledge. This expanded notion of knowledge, and consequently of truth, forces Fink to differentiate not only between different types of truth, but also between different ranks of truth. The notion that mundane truths are merely 'seeming' truths, coupled with his insistence that the acquisition of higher truths involves going beyond all human capabilities, seems to imply that the humanity and worldliness of subjectivity are deceptive obstacles to be overcome, rather than modes which are constitutive of the essential *situation* of subjectivity. In a thoughtful critique of Fink's position, Crowell refers to this as 'gnostic phenomenology'. Commenting on a passage we quoted at the end of last chapter, where Fink conjures the startling image of the onlooker freeing himself of the shrouding cover of human being ["... *frei geworden von der verhüllenden Verkleidung des Menschseins.*"] (44/40), Crowell comes up with an even more forceful image, according to which Fink's human being is "... the dark lord's creation into which I have fallen, the shroud in which the spark of true life is imprisoned." (Crowell 2001: 249) This is a hyperbolic reading of an already hyperbolic claim, and there is no textual evidence to suggest that Fink saw the mundane being of the world, or the flesh of man, as inherently evil in even the loosest sense of the word. Yet Crowell's hyperbole does magnify a very real concern of the possibility of misreading. This concern is clearly evident in Husserl's accompanying note. In a note to this passage, a line referring to a freeing of the "barrier of anonymity in which transcendental life proceeds" substitutes for the part on the shrouding cover. (44/40) A far more telling intervention, however, is to be found much later in the book, in the chapter on the 'making into science' of phenomenology.

Expanding on his earlier discussion on the deficient nature of mundane interpretations of the phenomenological reduction, Fink here also comments on the general impossibility of comprehending phenomenology on the basis of 'historicizing interpretations'. Contrary to appearances, Fink tells us, phenomenology is decisively *not* a *Philosophem* existing "... within

the world historically, having arisen in human cultural history.” (143f./131) It is here that Husserl interjects with a long marginal comment (n.469) which, while ostensibly warning against misleading presentation, also summarizes the core disagreement between him and Fink. The central question here, as Husserl formulates it, is that of “the subsequent existential function of phenomenology”, i.e., of the “transcendental problems of existence”. This subtle point of contact between worldly history, anthropology in the broadest sense of the word, and transcendental phenomenology prompts an extensive and decisive critical reworking of Fink’s theses on Husserl’s part.⁷⁵ He at first seems reluctant to locate this discussion at such a basic level as that of ontology and meontics, as Fink does. By this point, it will have become clear to any reader, as it had become clear to Husserl, that the set of Fink’s (me-)ontological claims carries with it metaphysical decisions and commitments which do not seem to be phenomenologically justifiable. This is why Husserl wants to insist that the problem of the existential function of phenomenology is, in fact, a higher-level problem (SCM: 143/129, n.469), and not something that necessarily needs to lie at the heart of the phenomenological canon. Yet it clearly is a central issue, for we have seen that the question of how transcendental insights relate to the factual world and mundane subjects directly bears on how we understand transcendental truth and warrant for transcendental knowledge. Husserl goes on to write:

“What must be avoided in the whole presentation is for things to look as if the mundanization of phenomenology, as well as the continual psychologization of transcendental performances that phenomenologize and get phenomenologically displayed, were an evil thing that only occasioned errors and misunderstandings.” (143/129f., n.469)

This seems to be a double warning, both for Fink and for the reader: phenomenology is not an extra-historical activity done by non-human subjects, and referring to its worldly manifestation as ‘appearance’, and to its truths as ‘appearance-truths’ means getting it exactly wrong. Already earlier in the text, Husserl had objected to ‘appearance’ as an “unsuitable expression”. (96/87) The objection is more than an argument about semantics: it is because mundane phenomenology is not an “outward expressional form” [*Äusserungsform*], as Fink puts it (ibid.), of a transcendental core completely divorced from mundane being, that it cannot be said that phenomenology merely ‘appears’ in the world, even if this appearance is provisionally defined as a constitutive moment of the Absolute. There is no way and no ‘place’ for

⁷⁵ Also see van Kerckhoven 2003: 454f.

phenomenology *to be* other than being, rather than appearing, in the world. The transcendental breakthrough via reduction doesn't lead the phenomenologist from being to non-being and back, but rather enriches his concept of being by expanding his experience, which is no longer strictly mundane, but now bears transcendental marks. This is captured well in Husserl's poignant remark that the world, for the phenomenologist, is "... not merely world in the ordinary sense (and even that of positive science) plus a transcendental explanation, rather, it is for him a world of new *worldly* sense, and his *life in the world* and in community with other men has a *new worldly style*, it gives him as man in the world new tasks." (ibid.) The core of this claim is not new – as early as *Ideas I*, we find the general idea that the methodological combination of the epoché and the reduction provides a new perspective on the world explicitly stated. However, in the context of the *Sixth Meditation*, the claim takes on a more profound meaning. Fink's insistence on the un-humanizing function of the reduction was developed, we have seen, as an explicit counter to any existential interpretation of phenomenology. We now see Husserl going in the opposite direction: phenomenologizing, initiated by the performance of epoché and the reduction, is precisely not a caesura in the history of subjectivity, separating the human being from transcendental life. Rather, it constitutes the beginning of, or a step toward, "... a new, higher humanity." (ibid.)

This recasting of the phenomenological project has deep implications for the architectonics of phenomenology itself. If phenomenology does not lead to an abandoning, negation, or even dialectical sublation of humanity of the phenomenologist, but rather to a transformation of his humanity, this means several things. First, it means that the act of phenomenologizing is continuous with the worldly history of human subjectivity. This is expressed in Fink's and Husserl's respective relation to the *possibilities* inherent to it: whereas for Fink, as we have seen, phenomenology amounts to a transcending of all human capabilities or possibilities (132/120), Husserl views the possibility of transcendental knowledge as the key to furthering humanity. As the concept of 'higher humanity' is thus clearly tethered to an epistemological framework, it becomes clear that what is meant by 'higher humanity' here is, first and foremost, a more *rational* humanity. Importantly, this rationality is embedded in a world populated with other subjects, all of them taking part in a worldly history, which means that there is a practical and normative dimension to the epistemological framework Husserl puts forth here. We shall turn to this aspect of the architectonics of phenomenology in a later chapter. Let us, for now, point out that the criticism that Husserl launches on Fink's presentation in note 469 has an ontological dimension to it as well. We have previously mentioned that Fink operates with a notion of being restricted to mundane being, which is

supplemented by an expanded notion of knowledge, which allows for transcendental knowledge of non-being. Husserl, on the other hand, wants to avoid precisely this metaphysical leap, and insists on the possibility of epistemological deepening of mundane being, thus cutting out the metaphysical notion of non-being altogether. At first, the concept of transcendental knowledge he refers to seems to be nearly identical with the ‘twofold transparency’ discussed by Fink; Husserl writes that man, once he has broken through to his higher humanity, in it “... shows himself as transcendental ego, which has objectivated itself as man and has moved out of the particular attitude of transcendental blindness into transcendental self-cognition.” (143/130, n.469) However, rather than now swinging back into the world with the insight that this acquired transcendental cognition is transformed into appearance-truth as soon as it is secondarily enworlded, what has happened is rather an expansion of the possibilities of mundane humanity. The mundanization of phenomenological insight is not a fall back into the cage of mundane being from the bliss of pure knowledge but an existential transformation – the phenomenologist has now “... gained the possibility of a new *mundane* being in transcendental self-cognition, everything transcendental projected back into mundaneness and determining worldly life in this new mundaneness.” (ibid.) In a rich and dense passage worth quoting in full, Husserl then drives the point home:

“But this moving mundaneness that again and again takes up into itself whatever is newly cognized transcendently is always understood as continually arising out of secondary constitution. The life of man in transcendently clarified humanity is basically different from naïve natural life, which for the serious phenomenologist just ought not really to be put forth any more. His life is a new life, and to this newness belongs the change in transcendental attitudes, namely in the sense of thematic directions within transcendentality. His ‘return into the natural attitude’ is a thematizing of the world, which for him is a correlate. He holds himself to this correlate, which has the cognitive sense ‘correlate’ only for him in his transcendental self-consciousness. And for him the world itself now receives a new dimension in the transcendental which flows into it. But he also has transcendental knowledge of fundamental happening, of the event of his absolute transcendental historicity, of the intrusion of the phenomenological reduction and the collapse of the world in its originally naïve sense, the world into which the disclosed transcendental has flowed and flows on further.” (ibid.)

The reference to the “transcendental knowledge of fundamental happening” [*transzendente Erkenntnis vom Grundgeschehen*] points in the direction of an essential, irreducible interweaving or intertwining of the transcendental and the mundane. In the previous chapter,

we referred to a certain ‘porosity’ of the transcendental reduction when we discussed the notion of pregivenness of the world. We now encounter yet another moment in which the reduction functions as a disclosing tool binding two registers, rather than separating them – once it allows for the breakthrough to the transcendental, it also allows us to see how it flows into the mundane world, rather than running parallel to it.

Husserl’s tacit rejection of the realm of pre- or non-being packed inside this marginal comment has a few implications for the overall architectonics of phenomenology. First, it leaves open the possibility for an ontologically richer transcendental subjectivity. An account of its being would not be limited to an analogical approximation inherently handicapped by mundane concepts, because it would recognize from the outset that transcendental description’s being enmeshed in mundane concepts is a natural and necessary consequence of the essentially mundane character of human subjectivity, which is the only conceivable locus of transcendental subjectivity, rather than its second-rate appearance-form. A phenomenological description which would account for the ‘absolute transcendental historicity’ in Husserl’s aforementioned sense would thus have to take cues from the kind of existential interpretation of phenomenology that Fink precisely wants to rule out with his doctrine of epistemological anti-humanism. Secondly, this kind of existential interpretation would consequently open up the possibility for a phenomenologically more fruitful description of world and its transcendental role and modalities in experience. Fink’s account of the world, we have seen, is curious. He insists on the irreducible *Weltbefangenheit* of subjectivity, but, at the same time, because of his highly restrictive notion of being, the world ends up being secondary in the alethic hierarchy he establishes. Depending on how charitably one chooses to interpret this, the world can then be seen as either a dialectical moment in the self-expression of the Absolute, or, on a very uncharitable interpretation, as epistemologically inconsequential or even hindering. Fink’s doctrine of the world thus seems to be self-stultifying. One unfortunate collateral victim of this ambiguity is the concept of pregivenness of the world. As we hinted in the previous chapter, pregivenness of the world could harbor significant descriptive and explanatory potential for transcendental phenomenology. In the following chapters, we shall see that it owes this potential to the fact that its historical dimension cannot quite be contained within the confines of achievements of transcendental subjectivity. Fink himself occasionally comes close to this insight, but it ultimately fades into the theoretically overbearing concept of meontic transcendentality. Once we turn to Husserl’s work of late-1931 and thereafter, we will develop this idea in more detail. What we will insist upon will be a rehabilitation of the

historical density of the world, and of its transcendental importance for subjectivity, in contrast to Fink's meontic interpretation of the being of the transcendental.

These questions of the 'existential function' of phenomenology, or, more generally, of the 'transcendental problems of existence', might necessitate existential solutions. We take 'existential' here to mean 'concrete', i.e. mundane and historical. Just how much of ontological and/or ontic determination phenomenology needs is a question which cannot be answered by staying within the text of the *Sixth Meditation*. One thing that does seem to be clear is that Husserl was looking to circumvent the whole issue of secondary enworlding by rendering it, in effect, unnecessary. From a systematic and canonical point of view, this was perhaps for the best, for, while Fink did have an explanation as to how phenomenological insight finds its place in the world, namely via secondary enworlding, he didn't have an explanation as to *why*. This is clear throughout the work, where the circular movement of transcendental knowledge is ultimately a mystery. The movement, we recall, goes in two opposite directions. First, the subject is driven to disclose its transcendental origins which remain forgotten, or concealed, in the course of natural life. This drive rests on latent transcendental fore-knowledge, and is accommodated by the performance of the operations of bracketing and reduction(s). This primary motivation is, in itself, deeply mysterious. Yet, what comes next is even more curious: once the subject has in fact achieved a certain level of self-knowledge, and has revealed its own nature as constituting, why does it ever 'go back' into the world? In other words, why does transcendental knowledge have to be reintegrated into the world as appearance-truth? Fink doesn't have a good answer to this question. Secondary enworlding is, for him, a mandatory moment of the Absolute which does not in any way rest on the activity or 'wish' of the phenomenologist (119/109). The non-participating onlooker is "*passively taken along*" (127/116) or "*enclosed and swept along by constituting life*" [*umgriffen und mitgerissen*] and "enworlded within the constituted context of time." (142/129) These references to the deep-seated passivity of the entire movement of transcendental cognition lead us to the conclusion that it itself rests on a more fundamental concept. This, for Fink, is the Absolute. In fact, phenomenology as the privileged road to knowledge is '*das passive Mitgenommenwerden*', a moment of the Absolute. It is for this reason that Fink can maintain a difference between the concepts of the transcendental and of the Absolute, and claim that the latter is an "all-embracing *inclusional concept*", whereas the former serves exclusively as an "*oppositional concept*", denoting that which is "*removed from the world*" and "*set up over against it.*" (158/143)

Fink's transcendental theory of method, and indeed the whole of phenomenology, thus rests on something deeply alien to phenomenology itself. There is perhaps no reason to frame

this opposition in manichean terms, – although we have seen that such an interpretation may not be entirely far-fetched – but the fact remains that transcendental phenomenology, as it is sketched out in the *Sixth Meditation*, stops just short of something ineffable and absolutely transcendent. The world it appears in is both the condition of its possibility, and its main hindrance, as it can transcend its ontic limitations only by way of analogy and speculation. This is the mystic core of Fink’s doctrine. While Husserl might have been ready to tentatively go along with the central tenet of this mysticism⁷⁶ – that the principle of all principles could not be consistently applied in phenomenology *of* phenomenology – it is safe to say that he ultimately rejected it, for

“... it guarantees that anything that is said about transcendental subjectivity will always be something less (or more) than the truth, will bear the mark of an incommunicable secret code, and will never mean what it seems to mean in all candor.” (Crowell 2001: 252)

Indeed, Fink was also aware of this divergence from Husserl, as his *Draft of a Foreword* makes clear. There he recognizes Husserl’s uneasy and qualified assent to the main thrust of the book, “a meontic philosophy of absolute spirit” developed while “adhering in all closeness to Husserl’s philosophy.” (SCM: 183/1) Summarizing the disagreement, he writes:

“Husserl finds the antithesis between the constituting and the phenomenologizing I to be too strongly emphasized, and finds the difficulties of transcendental predication exaggerated. He defends the concept of the philosophizing subject as individual against its reduction from the philosophizing subject that begins as individual spirit to the deeper life of absolute spirit that lies prior to all individuation – a reduction made in this text but certainly not explicitly. Husserl disputes the idea that man philosophizes only ‘seemingly’, since the transcendental ego is indeed itself ‘man’ (by self-apperceptive constitution, of course). That is, Husserl does not carry the distinction between transcendental subject and man over into the dimension of individuation.” (ibid.)

The last point is crucial: because Husserl rejects the idea that the transcendental and the human subject are distinctly individuated but dialectically united, he is free to reject both the idea of seeming or appearing truth, and the idea of secondary enworlding. Consequently, he can drop

⁷⁶ As Bruzina points out, Husserl doesn’t object Fink’s “supple, rich terminology of none other than Hegel”, and generally accepts the references to the Absolute, except when these terms take on an ontological, rather than purely phenomenological, dimension. (1986: 24f., cf. also n.43)

the notion of dialectics, as well as that of the Absolute, at least as they are developed by Fink. It would seem that phenomenology is thus rid of unnecessary conceptual baggage, and free to retain its adherence to the principle of all principles.

But this would be too hasty a conclusion. For, now that we have a more complete picture of Fink's arguments in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, we also understand the reasons, or questions, behind those arguments. There are two distinct questions that the transcendental theory of method must be able to answer in as conclusive a manner as possible: 1) what is the primary motivation for doing transcendental phenomenology?, and 2) what is the relation between the transcendental and the mundane ego? Now, these two questions, for Fink, can be posed as one: *who* is doing phenomenology? Husserl's rejection of Fink's answers to these questions does not mean that he has any answers of his own, at least not within the *Sixth Meditation*. We will have to turn to his other texts, both published and unpublished, in order to reconstruct an answer.

Regardless of how Husserlian, or even phenomenological, Fink's discussion is, his challenge to Husserl was both brilliant and impossible to ignore, for it showed that phenomenology could not fully legitimize itself by only using its own methods. In other words, it showed that phenomenology of phenomenology would inevitably produce a certain remainder, an *Abgrund*, which could not be accommodated by any method upheld solely by originary evidence. We are approaching the point where we can start formulating a response to this challenge. Once we turn to Husserl's manuscripts written shortly before and immediately after the completion of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, we shall see how the arguments developed there can be used to help articulate a Husserlian response to the questions of *who* and *why* of and in phenomenology. However, it would be a mistake to believe that those arguments came about solely as a reaction against Fink. In fact, they had a prehistory of their own – it was this prehistory that prompted Fink's deep dive into transcendental theory of method in the first place. One particularly illuminating motif in these complex relations will be Husserl's notion of 'parallelism' of the mundane and the transcendental. This early, pre-Finkian idea will later, in modified form, prove to be crucial in responding to the challenges of un-humanized phenomenology. But, before we can understand this modification, we must first understand the concept of 'parallelism' in its first iteration, as well as how its initial failure led Husserl close to accepting Fink's transformation of phenomenology, before rejecting it.

Therefore, let us first turn to some of Husserl's texts from the period directly preceding his collaboration with Fink, and see how they further shape our understanding of the complex circumstances which ultimately led to their disagreements over the essence of phenomenology.

3.3. *The path to phenomenology via psychology*

The explicit questioning of the being of the transcendental prompted a wide-ranging rethinking of some of phenomenology's core tenets and led Fink 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. Assessing Husserl's view of this ambitious recasting of his own philosophy is, as we have seen, not easy. Clearly, the differences between his and Fink's understanding of phenomenology go beyond mere presentation. Their divergence on the issue of the relation between transcendental knowledge and human possibilities cuts deep and cannot be assimilated to a stylistic difference between vocabularies of absolute and non-speculative philosophies. Yet, even if we agree with Moran's assessment that the issue of the being of the transcendental is mostly skirted in Husserl (2007: 23), the topics raised over the course of the *Sixth Meditation* quite obviously resonated with him. In fact, many of them had often been pursued by Husserl before Fink started working as his assistant. The central question of the relation between the transcendental and mundane subjectivity is exemplary of this kind of higher-order phenomenology present in Husserl's thinking throughout the majority of his career after the 'transcendental turn'. We catch a good glimpse of this heightened methodological self-awareness already in the reflections on the phenomenological reduction of the mid- to late 1920s. These also provide some perspective on Husserl's grappling with the question of motivation for doing phenomenology before it becomes an explicit concern in his later work.

The reduction-manuscripts of 1926,⁷⁷ as well as the texts directly preceding and succeeding them, are both interesting and instructive for several reasons. First, they reflect Husserl's then-predominant concern to clarify transcendental phenomenology's relation to psychology. This concern, in turn, was the product of an ongoing effort on Husserl's part to produce a systematic presentation of phenomenology.⁷⁸ Drawing comparisons and sharp demarcation lines between phenomenology and psychology proved particularly important for the efforts to present phenomenology to a wider, global audience. These efforts were then first distilled in the '*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Article' and culminated in the so-called *Amsterdam Lectures* of 1928.⁷⁹ A central motif of these discussions is the notion of a *parallelism* between psychology and transcendental phenomenology, and thus of a parallelism between the human

⁷⁷ Cf. Hua xxxiv: §§1-5, 3-109.

⁷⁸ See Luft's foreword in Hua xxxiv: xxiii.

⁷⁹ For both, cf. Hua ix: 237-349.

and the transcendental ego. The attempt to delineate phenomenology from psychology that was driving Husserl's efforts of the mid-1920s was not merely a matter of presentation of a new philosophical approach against the background of a slightly more well-established science, however. In fact, there is something germinal about these concerns, as they set the course for much of Husserl's later thinking. As Luft points out in his *Editor's Introduction* to Hua xxxiv:

“In the summer semester of 1925 Husserl lectures on ‘Phenomenological psychology’; in this course he deals extensively with the idea of a psychology according to phenomenological method, which, however, as a positive science, still comes before the phenomenological reduction. In these lectures, Husserl particularly thematizes the problem of the parallelism of intentional psychology and transcendental phenomenology, a problem which takes on an important role particularly in the later *Nachlass* texts, and will also be taken up again in the *Crisis*.” (Hua xxxiv: xxiv)

The notion of a certain kind of congruence between the two sciences rests on a broad rethinking of psychology itself, i.e. of its position with respect to other sciences. The lecture course of 1925 clearly and extensively argues for the necessity of a ‘pure’ or ‘phenomenological’ psychology, and contrasts it with empirical and historically bound sciences. However, it is important to fully understand the motivation behind this lecture course, and of the public talks and papers immediately following it. Certainly, it might appear strange that Husserl, at the zenith of his career and more than a decade after the transcendental breakthrough in his thought, decides to revisit the question of psychology once again. Perhaps even more surprising is his argumentation for the necessity of a ‘phenomenological psychology’ at that point in time, about two decades after he had decided to abandon the moniker ‘descriptive psychology’ for his own brand of thinking. Yet the 1925 course was not driven exclusively by the project of grounding other sciences, or of accounting for their ideal validities, nor was it designating a return to earlier thinking. Rather, Husserl's return to psychology was this time fueled by the wish to ground transcendental phenomenology in its own right, and that meant clarifying the unique positioning of the transcendental ego with respect to its natural manifestation, the historical, empirical human being.⁸⁰ This perspective allows us to first understand why Husserl even needed the notion of ‘pure psychology’, yet we must be careful not to fall into an interpretative trap here. It is decidedly not the case that pure psychology serves as a film, or an in-between step between empirical psychology and phenomenology, as if the only thing it lacked was some

⁸⁰ Sebastian Luft's distinction between ‘first’ and ‘second’ first philosophy is again pertinent here.

philosophical flavor, and then it would turn into transcendental phenomenology. But, before we turn to the fundamental difference between the two, as Husserl envisages it, let us first focus briefly on the similarities between them and on the function of the notion of phenomenological psychology.

It is characteristic of sciences in their infancy that they initially struggle to carve out their own subject matter. The process of delimiting and describing one then typically glides along the outer edges of other, already established sciences. This was true of transcendental phenomenology, a relative latecomer to the scientific scene. Expectedly, phenomenology had a particularly difficult task of establishing itself, given the extraordinary breadth of its ambition and the claustrophobia-inducing methodological constraints it imposed on itself. De Warren refers to this as ‘the opening paradox’ of phenomenology: “... that it is a science without a phenomenon immediately of its own – a phenomenon not already pre-given, as with physical phenomena or mental phenomena.” (2015: 83) Now, something very similar can be said of psychology as well, and Husserl deals with this similarity in the 1925 lectures. The first hint that it cannot be founded in the same way most other worldly sciences are is to be found in the fact that its subject matter isn’t immediately apparent, nor is it available to concrete intuition. Here, however, it is not enough to point to the pregivenness of mental facts as its subject matter, for two reasons. On the one hand, psychology is not the only science to deal with mental facts, phenomena, or the mental life in the broadest sense of the word. One needs only to look at anthropology, animal psychology, or even history and other human sciences. (Hua IX: 53/39) Thus, something needs to set psychology apart from all other sciences that deal with mental facts. On the other hand, and more importantly, the very division between mental and non-mental facts is not clear-cut, and attempts to keep them separate at all costs could produce additional confusion in the sciences:

“... we know that there are keenly felt unclarities concerning the execution of these intentions, ultimately unclarities concerning the mutual relation of nature and mind and of all the sciences which belong to these two titles. The natural and the mental do not confront us clearly and separately so that mere pointing would suffice: *here* is nature, and *here*, as something completely different, is mind. Rather, what seems at first obviously separated, upon closer consideration turns out to be obscurely intertwined, permeating each other in a manner very difficult to understand.” (54/39)

Psychology in particular must be cognizant of this, as the tendency to collapse the distinction, or to assimilate it into the concept of nature threatens to transform psychology into naturalistic psychology, and installs psychologism as the privileged mode of explanation of mental phenomena. While there is no doubt that the notion of *empirical* psychology is not vacuous, and that it can potentially be scientifically useful, Husserl makes it clear that a proper science of mental phenomena has to be able to provide a higher level of universality: “... when one speaks of psychology, one means clearly that it is to be a *science of the most universal forms and laws of mental facts* in contrast to the sciences of the individual concretions in historical actuality.” (53/39)

An attempt to illustrate what exactly such a universal science would entail is to be found in a text written a few years later, but still expressing the same train of thought. The text is part of the so-called ‘Gibson-convolute’, and deals with the notion of the transcendental reduction.⁸¹ In a section devoted explicitly to the parallelism between pure psychology and transcendental phenomenology, Husserl focuses on how a psychologist striving for insights in the realm of pure psychology might proceed. It quickly becomes clear that the work of the psychologist is very similar to that of the phenomenologist, as the crucial methodological step for both is the reduction of the experience of my own psychic life and of the psychic lives of others, with the goal of uncovering the “... pure psychic life and pure psychic subjectivity (with personality), the pure consciousness-subjectivity.” (Hua xxxiv: 119) The research of the psychologist then becomes a matter of consequently pursuing the modes of consciousness [*Bewusstseinsweisen*] in their actuality and potentiality. (120) Importantly, these are explored against the constant background of a given world serving as the total nexus of experience. Husserl rightfully points out that the task of psychology understood in this way is structurally identical to that of transcendental phenomenology. The difference between them is to be found in their scope and attitude toward the validity of the world. Pure psychology gets its bearings within the natural attitude, and remains in it even when touching the absolute heights of universality achievable in mundane reflection. But the line between the natural and the transcendental attitudes appears to be a thin one, even in these most programmatic of Husserl’s texts. The exact scope of psychology becomes difficult to pinpoint, and its pretensions to universality not easy to contain. Take the following striking passage:

⁸¹ The ‘Gibson-convolute’ is a series of manuscripts written in late 1929 with the goal of a general reworking of *Ideas I* in mind, occasioned by W. R. B. Gibson’s plans for an English translation of the work. For additional information, cf. Luft’s foreword in Hua xxxiv: xxxif. The title of the particular manuscript we will be following here is ‘Transzendente Reduktion. Versuch der Umarbeitung des Kapitels 2, Abschnitt 2 der *Ideen*’.

“All modes of consciousness through which I apperceive myself as a real human being, all accompanying potentialities of consciousness, as well as all those which account for the very pregivenness of the world and for that of the world which will become actual givenness, emerge in the pure psychic sphere. Even the possibility of performing a transcendental epoché and transcendental-phenomenological research and then the carrying out of them belong afterwards in this circle. I, the real human being standing on the ground of worldly experience, perform the phenomenological reduction, I impel phenomenology, which is now a science arising within the world as a cultural activity, a branch of culture existing in the world.” (ibid.)

Let us recall for a moment Fink’s claim, so central to his understanding of phenomenology and to the doctrine of enworlding, that phenomenology is not a ‘piece of philosophy’ existing historically in the world, “... having arisen in human cultural history.” (SCM: 143f./131) Rather, the mundane, cultural manifestation of phenomenology is ultimately a product of non-secondary enworlding, an ‘appearance’ in Fink’s sense of the word. The doctrine of primary and secondary enworlding, we have seen, relies heavily on several different elements which make up Fink’s general theory of the absolute. From the point of view of phenomenological methodology, that theory proved very difficult to square with Husserl’s methodological commitments. The reason why it must have seemed so attractive to Fink, and at the very least important, if not entirely tenable, to Husserl, was that it offered a framework for answering a number of meta-phenomenological questions: the question of the scientificity of phenomenology, of the relation between the mundane and the transcendental ego, and between psychology and phenomenology. In the manuscripts of the mid- to late 1920s, we find Husserl trying to tackle these questions in a way that is still very much influenced by his earlier efforts at formulating a systematic presentation of transcendental phenomenology. From the later point of view of Finkian meontic philosophy, these earlier efforts were certainly marked by a kind of philosophical naïveté, as they were operating with and within a mundane model of science and scientificity, and building atop of it.⁸² But this was not necessarily a weakness of Husserl’s phenomenology, as we shall try to show. While Fink’s forceful reimagining of phenomenology signified a radicalization of the very notion of phenomenological radicality, it is ultimately a distinctly counter-Finkian note in Husserl’s thinking that we need to follow if this radicality is to be usefully harnessed. We shall see how the question of the relation of philosophy to history

⁸² However, these manuscripts – and particularly the discussions of the shifting from the natural into the transcendental attitude and back – influenced Fink. As Luft points out, not only had Husserl touched on these ‘Finkian’ topics before; most of the topics later found and discussed in the *Sixth Meditation* are already found in the working manuscripts from autumn of 1926. (Hua xxxiv: xxviii.)

and culture, and thus the question of the nature of philosophizing, unifies these different strands of thought. Again, the problem of who is doing phenomenology, and why, appears at the forefront of our discussion.

It might be tempting to wave away the passage from Husserl quoted above; after all, he is apparently talking about the psychic life of a person after the performance of the reduction, and after the realization of the absolute truth of transcendental idealism, i.e. "... that transcendental subjectivity is the absolute foundation, to which all beings relate back." (Hua xxxiv: 121) The passage would then amount to no more than an after-the-fact retelling of insights won in the transcendental attitude. But, as Husserl continues, it becomes clear that the situation is more complicated. For, as he goes on to explain, the sphere of the purely psychic is very broad and almost all-encompassing: it includes not only my own life of consciousness and the world, but also other conscious beings, in all their modes of givenness. Their actuality is not only given to me, but also given as inseparable from the givenness of the world. This is Husserl's argument for intersubjectivity which is mentioned in the *Amsterdam Lectures*, and gets repeated in the 'Gibson-convolute' about a year later. The argument states that "... eidetic phenomenological psychology is anything but a mere eidetics of the individual *ego*; it is, rather, the eidetics of phenomenological intersubjectivity." (Hua ix: 344/249⁸³) "Thus", Husserl writes in a manuscript from the 'Gibson-convolute', "I appropriate pure intersubjectivity as a field within an intersubjective and pure psychology." (Hua xxxiv: 120). It is not easy to shake off the feeling that these claims already sound suspiciously like transcendental insights. Again, this might make sense, under the assumption that pure psychology is nothing other than a translation of the transcendental attitude back into the natural one. But this doesn't seem to be what Husserl is trying to show in these texts. To be sure, he does point out that transcendental phenomenology can not only inform psychology, but in fact must do so for psychology to become a science according to its subject matter and the full potential of its method, "[b]ecause a true psychology, which could deliver a psychological theory, cannot exist before a phenomenology." (108) He then adds that "[p]sychology is distinctive insofar as it, once consequently realized, necessarily leads into a pure phenomenological psychology and then inevitably into a transcendental phenomenology." (109)

⁸³ The English translation of the *Amsterdam Lectures* was published in Sheehan & Palmer 1997: 213-53. In the case of the following quotes from the *Lectures* the first page number will refer to the German edition in Hua ix, and the second to the corresponding page of the translation in the Sheehan & Palmer volume, which will be indicated with 'SP'.

The sense of this inevitability is questionable, and not fully explained in Husserl. Psychology plays a complex and important role in his reflections of this time, and it is more than a mundane, after-the-fact expression of a transcendental science. Here is how Palmer describes its role in his introduction to the English translation of the *Amsterdam Lecture*:

“In the Amsterdam Lectures Husserl makes it clearer than ever before that phenomenological psychology has a two-fold purpose: First, by creating a pure psychology that can parallel (insofar as this is possible) the apriori natural sciences of mechanics and pure geometry, it can have a reformative effect on empirical psychology. The eidetic insights into the essential structures of mental life give us a body of apriori knowledge that is not in any way a matter of empirical fact but of universal principles. But a ‘pure psychology’ can have another and totally different function, and this is Husserl’s deeper purpose: it can be the propaedeutic for transcendental phenomenology.” (Sheehan & Palmer 1997: 210)

There is a kind of a unidirectional dependency at play here: psychology depends on phenomenology because without it, it cannot fully account for the universality of its findings, nor can it ultimately relate them to the findings of other sciences of man and of nature. Phenomenology, on the other hand, does not depend on the science of psychology, as the “... historical roots of transcendental phenomenology do not lie in psychology at all, and thus it would be quite possible to develop a transcendental phenomenology through pure philosophical reflection without any recourse to the empirical dimensions of psychology.” (ibid.) This is, of course, a very strong claim, and it would be almost impossible to ascertain its truth conditions. It is not clear whether anything resembling transcendental phenomenology could *even in principle* arise without recourse to “empirical dimensions of psychology”, nor is it clear what phenomena such a phenomenology could hope to deliver. Yet the claim becomes more palatable once we focus on the general notion of scientificity, and this is the perspective Husserl offers at the closing page of his lecture, where he points out that “... transcendental phenomenology is not only a philosophical discipline in a specialized sense and a philosophical foundational science, but also is the all-embracing absolute science which enables every possible science to be an ultimately scientific science.” (Hua IX: 349/SP 253) Regardless of the historical context within which transcendental phenomenology developed and first appeared on the philosophical scene, then, it had had a special relation to universality which enabled it to infuse other sciences with meaning; “... even”, Husserl adds, “without the most radical grasp of the transcendental problem; thus, still in transcendental ambiguity. [...]” (348/SP 253) The

idea expressed here was an old one for Husserl, and was stated publicly as early as 1913; one needs only to recall §62 of *Ideas I*, where Husserl talks of phenomenology as being the “secret longing of all modern philosophy”, because only it can provide the “ultimately evaluative criticism of each specifically peculiar science”, as well as determine “the ultimate sense of the ‘being’ of its objects and the fundamental clarification of its methods.”⁸⁴ (Hua III/1: 133/142) Toward the end of the Amsterdam lecture, Husserl is keen to underline the absolute universality and unconditionality of his philosophy, and he closes with the following statement:

“[T]he right way to go is first to formulate transcendental phenomenology independently in its transcendental theories, and next show what it is in itself by exhibiting the essential nature of the natural focus as over against the essential nature of the transcendental focus, and through this bring to light the possibility of making a conversion of the transcendental phenomenological doctrines into doctrines of psychological positivity.” (Hua IX: 349/SP 253)

But this is easier said than done. Transcendental phenomenology, we are constantly told, includes reflection of a peculiar sort, one that is not straightforwardly commensurable with everyday or even scientific reflection. The universality phenomenology strives to attain is particularly elusive because it cannot be founded on any object among other objects of research. For, as soon as some category, be it intentionality, consciousness, or corporeality, is picked out as foundational, the research project is put squarely back into the natural register, and the science in question becomes science of a particular being. What is rather needed is an entirely new perspective on sciences and beings. This new perspective comes from a change of attitude. But that presents us with the problem we already mentioned in our discussion of Fink: how are we to conceive of such unique reflection, which is not simply reflection of a higher order, but of a new style altogether?

3.4. *The enigma of parallelism*

As we saw, Fink’s approach was to underscore the radicality of the new style, which lead him to the conclusion that the insights achieved within it could be translated back into mundane language only analogically. Husserl, on the other hand, was more inclined to focus

⁸⁴ For a discussion of the phrase “*die geheime Sehnsucht der ganzen neuzeitlichen Philosophie*”, cf. Cerbone 2017: 298ff. Cerbone discusses both the possible translations as well as the philosophical meaning of Husserl’s expression here. The translation of the passage used above is Fred Kersten’s, which peculiarly uses ‘nostalgia’ instead of ‘longing’. The translation of that word has accordingly been modified above.

on the similarities, both structural and practical, between the methods and goals of phenomenological research and those of other similar sciences. This is why psychology figures in in so many of Husserl's discussions of this topic. Firstly, it exemplifies the positive influence phenomenology can have on other sciences; it perfectly embodies the 'reformative potential' (Sheehan & Palmer 1997: 210) of transcendental philosophy in general. Secondly, it provides the aspiring phenomenologist with a kind of blueprint for their own research. For this reason, the closing paragraph of the *Amsterdam Lectures* is somewhat surprising, because it is not clear what exactly a transcendental phenomenology apart from, or independent of its transcendental theories even is. A philosophically more sober and practical description of how phenomenology ought to proceed is found in a manuscript written a couple of years earlier, in 1926, which opens with the following remark:

“Since the epoché is the passage to transcendental experience of being, which accounts for the primordial institution [*die als urstiftende ... fungiert*] of the transcendently-subjective as an experience-objectivity [*Erfahrungsgegenständlichkeit*], I must first have a certain way of deciding what I wish to count as transcendental-subjective experience. I have no foregoing concepts for that, so I must come up with a governing classification.” (Hua xxxiv: 76)

The starting point for doing phenomenology is the subjective life of a natural human being, and the science closest to it is psychology. Husserl will thus speak of the epoché and the reduction in the context of the natural attitude, and of reducing the natural psychic life to 'pure psyche'. He adds an important note here, which ought to prevent serious misunderstandings: the 'purity' in question does not imply an abstraction from the psychophysical dimension of experience. This becomes clear as soon as we understand what the reduction to pure experience entails. Contrary to popular belief – and it is not surprising that Husserl is constantly at pains to correct the misconception – the method of phenomenology does not consist in purifying a spiritual realm from all remnants of corporeality. It is, rather, about bringing to light the essential characteristics of particular experiences, whatever that essence might entail. The method of purification of experience through reduction thus consists in carefully neutralizing and excluding everything not belonging necessarily to my own subjective experience. 'Necessarily belonging' here means either being a reell part of the experience, or being inseparable from it. (78) It is then clear how pure psychology can easily retain corporeality in its eidetic descriptions, but also how it appropriates 'pure intersubjectivity' within itself. Although it ought to serve as a propaedeutic or blueprint for, and entryway into transcendental

phenomenology, it already seems to be able to provide quite a lot, as its descriptions seemingly capture the fullness of the relation between subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and the world. Referring to this field of experience of myself and of others, the ‘Gibson-convolute’ manuscript we have been following spells the implications out in full:

“But likewise, every single pure psychic subjectivity is a mind, psychophysically intertwined with nature, and each of these minds has the same general structure as mine, and as a singular one; more concretely, each of them, and mine, have that which the common world, as purely intersubjectively constituted, makes possible. Standing on natural ground, I can consequently pursue ‘constitutive’ research, keep within pure subjectivity, and in it find everything that makes each I an I for the world, and makes everyone a communal subject of the common world. And each reflection, carried out by each I <for> itself and in empathizing in and for others, consistently belongs to and includes minds. [... *gehört dann immer wieder in die Seelen hinein*] (120f.)

This entire analysis supposedly takes place in the natural attitude, ‘on the grounds of natural experience’. But this is a theoretical difficulty now; how exactly is this type of analysis different from whatever transcendental phenomenology hopes or aims to deliver? Husserl’s putting of ‘constitutive’ in scare quotes does not change the fact that the account sketched above *does* offer a constitutive analysis in a very meaningful sense of the word. He recognizes this and points out, in a sentence which almost bears a tone of concession, that pure psychology thus does indeed develop and unfold exactly parallel with transcendental phenomenology, only in a different attitude. (121) The task for us, then, is to understand what this parallelism entails. First, it is important to point out that it clearly means more than a structural similarity between psychology and transcendental phenomenology. It is not merely a parallelism of sciences, but of insights and *objects* of those sciences. In other words, the notion of parallelism includes the parallels between the transcendental and the mundane egos as well. Furthermore, this parallelism is not partial, coincidental, or contingent on anything else. Husserl insists on this point not just in this manuscript, but also in the *Amsterdam Lectures*, where he writes what exactly the parallelism he refers to means. It is a “... correspondence that is parallel in each and every particular and connection; it means a being different and a being separated that is different in a quite peculiar way and yet not in an outsideness of each other in any kind of natural-level sense of the word.” (Hua ix: 342/SP 247) However, both the similarities and the differences between the two attitudes still remain deeply mysterious here. The parallelism itself

seems to be a transcendental insight, as it is something we only become aware of *after* performing the transcendental epoché and the reduction, i.e., when my experience has already been thoroughly transformed by the knowledge that I am a transcendental subject, and that every experience I have is experience of something transcendently constituted. The difference between the psychological and transcendental epoché and the reductions is also, according to Husserl, a difference not of degree, but of kind. Transcendental knowledge can birth further transcendental knowledge, but it can also always return to the ‘ground of natural experience’ without losing its peculiar character, because the natural experience will, from then onwards, always have the modifier of known-to-be-constituted, i.e. be known as relative to the transcendental subject. (Hua xxxiv: 121) However, conversely, the knowledge gained through the natural epoché and reductions will never be able to attain the rank of transcendental knowledge simply by virtue of becoming more and more detailed:

“If the reflection on consciousness is accomplished by someone in the phenomenological-psychological focus, and in iteration, offers reflection on this reflection, and so on, no matter how much the researcher may obtain thereby for the phenomenological, his or her reflection on consciousness will still only attain a psychological meaning.” (Hua ix: 342/SP 247)

But this now confuses things further. Husserl’s thesis here, that there is a radical split between the science of psychology and phenomenology is clearly a precursor to the similar thesis Fink defends in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, which we discussed in section 1.3. The solution offered there, no matter how preliminary, was a meontic one, and was based on the ontological heterogeneity between mundane and transcendental being. Husserl doesn’t operate with that distinction, or at least not in the Finkian way, and certainly not in late 1920s. Consequently, he cannot use such a solution, and must find a different way to explain the radicality of difference. This task is made even more difficult by the fact that Husserl, much like Fink a few years later, insists on a certain kind of unity in difference between the two, but again, doesn’t operate with any of Fink’s theoretical tools such as dialectics or the notion of the absolute understood as a synthetic unity. On the notion of exact parallelism between the mundane, psychological ego and the transcendental ego, Husserl writes:

“This must be correctly understood. My transcendental ego is, as the ego of transcendental experience of self, clearly ‘different’ from my natural human ego, and yet it is anything but some kind of second something separate from it; it is anything but a doubleness in the natural

sense of one being outside the another. Indeed, evidently it only requires an alteration of focus, mediated through the transcendental *epoché*, to transform my purely psychological experience of self (the phenomenological, in a psychological sense) into transcendental experience of self.” (342/SP 247-48)

The radical difference between the two sciences is thus explained by an ‘alteration of focus’. Yet here we are faced with several closely connected problems. First, from which perspective is Husserl writing the passage above? Clearly, from the perspective of a transcendental philosopher who is now back in the natural attitude, standing at a lectern in Amsterdam, reading from a piece of paper, etc. This corresponds to the idea that the transcendental philosopher can, at any time, return to the ground of worldly experience without losing the insights won in the transcendental attitude. But then the recognition that one only needed a change in focus is itself something which can only become obvious once they are *back* in the natural attitude, and not at first. This seems to be a circle without an easy way out. There are two ways of looking at this difficulty. I, as a researcher in the natural attitude, can recognize that I need to change my focus, or deepen my interest in a certain phenomenon or phenomena related to it, and act accordingly. But then this shift is not as radical as Husserl would want it to be, because it still takes place within the same attitude, only with sharper focus. Alternatively, I could proceed as a transcendental philosopher, suspend any judgment about the existence of the world – which is, as we have seen in the previous chapters, the necessary act of ‘deworlding’ myself – and delve into the various constitutive achievements of my transcendental subjectivity. The problem with this approach is that, with it being as unnatural as it is, I already have to know or at least suppose that I will actually *find* any constitutive achievements to describe.

It is unclear whether Husserl sees this a problem, but an ever more poignant formulation of this possible vicious circle is found in the Gibson-manuscript, where we read:

“The transcendental attitude is an action which is necessary if I am to have the transcendental as an accessible realm. It is only when I perform it that I see that I was already a transcendental I in the mode of the natural attitude, and that that every other natural human being other to me is a transcendental subject, which doesn’t know itself as one, but essentially could know it and could reveal itself to itself as being transcendental, in the transcendental attitude which is for him essentially possible.” (Hua xxxiv: 122)

This passage illustrates the question in a very straightforward way: if the transcendental attitude is the only road to transcendental knowledge, but is also fully illuminated in its radicality only by transcendental knowledge, how can the phenomenologist ever start down this road? Put in a slightly different way: if our natural experience of the world and of other people cannot in principle deliver to us the essentially different character of transcendental knowledge, how is that barrier ever initially broken?

We have previously claimed that it would be an interpretative mistake to view psychology as a kind of membrane between empirical science and phenomenology. On the one hand, it is obvious why that is the case for Husserl: no matter how intricate its methods or how universal its results, psychology can never lose its character of a worldly science; there is a qualitative difference between it and phenomenology. On the other hand, there is something importantly different about psychology in comparison to other sciences in the natural attitude. The results it can deliver, as we have seen, can attain an impressive level of universality, even if only on the basis of psychological epoché and reductions. So much so, in fact, that Husserl does not shy away from talking about constitutive research done on natural grounds. (120) It is not entirely clear whether the latter is something which can only be pursued once we have the knowledge that all constitution is relative to a constituting transcendental subject, because the issue is then muddled by the claim of an exact parallelism between the two realms of experience. What does seem to be clear, however, is that Husserl does believe that psychology can *prepare* the phenomenologist for transcendental research. In that sense, it is a science at the outermost reach of the natural attitude, and although the gap that separates it from transcendental phenomenology is immeasurably great, as Husserl maintains in the *Amsterdam Lectures* and elsewhere, it is, at the same time, bridgeable. Psychology may not be the only road to transcendental phenomenology – in the following chapters, we shall explore a different one – but at least for the Husserl of the mid- to late 1920s, it looks to be the easiest one. Yet, the relation between psychology and phenomenology is obviously a complex issue, and it is no wonder Husserl referred to these problems as a set of ‘paradoxical problems’.⁸⁵

However, this is not the only problem Husserl faces in these manuscripts. An equally interesting and engaging one is what we might call the problem of *motivation* for phenomenology. At the very start of section 3.3. we stated that the notion of parallelism is one of the reasons why the manuscripts and texts we have been discussing are so interesting and instructive for understanding Husserl’s position with respect to the problems Fink lays out in

⁸⁵ See n.3 of Luft’s foreword in Hua xxxiv: xxiv.

the *Sixth Meditation*. It is an early but enduring tool in Husserl's repeated attempts to clarify the relation between the two realms of experience and the respective egos operative in them. Now we come to the second reason why Husserl's work of the late 1920s proves to be particularly interesting for this topic, and we could refer to it under the general heading of the *transformative potential of phenomenology*, where the transformation in question refers to the transformation of human beings, and ultimately of humanity itself. We shall deal with this topic in more detail in the concluding chapter. For now, let us first note how exactly the concept of parallelism flows into the more general topic of transformation.

One way for Husserl to address the paradoxical relation of psychology to phenomenology was, as we have seen, to develop the notion of 'pure' or 'phenomenological psychology'. Yet the introduction of the concept of pure experience into psychology only blurred the line between the sciences, to the point where transcendental phenomenology suddenly found itself in the position where it had to add further qualifications to the concept of 'purity' itself. This was a difficulty which then continued to appear in the following years, and something Husserl wrestled with repeatedly. Here is how Steinbock summarizes this issue:

"In order to distinguish radically the natural from the naturalistic, Husserl thinks a 'first reduction' is in order. This 'reduction' is itself curious, for it still allows the psychologist to be 'interested'. Moreover, while Husserl wants phenomenological psychology to treat the region 'psyche,' and transcendental philosophy to be universal, Husserl goes so far in the opposite direction of naturalism that he becomes unable to differentiate 'phenomenological psychology' from transcendental philosophy in a way that is meaningful. He is led to assert that psychology, too, is universal, that the psychologist is likewise an 'uninterested observer,' that he or she, once more, exercises the epoché and reduction, and becomes a 'phenomenon.' As a result, we are left wondering precisely what role phenomenological psychology really serves, and if it does have an essential role, how we are able to distinguish it from transcendental philosophy." (Steinbock 1994: 564)

Steinbock is here referring to Husserl's writings on psychology from late 1935 and 1936. These are part of the rich reflections which make up the supplementary texts to the *Crisis* volume, and we shall return to them later. The general problem described, however, was present as early as the late 1920s, however, and indeed, Steinbock points that out as well: almost a decade later, "... Husserl's analyses hardly go beyond the impasse reached in his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article from 1928." (563)

Of course, we can easily reconstruct Husserl response to this kind of criticism. The difference between the two science is in the scope, or better yet, the kind of epoché they exercise. Whereas the reflections within the natural attitude do not change the structure of the validity of the world, and do not change me in any essential way, the I of the transcendental epoché is essentially changed insofar as it is no longer a ‘child of the world’. (Hua xxxiv: 10) Here we see how the topics of the world, and of the experience of the world, which we have been following in their different modalities in the previous chapters, again appear as being intertwined with the question of who is doing phenomenology. We have chosen to speak of the porosity of the reduction, and tentatively pointed to the world, in its modality of pregivenness, as a phenomenon which shifts and see-saws between the two sides of the epoché and reduction. The discussion of a parallelism between the two egos again hints in this direction. Importantly, the research manuscripts on the reduction deal with this difficult cluster of relations several years before Fink’s recasting of these problems. As early as 1926 we find Husserl talking of the world as “the first universal topic”, even if this universality is still only understood in a “non-authentic” sense. (50) It is not universal in the authentic sense because it rests on the non-examined presupposition, *Doxa*, or ‘general thesis’ of the existence of the pregiven world. The suspension of that thesis through the transcendental epoché reveals that the topic of world, which had previously been taken to be the universal topic, or framework, is in fact relative to the true absolute topic, that of the transcendental subject. Through the methods specific to phenomenology, transcendental subjectivity is thus disclosed as the absolute universe of all possible sense-giving to beings. In the execution of those acts proper to phenomenology, everything changes, according to Husserl, yet everything also remains the same, only now seen from a different perspective. Transcendental experience produces knowledge of a new, hitherto unknown nature, it is not a second realm of being (55) but it does enclose the entirety of worldly being. “The thematic universality of the world remains exactly as closed off and exactly as operable as before, but still not quite in the exact same way. Every such operation is now *eo ipso* simultaneously transcendental operation.” (ibid.) In other words, transcendental knowledge effectuates a change or transformation in natural life itself, and in its relation to its world. In a sense, this change can never be undone, and the transcendental epoché and reduction can rightfully be said to have a *plastic*, rather than elastic methodological nature. The insistence on the absolute universality of the epoché doesn’t solve all theoretical difficulties, however.

While it does, at least nominally, answer the question as to *how* phenomenology is different from phenomenological psychology, it still doesn’t even begin to answer the practical question of *why* someone would perform these methods. Again, it is important to note here that

there is no mundane equivalent to the type of reflection in question here. While phenomenological psychology, or, more simply, psychology, might provide us with a very general model for such reflection, the motives behind that research are always ultimately practical and aimed at a better or more complete understanding of the world. In Husserl's words, psychology exercises a kind of a 'critical' epoché, which, although it suspends the validity of whatever it is focusing on, still remains interested in that validity, with the goal of better understanding some thesis about it, or of coming up with a new thesis. These are practical interests which govern this type of epoché. Transcendental epoché, on the other hand, not only suspends validity, but it also remains, and has to remain, absolutely indifferent and non-participating. (31) We recall that Fink tried to go around this problem by stipulating what he called 'phenomenological fore-knowledge', which latently operates as a thesis that the existence of the world itself is an unexamined presupposition. This latent transcendental insight is, for Fink, always already there, and becomes the focus of philosophical research through wonder at the world. It is questionable whether this explanation could be understood as anything other than a more general practical interest, but it probably could be squared with Fink's insistence on the mode of *Weltbefangenheit*, as opposed to the more theoretical notion of attitude in Husserl. But this was not Husserl's explanation, at least not explicitly. His notion of the essential possibility of transcendental knowledge essential to every subject (cf. 122) doesn't quite qualify as an explanation of motivation, but rather lays the ground for such an explanation at best.⁸⁶

Husserl himself is uncharacteristically hazy on this topic. In connection to the 'alteration of focus' mentioned at the end of *Amsterdam Lectures*, he will say, for example, that it is an act of will, "... a single volitional step – the willing of a universal and radical epoché..." which will then "... lead to a transcendental transvaluation of all the results of phenomenological psychology." Recognizing that this isn't much of an explanation, he then adds that "[o]bviously this requires as motive for it all the considerations that lead to

⁸⁶ For an attempt at an explanation that uses some Husserlian and Finkian resources, cf. Arp 2004. Arp frames his discussion in terms of what he refers to as the 'way-out problem' and the 'way-in problem' of philosophy. The former corresponds to the problem of motivating philosophical suspensions and reductions (looking for a way out of the everydayness of life and into philosophical reflection), and the latter roughly corresponds to Fink's notion of secondary enworlding, namely, finding one's way back into the mundane sphere after achieving insight. Arp argues that the motivating factors for philosophical reflection are what he calls 'cognitive interruptions', i.e., moments where everyday functioning somehow breaks down or misfires. His approach is interesting, and ultimately similar to the one we will be developing later, in some respects. However, one could argue that Arp doesn't actually touch on the problem of motivation for *phenomenology* and of secondary enworlding at all, as his paper either severely underestimates the notion of radicality that both Husserl and Fink insist upon, or overlooks it completely. Nevertheless, the end result of his discussion is a loosely existential theory of philosophical activity which, in many ways, seems to be the only imaginable one.

transcendental inquiry.” (Hua ix: 343/SP 248) But these considerations are somewhat unclear, especially given the fact that the volitional act leading to the radical step is supposed to be devoid of any practical interest. Keeping this stipulation in mind, it becomes difficult to understand Husserl’s otherwise perfectly plausible historical explanation that the transcendental attitude remained a theoretical impossibility until

“... a motivation became operative which was suited to putting the natural focus (a focus which by reason of its very nature necessarily comes first in the individual and historically) out of play and, in the same move, to compel a new focus, which we call transcendental. Such a motivation arose when, under the aegis of philosophy, there developed a truly all-embracing theoretical interest, in which questions were posed about the universe as such, about the world as the cosmos comprising every existing thing whatever.” (332/SP 238)

Here we are still, of course, on the level of the universal, or all-embracing topic of the world, i.e. on the level of non-authentic universality. And while Husserl does go on to discuss the shifting of philosophical focus on consciousness, and the ensuing confusions stemming from different forms of idealism, the principal difference between transcendental phenomenology and all other forms of idealism remains obscure, because it still isn’t clear how and why its search for transcendental knowledge transcends the horizon of natural, worldly life. “The transcendental epoché, the radical putting out of consideration every practice whatsoever of accepting the ‘existing world’”, we are told, “is accomplished through an act of will in such a way that it is ‘once and for all’”. This is the plasticity of life after the reduction at play: “from now on this habitually and constantly firm resolve of will makes the phenomenologist a transcendental phenomenologist.” (341/SP 247)

This is not the only place where Husserl talks of a *will* instituting the habituality of a new, changed life of the transcendental philosopher. The short but dense and challenging text on the return from the transcendental attitude into the positivity of natural life, written in late 1926, mentions an ‘infinite will’ driving the striving for the grounding of a ‘science’ of the transcendental mind. [„*Wissenschaft vom transzendentalem Geiste*”] (Hua xxxiv: 106) This infinite will is more than a mere disposition, Husserl tells us, but rather a living, driving force which not only helps primordially institute transcendental life, but also preserves it as a lasting acquisition.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ One cannot help but be reminded here of Derrida’s *Voice and Phenomenon*, which, although in a different context, argues that “... despite all the themes of receptive or intuitive intentionality and of passive genesis, the

But all of these approximations and attempts at grasping the beginnings of the radically new science seem to fall short. The unfolding of transcendental research is enmeshed in difficulties, both of motivation, and of method. The shift from a natural to a completely unnatural attitude is not merely a shift in the frame of mind, yet it is unclear how it can be anything but that. As a beginner in phenomenology, “I live a natural life and establish, based on some sort of a motivation [... *etabliere auf Grund einer wie immer zu beschreibenden Motivation...*], a ‘transcendental’ life of knowledge which here and there overlaps with it.” (11) The habitualities of this new life sediment in my natural life, and drive me to further research, uncovering more and more of the overlap between the two realms of knowledge. This is Husserl’s doctrine of the parallelism between the transcendental and the mundane egos. It is invoked repeatedly as an attempt to explain the curious fact that a worldly, historical person, can both constitute a world, and be a part of it. Yet it doesn’t seem to explain much. The question of who is doing phenomenology, and why, remains almost as obscure as at the beginning.

There is another closely related problem that the texts we have been discussing here hint at, but don’t really solve, and it again has to do with the motivation for engaging in this peculiar type of research, but at a more general level. Phenomenology is supposedly more than just a discursive exercise or stabbing in the dark – in other words, it neither invents its objects of research, nor does it stumble upon them randomly. Rather, it purports to discover and describe them according to strict and repeatable methods. But if those phenomena are of a radically different nature than natural phenomena, to the point where transcendental phenomenology is the *only* science capable of disclosing them, we need to ask why we would even need it. This question becomes particularly poignant in light of the non-participating and disinterested nature of that research. In other words, what does anyone stand to gain by engaging in transcendental phenomenology, and why should we aim to establish a community of such researchers?

These questions weighed heavily on Husserl. Some of their difficulty, we have seen, stemmed from phenomenology’s exceptionally high standards of scientificity and universality. But, were these standards a realistic, or even a desirable goal? Answering this question meant responding to another kind of challenge, based on a substantially different understanding of what phenomenology was, *why* it was to be pursued, and by *whom*.

concept of intentionality is still taken in the tradition of a voluntaristic metaphysics, that is, perhaps taken simply in *the* metaphysics.” Derrida then expands this claim: “The explicit teleology that orders all of transcendental phenomenology would basically be only a transcendental voluntarism.” (Derrida 1967a: 37/29)

4 In the Throes of Anthropologism: Theoretical Interest and the Issue of Presuppositions

An attempt to coherently present a philosophy of radical beginnings will have to account for the reasons for undertaking a new beginning, and for the nature of its radicality. For most philosophies, it is the latter part of the account that proves to be difficult. For transcendental phenomenology, as we have tried to show in the previous chapter, the difficulty is in fact inverted. Although Husserl's project sits comfortably in the tradition of Descartes and Kant, for example, his notion of radicality sets it apart from them significantly. Husserl's phenomenology operates with such a strong concept of radical investigation – based on his notion of the absolute epoché – that it becomes all-pervasive, and consequently results in a global dichotomy of the natural and transcendental attitude. The famed paradox of subjectivity is one direct consequence of this dichotomy. Yet, as we've seen, it results in a more practical problem as well. Given that the logical conclusion of 'phenomenology of phenomenology' is that the transcendental undertaking is, in fact, unnatural, a straightforward problem of motivation immediately springs forth. *Why* would anyone choose to leave the natural attitude? This is quite a complex problem, because the motivation to do so cannot even be understood as a miraculous instant, to use Sartre's expression; heavy philosophical machinery must first be developed, and then employed, in order for the transition between the attitudes to even be possible. But that can only be done in advance then, hoping that there is a transcendental attitude or realm of some sort to be transitioned *into*. It is only after all of these practical problems have been acknowledged that it even makes sense to ask *who* is then doing phenomenology. Again, it is only because Husserl works with such a strong conception of radicality that this even becomes an issue in the first place, and that the seemingly absurd conclusion, that phenomenology is not a human activity, becomes understandable, albeit contestable.

This is the situation where we left off. We can track the different solutions we've been discussing by observing how they address the issues of radicality and beginning, respectively. Fink's approach was to tie the latter to the former entirely; the upshot of this was that the problem of motivation essentially didn't exist for Fink, as the 'decision' to pursue phenomenology was ultimately a reaction to a preexisting transcendental foreknowledge. The character of this latent knowledge remains mysterious in Fink, although the recognition that it

is tethered to a larger context of the movement of absolute knowledge does come close to a speculative explanation. For Husserl, on the other hand, the notions of beginning and of radicality initially remain separate. It could be reasonably argued that it is only through his collaboration with Fink that he became aware of the seriousness of this question. However, this does not mean that he hadn't been aware of the problem at all, as his research manuscripts from the mid- to late 1920s demonstrate. In those writings, we've seen, Husserl is still clinging to a very traditional image of human and scientific motivation and insists that the transcendental attitude is a radical change of perspective on the human being, rather than a break with humanity. However, the operative concept of *parallelism* employed there turned out to be insufficient to explain the transition between the parallel attitudes, as it couldn't quite address the reasons for the radical shift taking place within it.

Fink was influenced by these manuscripts, and his radicalization of the issue, which we referred to as epistemological anti-humanism, was a response to the explanatory deficiency of the idea of parallelism. This now leads us back to Husserl, and this time to a modified approach to the problem. In the early 1930s, Husserl is now intent on demonstrating, very much in line with Fink's arguments from the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, that there indeed *was* a profound difference *in kind* between the human subject and the transcendental subject. This claim is interwoven with his criticism of what he calls 'anthropologism', and in order to understand the former, we first need to understand the latter. Thus, in an attempt to clarify the relation between humanity and phenomenology, in this chapter we first turn to Husserl's critique of similar attempts which he deems not scientific, or not rigorous enough. Crucial for our purpose will be an understanding of the complex interplay between Husserl, Dilthey, and Heidegger. This will provide us with a baseline for discussing Husserl's modified and heavily Fink-influenced theory of the mundane/transcendental relation. This theory proved to be short-lived, however, and it served, as we will then try to show, as an in-between step toward a much more fruitful one, the discussion of which will be the subject of the next chapter.

We will close this chapter by taking the first steps toward this, arguably, more plausible way of reading Husserl's transcendental project. Instead of insisting on the non-participating, purely theoretical nature of phenomenology, one way of relieving it of some of its paradoxes is by leaning into the *historical*, practical side of phenomenologizing activity, and arguing that the motivation for it lies in a kind of existential and ethical decision.

4.1. Historicism and generativity

The question of who is doing phenomenology, as we have seen, is inseparable from the question of why do phenomenology at all. The two questions not only go hand in hand, but also exhibit a structure of co-dependence. Depending on how one chooses to answer one of them, several options present themselves with respect to the other, and many permutations are possible here. These questions appear as meaningful in phenomenology precisely because of its central methodological device, the phenomenological reduction. Now, the reduction seems to preclude any trivial or straightforwardly historical answer, because it "... frees us from the sense-restrictions of the natural attitude and of every relative attitude." (Hua iv: 179/189) This is an old argument of Husserl's, taken here from *Ideas II*, but found throughout his work: "Natural man, and especially the researcher into nature, is not aware of these restrictions; he does not see that to all his results adheres a determinate index, one which manifests their merely relative sense." (ibid.) The discovery of the absolute constitutive consciousness, that the reduction ideally results in, does not mean abandoning the world of the natural man completely, however, and Husserl talks here of the educational function of the phenomenological reduction [*Das Erzieherische der phänomenologischen Reduktion*] which allows us not only to become aware of the constitutive achievements of our transcendental ego, but also "... henceforth makes us in general sensitive toward grasping other attitudes, whose rank is equal to that of the natural attitude." (ibid.) We are reminded here of Fink's concept of the 'pedagogical impulse' inherent to phenomenology, which is ultimately responsible for what he calls secondary enworlding, i.e. for phenomenology's appearing in the world. This seems to go well with the notion of the transformative power of phenomenology we hinted at in the last chapter and gives us an idea of what transcendental habituality comprises. Greater sensitivity toward various attitudes human beings adopt (personalistic, scientific, artistic, political, etc.), as well as a better understanding of them, is not only a worthwhile theoretical, but also supremely practical goal. But this practical usefulness of the transcendental habitus on the one hand, and its nominal unnaturalness and non-participating nature on the other, make for strange bedfellows.

Husserl's operative ideal of scientific philosophy rests on a radicalized Cartesian notion of its presuppositionless, and phenomenology thus demands "... the most perfect freedom from presuppositions and, concerning itself, an absolute reflective insight." (Hua III/1: 136/148) With respect to the 'who and why of phenomenology', this doctrine turns out to be quite difficult to square with some very attractive and plausible possible answers to these questions.

What Husserl means by ‘absolute reflective insight’ can be understood as constant phenomenological vigilance in maintaining the difference between the natural and transcendental attitude. This is necessary because, as Husserl points out time and time again, it is all too easy to fall back into the natural attitude precisely because the field disclosed by the reduction is “something *contrary to nature*.” (Hua IV: 180/189) In fact, as the argument continues, all the results and the insights into the constitutive achievements of absolute consciousness only make sense from within phenomenology, i.e. once we adopt the framework of phenomenology. (180/190) This makes the demand for constant vigilance all the more central, as it is not only necessary to keep one from falling back into the natural attitude, but also makes sure that the phenomenological insights will retain their sense and relevance.

Yet none of this helps us respond to the difficulty with which we ended the last chapter. If the ideal of absolutely presuppositionless philosophy is taken as seriously as Husserl would have wanted us to take it, it becomes unclear how a jump into a radically unnatural life could ever be motivated or justified. For, the very ideas of scientificity and radicality would surely have to be left aside as historical relics of human activity. Furthermore, if the truth of phenomenology is *only* to be understood from within phenomenology, we have to explain how such hermetic and unnatural knowledge ever comes to be known by human beings. I will argue that the only way to provide a satisfactory answer to these questions is by emphatically insisting on understanding phenomenology as a human activity, motivated and driven by human concerns, taking place on a historical, worldly stage. This directly contradicts two successive claims made by Fink in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, where he argues that the “... phenomenological reduction is *not within reach of* an ‘anthropological-existential’ characterization (and critique)”, and that phenomenology itself is “... not a ‘piece of philosophy’ within the world historically, having arisen in human cultural history.” (SCM: 142-44/129-131) We have seen the enormous context of methodological and ontological arguments surrounding this Finkian claim, and we have seen that his response to the ‘who and why’ questions rests on a non-humanistic understanding of phenomenology. Husserl’s stance on this issue is much more difficult to parse, for two reasons. First, he doesn’t clearly and explicitly state his position, partly because he lacks the dialectical tools which enabled Fink to develop a distinct and decisive interpretation. Second, Husserl’s thoughts on this problem are scattered and span a longer period, and therefore lend themselves to more varied and occasionally borderline contradictory readings. In the last chapter, we took a look at his manuscripts from the years preceding his collaborative work with Fink. Those focused on the intentional-psychological road to phenomenology and were heavily invested in the notion of parallelism

between the mundane/psychological and the transcendental. While that notion ultimately turned out to be not as helpful as Husserl might have hoped, it remains important for our account here, and not just because it represents Husserl's first major attempt to account for the methodological question of the being of the phenomenologist. The idea of a parallelism between the two registers, however lacking in explanatory potential, retained a crucial link between the human being and their reality, and phenomenological activity. The *Amsterdam Lectures*, toward their end, even offer a plausible attempt at a historical interpretation of the origins of phenomenological inquiry, and therefore of the transcendental attitude. And although Husserl employs only a vague notion of volition there, the reader is left with the distinct impression that phenomenology is ultimately a human endeavor taking place on the world stage, within history. For the Husserl of the mid- to late 1920s, that is not a shortcoming and he makes sure to underline that the transcendental attitude, for all its unnatural character, is an alteration of focus, rather than a separate, second realm of any sort.

In 1931, Husserl seems to change and radicalize his position. Undoubtedly influenced by Fink, whose materials for the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* he had access to in the meantime, he briefly comes to adopt an understanding of phenomenology more in line with the Finkian anti-humanism we described in the previous chapters. We shall turn to this brief quasi-Finkian phase of Husserl's work in due time and see how it comes close to positing a kind of anti-humanism at the heart of phenomenology, before softening it with more familiar vocabulary. Exposure to Fink's thought wasn't the only reason for this shift, although it was the most decisive one. A second reason, as we've argued in 2.1.1., was Husserl's growing need to respond to the explicit and implicit criticisms coming from Heidegger. By the early 1930s, two readings of *Being and Time* in,⁸⁸ Husserl had already developed a good sense of the general thrust of Heidegger's criticism. For reasons that probably went beyond pure philosophy, he was also very disparaging of it, which, in turn, prevented him from engaging with Heidegger's

⁸⁸ There is an interesting discrepancy in the literature regarding the exact time frame of Husserl's reading of *Being and Time*. The Sheehan & Palmer volume we've been relying on in our discussion states that "[b]etween April 1927 and September 1929 Husserl read twice through Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*", which would plausibly place the first reading shortly after the publication of the volume. (SP: xiii) For Sheehan and Palmer, this claim can apparently be traced back to Husserl himself. (n.9) A look into the *Husserl-Chronik* seems to corroborate this: a note from Ingarden from late 1929 mentions a "thorough working through Heidegger's book" on Husserl's part. (Hua Dok. I: 349) The otherwise remarkably reliable Luft, however, surprisingly maintains that Husserl "... did not read *Being and Time* until 1931." (Luft 2005: 142) This comparatively late reading would certainly account for the prominent spot Heidegger occupies, implicitly or explicitly, in Husserl's work from 1931. We shall address some of those references to Heidegger in the following pages. However, the letter Husserl wrote to Pfänder as early as January 6 attests to an already existing and elaborate (at least from Husserl's perspective) understanding of the gulf between the two, and thus makes Luft's claim difficult to accept. Either way, the answer to this question is not central to the interpretation we're offering, namely, that it was primarily the need to respond to the Finkian brand of anti-humanism that drove Husserl's work of the early 1930s.

thought in a more nuanced way. In a helpful discussion of this topic, Luft summarizes the crux of the problem in the following way:

“Although Husserl in turn might have been all too quick in criticizing Heidegger as simply going with the flow of the *Zeitgeist*, he did have a keen sense of Heidegger’s thought as breaking with fundamental principles of his thought, which, in turn, Heidegger merely wanted to bring to full fruition rather than abandon altogether – although at times his rhetoric might have sounded otherwise.” (Luft 2005: 169)

Husserl’s drive to trade blows with Heidegger’s philosophy, coupled with his collaborative work with Fink in full swing, reached a high point in 1931, when Husserl devotes several manuscripts and even a series of public lectures to the issue of the relation between phenomenology and what he calls ‘anthropologism’. The problem of anthropologism, i.e. the idea that philosophical truths can ultimately only be grounded in the historical human being, becomes his main target at this time. In order to better understand this criticism, it is important to briefly touch on Husserl’s earlier critique of a similar claim. Anthropologism, broadly construed, bears many similarities to what Husserl, as early as 1911, explicitly identified as historicism, and, as its close relative, ‘worldview philosophy’:

“Historicism takes its position in the factual sphere of the empirical life of spirit, and by positing it absolutely, without exactly naturalizing it (especially as the specific sense of nature is far removed from historical thought and at any rate does not influence the latter in a generally determinative way), a relativism arises that has a close kinship with naturalistic psychologism and that entangles us in analogous skeptical difficulties.” (Hua xxv: 41/278⁸⁹)

The attack Husserl mounted on historicism in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* was directed primarily at Dilthey, to whose philosophy Husserl retained a complex relation throughout his career.⁹⁰ Arguably, this criticism of Dilthey was not particularly strong, and rested mostly on arguments for principal universality and objective validity of strict scientific knowledge which only seem straightforward and uncontestable once one has already accepted the

⁸⁹ The second page number refers to the English translation of *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* published in *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*; for full reference, cf. Husserl 2002.

⁹⁰ For a general overview of the relation and interplay between the main themes of their philosophies, see Tillman 1976. For a philosophically more focused contribution, intent on uncovering a “fundamental convergence” between Dilthey and Husserl, cf. Makkreel 1982. For several further useful references, cf. Steinbock 1995a: 78, n.38.

phenomenological perspective as fundamentally correct. Having gone through several of quotes from Dilthey, which exhibit the admirable and significant potential of *historical science*, Husserl admits that there is a natural appeal to *historicist* arguments, for they express a certain kind of ‘*factual truth*’:

“Certainly, a worldview and a worldview philosophy are cultural formations that come into being and disappear in the stream of the development of mankind, whereby their spiritual content is determinately motivated under the given historical circumstances.” (43/280)

Of course, this same factual truth can, in principle, be applied to rigorous sciences as well, of which phenomenology is one, and not merely one among many. “Do they *for that reason* lack objective validity?”, asks Husserl, and adds that the ‘very extreme historicist’ will affirm this, before concluding that there is thus a very clear link between historicism and extreme skeptical subjectivism. (ibid.) This is not merely a case of drawing false philosophical conclusions – consistently following historicism to its logical conclusion, for Husserl, inevitably leads to extreme skepticism. Thus, the problem must lie in one of the premises. In this case, the difficulty obviously arises from the mistake of translating the notion of historical, circumstantial motivation to the field of rigorous science, for, as soon as we do that, according to Husserl, elementary notions such as truth, theory, and science lose their universal validity and dissolve in the mire of historical contingency. This is thus a case of historical science overstepping its bounds, and the blueprint is well known: once the explanatory apparatus applicable within one regional ontology for whatever reason overextends and flows into other, principally different domains, a crisis of rationality arises. The argument becomes shaky at this point and invokes, at first glance, a kind of Platonism. Empirical science, including human sciences such as history, cannot in principle tell us anything about the validity of the distinction between merely historical and universally valid formations because the very distinction lies beyond those sciences:

“And if spiritual formations can in truth be considered and judged with respect to such oppositions of validity, then the scientific decision about validity itself and its ideal normative principles is by no means a matter for empirical science.” (44/281)

As Husserl pithily puts it, "... historical reasons can yield only historical consequences. To want either to justify or to refute ideas from facts is countersense – *ex pumice aquam*, to use Kant's quotation." (ibid.)

The implied twofold argument here is that a.) philosophy is the only science equipped with tools for judging this rarified concept of validity, *and* b.) that phenomenology is the most rigorous, and thus best way to do that kind of philosophy. This may very well be true; however, the argument Husserl makes here misses the point almost entirely. The argument rests on the presupposition that the distinction and opposition between empirical and universally valid claims is, itself, a universally valid one, but this is precisely what the historicist, extreme or not, would deny. *Contra* Husserl, it is unclear that denying this distinction necessarily leads to extreme skepticism, and this is a point Husserl picks up on in Dilthey himself. Yet, he is quick to dismiss the possibility of a 'softer' historicism:

"Dilthey ... likewise rejects historical skepticism; but I fail to understand how he can believe he has obtained from his very instructive analysis of the structure and typology of worldviews decisive reasons *against* skepticism. For as is argued above in the text, a human science (which is, after all, empirical) can argue neither against nor *for* anything that lays claim to objective validity. The matter changes, and that seems to move his thought inwardly [... *und das scheint innerlich sein Denken zu bewegen*], when the empirical attitude, which aims at empirical understanding, is replaced with the phenomenological eidetic attitude." (45, n.39/281, n.13)

Husserl thus finds redeeming qualities in Dilthey's *philosophical* claims (as opposed to his historical claims) only insofar as they manifest a kind of a spiritual proximity to the impulses of phenomenological description. For our present discussion of the particular stage of Husserl's thought in 1931, these early references to Dilthey are of twofold importance.

First, they point to a long-standing engagement, on Husserl's part, with the topic of the relation between history and universal validity. As opposed to his even earlier interest in the issues of relativism and psychologism – ideas of which he remained unequivocally critical throughout – the notion of an essentially historical constitution of validity clearly presented itself as a touchstone of his subsequent work. Dilthey's philosophy was an important, and constant, interlocutor for Husserl in this context. Even when focusing our attention solely on *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* – relatively speaking, a very early text for the context we are pursuing here – we can develop the distinct impression that the problem for Husserl lies not in affording history an important role in the investigation of objective validities, but rather in what

he perceives as the necessary logical link between such an approach and extreme skepticism. In other words, the topics of history and universal validity might not necessarily be mutually exclusive, and could even be viewed as complementary, as long as one is clear about the scope and the interplay of the empirical and the eidetic attitudes and of their corresponding claims.

Strictly looking at the arguments it employs, and especially bearing in mind the year of its publication,⁹¹ it is only fair to point out that the *Logos* article was not necessarily Husserl's best showing. This is particularly true of the second half of the text, which deals with historicism and worldview philosophy. However, it also features a very prescient Husserl who, as early as 1910-11, is obliquely approaching insights which would only get further elaborated much later. The importance of Dilthey's philosophy as sounding board cannot be overstated here. In keeping with his relentlessly scientific approach, Husserl not only chose to criticize the strongest philosopher from the opposing camp, but also made sure to present his position in as strong a way as he could. The upshot was that the penultimate section of the article opened with the following sentence: "After having done full justice to the high value of worldview philosophy, it may well seem that nothing could prevent us from *unconditionally* recommending that one strive for such philosophy." (Hua xxv: 51/286) Disappointingly, the case Husserl then makes for the necessity of universally valid science is not particularly convincing. The main thrust of his argument is again to be found in a sharp distinction between culture or worldview and science, yet it is unclear how Husserl's argument for this sharp distinction is anything *but* historical or cultural. To be sure, according to Husserl, the difference between the two was not always as clear and sharp: "In practical striving they flowed together; they also lay at finite distances, however high above the one striving for them may have felt them to be." (52/286f.) Yet even though the difference between the two, according to Husserl, is a reality that exists "from now on for all eternity" (51/286), the constitution of the difference seems to be historical through and through. What props up the difference between empirical and universally valid sciences, it turns out, is an essential difference in the structure of the teleologies specific to them. But the teleologies in question do not come about *ex nihilo*, nor are they waiting to be plucked from any heavenly hanging gardens of ideal objects. Instead, the very type of differentiation Husserl is defending as necessary for the type of philosophy he is trying to do is a product of human scientific activity. Thus, the practically oriented

⁹¹ That is, keeping in mind that the arguments of *Ideas I* had largely not yet been known to the wider philosophical public.

interwovenness of culture, worldviews, and science is merely a stage in the development of human rationality:

“That has changed completely since the constitution of a supratemporal *universitas* of rigorous sciences. Generations upon generations work enthusiastically on the immense edifice of science and add their modest objects of inquiry to it, ever conscious of the fact that the edifice is infinite and will never ever be completed.” (52/287)

As opposed to empirical investigation, worldviews both fledgling and old, and morality – all of which are principally finite and oriented toward obtainable goals – “[s]cience is a title for absolute, timeless values.” A crucial distinction here is not spelled out but only implied: the fact that these values are timeless *does not* mean that they are outside of time. A lot of important philosophical and conceptual work here is being done by the distinction between *supra-* and *a-*temporality. The relations between this conceptual pair and the notion of constitution are not entirely clear at this point. Thus far, Husserl seems to operate with the idea that the constitution of rigorous sciences is something that happened within history, and that this intergenerational process ultimately elevates them to a supratemporal status. Does this mean, however, that the objects of these sciences, as well as the values tied to them, are also constituted within history? The immediate continuation of the argument casts some doubt on that:

“Every such value, once discovered, belongs henceforth to the value-treasures of *all* subsequent mankind and obviously determines forthwith the material content of the ideas of culture, wisdom, worldview, as well as that of worldview philosophy.” (ibid.)

Here, talk is of *discovering* values, rather than of constituting them, and a lot seems to hinge on how one decides to understand this notion. We will turn to that question again in the following chapter, when we focus on the broader motivational factors which lead to phenomenological philosophy. For now, let us point out that it is already in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* that we catch a glimpse of a theory of constitution which prefigures much of what will be discussed in the later Husserl under the headings of teleology, institution, and generativity. The latter in particular is a wide-ranging concept, including large clusters of broadly historical reflections during Husserl’s last decade:

“Stated in a provisional manner, by generativity or ‘generative’ Husserl means both the process of becoming – hence the process of ‘generation’ – and he means a process that occurs over the ‘generations’ – hence specifically the process of ‘historical’ and social movement.” (Steinbock 1995a: 55)

The notion of generativity, we will see, encompasses constitution and history in a way which not only unites them under the same heading, but in fact shows that they are inseparable. If this concept of generativity truly turns out to be indispensable, it will naturally have major consequences for our understanding of the transcendental project in general. For, if all constitution necessarily takes place within world history, – and the arguments for the intergenerational, social nature of constitution of temporal *and* supratemporal objects such as values indicate that this history can only be a world history – this will necessitate a reevaluation of the arguments for the irreducibility of the world and of history. These, in turn, unequivocally point us in the direction of the *irreducibly human* nature of transcendental phenomenology. Thus, we circle back to the question driving our discussion, namely, who is doing phenomenology? We have seen how this question, springing from methodological concerns, is linked with the question of practical motives, and even those of practical utility of pursuing phenomenology. A purely theoretical answer, à la Fink, turned out to be unsatisfying. In our attempt to tease out a better one, we are now following a hint from Husserl himself, who, in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, talks of transcendental phenomenology as the pathway toward a ‘higher humanity’. This is a useful notion, as it pulls together various strands of Husserl’s concerns: it indicates that not only is there a transformative quality to phenomenology to be found at the personal level of the phenomenologist, but also at an interpersonal and, ultimately, much larger, intergenerational and societal level. To foreshadow our conclusion somewhat, we could now say: what makes transcendental phenomenology unique among all other sciences is not that it is a caesura in worldly history, deriving the universality of its insights from its atemporal and non-mundane character; rather, it is unique precisely *because* it is a *Kulturgut* which opens up a perspective on historically constituted universal validities. The locus of this intersection of history and ideality is mankind. Before we can turn to this broader perspective, however, we first have to stay at the level of the individual for a while longer. The transition from the ‘who’ to the ‘why’ of phenomenology will then allow us to make the transition to the topic of motivation for, and usefulness of, transcendental phenomenology in general.

4.2. *Instead of theory, understanding*

The choice to sketch out this path by taking a detour through Husserl's early criticism of Dilthey might seem strange and surprising at first. While we have shown how the very early *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* already portends some of the later developments, this link is still somewhat tenuous. Yet distinct genealogical lines can be traced, especially as we begin approaching 1931, when Husserl seems to be most intent on sharply distinguishing between the human and the transcendental ego. One useful heading for the later developments in Husserl's thought – including, but not limited to, a more pronounced interest in historical and broadly sociological themes – is the term 'generative phenomenology', as we have seen. Steinbock, whose work brought the importance and richness of Husserl's concept of generativity into sharp focus,⁹² correctly points out that it "... would not be wrong-headed to seek Husserl's engagement with generativity and generative problems in motivations that lie outside of the internal development of Husserl's own work as it was developed prior to the 1930s." (Steinbock 1995a: 63) This, of course, does not mean that those motivations were exclusively shaped by external factors. As we are trying to show, the specific issue of whether phenomenology is to be understood as an essentially human activity, and if yes, how that irreducible human foundation relates to the transcendental project on the whole, is a particularly convenient gateway toward understanding Husserl's more detailed engagement with the topics of humanity and history. Viewed in this way, it becomes apparent that both the question of the place of humanity in phenomenology, as well the whatever the answer to that

⁹² Apart from the condensed overview in the article quoted above, the central and most exhaustive exposition of the topic is to be found in his *Home and Beyond: Generative Phenomenology after Husserl*. (Steinbock 1995b) We shall refer to some of its arguments in the next chapter. While a more complete examination of this book would go beyond the scope of this discussion, it is worth briefly pointing out that the criticisms or hesitations regarding Steinbock's account of generative phenomenology primarily revolved around the question of whether the reading of the Husserlian project sketched there still retained *transcendental* character. Cf. Soffer 1997 and Crowell 1998.

This is a worry that was fueling both Husserl's and Fink's work of the 1930s, and the progressive radicalization of the understanding of the transcendental ego, as well as Husserl's vehement criticism of 'anthropologism' were both reactions against the perceived threat of falling back into a 'natural-attitude' phenomenology in the face of an opening up of the phenomenological method. One way to read Steinbock, I would argue, would be as saying that the threat was not as great as Husserl had perceived or imagined it, or, even better, that the sharp distinction between the two attitudes (natural and transcendental) was blurrier than initially believed. To be sure, this takes some conceptual redeployment, and Steinbock's book, on the whole, seems to be not a step, but a leap in the right direction at the very least. What it does *not* do, in my view, is give up on the methodological apparatus of transcendental phenomenology altogether. Here is Soffer's concern: "Yet what sense does the term 'transcendental' have here, once we have rejected the transcendental reduction, transcendental subjectivity, transcendental world-constitution, and, I suspect, the principle of all principles of *Ideas I*?" (Soffer 1997: 153) This seems to misrepresent Steinbock's claims somewhat, insofar as it places emphasis entirely on the critical aspect of his argument. Rather, what is presented there, similar to what I am arguing toward here, is a productive transformation, instead of outright rejection, of some of these aspects of phenomenology's method.

question turns out to be, intrinsically belong to the process of phenomenology's attaining self-understanding, or to its 'self-explication'. (65)

This brings us to the *second*, equally as complex reason why the references to Dilthey's philosophy are important for this context. In the heady mixture of influences, criticisms, and reactions shaping the development of Husserl's thought of the early 1930s, it was *Heidegger's* critical reading of Dilthey and of *Lebensphilosophie* that helped set the stage for Husserl's response to, and critique of, Heidegger. We know Husserl first truly became aware of Heidegger's critical reappropriation of his phenomenology by reading *Being and Time*. What he found there was a more or less finished sketch of what a certain kind of phenomenological fundamental ontology might look like. At the same time, he was probably oblivious to the development of Heidegger's thought which led to the presentation of fundamental ontology in *Being and Time*. Regardless of how well Husserl knew the content of Heidegger's Marburg lectures,⁹³ if at all, he clearly picked up on a crucial point of Heidegger's: that the *fundament* of fundamental ontology is "irremediably ontic". (Krell 1980: 210) In other words, even if it could be demonstrated that the large-scale Heideggerian project directed toward understanding the meaning of Being is principally compatible with Husserl's phenomenology, the preparatory existential analytic of *Dasein* remained essentially related to the contingent human being. For Husserl, this amounted to an outright negation of transcendental phenomenology, and was enough to assure him of the irreconcilable differences between his version of phenomenology and that of Heidegger. In the next section we will turn to his arguments against this perceived perversion of phenomenology. What is interesting to point out at this point is that both the Heideggerian critique and the Husserlian response to it found their inspiration in a productive dialogue with *Dilthey*. As a matter of fact, it was precisely a certain proximity to Dilthey that ultimately allowed Husserl to formulate a response to the Heideggerian critique, or, at the very least, provide a platform for formulating a more elaborate transcendental response.

This important point allows us to modify a very fortified common reading of the Husserl-Heidegger debate, according to which the major change and expansion of transcendental phenomenology in Husserl, taking the form of a 'historical turn', was a concession on Husserl's part. Rather, insofar as "... we are seeking so-called 'external,' historical influences on Husserl in this regard, then a much more likely source would be Dilthey." (Steinbock 1995a: 63) The line of influence Steinbock highlights here is primarily directed at the genealogy of 'generativity' as a prominent notion in Husserl's later philosophy.

⁹³ For a succinct discussion of that critically important phase of Heidegger's development, cf. Krell 1980.

Given that ‘generation’ and ‘historicity’ both feature in *Being and Time*, it might be appealing to argue that their latter occurrences in Husserl clearly betray massive indebtedness to Heidegger. Yet as Steinbock goes on to add, “... precisely at the places where Heidegger uses ‘generation’ and ‘historicity,’ Heidegger himself refers to Dilthey.” (64) This is not surprising, given how great and influential a role Dilthey played in Heidegger’s development, *particularly* in shaping his understanding of the nature and role of phenomenological investigation.⁹⁴ This influence is most clearly and directly recognizable in what Kisiel refers to as “Heidegger’s hermeneutical breakthrough in 1919.” (Kisiel 1993: 49) The “seminal insight” of this breakthrough is that “[a]ll of our experiences, beginning with our most direct perceptions, are from the start already expressed, indeed interpreted.” (ibid.)

A profound sensitivity to the philosophies of both Dilthey and of early Husserl is at play here, and the formative moments for Heidegger in the very early 1920s come from their happy marriage. It was “[t]his Diltheyan emphasis of the intentional structures described by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*”, Kisiel writes, that led Heidegger to “... a pretheoretical solution to the problem of intuition and expression, and thus to a more radical conception of phenomenology as the original science of origins than hitherto conceived.” (ibid.) For Heidegger of this time, there was no sense of this type of work as moving *away* from Husserl and toward Dilthey. Rather, it was perceived as a fusion of the best elements of both within the framework of phenomenology: “In SS 1920, Heidegger criticizes, not Husserl’s, but Dilthey’s conception of ‘immanent perception’ in his search for alternatives to describe this inherently historical self-experience.” (58) If the inherently historical structure of the subject under investigation is phenomenologically graspable, that is only possible because this facticity “... includes a structure of self-experience reminiscent of the peculiar doubling of the retentive-protentive temporality of the lifestream.” (ibid.) This is what ultimately gave Heidegger’s “hermeneutically slanted descriptions a Husserlian flavor” (ibid.), Kisiel argues.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ In a recent monograph on precisely this topic, Scharff (2019) defends the strong claim that “Heidegger was never any kind of Husserlian revisionist”, and that his “... *approach to Husserl – indeed, his whole approach to the question of what it is to philosophize at all – is informed by his prior reading of Dilthey.*” (xiv) Theodore Kisiel’s magisterial study on *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time* (1993) is also useful here, especially the chapter on Heidegger’s ‘theo-logical beginnings’, with pp. 100-105 being historically particularly instructive for our present context. Additionally, cf. Fehér 1994.

⁹⁵ Indeed, as Kisiel also points out, none of this was very far away from Husserl’s own understanding, nor was it new or alien to him:

“Even the hybrid of ‘phenomenological hermeneutics’ which, as Heidegger notes in the very first hour of the next semester, ‘lifts’ the distinction of the ‘systematic’ from the ‘historical’ in philosophy may not have been regarded by Husserl as a departure from his own work. Husserl’s task-setting letter to Heidegger of September 10, 1918, mentions the convergence with his ongoing work on *Ideen II* of an article by Dilthey’s student, E. Spranger, on the ‘theory of understanding’. In SS 1919, Husserl gave the

The question of all questions of phenomenology scholarship now becomes the following: were these early considerations of Heidegger's principally new hermeneutic descriptions with a Husserlian flavor, or were they principally Husserlian descriptions with a hermeneutic slant? The choice of how to answer that question will undoubtedly steer our understanding not only of the level and sense of Heidegger's originality, but also of the scope and limitations of Husserl's critical rapprochement with this perceived 'anthropological' misreading of his position. Although for Heidegger the work he was doing in the early 1920s might not have amounted to an abandonment of Husserl, there was definitely a sense of accessing previously untapped potential in phenomenology about it. Above all, this is visible in their respective relations to the notion of theory. While the theoretical stance was the ultimate and most encompassing attitude for Husserl – resulting in doctrines such as that of the 'unparticipating observer' and of presuppositionless philosophy – Heidegger was suspicious of such ideals, driven by the insight that the notion of pure, disinterested and presuppositionless theory was in itself a prejudice; perhaps a prejudice of a higher order, but a prejudice nonetheless.⁹⁶ As notes from Oskar Becker from the summer semester of 1919 succinctly demonstrate, the notion of 'situation' Heidegger was operating with already seemed to be at odds with the phenomenological reduction as presented by Husserl in those years. He talks of situation as of a "certain unity in natural life" (Heidegger 1987: 205), a unity characterized by an irreducible nexus of historicity, of motivations, tendencies, and events which are not understood as something that can be isolated, listed, or put under a microscope as if in a

very first of a series of courses all entitled 'Nature and Spirit', in which Dilthey's hermeneutic approach plays an essential role." (Kisiel 1993: 57)

Kisiel's paraphrasing of Heidegger's text here is not doing the reader any favors, as the meaning of the verb 'lift' remains almost wholly obscure in this context (except, perhaps, to the most gifted of Hegelians). Here is Heidegger's quote in the original German, together with the important sentence immediately preceding it:

„Diese geistesgeschichtliche Betrachtung, die sich verständlicherweise hier auf das mit dieser Problematik sinnmäßig Zusammenhängende beschränken muß, ist aber nicht hinzunehmen im Sinne der üblichen historischen Vorbetrachtungen als bloße Einleitung, als das bloße Nun-einmal-irgendwo-Anfangen, weil ein Anfang gemacht werden muß, sondern das Verstehen der geistesgeschichtlichen Motive ist mit *ein echtes Stück der Vorbereitung und Inangriffnahme phänomenologischer Kritik*. (Es liegt zwar hier ein noch tieferer Wesenszusammenhang vor, der in das Wesen aller phänomenologischer Hermeneutik zurückleitet. Für unsere Zwecke genügt aber der Hinweis auf einen engen Zusammenhang zwischen geschichtlicher und „systematischer“ Betrachtung – beide sind aufzuheben!)“ (Heidegger 1987: 131f.)

Regardless of how we decide to understand the notoriously slippery 'aufheben' here – as doing away with the distinction altogether or as preserving it in a transformed sense – what is important to take note of is Heidegger's insistence on the *philosophical* character of *prima facie* historical reflections. A deep understanding of historical circumstances is a necessary prerequisite for the work of phenomenology, not something holding it back.

⁹⁶ For a balanced and informed account of Heidegger's grappling with this issue, with a detailed look into how it influenced the development of his understanding of truth and logic, cf. Dahlstrom 2001.

laboratory, but rather as something that “happens to me” and thus determines me. As Becker puts it: “The I is itself a situation-I; the I is histor-I-cal [*das Ich ist histor'isch*].” (206) It is thus clear how for Heidegger, as early as 1919, the phenomenological reduction can seem like an explosion of the unity of the situation, or an emptying out of its content. Adopting the radically theoretical attitude that Husserl had insisted on thus might be tantamount to robbing the subject of its historicity, and this dehistoricization is, at the same time, an unmaking. By the mid-1920s, this intuition will turn into full-blown criticism directed against Husserl.⁹⁷

Dilthey enters the picture at this critical juncture. In an attempt to grasp the structure and the content of the shift from a purely experiential to a theoretical attitude, Heidegger turns to Diltheyan hermeneutics for a possible solution:

“Applying Dilthey’s distinction between the explanatory and the understanding sciences, Heidegger finds two basic types of this modification of the experiential to the theoretical attitude. The explanatory type of science involves a maximum of theoretization and the utmost eradication of the situation, and the understanding type a minimum of theoretization with the greatest possible retention of the situation, say, in the experience of the artwork or the pious experience of Jesus as viewed by the historian. The basic problem of the latter type: how to unify theoretization with its explication of the experiential content of such different lifeworlds?” (Kisiel 1993: 65f.)

The answer to the question Kisiel asks will be a complex one, whichever perspective we choose to adopt, Heidegger’s or Husserl’s. But the general direction in which it has to go seems to be clear. Becker’s note in Kisiel’s translation: “Intuitive eidetic phenomenology, the primal science of philosophy, is an understanding science.” (66) The motif of primordial science is important in this context, but it is important not to confuse it, nor conflate it, with the notion of

⁹⁷ However, as Dahlstrom (2001) argues, these criticisms are

“... substantially mitigated [...] by the fact that they are directed at a stage of intentional analysis that Husserl had long since gone beyond by the summer of 1925 when Heidegger is reciting those criticisms to his students. Heidegger’s silence on this development is significant, since he was plainly aware of it and since it anticipates his existential analysis in certain essential aspects.” (xix)

Dahlstrom, taking his cue from Thomas Prufer, argues that it was not mere wish to commit intellectual parricide, nor was it intellectual dishonesty on Heidegger’s part that prompted him to conveniently ignore the significant strides in phenomenology of time Husserl had made in the previous years. Rather, it was the need to distance himself from the framework within which they arose, which he maintained was principally wrong. In that claim we catch a glimpse of the meaning of the claim that Heidegger was saving Husserl from himself, in a way: “An injustice and a disservice is thus done to Husserl’s phenomenology, even if this injustice is, as Prufer suggests, the price of the philosophical maturity of its most famous student.” (170)

first philosophy, as Husserl understood it. In a paper focusing on precisely this issue in Heidegger's seminar of 1919, Kovacs writes:

“For Heidegger, philosophy is not a theoretical, speculative science at all; it is a way of disclosing (living) experience. It is a primordial, pretheoretical science that is able to reach and describe (phenomenologically in hermeneutic intuition) lived experience prior to its disruption and deformation by the theoretical attitude.” (Kovacs 1994: 95f.)

The phrase “hermeneutic intuition” is somewhat disconcerting, as it's not clear what exactly it entails. We can come up with a first approximation of what it does not entail, however. If we recall Husserl's ‘first philosophy’, we see that what Heidegger is proposing makes a clean break with any such conception of philosophy in his early appropriation of phenomenology. However, we will also recall that there was a different sense in which the idea of first philosophy appeared in Husserl, namely, as self-grounding of transcendental phenomenology. Now, in order to circumvent the debate about the extent to which Heidegger's “phenomenological decade” (Kisiel 1993: 59) was still part of a *transcendental* project, we can drop that moniker altogether, and pose the question in the following way: what is the ground, or foundation, for phenomenological research? We are thus instantly transported back into our guiding question, namely, who is doing phenomenology? For both Husserl and Heidegger, the stakes are high in formulating a response to this basic problem; as a matter of fact, they are so high, that the question can be posed in a much more basic way: who, and why, is doing *philosophy*?

By the time of the publication of *Being and Time* Heidegger will have developed his own answer to that question, as well as his criticisms of rival answers from Dilthey and Husserl. That book is not very explicit in its treatment of either of those, but it rests on the intellectual prehistory we sketched above. What is both fascinating and confusing about this prehistory is just how much Dilthey, Husserl, and Heidegger agree on and share in their respective philosophical attempts to capture the essential structure of the human being. This is not entirely surprising considering the larger scientific and cultural climate within which their philosophies developed. A central pillar of all three was a profound skepticism toward, and, ultimately, rejection of, the positivistic assumption that natural science can and ought to provide an account of the entirety of human experience. What they disagreed on were details which, to an outside

observer, might have seemed inconsequential.⁹⁸ Yet, these details prove to be decisive for our problem here. Dilthey's death in 1911 prevented him from engaging with Husserl's mature thought and made any engagement with that of Heidegger impossible. However, for both Husserl and Heidegger, Dilthey's work provided a perspective, or served as a lens, through which they viewed the matter of their disagreement. They accused each other of missing the decisive point, while referring to Dilthey's philosophy as already reaching the outermost limit of the paradigm they were both trying to leave behind, each in their own way.

In Husserl's case, the proximity to Dilthey is most explicitly expressed in the lecture course on *Phenomenological Psychology* of 1925, which we already referenced in the previous chapter. There, Husserl makes it clear that he viewed Dilthey not only as an ally in the war on naturalism in psychology and in human sciences – although his work, according to Husserl, was seminal in divesting them from the exaggerated naturalistic optimism and consequent naïveté (Hua IX: 11f./7f.) – but also recognizes a deeper affinity between their respective projects. Thus, a more mature Husserl, well after his initial criticism launched in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, is now able to write:

“The further I myself progressed in the elaboration of the phenomenological method and in the phenomenological analysis of mental life, the more I had to recognize that Dilthey was in fact right with his judgment which had so greatly astonished me, concerning the inner unity of phenomenology and descriptive-analytic psychology. His writings contain a gifted preview and preliminary level of phenomenology.” (34f./25)

This is, of course, not a concession. Husserl still faults Dilthey for lacking sharpness in his work, and claims that his investigations were methodologically fundamentally limited, unable to reach a level of generality necessary for attaining the type of scientificity striven for. For Husserl, phenomenology cannot be content with remaining on the level of ‘explanation’, because no matter how fine-tuned that method might be, “... the art of historical description and explanation is restricted purely to the individual.” (12/8) Because a Diltheyan framework is unable to offer explanation of the universal *laws* behind mental and cultural life, it remains tied to empirical science. Although the basic Diltheyan insight – that there is a fundamental difference between the ways physical and mental facts should be investigated – was correct,

⁹⁸ Consider umbrella terms such as ‘philosophy of life’, ‘existential philosophy’, or even ‘phenomenology’. Such terms, as a matter of practical inevitability, end up producing blanket statements that level all difference between very different philosophers and philosophies.

Dilthey's methodology was simply not developed enough.⁹⁹ Thus, Husserl's judgment that "Dilthey [...] was much more a man of brilliant intuitions of the whole than of analyses and abstract theorizings." (6/3)

Yet this 'brilliant intuition of the whole' is worth pursuing further. There is a sense of gravity to Husserl's phenomenological criticism of Dilthey, and the methodological deadlock of a philosophical science riveted to the empirical individual is certainly an issue. But can this problem be explained away, or *bracketed*, or does it rather point us to an irreducible reality that has to be integrated into our account, rather than be purged out of it? In other words, what if the solution of this problem demands, not a more stringent application of a specific methodology, but a transformation of it? This insight is what Husserl tried applying to Dilthey's philosophy, and the crucial methodological transformation he introduced was the *universal epoché*, followed by a set of reductive steps. But this has created new problems, such as the one of the relation, both ontological and epistemological, between the mundane and the transcendental ego. Another problem, one which provides us with a privileged view into these difficulties, is of motivation for any of this: in addressing that issue, Husserl paints himself into a corner to an extent, because he seems to want to avoid an ultimately *anthropological* understanding of the scope and intentions of phenomenology. But isn't there a different way to approach this issue? Couldn't universality of its insights be reconceptualized in a way that would allow us to track their validity across human beings, rather than non-mundane egos, without sacrificing transcendental weight?

One way to do that would be to shift some attention from the individual to a larger, intra- and intergenerational perspective, and see how the notion of transcendental functions there. This is, in short, what the turn toward 'generativity' in the later Husserl entails. We recall that one of Steinbock's claims was that Dilthey was a key influence on Husserl in this regard.

⁹⁹ In the previous section we briefly touched on *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* as the cornerstone, or in any case one of the central touchstones, for understanding Husserl's relation to Dilthey. It should not be surprising that we chose to deal with that text after a long discussion of the relation between phenomenology and psychology either, for, as we now see from the perspective of the *Phenomenological Psychology* lectures, this early reaction to Dilthey was a formative moment in Husserl's appropriation of psychology for his own philosophical project. We have pointed out that the criticism mounted in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* was not very strong. Indeed, Dilthey himself pointed that out in a letter to Husserl from June 1911, while, at the same time, acknowledging the missteps of his own presentation of his ideas. (Bw 6: 43-47) The entire exchange that took place over three letters (two of Dilthey's, one of Husserl's) is very instructive, and serves as proof of mutual recognition of convergences between the two philosophies. (43-52) We shall not go into more detail here, so as not to derail our discussion any further. It is also worth pointing out that Husserl wrote a set of further reflections on Dilthey and 'personal psychology' a few years later, in 1928. These are collected in the original German edition of the *Phenomenological Psychology* lectures (Hua ix: 354-64) and have not been translated into English as far as I know. Again, for reasons of textual economy, we shall not be delving into them, as the arguments they comb through are very similar to the ones we deal with above.

One of the reasons for this was that Dilthey was, in fact, grappling with an analogous problem in his philosophy. Put in a very simplified way, they were both looking for a way to avoid grounding their philosophies in the individual human being, and ultimately for the same reason: because such a limited perspective would be unable to deliver even useful generalities, let alone laws pertaining to human nature. In their *Introduction to The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, Makkreel and Rodi illustrate this difficulty in the following manner:

“Despite his efforts to reduce the role of psychology in the overall system of the human sciences and to do justice to the transpersonal forces operative in history, Dilthey persisted in the belief that the role of individuals could not be eliminated if history is to be assigned meaning. Without human beings and sciences, there cannot be a formation of the historical world. [...] We can, however, save Dilthey from anthropocentrism by reiterating that in the *Formation*, individuals are no longer considered to be the sole carriers of history but merely the co-carriers.” (Makkreel & Rodi 2002: 19)

This is structurally very similar to Husserl’s worries and already anticipates some of his solutions, although his difficulties with the notion of the human individual were tied to other reasons. We have made first steps toward understanding some of those reasons, although we are still far from fully addressing Husserl’s way out of the problem of anthropologism.

The reference to Dilthey’s *Formation* book [*Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*] gives us a good way to wrap up our discussion of Diltheyan influences on Husserl and Heidegger. For Husserl, this “last and most beautiful of his [Dilthey’s] writings on this subject” was clearly the work in which he recognized the most of his own thoughts. (Hua ix: 34/25) Interestingly, Heidegger refers to the exact same book, albeit somewhat obliquely, toward the end of *Being and Time*, as he is once again underscoring the necessity of interpretation of the essential historicity of *Dasein*. This “... existentiell possibility of an explicit disclosure and grasp of history”, Heidegger tells us, is “... the presupposition for the possibility of ‘building up the historical world in the sciences of the humanities’.” (Heidegger 2006: 376/345) For Heidegger, both Dilthey and Husserl remained ensnared in investigations which, no matter how subtle, were tied to a tradition in which the central question, that of the being of *Dasein*, remained ignored. (Heidegger 2006: 46f./44f.) We are reminded here of the critical point occasionally raised against Husserl, according to which he never asked about the being of the transcendental ego; we also recall that one of the greatest speculative strengths of Fink’s intervention was that it asked precisely that. This is one sense of the *indirect* influence

of Heidegger which we referred to in section 2.1.1. Heidegger's criticism, as summed up by Luft, was that:

“... Husserl's concept of the subject as transcendental ego, according to Heidegger, tacitly ‘leaps over’ the question of the mode of being (*Seinsart*) of this entity (as well as the world it lives in), and, furthermore, leaves the question unanswered as to whether this transcendental ego is the same as or different from its ‘factual’ mundane counterpart. In framing the subject as transcendental ego, i.e., as different from any other worldly entity, Husserl sees that there is a difference in being between the subject and other entities. Yet he does not exploit this insight.” (Luft, 2005: 147)

As we have tried to show, it was Fink's appropriation of this criticism, and the resulting layered ontology that culminated in the doctrine of the non-being of the phenomenological observer, that catalyzed Husserl's later complex attempts at a response. Now, it would be wrong to believe that Husserl never had any interest in these questions prior to the advent of Heidegger or prior to his collaboration with Fink. Those earlier discussions, however, mostly remained buried under his more general reflections on psychology. Husserl's next attempt to respond to the criticism above, as we will see in the next section, will try to build on the notion of *parallelism* that dominated his earlier brushes with the question of the difference between factuality and transcendentality, while also trying to accommodate a chief insight from Fink. We will have to turn to Husserl's polemical texts from 1931 to follow this development.

4.3. *Preamble: the Pushmi-Pullyu of phenomenology, theory and practice*

A striking feature of the Husserl/Heidegger debate we've started exploring is that each of them criticized the other for being overly reductive in their approach to the subject matter. From Heidegger's perspective, there are two levels to the inherent limitations of Husserl's approach. The first one is a matter of localized, or internal, phenomenological debate concerning specific elements of Husserl's doctrine. We have seen that a great deal of Heidegger's critique revolves around the fact that the phenomenological reduction is a methodological device which, if performed in the way Husserl would have it, nullifies the ‘situation’ by which the subject is essentially determined. In other words, the performance of the epoché and of the reduction strips subjectivity of its constitutive make-up, mistaking its essential features for contingent properties. Heidegger insists that a proper account of

subjectivity must be much more inclusive, lest it turn into barren abstraction. Let us refer to this as Heidegger's *holistic* critique of Husserl. There is, however, a much larger context for Heidegger's criticism, and we may refer to it as the *ontological* critique of Husserl's phenomenological project. For Husserl, the question of properly grounding transcendental phenomenology, which meant philosophy, and then, consequently, human and natural sciences, was the question of whether the subject of phenomenology was an empirical, mundane human being, or rather something else. This 'something else' – the transcendental ego – must exhibit a certain universal, a priori structure, if it is to serve as the foundation for all sense constitution, and thus for an accurate and originary account of the ground of sciences. Because all other sciences are bound to an uncritical acceptance of the world, it follows that phenomenological science must look beyond this acceptance and moor on something which is not straightforwardly mundane. It is easy to see why Heidegger's insistence on the *In-der-Welt-sein* of *Dasein* must have seemed like a step back to Husserl: it looked to be a relapse into the uncritical natural attitude after his phenomenology had done its best to disclose its constituted character. Thus, whatever value there was in Heidegger's analyses of the natural attitude, it was to be assessed only after adopting the true transcendental stance on the issue. However, for Heidegger, this debate was ultimately of transitory value:

“To Heidegger, such an analysis of *Dasein* was not the last word either; indeed, one can more adequately call it ‘the first word’, since the ‘fundamental ontology’ of *Dasein* was only a preliminary stage in a continuing project that was dedicated to thematizing the Being of the entities. Ultimately, therefore, the topic of personhood had only a passing relevance for Heidegger's project as a whole.” (Luft 2005: 169)

The holistic criticism, directed at a specific part of Husserl's phenomenology, thus gives way to ontological criticism, directed at a tradition of which Husserl was a part. This is expressed well by Reiner Schürmann, who is critical of existentialist and anthropological misreadings of *Being and Time*. While there is some truth to both of them, he contends, they are insufficient, as well as any reading that views this work as merely a philosophy of subject that finally does away with solipsism. What these interpretations miss, according to Schürmann, is “... that in *Being and Time* Heidegger is preoccupied with the question of Being as such – whatever that will turn out to mean – and only *therefore* with the question of *Dasein*.” (Critchley and Schürmann 2008: 58) To be fair to Husserl, this larger project is barely discernible from an

immanent reading of just this one book, and it is only with the benefit of historical and bibliographical distance that the possibility for this kind of reading really opens up.

What we probably *can* fault Husserl with is a profound misunderstanding of the relation of theory and practice of *Dasein*, as it appears in *Being and Time*. This misunderstanding then turned into some confusion regarding his own position on the issue, as we will see. We need not decipher what Heidegger's actual view on this topic was; for our purpose, it is more important to focus on what Husserl *thought* Heidegger's view was, and how he tried to work through it. Yet, before we can do that, we must make some preliminary remarks that will help us understand how the confusion came about. The problem of the relation of theory and practice in *Being and Time*, and in the later Heidegger, is, expectedly, very complex. For example, *contra* Husserl's and numerous other interpretations, Heidegger doesn't seem to be arguing for a mere *reversal* of the relation between theory and practice in his version of phenomenology. To be sure, there is a certain kind of priority of practice over pure reflection, at least insofar as, for him, there is no such thing as pure cognition, but rather cognition is always an assemblage of responses to practical concerns. To quote Schürmann again, "[w]hat cannot be questioned is that cognition receives a derivative status in *Being and Time*." (124) But, he continues,

"... because Heidegger's relation to inherited concepts is still quite ambiguous here, his vocabulary does not match the novelty of his thinking. Therefore, it is impossible to argue definitively either for a *priority* of practice over theory or for a pure and simple dissolution of their difference." (ibid.)

It is not easy to understand what the dissolution of the difference would exactly mean, nor what would have to come in its place, if anything.¹⁰⁰ But the uncertain status of the theory/practice distinction could also point us in a different direction: rather than seeking ways to go beyond it, we might look for ways to reconstruct the distinction while still making use of it. One way to do that would be to rethink the concepts operative in it. Some hints may be found in *Being and Time*. Let us briefly turn to Schürmann's reading once again. He usefully points us to §69, where Heidegger is grappling with the question of the "*ontological genesis* of the theoretical

¹⁰⁰ Schürmann worked on precisely this issue, and his hermeneutic strategy is both inventive and demanding, insofar as he puts forth a kind of a 'retroactive' reading of *Being and Time*, wherein he interprets it on the basis of Heidegger's later writings. In his lecture courses on *Being and Time*, he recognizes that already in that book, "... in a deeper way, one would have to say that [...] the very distinction between theory and practice is no longer adequate and gets dissolved." (Critchley and Schürmann 2008: 124) He also recognizes that that would be a somewhat strained reading, only demonstrable on the basis of later works. This reading gets developed further primarily in Schürmann 1982.

mode of behavior”, i.e. with the preconditions for the possibility of *Dasein*’s existing in “the mode of scientific investigation”. (Heidegger 2006: 357/327) The insistence on existing in a specific *mode* as precondition for engaging in scientific activity is a way to argue for an ‘existential concept of science’. If we were to try to relate these passages with Husserl, we might read this as thinly veiled criticism of his phenomenology, for Heidegger explicitly opposes the existential understanding of science to what he calls the logical concept, “... that understands science with regard to its results and defines it as a ‘context of causal relations of true, that is, valid propositions’.” (ibid.) While it is clear that the existential concept of science does not *exclude* the logical one, the implication is that it not only complements it, but in a crucial sense precedes it. The sense of this precedence is key here. According to one understanding of Husserl’s position at the time, which may have been both Heidegger’s and of Husserl himself, transcendental phenomenology would not have denied or even questioned that the logical conception of science derives from practical comportment in the world. However, this would have been a matter of empirical fact, wholly separate from the transcendental sense of science and of theoretical interests driving it. *Being and Time*, on the other hand, nudges phenomenology in a different direction, and the derivative relation obtaining between practical and theoretical interest plays a different role and carries a different type of weight. Put in a very simplified manner, whereas it would seem that for Husserl the transcendental was tied solely to the theoretical, it is the existential and practical dimension of *Dasein* that harbors transcendental sense.¹⁰¹

Heidegger hints at this with the fundamental-ontological claim that “... a completely adequate existential interpretation of science cannot be carried out until the *meaning of being and the ‘connection’ between being and truth have been clarified* in terms of the temporality of existence.” (ibid.) But the point mentioned above can be put in a simpler way as well. This time, the implied criticism of Husserl is even more apparent: the transition from practice to theory is not a matter of merely severing ties to worldly concerns and turning into a disinterested spectator, so that “... what is decisive about the ‘origin’ of theoretical behavior would lie in the *disappearance* of praxis.” (ibid.) In other words, theory is not *privation*. Rather, manipulation and layering of different practical interests brings about different modes of practice, which, for example, include more detail-oriented types of circumspection, turning it into inspection, etc. The central insight here is that theory and practice are not two separate

¹⁰¹ This lapidary statement doesn’t quite do justice to the complexity of the situation, though. Again, in order to try to stay on track as much as possible, some references and many possible further discussions simply must be omitted. For some further insight into these issues, cf. Bernet 1994 and Moran 2007b.

modes of existence, but that theory is rather a specific form of practice: “And just as practice has its own sight (‘theory’), theoretical investigation is not without its own praxis.” (358/327f.) For Schürmann, this set of remarks late in the book is indicative of a kind of a shift in the understanding of the theory/practice pair in *Being and Time*. Whereas the first, simpler reading would indicate that theory, however understood, is straightforwardly derived from practice,¹⁰² the second reading would seem to indicate that cognition is “... derivative of an amalgamate of a certain practice and a certain theory.” (Critchley and Schürmann 2008: 125) This claim remains undeveloped in *Being and Time*: “It is clear that Heidegger struggles here to get out of a traditional either-or, that he does not yet possess the terminology to move forward.” (ibid.)

Heidegger’s terminological deadlock and his eventual solutions aside, it seems abundantly clear that the kind of reconfiguring of the theory/practice relation in phenomenology that is being offered in *Being and Time* obviates the doctrine of the disinterested, or non-participating observer. In fact, such a doctrine, for Heidegger, would not only be unnecessary, but in fact corrosive of the entire project of phenomenology. This is the background of the anthropologism Husserl believed he recognized in Heidegger. Luft, summarizing Landgrebe, writes:

“As Landgrebe, Husserl’s former assistant, rightly remarks, ‘in Heidegger’s rejection of the “unparticipating observer” lies an attack on one of Husserl’s core thoughts’, namely, his notion of philosophical theory. Such a stance accounts for an abstract view of subjectivity and cannot represent its true concretion. In other words, because of his ‘theorizing’ presupposition, Husserl failed to really get ‘to the subject itself’. The upshot of this critique is ultimately that the distinction between a ‘mundane’ and transcendental subject is impossible, and it is ultimately a rejection of Husserl’s conception of transcendental phenomenology as a theory that can only begin its work after breaking with the ‘natural attitude’.” (Luft 2005: 149)

We are thus back at our leading question of who phenomenologizes, and why. Given the background we have provided above, it is not surprising that Husserl chose to address Heidegger’s criticism by further fortifying his commitment to the purity and primacy of theory. It is unclear whether Husserl ever picked up on, or gave serious thought to, the second, more complex reading of the theory/practice relation in *Being and Time* proposed by Schürmann. He

¹⁰² Or, put in the vocabulary of *Being and Time*, the first argument would be for a blanket primacy, both historical and ontological, of the realm of *Zuhandenheit* over *Vorhandenheit* in *Dasein*’s relation to the world.

probably should have, for his phenomenology, as we will argue, can not only be squared with such an ‘amalgamate reading’, but is in fact at its strongest if understood in a comparable way.

But that was not the approach Husserl adopted in his initial defense against this ‘philosophical anthropology’, “... which alleges that the true foundation of philosophy lies in human being alone, and more specifically in a doctrine of the essence of human being’s concrete worldly Dasein.” (Hua xxvii: 164/SP 485¹⁰³) Instead of exploring the ambiguity of the relation between theory and practice, and between the mundane and the transcendental, he opted for a quasi-Finkian radicalization of theory. This pushed Husserl in a rather unproductive direction, as we will now try to show.

4.4. *Circularity and presuppositions*

The quote concerning the alleged foundation of philosophy is found in the opening passage of the *Phenomenology and Anthropology* lecture, given on three occasions in Germany in the first half of June 1931. As a brief historical aside, it is instructive to point out how important a role public lectures played in the development of Husserl’s philosophy. Of course, this is quite clearly true of the regular lecture courses offered over the course of his university career; we have long since known, for example, that the *Idea of Phenomenology* lectures, or the ones on *First Philosophy*, or on *Phenomenological Psychology*, provided crucial insight into the formative moments of Husserl’s development as a phenomenologist. But it was his public lectures aimed at wider academic audiences that provide us with milestones in the process of phenomenology’s self-exposition. The *London*, *Amsterdam*, and *Paris lectures*, *Phenomenology and Anthropology*, as well as the *Vienna lecture*, all played the crucial role of introducing not just philosophers, and possibly not even exclusively academics, but the general interested public as well, to the radicality of phenomenological thought. This implies that there is a universal quality to phenomenology which goes beyond the limits of mere philosophical debate and relates to the concerns of humanity at a more basic level. Husserl was committed to the task of presenting this for a large part of his career, and his quest for articulating a philosophy of infinite tasks which would be capable of addressing the concerns of finite beings remains traceable throughout.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ The second page number indicates the English translation of ‘Phenomenology and Anthropology’ in Sheehan and Palmer 1997: 485-500.

¹⁰⁴ This is not to say that the lectures were always a success. In particular the *London lectures*, titled ‘Phenomenological Method and Phenomenological Philosophy’, seemed to fall on mostly deaf ears. This was quite possibly a consequence of many different factors: the alienating and esoteric nature of Husserl’s

Notwithstanding some minor changes in focus, the lectures named above, spanning over a decade of intellectual work, remain remarkably consistent in their insistence on a Cartesian model of radicality and grounding. We have repeatedly referred to the fact that there seem to be two ideas of grounding at play in Husserl. Whether the later, broader notion of self-grounding of transcendental phenomenology logically entails the idea of grounding of other sciences is perhaps not immediately clear. Yet, for Husserl, this seems to be more or less implied. Thus, when he, at the very end of the early *London lectures*, speaks of phenomenology as serving the role of ‘*das gemeinsame Mutterhaus*’ for all other sciences (Hua xxxv: 307¹⁰⁵), that is the Cartesian ideal that is present as ultimate goal throughout these lectures.

Phenomenology and Anthropology is the culmination of this ideal. Although it could be reasonably argued that the *Cartesian Meditations* are deeper, philosophically more interesting, and much subtler in their presentation, the importance of the 1931 lecture lies in its immediate context. Husserl’s pressing need to respond to his contemporaries and disciples-turned-apostates lends this text a specific militant quality. Yet the arguments against the anthropological misreading of phenomenology move at a very general level there. For a better look into Husserl’s grappling with Heidegger’s position, let us first turn to a research manuscript written in early 1931, most probably a few months before the June lecture. Titled ‘*Schwierigkeiten des begründenden Rückgangs von der Welt als vorgegebener zur Subjektivität*’, this manuscript provides a much more intimate look into Husserl’s perception of the objections launched against his philosophy.

What immediately strikes the reader is just how understanding Husserl seems to be when it comes to the apparent obvious truth of the anthropological approach. Much like in the case of historicism, there seems to be a tinge of self-evidence to the theory as soon as one adopts the view that sciences are ultimately *Kulturgebilde* growing on the fruitful ground of a prescientific and a-theoretic world. It could further be argued that this is the teaching of phenomenology itself: the phenomenologist performs an epoché of the positive sciences, brackets their validity, and is thus left with the lifeworld. This is the level at which Heidegger’s analysis unfolds. Although he makes sure to distinguish his fundamental ontology from anthropology in *Being and Time*, for Husserl, there is no doubt that his thought is non-positivistic anthropology. It must be added that it was always highly unlikely that Heidegger’s

terminology, his failure to engage his audience with references to philosophers they knew well, as well as the unfortunate language barrier. For an overview of the circumstances of this episode, which still remains somewhat obscure in scholarship, cf. Spiegelberg’s ‘Husserl in England: Facts and Lessons’ and the ‘Appendix’ in Spiegelberg 1981.

¹⁰⁵ See editor’s note: Hua xxxv: 340, n.1.

distancing from anthropology would impress Husserl. For, the argument against anthropology, namely that it passed over the *sum* of the *cogito* in silence, was more or less the argument against Husserl's phenomenology as well. Regardless of how new Heidegger's conception of ontology truly was – and Husserl clearly lacked the patience and sympathy with the overall project that would force him to embark on that investigation – it must have seemed obvious to Husserl that the ontology of *Being and Time* was a mundane ontology. Consequently, the question of the being of the transcendental ego was transformed into questioning the being of a mundane ego. This is a convenient point to remember our previous discussion of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, and to reiterate that that Finkian background provides the crucial context for understanding the battle against anthropologism raging in Husserl's work of 1931. The central task for Husserl of this time, constantly present but waxing and waning throughout his work, is to articulate an alternative to the kind of anti-humanist interpretation of phenomenology emerging in the *Sixth Meditation*. The task is crucial because that interpretation is a monster not easily vanquished. In fact, it seems, at least at first, that it is the only logical conclusion of a phenomenology of phenomenology carried out in a rigorous manner. Yet, we recall Husserl insisting that the transcendental and the mundane were not distinctly individuated, and that phenomenology was a way of cultivating, rather than transcending, human possibilities. Instead of a caesura in humanity, it is a path toward higher humanity. Thus, everything hinges on showing how phenomenology relates to humanity. One straightforward way might be to place man at the center of the investigation. After all, is not the lifeworld, which remains after we have bracketed the presuppositions of natural science, always a world lived in, by human beings? Husserl entertains the thought:

“Thereupon, it seems that we arrive at anthropology as the philosophically first, fundamental science: a science of the concrete human being, with all that appertains to the concreteness of a worldly life. It is proper to this life that it always already knows itself as having a world, being in a world, having it at its disposal but also being a part of it as a worldly object, and that it also naturally knows itself as living in a community with other human beings in a human manner, and being directed at the world in this community in a communitarian manner, which includes being directed at itself and its community.” (Hua xxxiv: 255)

This sounds appealing, even to a transcendental phenomenologist. After all, isn't the idea of an irreducibly humanized world, of a 'world with a human face' [... *Welt, die von der Menschheit*

her ihr Antlitz hat], so to speak, simply a radicalization of the centrally important doctrine of the a priori correlation between man and world, i.e., of intentionality?

A further factor to consider when weighing the truth of this approach is that it seemingly offers an all-encompassing explanatory framework. For, as soon as the human being/lifeworld pair is accepted as grounding, there is no way to go beyond that baseline and transition into a more fundamental type of investigation, such as, for example, an investigation of the *origins* of universal validity of the lifeworld. Even formulating what such an investigation might consist in would then be problematic, as there would be no way to transcend this baseline. This can be demonstrated on two examples, both of which Husserl comes up with as possible arguments against transcendental phenomenology.

On the one hand, there is the difficulty of articulating universal eidetics. To be sure, one could argue, as Husserl so often does, that a robust theory of essences aims at unconditional insights with apodictic validity, and that such insights are, by definition, not bound to any place or time. (255f.) Consciousness of this idea of infinite, universal science steers the work of individual scientists, and this ever-present idea is what supposedly enables individual human beings to bridge the gap between their concrete situation and universally valid insight. Taking their concrete worlds as starting points, "...each and every one must be able to construct the essential form of a possible envioning world in general, including wholly unknown ones, an essential form which encompasses all possible worlds in general." (256) This is how a phenomenologist might initially respond to the claim that sciences were merely cultural artefacts, products of their time. Yet the more pernicious argument is that the insights themselves, which purport to be universally valid, are still historically bound, regardless of their postulated apriority or apodicticity. This argument, as Husserl points out, affects all essential generalities, and thus shakes the very foundation of phenomenology as universal science.

This difficulty, Husserl continues, ties into a different, more general one. Any investigation into the structure of the world, universal pretensions or not, necessarily presupposes the human being for whom the world is an envioning world. This is a restatement of the already mentioned 'world with a human face' problem. There can be no thinking of the lifeworld without thinking the 'life' part of it, and there can be no thinking the envioning world, without acknowledging that it is an environment to and for someone. Now, Husserl seems to believe that this is not simply a strong statement of the necessity of correlation. For, the true sense of this anthropologicist claim is that the concrete human being is now understood as the primordial ground [*Urboden*], and any questioning back into the grounds for the validity

of some particular content is in fact a questioning back into the psychological lived experiences and habitualities, which are then seen as the only possible source of validity. (256)

Thus, it would seem that there is no way to go beyond the basic claims of anthropologism, and this explains what Husserl means by the ‘circularity’ of the anthropological approach. The expression appears oddly chosen at first, as one would expect it to point to a fatal flaw in the approach. However, the circularity in question does not refer to a *logical* circularity, and it is not a circularity of anthropologism – rather, it points to the seemingly inescapable circularity of the *transcendental-phenomenological* approach. This, of course, provided that the basic tenet of anthropologism is accepted, namely, that the “[u]ltimate ground for explaining being is thus the anthropological one, that is, the human being in his concreteness, as the human being of his environing world.” (257) This is why, to Husserl, Heidegger’s philosophy seems to be completely at odds with phenomenology proper; it precludes us from pursuing the kind of *Ursprungsklärung* that phenomenology is designed to provide.

With this critical statement against phenomenology, Husserl believes he has laid the groundwork for a defense of his approach, and that is what the second half of this short manuscript tries to accomplish. Now, as ever, it must be pointed out that Husserl’s research manuscripts must be taken with a grain of salt, for they are often coarse, and sometimes clearly left unfinished. Thus, this text is nowhere near a definitive Husserlian response to Heidegger. Yet, it is important for us because it is indicative of the earnestness with which Husserl viewed these objections. In that sense, it reminds us of *Philosophy as Rigorous Science* and its attack on historicism. Unfortunately, it is also reminiscent of that earlier text in another way: Husserl’s presentation of the position he wants to criticize is oftentimes more attractive than the phenomenological alternative he then lays out. The strategy he adopts in this particular paper relies entirely on the acceptance of a particularly strong conception of ‘theoretical attitude’. In it, Husserl sees the antidote against what he perceives as the clearly anti-scientific charge of anthropologism:

“Does one want to say, in accord with the latest turns of philosophical fashion: it is not a matter of *science* at all, science is a specific kind of relation between specifically interested human beings in a concrete association of their life, that remains in abstract incompleteness if it is viewed as solely theoretical, when however a very special motivation of this concrete, full life occasionally creates a theoretical attitude and, from it, the emergence of a theoretical habituality?” (ibid.)

Again, this formulation is not necessarily *wrong*: the only reason Husserl opposes it is because he believes such a theory of science, which seems to have the contingency of human beings pursuing it hardwired in, cannot deliver universal insights which would be valid irrespective of the time or place of their application. His response has the flavor of an *ad hoc* solution: we ought to distinguish theoretical interests that contingently arise in individual human beings from the ‘concrete universality of theory’ [*die konkrete Allseitigkeit des theoretischen Themas*]. (258) The reasoning offered here is not very convincing: only after adopting this distinction are we able to recognize and pursue the necessary “true rationalism of a true scientificity”, which is the precondition, if our questioning is to have an understandable sense and its necessary right and privilege. [*Recht*] (ibid.) This, in turn, is what ultimately allows us to see that anthropologism does not disclose the true primordial ground; rather, it rests on an “... admittedly deeply concealed origin of validity that is to be uncovered, a supremely complicated founding of validity that is to be systematically investigated”, which is disclosed as the absolute life and the absolute being of that subjectivity which we ourselves are. (258f.)

But this is simply not enough to circumvent the objections Husserl himself preemptively raised. Firstly, it would be incorrect to say, and Husserl surely at least heavily implies it, that the thesis of anthropologism was *not* perfectly understandable in itself. Indeed, the only reason to doubt it – excluding mystical experiences and hunches – is if we are driven by the idea of an absolutely privileged scientific knowledge, from which we derive the idea of universality that steers our investigation and ultimately lends it its “*notwendiges Recht*”. However, regardless of whether there are a priori insights and essences not bound to any time and space, *clearly* the idea of building any type of science around them is a historical one. In that sense, no matter how great its legacy may be, this ideal of universal science of infinite tasks cannot derive its own precedence from itself. Favoring such an approach over any other one is still a matter of practical preference, although the processes behind such decisions are, to be sure, highly complex.

Husserl was not unaware of this kind of objection, nor was this approach entirely alien to him. In a short unpublished manuscript, probably from 1931, he deals with a similar question.¹⁰⁶ How does the operative ideal of universal science come about, and how does

¹⁰⁶ The manuscript is titled ‘Die Motivation der phänomenologischen Wissenschaft und der Wissenschaft überhaupt im ganzen des menschlichen Daseins. Zum Gang der *Cartesischen Meditationen*’ and is found under the signature B iv 4/1. The *B-Manuscripts* concern the problematic of the reduction, and the ‘B iv’ group is titled ‘Historische und systematische Selbstcharakteristic der Phänomenologie’. Although the exact dating of this manuscript is uncertain, it fits thematically with the kind of work Husserl was doing in the early 1930 as preparation for the systematic presentation of his philosophical system.

phenomenology coalesce with it? The macrolevel of universal science is intertwined with the microlevel of individual psychology: the imagined ‘first phenomenologist’, in his solitary philosophizing, tends toward questioning. But this ‘first solitary phenomenology that originates from him’ (B IV 4/1: 2a) cannot stay solitary, or ‘solipsistic’, for long, for the questioning of the sense of my life cannot ignore the fact that that life is ‘always life in a community’ [... *immer schon Gemeinschaftsleben*]. Thus, the first step toward the broader intersubjective sense and application of phenomenology barely has to be made. It would be more accurate to say that it is built in from the start. This still doesn’t quite explain the striving toward universality that defines the phenomenological project: “But how did this task ‘science’ even originate historically? What drove that first one, in whom it germinated, how did it turn from a task of one solitary thinker to the task of an expanding scientific community?” (ibid.) In this manuscript, there are no definitive answers; the loose hypothesis Husserl explores again sounds like the statement of an opposing position, rather than as an answer worth taking seriously. An existential reading of the origins of science would perhaps be content with the conclusion that science, like any other communitarian undertaking, was ultimately a tool in pursuing some sort of an easily universalizable goal, such as human happiness stemming from useful and gratifying ideals such as the feeling of safety, mutual understanding, solace in predictability, etc. Indeed, Husserl identifies this ‘striving for gratification’ [*streben nach Befriedigung*] as a crucial factor. However, he also points out that phenomenology cannot content itself with this loosely ‘ethical’ theory of the primordial institution of science. There is certainly an existential aspect of this story, yet that cannot be the whole story. “According to its essence”, we read, science “emerges from the overall unfolding and style of the natural human worldly life, encompassing it in the universality of the new ‘philosophical’ interest.” (ibid.)

Husserl now seems to be left with a difficult problem. Because the historicist and anthropological approaches are fundamentally all-encompassing, they have no problem incorporating such existential theories of the origins of scientific universality into their basic positions. However, this means that they would also easily engulf any phenomenological hybrid theory trying to accommodate both contingency and universality, and thus divest phenomenology of its transcendental pretensions.¹⁰⁷ This was becoming increasingly clear to Husserl thanks to his work with Fink, as well. We are still working our way toward a satisfying

¹⁰⁷ Husserl’s notion of ‘phenomenological psychology’ is perhaps one such hybrid theory. As we have tried to show in sections 3.3. and 3.4., it breaks down under scrutiny, because it becomes unclear how it differs from transcendental phenomenology, while also remaining clearly distinct from classical psychology. It is almost a kind of a philosophical fiction concocted by Husserl out of theoretical necessity. For a similar claim, cf. Crowell 2002 and Luft 2005, n.26 and n.27.

formulation of the transcendental-phenomenological project which would be able to pull together these different strands. Since such a theory must be able to account for the passage from empirical, contingent origins to universal validities, it must also be able to account for the motivation for it. It is easier to understand now why Fink's recasting of these problems in his terminology of the Absolute must have seemed like an attractive option to Husserl at this time. Once the doctrine of transcendental foreknowledge is accepted, for example, the problem of motivation is deflated significantly. For, the difficulty of psychological motivation for a wholly new and unnatural turn toward the non-mundane then gives way to a comparatively slightly simpler task: namely, of showing how this latent drive toward transcendental knowledge is somehow always already present.

One way of doing this is to argue that the theoretical attitude, which provides the fruitful ground for any type of questioning with pretensions to universality, is in fact *presupposed* in any such questioning. This argument, which finds its most extreme formulation in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, is then employed in criticism of Heidegger. A brief note, written in May 1931, written explicitly against the Heideggerian idea of an existential analytic of *Dasein*, is tellingly titled 'Wissenschaftliche Beschreibung setzt eine theoretische Einstellung auf das allen praktischen Interessen *Identische* voraus'. Husserl's criticism here is relatively straightforward: any kind of investigation that is scientific in the broadest sense of the word presupposes the theoretical attitude of a non-participating onlooker that remains separate from the worldly practice of human beings pursuing such investigation. (Hua xxxiv: 259) Now, this is hardly a criticism of Heidegger, for it is never claimed in *Being and Time* that its investigation *does not* take place in the theoretical attitude. Rather, as we have seen, it implicitly argues for a subtler understanding of the distinction between the two attitudes. However, even if we opted for the hardline reading, – which Husserl most probably did – according to which Heidegger was actually arguing for absolute primacy of the practical over the theoretical, that still wouldn't mean that insights achieved in the theoretical attitude couldn't recognize their own derivative, or secondary nature. Husserl was probably aware of this as well: "Husserl's point is that this theoretical stance *necessarily entails* the claim to rationality and scientificity. The opposition is not between the theoretical Husserl and the atheoretical Heidegger: Husserl maintains that doing theory *implies* the very idea of rationality and scientificity." (Luft 2005: 161) As Luft further argues, Husserl interpreted Heidegger's deliberate bracketing of the theoretical stance as a wholesale rejection of the idea of scientific philosophy. Yet, so the argument goes, even under the banner of the primacy of practical comportment, any attempt to provide an essential structure of *Dasein* is "*nolens volens* a scientific endeavour." (162)

What does this tell us about the motivation for doing phenomenology? As we have seen, the anthropologically inclined philosopher has a number of plausible ‘existential’ explanations at their disposal, all of which spring from practical concerns of the human being. Because this kind of approach does not have to account for the various gaps between the historical, atemporal, and supratemporal, it is free to use these explanations as hypotheses subject to fine-tuning. As Luft puts it, “Heidegger’s claim [...] is that doing philosophical theory is but a radicalization of a ‘reflective’ tendency inherent in *Dasein*’s everyday life, rather than an inherently ‘unnatural’ or ‘artificial’ performance.” (164) On the contrary, Husserl is very concerned to preserve the gap between theory and practice, as that distinction is ultimately a safeguard against the much more important distinction between the transcendental and the mundane. From Husserl’s perspective, the argument for the necessary intertwining of theory and practice ultimately leads to the erosion of the central tenet of transcendental phenomenology. Here is Luft again:

“... ‘transcendental ego’ is, for Heidegger, merely an *abstract moment* of the full concept of *Dasein* as factically existing in a factual world. It is dependent on the factual subject rather than the other way around – whereas for Husserl, the concrete subject is ‘merely’ a ‘mundanized’ transcendental ego.” (158)

The above statement seems to be a fair characterization of Husserl’s position, at least at this particular point in time. The propensity for theory present in the human being thus begins to look more and more like something bequeathed to it from the transcendental ego: an ever-present legacy as prerequisite for getting back in touch with one’s transcendental nature. Let us explore this further.

4.5. *The Finkian turn*

Keeping in line with our discussion so far, we must point out once again that this introduced solution begets further questions. A pressing question that presents itself now is, again, that of the points of contact between the two egos. The initial notion of a parallelism between them turned out to be problematic on two levels. First, it was insufficient to account for the motivation for moving from one register to another. Secondly, it glossed over the question of the being of the transcendental ego. Putting it very coarsely, we could say that both Fink and Heidegger resolve these two problems by shining a new and focused

phenomenological light on the latter issue. This then naturally led them to the solution of the former issue. Their differing conceptions of being, but also their respective background understanding of the relation of theory to practice, meant that the conceptions of motivation that they developed – for science, broadly, and phenomenology, more specifically – were very different. In this respect, Husserl suddenly found himself somewhere in the middle: driven to respond to the Heideggerian challenge, but reluctant to follow Fink’s lead.¹⁰⁸ There is a certain indecisiveness to Husserl’s work from this time which is indicative of the difficulties he had in navigating between the two extremes. Thus, in the brief note directed against Heidegger he will say the following on the issue of motivation:

“It takes specific motives to make the theoretical attitude possible, and contrary to *Heidegger*, it seems to me that an originary motive, for science as for art, lies in the necessity of play and particularly in the motivation of a playful – which is to say not springing forth out of a need of life, not out of a profession, or purposive self-preservation – ‘theoretical curiosity’, which wants to look at things and get to know them, things which do not concern it. This, and not ‘deficient’ practice, is at play here.” (Hua xxxiv: 260)

We can ignore the fact that Husserl is probably misrepresenting Heidegger here: *Being and Time* certainly cannot be read as claiming that science originates merely and solely from the fact that, e.g., tools occasionally break down. Even if that were so, that wouldn’t necessarily entail that the idea of science was any less dignified by virtue of having relatively ‘lowly’ origins. In fact, Husserl’s opposing notion of ‘theoretical curiosity’, as presented here, still seems essentially tethered to empirical factors, entirely contingent on the fulfillment of specific requirements.¹⁰⁹ But that empirical make-up, it turns out, now has a tinge of Husserlian metaphysics to it.

¹⁰⁸ We ought not forget that the developments we are describing were taking place *during* Husserl’s collaboration with Fink. In a way, they were responding to the issues in tandem, but their paths diverged significantly. As we have pointed out at the very beginning of our discussion, neither Husserl’s nor a Husserlian response to Fink can be formulated solely on the basis of an immanent reading of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. For that reason, the research manuscripts surrounding that work are crucial in trying to work out a plausible reading of this complex situation.

¹⁰⁹ In their discussion of Husserl’s so-called ‘Prague letter’ from 1934, Moran and Steinacher have argued that Husserl, when discussing the topic of breakthrough to the theoretical attitude, uses the Ancient Greek concept of wonder which is not equivalent to mere curiosity. (2008) While it is true that Husserl occasionally does rely on somewhat vague distinctions between the ‘merely’ existential and non-mundane, or transcendental, concepts, – like in the case of motivation we are discussing above – the ‘Prague letter’ does not seem to be guilty of that, or at least not as much. We will return to the topic of worldly motivation in more detail in the following chapter.

We chose to frame Husserl's responses to the question of anthropologism as a continuation of his attempts to articulate the notion of parallelism. While this initially might look surprising, the links between the two issues become obvious very quickly. For Husserl of the second half of the 1920s the idea of parallelism was key in addressing the relation between the mundane and the transcendental. The anthropological approach, on the other hand, seems to be the exact opposite: whereas the notion of parallelism is a device meant to preserve the distinction, anthropologism apparently looks to collapse it altogether and claim that the transcendental is, at best, a derivative mode of the mundane. However, the problem with the image of parallelism Husserl employed in his earlier ruminations on the path into phenomenology via psychology was, in a way, made self-evident by the image itself; on a classical interpretation, parallel lines neither touch nor intersect. What was needed was a different image, and, as Husserl correctly realized, an improved image had to be accompanied by improved theory. We now briefly turn to a couple of other texts from this period, where he takes up these issues repeatedly, in an attempt to come up with a more appealing image. For better or for worse, this interim attempt from 1931 is where Fink's influence is felt the most: the mundane/transcendental distinction is preserved in its radicality, but at the cost of new metaphysical stipulations.

What Husserl's old approach seemingly lacked was precisely a certain metaphysical charge. For, if phenomenology simply claims, or even demonstrates, that every single mental act has an exact transcendental counterpart, while also claiming that the two are so radically different that one of them is wholly unnatural, there is the unavoidable question of the usefulness of such an insight. To be sure, the phenomenologist driven by a purely theoretical interest may argue that such an insight is already useful by virtue of merely existing. But if there is such a radical disconnect between these two realms, then phenomenology becomes a futile, empty exercise of terminological juggling. Now, this is obviously at odds with Husserl's understanding of his own project. As we have pointed out, it is enough to look at the various public lectures he held over the years to notice an unmistakable belief in the usefulness of the transcendental-phenomenological platform for humanity. Thus, either the motivations for it ultimately lie in worldly, practical concerns, or there is a deeper non-worldly truth to phenomenological insights worth pursuing.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ We may ignore here the obvious continuation of this argument, where the very *nature of usefulness* of pursuing 'truth' in the first place would have to be questioned. In any case, this type of meta-reflection would have ultimately been alien to Husserl.

This truth, which is operative but latent in most of Husserl's earlier work, now comes to the fore in a more explicit manner. In the research manuscripts of the early 1930s, it looks like the *epistemological* claim of the *parallelism* of the mundane and the transcendental becomes undergirded by a *metaphysical* claim of *entailment*. This claim can be put in the following way: the natural, mundane ego is not a self-sufficient reality, but is rather a *mode* of the transcendental ego, it is entailed by it. It is not the case that there simply happens to be a transcendental structure that exactly mirrors that of our worldly ego in its concreteness, and that happens to be discoverable by a specific worldly science called phenomenology. Rather, that transcendental structure points us to a *deeper truth* about ourselves, namely, that each of us is a mundanized form of a universal structure called the transcendental ego. Consequently, phenomenology takes on the unique role of the singular science capable of disclosing this true nature.

Now, the question of motivation for phenomenology can be put in a decisive way: as long as we establish and accept the minimal epistemological standard of truth as something worth pursuing, phenomenology becomes a necessary science, because it is the only path toward absolute knowledge. As for the follow-up question of how to explain the reason for breaking through the natural attitude in the first place, this is less of a problem for a more explicitly metaphysical theory of the mundane/transcendental relation. Because the relation obtaining between them is no longer one of mere parallelism, but rather of entailment, this point of contact implies a natural predisposition for this change. In a manuscript from August 1930¹¹¹, we read:

“The fact of the transcendental attitude, and of the historical motives from which it emerged, shows that to the transcendental humanity in the natural form belongs the *possibility for motivations for a change* of this attitude, that is, the possibility to transition from the natural into the transcendental attitude, and, by means of it, to recognize the transcendental [*das Transzendente*], and consequently to recognize the natural attitude as a mode of the *transcendental state*. [... *als einen Modus transzendentaler Zuständigkeit*]” (154f.)

This is as clear a statement of the metaphysical primacy of transcendental subjectivity as possible, and Husserl makes sure to spell it out as he continues: “The singular monad of transcendental subjectivity constituted the world; what is thereby meant is, it constituted itself

¹¹¹ ‘Epoché und Reduktion. Die natürliche Einstellung als Modus der transzendentalen Subjektivität: die Monade in natürlicher Einstellung – die Monade in dem Modus der transzendentalen Einstellung’ (Hua xxxiv: 148-56)

as ‘I, this human being’, and vice versa.” (155) The ‘vice versa’ here is easily misunderstood: what Husserl means by it is that ‘I, the human being’ and the world are a package deal: transcendental subjectivity constituting itself as the former simultaneously means constituting the latter. Likewise, there is no constituting the world without the accompanying self-mundanization of subjectivity. Now, it might be objected that this doesn’t mean that the claims above are *metaphysical* in the sense of arguing for the ontological primacy of transcendental subjectivity over mundane subjectivity. Could it not be that Husserl is simply arguing for an essential unity of the two? The argument might go like this: although it makes sense to distinguish them, and we can develop methodological tools to do so, they are still essentially two moments or aspects of one and the same structure. Even though it *looks* like we are able to talk about them as entirely separate entities, that is in fact merely an indication of the deficient nature of our language, and betrays the still-present fundamental naïveté of the natural attitude, etc. However, let us imagine for a moment an inversion of the sentence above: could we claim that the mundane human being constitutes transcendental subjectivity, i.e., that any sense we can ascribe to the latter is derived solely from the former? This plainly goes against Husserl’s intended meaning here and is basically the formulation of the anthropologicist position he so vehemently criticizes. While this particular manuscript we are quoting here is not representative of the entirety of Husserl’s complex position(s) on this issue, it does show that the terminology of modes is not as metaphysically innocent and neutral as it might be believed. For, there is an obvious asymmetry at play between the two modes, in the sense that the one presupposes the other, but not the other way around. At best, what could be argued in favor of the “one structure, two aspects” claim would be that the transcendental ego *necessarily* goes through the process of mundanization which necessarily terminates in the mundane ego. However, this ‘tendency toward being’ argument still does not eliminate the metaphysical asymmetry.

We are arguing that several of Husserl’s manuscripts from 1931 adopt a very Finkian perspective on the issue of the relation between the worldly and the transcendental. So far, our discussion in this and the previous section has shown that this Finkian high point comes about as a consequence of Husserl’s criticism of the ‘anthropologicist’ reading of phenomenology. We have already pointed out – in our discussion of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* – that Husserl was already distancing himself from the radical theory proposed by Fink by late 1932, i.e., by the time that the book was more or less completed. The crux of their disagreement was related to the question of whether phenomenology went beyond human possibilities or was rather furthering them. However, before Husserl would opt for the latter understanding, more

in line with his own position, he did briefly defend a position strongly resembling the epistemological anti-humanism we found in Fink. This moment of particular proximity to Fink is to be found in what was supposed to be Husserl's definitive statement against anthropologism, his 1931 lecture, *Phenomenology and Anthropology*.

Husserl's private, sparse remarks on Heidegger from just a few months earlier were characterized by a sensibility to opposing arguments. In contrast, this June public lecture is driven by a marked lack of patience for the anthropologicistic misappropriation of phenomenology. The lecture moves at a brisk pace, with telltale signs of a man on a mission: Husserl's goal is to show that philosophy à la Scheler or Heidegger "... constitutes a complete reversal of phenomenology's fundamental standpoint." (Hua xxvii: 164/SP 485) Husserl insists, as fiercely as ever, that the true goal of philosophy is ultimate grounding of knowledge and of scientific foundations. (169/489f.) We witness phenomenology at its most Cartesian: it is Descartes' move toward the subjectivity experiencing the world that first discloses the "great enigma" of the self-evident being of the world. (167/488) Consequently, breaking through the worldly naïveté is what first opens up the perspective on "... an entirely new dimension of scientific inquiry." (168/488) While these claims are nothing new, Husserl does make sure to underline a point usually insisted on by Fink: that this new dimension is so principally different from what we are used to in our scientific investigations, that we basically lack the language to express it properly: "This newly opened dimension of knowledge can only with difficulty be put into words and concepts; the old, traditional concepts, alien as they are to the essence of the new dimension, cannot grasp it; rather, they only misconstrue it." (168/488f.) This is worth thinking through carefully.

As is usually the case with Husserl's programmatic writings of this sort, there is an implicit idea of science guiding his discussion. It is not exactly an 'operative concept' in Fink's sense,¹¹² because Husserl spends quite a lot of time discussing it in its various modalities. Yet it could be argued that it rarely, if ever, gets thematized according to the regulative ideal of a presuppositionless philosophy. In other words, the ideas of science, scientific rationality, and of scientific goals that Husserl works with all seem to be infused with their usual, mundane sense. Indeed, that turned out to be a difficulty for Husserl in the years leading up to his work with Fink: the idea of universal science alone simply wasn't enough to motivate the kind of radical changing of attitudes that is the bedrock of phenomenological epistemology. To an extent, this problem persists in the *Phenomenology and Anthropology* lecture as well. Although

¹¹² Cf. Fink 1957.

Husserl promises to “... lay out [...] the true meaning of transcendental phenomenology in an evidential way” (168/489), his way of proceeding doesn’t quite succeed in shedding contingent presuppositions, or in ‘transforming historical propositions into substantive ones’, to use Husserl’s words. (169/489) For example, he begins with the assumption that

“[e]very genuine beginning of philosophy springs from meditation, from the experience of solitary self-reflection. When it is rooted in its origins, an autonomous philosophy (and we live in the age when humanity has awakened to its autonomy) becomes the solitary and radical self-responsibility of the one who is philosophizing. Only in solitude and meditation does one become a philosopher, only in this way is philosophy born in us, emerging of necessity from within us.” (ibid.)

But this seems needlessly reductive, and explicitly tied to *one particular historical model* of philosophical reflection. Not only does this model, based on “... the will to practice the most extreme kind of scientific radicalism” (ibid.), exclude a great deal of philosophical questioning which can only take place in a group setting; it also seems to ignore the fact that the very idea of scientific radicalism only makes sense if one first presupposes a community of researchers. This holds true regardless of how we understand the pursued rigor of science: the ideal of universality presupposes the existence of a multiplicity, and the only way to test if an insight is universal is to subject it to independent tests. Of course, Husserl was well aware of this: he repeatedly insisted on the need for a community of researchers working on the infinite task together. Furthermore, he recognized that any solitary approach will be plagued by the shadow of “the most embarrassing of unintelligibilities”, namely, the “initially misleading illusion of a transcendental solipsism.” (178/498) Yet, solitary meditation still seemed to him to be a model of beginning in philosophy worth salvaging here. How is this to be explained?

Phenomenology and Anthropology lecture is a work with a pronounced transitional character, almost like a snapshot of Husserl trying to pursue several directions of thought at once. *Prima facie*, he is still dedicated to the goal of articulating his project in the grounded terms of furthering the rigor of already existing sciences. The key methodological move, we recall, consisted in making the ego the absolute topic of phenomenology by bracketing the hitherto not questioned validity of the world-as-existing and investigating the origins of that validity. This was a bottom-up approach to the story of the beginnings of phenomenology: although it faltered slightly in explaining the motivation for the ultimate decision of bracketing the all-pervasive acceptance of the being of the world, it nevertheless managed to provide a

decent historical account of the genesis of this radically new approach to science. At first, it may appear that *Phenomenology and Anthropology* presents an identical account. For example, Husserl still seems to maintain, as he did earlier, that the entire way of proceeding rests on the possibility of exercising specific volitional acts. The phenomenological reduction is not something that merely occurs, but "... continues on by an act of will, a commitment that is binding on me the phenomenologist once and for all." (171/492) However, a subtle shift in Husserl's explanatory tactics now turns the account into a top-down one. Key for understanding this is Husserl's strong theory of the innateness of the theoretical interest which dominates this period of his confrontation with Heidegger.

The theoretical interest, namely, is no longer understood simply as an innate openness for questioning, capable of leading to just any truth. Rather, it is now the pathway toward a very specific truth. When Husserl claims that the "impelling motive" for phenomenology is responsible interpretation of the origins of the validity of being of the world, one is overwhelmed by the feeling that the result of such responsible questioning can be only one: that the world "... gains its meaning and acceptance purely in us, and first of all in myself and from myself. – In myself, be it noted, as transcendental Ego." (174/494) That is the meaning of the top-down approach which plays such a central role in this lecture: theoretical interest does not merely propel the natural subject outward toward pursuing truth, but is the means of getting back in touch with the deep, inner truth which has been there all along: that the natural ego is a mode or apperception of the transcendental ego. Nowhere do the closing Augustinian words of the *Cartesian Meditations* ring louder than in *Phenomenology and Anthropology*. But things are not as straightforward as this.

Although this lecture sets itself up as an attempt to systematically and rigorously lay out the building blocks of phenomenology in a self-evident way, Husserl makes a surprising number of 'proof is in the pudding' claims in it. At the very beginning of the lecture, he speaks of the need to finally resolve the age-old philosophical conflict between various kinds of subjectivism and transcendental philosophy. He then commits the same error he did in *Philosophy and Rigorous Science* and argues that, if any of the variants of subjectivistic or anthropologicistic philosophy were to be true, there would have to be a way to ascertain that truth on a priori grounds, according to "the very essence of philosophy." (165/486) But, of course, such approaches might precisely be arguing against such an understanding of philosophy, making Husserl's entire counterargument an elaborate form of begging the question. Still, he goes on to claim that it must in principle be possible to reach a "fundamental decision" regarding the schism between anthropologism and transcendentalism on a level above any

psychologism, anthropologism, or subjectivism. (ibid.) Yet, shouldn't this fundamental decision also go beyond any transcendentalism, if it is to ground it? This is not a worry for Husserl. Although he correctly points out that "... here everything depends on actually possessing the *insights* that this fundamental decision presupposes" (ibid.), he immediately proceeds under the assumption that these insights can only be, and in fact are, provided by phenomenology. Toward the end of the lecture, he recognizes that all this leads to an idealism which at first seems counterintuitive: would it not be "*eine tolle Zumutung*" to claim that the being of the world is in some way relative to my performances? (175/495) There are levels to the idealism proposed by phenomenology: *of course* there is the world itself outside of me, and, strictly speaking, it is my "picture of the world" that is constituted in my ego.¹¹³ Yet, as soon as we broaden the perspective slightly, we find that the very outside/inside distinction is again a product of my constitution. (ibid.) There is no way to break through this perspective, because every single insight can be shown to get its sense from my own passive and active constitutive achievements.¹¹⁴ Husserl counters the anthropologicist claims of the *Unhintergebarkeit* of the human being by casting an even wider net. The human being, or *Dasein*, cannot be the endpoint of investigation because it is not the ultimate reality, but rather a specific mundane mode of presentation of the ultimate reality of the transcendental ego. We now come to the properly Finkian claim of the lecture: it would be all too easy to believe that it is I, a particular human being, who is practicing phenomenology, making the necessary alteration in my attitude toward the world, etc. Yet, for Husserl, this understanding indicates that one still remains shackled to the naïve acceptance of the world:

"For, to take oneself as a human being already presupposes an acceptance of validity of the world. What the epoché shows us clearly, however, is that the Ego is the one in whose life-process the apperception 'human being', standing within the universal apperception 'world', acquires and maintains its sense of being." (173/493)

¹¹³ We will not deal with this particular claim here. However, it is worth noting that this formulation does seem to be at least implying a certain kind of representationalist epistemology not consistent with Husserl's theory of perception which generally tends toward direct realism. It is possible that Husserl's use of the term *Weltbild* here wasn't meant to convey any particular epistemological position, and his use of quotes around the word does seem to confirm that.

¹¹⁴ This is one of the most contentious points of phenomenology, and it has sparked much more debate than could be mentioned here. One of the more recent influential criticisms of this aspect of the phenomenological doctrine has been offered by Meillassoux, where he dubs this inescapability of the first-person perspective with respect to the external world 'correlationism'. (2006) There are various epistemological and ontological aspects of the anti-correlationism critique of phenomenology, but the central point is ultimately about the legitimacy, or lack thereof, of claims phenomenology could make about the metaphysical question of realism vs. idealism. There are various strategies for responding to this criticism, but this debate goes beyond the scope of this discussion.

This new field of research, Husserl maintains, is sharply separated from the field of the natural world. The obvious implication is that it is not the human being who is doing phenomenology. The gap between the mundane and the transcendental in Husserl never seemed so great as in this particular moment.

In a sense, none of this is truly a problem for Husserl now, precisely because he is adopting a perspective that is basically Fink's. He himself recognizes the issue that, if there is such a radical difference in kind between the two fields, one must ask the question: how is any of this "... supposed to have any philosophical relevance at all?" (ibid.) In an extremely pertinent passage, he then writes:

"After all, it is as a human being standing in the world that I pose all my theoretical and practical questions, and also all questions about my fate. Can I give all these up? But must I not do so, if the being of the world is and *remains* subjected to an epoché? This being the case, it would seem that I shall never again return to the world and to all those questions about life for the very sake of which I have philosophized and have striven for scientific knowledge as a rational and radical reflection upon the world and human existence." (ibid.)

These are poignant questions, but they remain unanswered in this lecture. Earlier, we have noted that Husserl's ultimate rejection of Fink's position can be summed up as a rejection of secondary enworlding. Yet, here, he is accepting that notion as a legitimate concern for phenomenology. How *does* the phenomenologist return to the world, and why? The answer is straightforwardly Finkian: the motivation both for leaving the natural attitude and for returning to it is one and the same: a striving for attaining absolute knowledge. Husserl also seems to accept Fink's doctrine of a strict alethic hierarchy here: "Once we have recognized the deficiencies of the naïve attitude, this becomes the only possible path to take in order to establish sciences based on genuine rationality. Concretely expressed, it is the path to the only possible philosophy that is radically grounded." (178/498) This is uncharacteristic of Husserl; his previous discussions of the paths into phenomenology did not rest on the preconceived notion that the natural attitude was somehow deficient. Rather, it was the case that our understanding of the natural attitude was significantly furthered by the performance of various methods of phenomenology. In *Phenomenology and Anthropology*, however, the claims are not quite as careful, and one is left with the impression, much like after reading Fink, that the natural attitude is a ladder to be discarded once one has reached the top of absolute

knowledge.¹¹⁵ This is reminiscent not only of the epistemological anti-humanism doctrine in Fink, but also runs dangerously close to what we saw Crowell refer to as Fink's 'gnosticism'.

In his attempt to counter the anthropologicist focus of his contemporaries, Husserl thus seems to offer the public a decidedly anti-anthropological interpretation of his phenomenology. The influence of the collaboration with Fink is unmistakable. Much like in Fink, the problem of motivating this radically unnatural science which leads to radically unnatural conclusions is more or less eliminated by the fact that the striving toward knowledge is essentially tied to a presupposed teleology. This teleology is larger than the subject, and therefore carries it through the process of cognition. Although *Phenomenology and Anthropology* nominally is Husserl's attempt to sharpen the Cartesian model of radical beginnings and grounding, and thus mostly mimics his classical terminology, there is a distinct trace of the passive '*Mitgenommen-werden*' present in it. Husserl's point that the traditional language of science and philosophy can only misconstrue the true findings of transcendental phenomenology ought to be understood from this Finkian perspective: mundane language fails us because we, as human beings, find ourselves taking part in a movement of knowledge going beyond human capabilities. This is a very un-Husserlian way of understanding the role and task of phenomenology, and, as we have seen, by the completion of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, Husserl will have abandoned it in favor of articulating a transcendentially charged notion of humanity. The medium of this new concept of humanity, as his subsequent work shows, is history.

The topic of history assumed unprecedented importance in Husserl's work of the 1930s and continued to preoccupy him until the end of his life. However, while it certainly was an organic development resulting from a confluence of factors – collaboration with Fink, confrontation with Heidegger, the impending private and political catastrophe – it still demanded a significant redeployment of phenomenological concepts, tenets, and methods.

We have spent this chapter trying to create an accurate picture of the crossroads at which Husserl found himself in 1931. There were many paths we, together with Husserl, had to account for. The attempt to show how rigorous psychology naturally evolves into phenomenology was one. However, by the late 1920s, Husserl had returned to a Cartesian model of gradual laying down of foundations for science, i.e. philosophy. Yet this road turned out to be fraught with difficulties. In light of more and more nuanced criticism coming from within phenomenology, there was now a forking path. One could either go down the road of

¹¹⁵ On the complexities of Husserl's concept of the Absolute, particularly in relation to a phenomenological concept of God, cf. Boehm 2005.

old and relatively naïve Cartesianism, and risk succumbing to the dangerous ‘anthropologicistic’ objections, or radicalize it by arguing that it is only a deficient mundane analogy for the kind of absolute, non-mundane insights that were actually attained through phenomenology. In effect, the response to anthropologicistic arguments was to sever ties with humanity altogether and then rebuild them via terms such as ‘enworlding’ or ‘mundane self-apperception’. We can put this in a different way as well: Husserl’s repeated claims that phenomenological research was “contrary to nature” now included an ontological dimension as well. This was Fink’s strategy from the *Sixth Meditation*, and it was Husserl’s strategy in mid-1931, as we have tried to show. This approach was abandoned very quickly, however, and gave way to a more nuanced understanding of the relation between the mundane and the transcendental. In the next chapter, we finally turn to this transition, once again carefully following our Ariadne’s thread, the ‘who and why’ of phenomenology. Let us conclude this part of the discussion with some brief remarks on two shortcomings of Husserl’s arguments against anthropologism. These will prepare us for the continuation of our argument.

4.6. *Two notes on presuppositions*

That Husserl was deeply influenced by Descartes is entirely uncontroversial, although assessing the precise scope of that influence is a matter of some complexity. The Cartesian legacy in Husserl is certainly not a matter of uncritical acceptance of specific arguments from Descartes; rather, it manifests itself as a spiritual proximity of philosophical projects. The point of intersection between them is the idea of radical beginnings in philosophy and, more broadly, science. This idea, shining bright in both, is followed by a cluster of adjacent philosophical goals and commitments: absolute foundations, apodicticity, rigorous science, and ego as fulcrum of these. As we have seen, this Cartesian model was the framework on the basis of which Husserl and Fink tried to build the edifice of a consistent phenomenology laid out in accord with a transcendental theory of method. To be sure, Husserl’s reliance on the Cartesian model ebbed and flowed over the years. Famously, one of the most influential interpretative strategies in later phenomenology has been to read Husserl as having *moved away* from Descartes in his later work, even though that interpretation itself has been contested, not entirely without reason.¹¹⁶ Yet, Husserl’s repeated references to Descartes are too evenly

¹¹⁶ For the classical statement of Husserl’s supposed departure from Descartes, cf. Landgrebe 1961. The influence of Landgrebe’s paper can hardly be overstated, and the phrase ‘*Abschied vom Cartesianismus*’ has since long become part of the scholarly vernacular. It has been criticized, however. See, for example, Luft’s informative

spaced out, and their basic philosophical impulses too similar, for the thesis of departure – no matter how sympathetic we may be to it – to completely absolve us of the need to acknowledge Descartes’s lingering presence.¹¹⁷

One striking image present in both is that of treading uncharted territories and of exploring new continents or worlds. Because that image is fueled by the idea of a new and radical grounding of knowledge, the charting process always carries the sense of turning one’s back to the naïveté of old. It is a kind of methodical and controlled plunging into newness, followed by building anew. This image is not without its problems, however. The radical beginner must be careful not to cut the branch they are sitting on, or at least not do so without first providing a safety net. This is where even the most radical of beginners must be pragmatic, for the safety net must still be fastened onto something. Descartes was aware of this. In *Discourse on the Method*, he writes:

“Now, before starting to rebuild your house, it is not enough simply to pull it down, to make provision for materials and architects (or else train yourself in architecture), and to have carefully drawn up the plans; you must also provide yourself with some other place where you can live comfortably while building is in progress.” (Descartes 1985: 122)

It is interesting, and important for the way we shall try to proceed in our discussion of Husserl, that Descartes comes up with a “provisional moral code” in order to secure his own standing in the in-between phase of the investigation. The few maxims of this code are a mix of individual and communal injunctions, all very much practical in nature. The ideal of a presuppositionless philosophy in Descartes, thus, necessarily comes with a caveat.

Husserl was certainly not unaware of these passages and, as we shall see, he had indeed already somewhat addressed this issue in some of his earlier work. But the context of the early 1930s pushed him in a different direction. As we have seen, because the notion of the theoretical attitude became the main hinge for his attempt at distancing from anthropologism, he had to argue for the absolute theoretical primacy of the theoretical over the practical. But

Introduction to the Translation of the First Philosophy lectures: Luft 2019: lxx-lxxv. Not surprisingly, the question of making Husserl more palatable to an audience under the spell of Heidegger crops up. There are, however, *philosophical* grounds on which the strong thesis of departure can be criticized as well. Some of these will be the subject of the following chapter.

¹¹⁷ Paul Macdonald makes a strong case for the deep parallels running throughout Descartes’ and Husserl’s respective projects: “... they are reacting to similar background problems (primarily skepticism), they abandon the vocabulary and method of their predecessors, adopt a novel formal ontology, and commit themselves to a grounding of evidence in the domain of subjective experience.” (MacDonald 2000: 225)

the only way to do that seems to be to concede to the anti-humanist interpretation of phenomenology proposed by Fink. Even then, the notion of phenomenology that arises cannot do away with stipulations. Let us briefly mention two of them, pertaining, respectively, to the ‘who’ and ‘why’ of phenomenology.

1. The main thrust of the argument against anthropologism is that the human being cannot be the endpoint of rigorous science nor, *eo ipso*, of philosophy. In fact, in his manuscript on Heidegger, Husserl even goes so far as to argue that it cannot be taken as the *starting point*, because that already presupposes too much. It is not that the analytic of *Dasein* à la Heidegger is of no use to phenomenology; it may not even be altogether wrong. Rather, Husserl argues, his approach is simply a more fundamental one, starting with that which is truly primitive, and beyond the constant change present in worldly subjects and in the world itself: this is the necessary, and the only correct way of proceeding. (Hua xxxiv: 260) Now the starting point and the endpoint of phenomenological research become identical: in both cases, it is the transcendental ego. To be sure, through the course of analysis, this absolute field, disclosed by the phenomenological epoché and reduction, is progressively illuminated. Let that be understood as an infinite task. Still, the question remains, how does the phenomenologist ever really know that this initial field truly is the primordial, or most primitive, structure? The epoché, phenomenological reduction(s), principle of all principles, etc., are all tools that seem designed specifically for disclosing a certain kind of structure. Not surprisingly, these tools are then legitimized in that very process.

As a though experiment, it is very easy to imagine some kind of an entity, structure, or process which remains just beyond the purview of existing phenomenological methods but which grounds (in whatever way) the transcendental ego. Fink’s constructive phenomenology is partially a proof of this concept. Phenomenology is thus thrust into speculation which somewhat undermines the insight that the transcendental ego is the absolute topic of science. Because, again, the only real ‘proof’ of the rigorous scientificity of existing methods is that they led us to the transcendental ego. This leads us to the second easily imaginable thought experiment. The entire edifice of transcendental insights built up through phenomenological investigation could be a theoretical fiction and there would be no way of knowing, as long as the methods used retained their purely theoretical charge. For, as long as we are operating with the notion of theoretical interest devoid of practical concerns, but rather serving as the glue holding two radically different kinds of ego together, phenomenology remains a self-enclosed system. Here is a short, pertinent passage from *Phenomenology and Anthropology*:

“Owing to this epoché *human solitude* has become something radically different: it has become *transcendental solitude*, the solitude of the *Ego*. As *Ego* I am for myself not a human being within the world that is in being; rather, I am the ego that places the world in question regarding its entire being, and hence too regarding its being in this way or that.” (Hua xxvii: 171/SP 491f.)

We ended the previous chapter with some references to the notion of *transformation* engendered by the reduction. Here, we come across it again, but this time in a different register, or rather, in a different way. Previously, the notion referred to the transformation of the empirical ego after performing the reduction. Now, it serves to underline the contrast between the empirical ego and its true nature. The notion of transcendental solitude is not helping here: regardless of how one conceives the ‘communication’ between the transcendental and the mundane ego, as long as they are conceived of as being radically different, transcendental insights ultimately remain useless to the non-phenomenologist.

2. In the first point, we reflected on the ‘who’ of phenomenology. What about the ‘why’? Husserl’s implicit embracing of the Finkian anti-humanism does seem to short-circuit the problem of motivation by positing an intrinsic propensity for the change in attitude which is always present in the natural ego. Yet this presupposes more than it explains. Husserl claims that the fact that there is the transcendental attitude is evidence of the existence of an innate possibility for striving toward it and for transitioning into it from the natural attitude. (Hua xxxiv: 154) In other words, this most unnatural of steps stems from a built-in motivation. At first glance, this seems to eliminate the problem of the ‘why’. To be sure, it is an unsatisfying solution, based on a seemingly arbitrary stipulation, but it is a solution, nonetheless. On closer inspection, however, we find that a certain aporia still remains. Engaging in transcendental phenomenology is not as quick and simple as flipping a switch; Husserl (as well as Fink) points this out constantly. Now, this does not only bear upon actually performing phenomenological analysis. It very much refers to the path one has to take in order to find themselves in the position to engage in such investigations: it takes a certain congeniality with the rational spirit of science, intelligence, a patient disposition, etc. All of this presumably rests on an even broader and more intangible set of historical circumstances, and so on. So, clearly, the intrinsic motivation for leaving my natural way of being isn’t sufficient on its own, because otherwise, anyone could randomly become a transcendental phenomenologist.

This now leaves two options for explaining motivation. We could acknowledge the factors mentioned above and view phenomenology as the latest in a long line of gradual improvements in the historical, natural scientific enterprise. According to this option, there

would be no *radical* difference in kind between phenomenology and any other science. Alternatively, one could argue, as Husserl does, that particular historical and natural circumstances provide necessary fruitful ground for phenomenology, but that this is not sufficient. Because there *is* a radical difference in kind between phenomenology and all other sciences, the origin of motivation cannot be merely empirical or mundane. The difficulty here is that this leads us back to square one, and the problem of motivation remains exactly as obscure as before. We recall that Husserl's earlier investigation of the transition from pure psychology (still mundane) to phenomenology (transcendental) ultimately bottomed out with the mention of *eine wie immer zu beschreibende Motivation*. The concluding paragraphs of *Phenomenology and Anthropology* now illustrate that no real progress has been made:

“To be sure, this remarkable relation, this parallelism between an intentional psychology and a transcendental phenomenology naturally calls for clarification. We must come to understand, on ultimate transcendental grounds, why psychology – or anthropology, if you wish – is in fact not just a positive science along with the natural sciences, but rather has an *intrinsic affinity* with philosophy, with transcendental philosophy.” (Hua xxvii: 181/SP 500)

What clarification does Husserl offer, then? Well, there are two points, in keeping with the fact that one can search for motivating factors on the subjective and the intersubjective level. Broadly speaking, once we have become aware of the true rational ideal of science, and once we have realized that any science of the world, thought through to the end, must ask for ultimate grounding, “... at that point any positive science of the world changes over into a transcendental science of the world.” (ibid.) On the individual level, once psychologists have become aware of this ideal of rationality, “... then a spontaneous tendency begins to impel psychologists to give up their naïve orientedness to the world and to understand themselves as transcendental philosophers.” (ibid.)

None of this is very reassuring, nor promising. Attempts to highlight the unique character of phenomenology as opposed to other sciences led to an extreme radicalization of the Cartesian ideal of a presuppositionless science. The upshot of this strategy was that the very concepts of humanity and of the world were viewed as initially unfounded presuppositions, rather than as the natural starting framework of any possible scientific investigation. Trying to compensate for the loss of this sturdy framework, Husserl was then forced to introduce certain presuppositions, or stipulations, of his own. These, in turn, have not only made the supposedly pure field of investigation significantly messier than before, but have also brought Husserl very

close to Fink, whose understanding of phenomenology (at least from the 1930s) is the antithesis of that usually found in Husserl. But Husserl quickly became aware of this himself, and his work after the collaboration on the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* saw him trying to approach these issues from a fresh perspective.

5 Formulating the Task Anew: Toward a Transcendentally Clarified ‘Higher Humanity’

So far, our discussion has mostly taken on the form of a critique, in both senses of the word. We have paid considerable attention to the larger, almost unprecedentedly complex context surrounding the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*; in the process, we have attained some insight into the nature, role, and scope of certain concepts deeply ingrained in phenomenology. Notions such as the world, science, and radicality, as well as oppositions such as that between worldly and transcendental egos and sciences, all occupy distinct places and play operative roles in the tapestry of phenomenological methodology and activity. However, it turned out that none of these are easily isolable, or even straightforwardly identifiable, without a certain level of prior understanding of the overall project within which they assume their roles. Furthermore, these concepts bleed into each other: one cannot hope to understand Husserl’s (or Fink’s) notion of radical science without understanding his notion of the world, and similar examples abound. Thus, a critical examination of phenomenology’s central concepts presupposes at least a vague idea of the bigger picture, yet the latter can only be critically sharpened through an examination of its more specific elements.

This is consistent with how Fink and Husserl present the issue in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, and is the reason why a transcendental theory of method cannot be codified in a handbook, ready-at-hand to be consulted before engaging in phenomenological work. Thus, they conclude that transcendental methodology must be developed in a different way, which they quite appropriately designate as ‘phenomenology of phenomenology’. This kind of a broadly coherentist perspective is an attractive proposition: there is something intuitively appealing to the idea that the details of a highly complex practical activity are illuminated through the very process of engaging in it. The beginner’s first attempts may flounder, yet his skills are further honed with every new attempt.

In the case of Fink and Husserl, however, this analogy only gets us so far. For, as we have seen, both were reluctant to affirm the intuitive underlying premise that phenomenology could be modeled after everyday or even classical scientific practice. Driven by foundationalist impulses, though possibly for different reasons, both tried to anchor phenomenological practice in a strong conception of theory, which was, in turn, grounded in the transcendental ego. The upshot was the peculiar claim that phenomenology, while *practiced* by performing specific

methods, was not, in itself, a practice, but rather pure theory of a non-participating observer. This counterintuitive conclusion prompted us to pursue some non-Kantian criticism: we have seen how the postulated absolute primacy of theory ultimately leads to a host of metaphysical and epistemological claims which are difficult to parse if the phenomenological project is to make sense and remain reasonably internally consistent.

However, critique and criticism need not be merely limitative and negative. We now have a clearer image of the pivotal role of the Husserl-Fink collaboration on the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, and have identified the question of phenomenology's relation to humanity as the decisive issue and point of contention. This leads us to the positive aspect of our discussion. In this chapter, we try to provide a general outline of Husserl's restitution of the human dimension in phenomenology in the wake of his direct collaborative work with Fink.

One must tread carefully here; like the issues we have been discussing in the previous chapters, this one does not lend itself to easy presentation and clear-cut timelines. We would be doing Husserl a disservice by reducing his work immediately after the *Sixth Meditation* to a mere reaction against that work. In this chapter, we will point to some resources dating back to the early 1920s which clearly resonate with the thorny issue of the relation between humanity and phenomenology that would become so central about a decade later. Yet, these tentative parallels are of limited argumentative force. Questions of continuity of thought are canonical in Husserl scholarship, and occasionally informative; flashes of thematic overlap, however, do not tell us much on their own. As ever, the work of contextualization is crucial in establishing *sachliche* connections and separating them from serendipitous overlap in topics pursued or terms used. With regard to our guiding question of the 'who and why', the situation is particularly complex. This is partly due to Husserl's evolving understanding of the radical nature of his own philosophy. Already by the publication of *Ideas I*, there is a clear awareness of the importance of positioning transcendental-phenomenological investigation with respect to the concept of world. By the mid-1920s, Husserl operates with the distinction between the world as a *non-authentic* universal topic, and the transcendental ego as the authentic topic of phenomenology, and thus the only universal topic of phenomenology. But these formulations still have the sense of carefully adopting a new *perspective* on things, rather than of disclosing *new* things. It is with Fink that the question of the ontological status of the transcendental gets posed in an explicit way, meaning that the phenomenologist is now forced to account for the individuation of two egos. This kind of new focus resulted in a borderline non-Husserlian theory of method. Nevertheless, Husserl's earlier efforts must be rethought in light of it.

This point can be put in a slightly exaggerated, but illustrative way. The *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, with its added ontological, and, consequently, metaphysical focus, serves as a kind of threshold separating ‘pre-critical’ phenomenology from a self-understanding marked by an advanced grasp of its own system, methods, and goals. The passage from the pre-critical to the advanced stage, we recall, revolved around overcoming the notion of transcendental naïveté. For Fink, this crucial breakthrough amounts to the realization on the phenomenologist’s part that phenomenological cognition has no mundane counterpart as it is not ontically bound in any way. The cornerstone of this radical insight is a sharp distinction between constitution and constitutive interrogation, i.e., between the constituting and the onlooking ego. This distinction is far-reaching, and one of its major components is a thick dividing line between theory and practice. To be sure, Husserl had always separated the two, yet it is only with Fink that it became obvious that the radicalized operative distinction between theory and practice was, in itself, a theoretical construct steered by very specific metaphysical ideas.

How does this shape our understanding of Husserl? The collaboration with Fink of the early 1930s is, in one way, an interpretative point of no return. A heightened sense of self-reflection, a deepened responsiveness to metaphysics, and a newly discovered flair for historical dialectics are all indicative of the Husserl of the 1930s, and they all bear an indelible stamp of Finkian architectonics. Any reading of Husserl, it seems to us, ought to try to retain these. On the other hand, the verso of this rich transcendental theory of method, a commitment to an un-humanizing version of phenomenology, is something transcendental phenomenology could, and probably should, do without. The reasons for this are not exclusively metaphysical; while there are good reasons to suspect that the specific Finkian brand of speculative phenomenology necessarily warps some of the most fruitful and most grounded aspects of the phenomenological method, such constructive expansion might prove to have redeeming qualities as well. In any case, rejecting it outright on a priori grounds would be too extreme, and could be shortsighted. However, the price of admission to this newly expanded realm of transcendental phenomenology may not be a relinquishing of the most basic impulses behind it. Put differently, once a philosophy finds itself arguing against its being a human activity, something has gone awry somewhere along the way. However one chooses to understand the uniqueness of phenomenological methods, there can be no doubt about the fact that their ultimate goal is a better understanding of ourselves and of our place with respect to others and to the world we find ourselves in. This means an investigation of the faculties and the possibilities inherent to us and to other beings like us, philosophers and non-philosophers alike.

Husserl understood this, both prior to the collaboration with Fink, and after it. A look back at some of the earlier writings shows that a strong sense of the human and ethical foundation of phenomenology is already present there, if not always readily apparent. These writings hold a kind of a germinal truth, which is only truly illuminated once the context of the *Sixth Meditation* and of its aftermath is considered. This broader context allows us to better understand the development of Husserl's thought after 1932 as well. We can agree with Heffernan that "Husserl performs a seismic shift in the horizon of his philosophical studies" (2015: 184) in the writings from the *Crisis*-period, but this must be clarified. The immense shift in those writings stems not from the unprecedentedness of their subject matter, but rather from the raised methodological awareness of its indispensability. The goal for Husserl thus becomes to show that "the problem of the genuine meaning of human existence" (ibid.) is the proper subject matter of transcendental phenomenology. This vast and thematically rich 'existential' domain is then explored in a number of ways and across multiple regions, spanning diverse topics such as metaphysics, biology, history of science and teleology, ethics, and even the subconscious and the unconscious. Considering this heady mix, it should not surprise us that phenomenology occasionally veers off into exaggerated pathos, and the 'late Husserl' was no stranger to it. Yet, beyond this grandeur, there is a vital core of humanist philosophy worth articulating and preserving.

In this chapter, we shall focus on several theoretical, methodological, and *ethical* aspects of this humanist transcendental phenomenology, leaving the discussion of its broader implications for the conclusion. Throughout the chapter, we will further probe the question of the 'who and why?' against the backdrop of a *rehabilitation of the natural attitude*. This central motif appears in various guises in Husserl's mature writings: as part of the reflections on the different ways into phenomenology, in the attempts to formulate a satisfying concept of the pre-given world, and in the constant fine-tuning of phenomenological methods, among others. Another development worth paying attention to is the gradual collapse of the strict distinction between the constituting and the onlooking ego,¹¹⁸ necessitating a reevaluation of the relation between theory and practice. We shall see how these two motifs overlap and fuse together, and how the potent phenomenological motifs of *ambiguity* and *transformation* emerge from them. These, we argue, combine to offer a profound view of the human being in phenomenology.

¹¹⁸ It has been argued that this blurring of the distinction on Husserl's part "... must be conceived as a clear concession to Heidegger's critique." (Luft 2005: 165) This might be too strong. While there can be no doubt that Heidegger's criticism influenced Husserl, as we have tried to show in the last chapter, attributing Husserl's shift entirely to that influence is too constricting. We will look at some other possible factors in this chapter.

5.1. The turn away from Fink: sciences, knowledge, localization

We ended the previous chapter with a discussion of *Phenomenology and Anthropology*, and we have seen that the lecture ends on an ambiguous note. This ambiguity was the product of trying to follow two diverging tendencies at once, one old, and one growing. The former is easily explained; it is a curious and unfortunate fact of Husserl's career that much of it was spent battling misreadings of the 'true' sense of transcendental phenomenology. This drive to defend a certain kind of orthodoxy was then, expectedly, the strongest in the years when the heaviest blows to it became part of the philosophical mainstream. It was not enough to point the listeners and the readers back to the *Prolegomena* either; for all their subtlety, its criticisms of psychologism and anthropologism¹¹⁹ now seemed to be somewhat passé. Staying with the colorful vocabulary of orthodoxy and heresy for a moment,¹²⁰ we can extend the analogy a bit more. The 'new heretics' (Scheler and Heidegger being the most prominent ones), trained and well-versed in phenomenology, were not merely philosophers who found themselves on the wrong path, someone to be (ideally) converted to phenomenology. On the contrary, these philosophers decided that the kind of phenomenology Husserl was offering was insufficient, and were, in a way, apostates from the Husserlian orthodoxy. This must have seemed like a

¹¹⁹ 'Anthropologism' appears as the target of Husserl's criticism already in the *Prolegomena*, albeit in the context of psychologist relativism with respect to logic. The two main representatives of the anthropologistic tendency Husserl names are Christoph von Sigwart and Benno Erdmann. The cornerstone of this type of relativism is the identification of laws of logic with laws of thought, which, once consequently followed, leads to a deep-seated relativism about truth, necessity, and the very notion of foundation in science. Cf. Hua xviii, chapter seven, and in particular §§36, 39, and 40. Husserl's notion of objective validity used in this book is a very strong one, in the sense that it implies the absolute validity of certain laws independently of human knowledge of them.

Some difficult questions could be asked about the origins of this validity and about its intertwining with the factual and the historical. Husserl himself seemed to have become progressively more interested in questions of this sort throughout his career, although both the extent and the results of this interest are very much open to interpretation. Particularly the French reception of Husserl has devoted considerable attention to these questions. The classical points of reference here are the works and lectures of Merleau-Ponty (1960; and especially 1998) and Derrida (1962; 1990). Inspired by a contemporaneous rise in popularity of structuralist analysis in philosophy, these accounts brought the role and importance of language in the constitution of ideality into sharp focus. We do not need to go into the details of these accounts, and, consequently, of the reception of this reception of Husserl. Particularly in the case of Derrida, there has been much debate regarding the tenability of his interpretation: for a brief overview of the criticisms of his appropriation of Husserl, cf. Willard 1995, Evans 1995, and Hopkins 1995.

Regardless of the details of this debate, however, I believe a useful lesson to be learned from Merleau-Ponty and Derrida is a profound skepticism toward any phenomenological claim to neat separation and distinction, and a corresponding sensitivity to possibly irreducible entanglement, complexity, and ambiguity. Furthermore, both argue, it seems to me, that this irreducibility extends to both the formal and the material level of analysis. In other words, even a transcendental theory of *method* cannot hope to deliver purity without remainder, possibly because it may turn out to be impossible to formulate that theory without inherent reference to, and influx of, practice. (We recall that Fink begins with precisely this observation, before giving in to a deeper theoretical impulse.) This basic insight turns out to cut quite deep, and the movement of Husserl's thought in the 1930s mirrors its progressive realization. We shall return to some of these motifs throughout this chapter.

¹²⁰ The image of phenomenology as a history of Husserlian heresies, originating from Ricœur (2004: 9), has become a mainstay of Husserl scholarship, for better or worse.

much bigger problem to Husserl, for these new and formidable criticisms came not from ignorance of transcendental phenomenology, but from reasoned rejection of its main tenets.

Husserl knew the reasons and arguments behind that rejection quite well, but it is not always clear if he truly understood them, or wanted to understand them. In the *Nachwort* to *Ideas I* – another classical point of reference for Husserl’s early-1930s apologetics, and a text fitting squarely into the crucial moment we are exploring – he reflects on these briefly, and it might be worthwhile to take a look at some of these considerations.¹²¹ Again, Husserl points out, the crux of the problem lies in understanding the relation between philosophy and rigorous science. Whereas for transcendental phenomenology this relation is properly viewed as one of identity, the ‘counter-trends of the present’ are looking to denounce philosophy’s claims to both rigor and scientificity; presumably, because rigorous science remains unable to address any of the concrete concerns of those who engage in it. There is a subtle undercurrent of irony here: Husserl’s phenomenology, itself growing out of criticism of naturalistic overstepping of methodological bounds is criticized for blindly forcing the ideal of scientific rigor, itself regionally applicable at best, and parochial at worst. Of course, for Husserl, such criticism is nonsense, for any true decision to engage in any kind of scientific practice already presupposes a dedication to this ideal. For that reason, Husserl argues:

“... I cannot acknowledge any kind of justification to the objections that have been advanced from those quarters: e.g., my intellectualism, the miring of my methodic procedure in abstract one-sidedness, my failure, in general and in principle, to touch upon original-concrete, practical-active subjectivity, and my skirting of the so-called problems of ‘Existence’ as well as the metaphysical problems.” (Hua v: 140/407)

¹²¹ The *Nachwort* was originally published in 1930 and has since been included in the *Husserliana* volume of *Ideas III*. (Hua v: 138-62; for a full reference to the original publication, cf. Hua v: 138, n.1). However, this particular text is more famous as the preface to the English translation of *Ideas I*, where it appeared in a slightly changed form in 1931 and introduced the English-speaking audience to this important work. Somewhat confusingly, this text, under the title *Epilogue*, is now included in the English translation of *Ideas II*. For bibliographical information about this edition, cf. the full reference to the translation of Hua IV in the Bibliography. When quoting, we will refer first to the German original from Hua v and then to this English translation.

The situation in 1930/31 was significantly more complicated than the English-speaking readers of the 1913 work might have expected – a lot had happened and changed since, both in Husserl’s own understanding of his work, and in the others’ understanding of it. Thus, benefitting from a distance of almost two decades, Husserl introduces a new audience to an old work by illuminating it with the light of his own philosophical progress. In the process, he briefly touches on debates the Anglophone readers would have known little to nothing about, but does so in a very accessible way. Indeed, as Rojcewicz and Schuwer argue: “The *Epilogue* differs considerably in style from the other writings presented herein. [i.e., from the text of *Ideas II* and its supplemental writings. – D.Dž.] It is written in very polished German, employs a broad vocabulary in highly idiomatic language, and represents Husserl at his most literary.” (*Translator’s Introduction* to the English translation of *Ideas II*: xiv)

All of these objections, he goes on to argue, are based on complete misunderstanding of the sense of the phenomenological reduction, and of phenomenology on the whole, and ultimately, "... on the fact that my phenomenology is interpreted back to a level, the overcoming of which is precisely its whole sense." (ibid.) The reference here is clear enough (though perhaps not to the Anglophone reader of the time, new to phenomenology and in the dark about the details of the family drama within it); the true meaning of the phenomenological reduction is that it enables the phenomenologist to adopt a kind of a transverse position with respect to the world and their own mundane existence, and disclose the transcendental ego as the authentic universal topic of science. Anything less than that, and one is still wed to the ontic, engaged in futile attempts to wring out universal validity from it, or, even worse, rejecting that such validity is possible in the first place. Husserl thus concludes:

"So it is my critics who have remained mired – in an anthropology, whether empirical or apriori, which, according to my theory, does not at all secure the specifically philosophical ground. And to take this anthropology for philosophy is equivalent to a relapse into a 'transcendental anthropologism' or 'psychologism'." (ibid.)

This was written in 1930, and we know what form Husserl's safeguard against such a relapse would soon take: radicalization of the difference between anthropology and phenomenology culminating in Fink-inspired interlocking claims we explored in the previous chapter. The first of these was that the human being is 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. This loose formulation still leaves quite a bit of leeway with respect to articulating its ontological and alethic consequences. However, the other claim appearing in conjunction with it, namely that the natural attitude is in some way *deficient* rather than not yet properly examined, put Husserl's account firmly into Finkian territory. Thus, what was meant to become a decisive public argument against the anthropologism of his contemporaries – and we ought not forget that the *Phenomenology and Anthropology* lecture was delivered three times before large audiences – turned out to present an uncharacteristic and perhaps not entirely flattering picture of Husserl's project.

From a strategic point of view, it is understandable why the rather obscure meontic vein of Fink's thought appeared to perfectly align with Husserl's interest at this time. It is also not inconceivable that Husserl would opt for a presentation of his thought which emphasized the laborious and unnatural character of his scientific philosophy. After all, his goal was precisely

to show that the contemporary criticisms were too crude and simplistic, and that they, in their misunderstandings and misrepresentations, intentional or not, relinquished the only true sense of philosophy. When read in this context of the *Phenomenology and Anthropology* lecture, the reference in the *Nachwort* to “the ascent from mundane subjectivity (from man) to ‘transcendental subjectivity’” (ibid.) takes on a new dimension, once again reminding us of the ‘gnosticism’ lurking in the background of a sufficiently radicalized phenomenology.

This two-pronged strategy of shifting the accusation of misunderstanding and short-sightedness and of parallel radicalization of his own relation to anthropology didn’t do Husserl much good. Someone receptive to the main thrust of Heideggerian criticism was never going to be persuaded by the argument that a *further* remove from the concrete human being was necessary in order to do real philosophy. A related, beguiling quasi-argument that occasionally appears in Husserl is that the primacy of theory in phenomenology is simply a function of the very nature of scientific investigation. A curious defense of this line of thinking is found in Gurwitsch’s ‘Critical Study of Husserl’s *Nachwort*’. Toward the very end of the paper, we read:

“As to Husserl’s defense against the reproach of ‘intellectualism,’ his defense seems to us superfluous because the reproach itself is pointless. Philosophy as clarification of the world and, more particularly, as clarification in a radical sense – in which alone the clarification deserves to be called philosophical – can by its very nature be nothing else than ‘intellectualistic’ because clarity and clarification are precisely matters of intellect.” (Gurwitsch 2009: 127)

But this is, of course, a caricature of the criticisms raised against Husserl, and a philosophical sleight of hand. In the case of Heidegger, we recall, the question was never about whether *Dasein* could adopt a theoretical attitude, or even whether the investigations into fundamental ontology took place in a theoretical attitude which remained non-explicit or unacknowledged. One may very well agree with Husserl that any focused phenomenological examination is by definition a scientific undertaking, and that, consequently, any kind of theory-building rests on certain ideals of scientificity. The real question then becomes how the phenomenologist chooses to address the origins and the nature of the theoretical attitude and the status of theory. It was the gradual radicalization of *this* issue that led Fink and Husserl to the objectionable doctrine of the purity and primacy of theory, which was ultimately the crux of the debate over Heidegger’s alleged anthropologism.

The problem of the relation between phenomenology and anthropology thus cannot be sidestepped, for every kind of investigation can be subjected to meta-questioning; nor can it be dismissed easily by way of stipulation, for phenomenology, by design, seeks to eliminate rather than proliferate presuppositions. This leaves the Husserlian phenomenologist in an awkward position, as the avenues toward explaining who does phenomenology and why are closed off one by one. How does one proceed from here?

In several of Husserl's manuscripts from late 1930 and 1931 we saw him going down a path already trodden by Fink. However, those manuscripts never turned into more than careful probings of a position that was ultimately alien to Husserl, and which he later rightfully rejected in favor of a more grounded understanding of phenomenology's position with respect to the natural human being. The *Phenomenology and Anthropology* lecture was somewhat of an outlier in this respect, at the same time emphatic about the idea of a phenomenology beyond the human being, and insistent on a deep and ineradicable link, a "remarkable relation" between it and human psychology. We recall that Husserl points out "an *intrinsic affinity*" of transcendental phenomenology, psychology, and anthropology. (Hua xxvii: 181/SP 500) This claim indicates a new opening and a revisiting of an old tendency in Husserl. The relative novelty of Husserl's insistence on the affinity between mundane science and phenomenology will become especially clear on the example of anthropology. Before we can understand how the latter adopts a new kind of role for Husserl, we first need to understand why it gets infused with new epistemological dignity. Here, the genesis of his reaction against Fink is crucial.

The 'intrinsic affinity' observation with respect to psychology is not new, but it does seem to take on a modified meaning for Husserl in the years after collaborating on the *Sixth Meditation* and leading up to the *Crisis*. Husserl of the 1920s was at pains to formulate a satisfying explanation of the transition from psychology to transcendental phenomenology. What emerged as part of this explanation was a curious theoretical construct called pure or phenomenological psychology. In the later years, Husserl's explanation moves away from this in-between stage. Instead, he elects to talk of the "alliance" [*Verschwisterung*]¹²² between psychology and transcendental phenomenology, a term meant to emphasize a specific kind of immediate relation between the mundane and the transcendental, a unique kind of "inseparability of the transcendental dimension and mundane reality."¹²³ (Hua xxix: 208)

¹²² The German word implies an even more intimate relation than that of alliance, almost one of filiation.

¹²³ Several sections of the *Crisis* and a couple of corresponding research manuscripts refer to the concept of *Verschwisterung* of psychology and transcendental phenomenology. (Hua vi: §§58, 60; Hua xxix: §16) These sections are all part of an attempt to reevaluate the psychological way into transcendental phenomenology. We shall return to the contentious topic of the ways into phenomenology again in this chapter.

These remarks point to a move away from the epistemological machinery of radical differences and gaps, and toward a more complex image of irreducible interwovenness of the mundane and transcendental registers of knowledge. It is true that Fink's epistemology also rests on the presupposition of the necessity of mundanization of transcendental knowledge. The bidirectional tendency inherent to the movement of knowledge, according to Fink, is analyzable into distinct moments of primary, anonymous enworlding, reductive deworlding, and secondary enworlding. However, although Fink does insist that phenomenology both begins and 'ends' in the world, transcendental knowledge can, according to him, never be properly mundanized. Because its ontification is both necessary and distortive, he adopts the term 'transcendental illusion' from Kant, which consequently casts a long shadow over the very idea of phenomenological epistemology. This is in stark contrast with Husserl's view on the matter, and during the collaboration with Fink, he starts articulating an alternative. We catch a first glimpse of it already in the *Nachwort*, where Husserl reflects on his understanding of the nature of philosophy, and of its relation to the unique kind of knowledge it delivers:

"For me, philosophy, as an idea, means universal, and in a radical sense, 'rigorous' science. As such, it is science built on an ultimate foundation, or, what comes down to the same thing, a science based on ultimate self-responsibility, in which, hence, nothing held to be obvious, either predicatively or pre-predicatively, can pass, unquestioned, as a basis for knowledge. It is, I emphasize, an *idea*, which, as the further meditative interpretation will show, is to be realized only by way of relative and temporary validities and in an infinite historical process – but in this way it is, in fact, realizable." (Hua v: 139/406)

One can hardly read this passage and not be instantly reminded of some of the sections from *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*. In the previous chapter, we noted that that early text contained prescient references to the intertwining of history and ideality. A complex concept of constitution tentatively emerged in it, allowing for the possibility of historical constitution of universal validities. The passage quoted above now reiterates this basic possibility, but this time with focus on the properly transcendental-methodological question concerning the epistemological status of phenomenology's knowledge claims. It is not the case, Husserl seems to be arguing here, that the phenomenologist must find a way to somehow bridge the gap between transcendental knowledge and its limiting mundane shroud. Nor is the ontification of such knowledge an unfortunate necessity; rather, the only proper way for knowledge delivered by phenomenology to be realized in the first place *is* within worldly history. This claim seems

to be animated by the conviction that the “relative and temporary validities” not only serve as vehicles of transcendental insights, but rather carry an intrinsic potential to become, by way of appropriate constitutive achievements, universal insights. The notion of intrinsic affinity of phenomenology and select mundane sciences – particularly psychology and anthropology – thus hints at a significant convergence of the natural, scientific, and transcendental attitudes.

In Husserl’s writings to which we shall soon turn, this convergence gets highlighted and explored at the expense of Finkian radicalization of transcendental phenomenology. It is important to properly evaluate this distancing from Fink, however. Although Husserl’s recoil from the ‘manichean’ side of his assistant’s thinking does constitute a certain kind of return to, or a rehabilitation of, the natural attitude, he never breaks away from those very impulses that had made Fink’s radicalization possible in the first place. Husserl never actually renounces the foundationalist drive behind his philosophy, he never gives up on the transcendental ego as the absolute anchoring point of experience, and he certainly never gives in to the temptation of any kind of relativism, not even at his most historically reflective. Yet it is not without reason that all three of these commitments become looser in the years after the collaboration on the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*.

Viewed from an ontological perspective, this loosening is the result of Husserl’s rejection of the Finkian notion of meontics; for, once the idea of a realm of experience entirely outside of ontology is jettisoned, it becomes difficult to maintain the postulated absolute difference between the constituting ego and the reflecting onlooker. It seems that the only way for this distinction to survive phenomenological scrutiny is if it is propped up by an elaborate ontology. Without it, the distinction is left hanging in the air; we saw Husserl grasp at an eccentric notion of theory in order to try to preserve the non-participating onlooker without simultaneously subscribing to Finkian ontology. What we broadly term ‘Finkian ontology’ goes well beyond Husserl’s technical understanding of ontology. For Fink, ontological (and epistemological) commitments are a necessary function of his metaphysics of the Absolute. This is most clearly seen on the example of the notions of ‘split’ and ‘unity’ with respect to various facets of experience. For example, although we refer to the ‘constituting ego’ and the ‘onlooker’, that distinction does not mirror the true state of affairs entirely accurately. It would be more accurate to talk of a tripartite division between the mundane ego (the transcendental ego apperceiving itself as a human being), the constituting ego, and the onlooker. There are different kinds of unity at play here. On the one hand, there is the initial unity between the first two egos which is anonymous and constant. Once this anonymity has been broken through by performing the reduction, the non-participating onlooker is produced, and with it the insight

that the transcendental ego and the onlooker are ontologically alike, i.e., that they are both meontic in nature, and thus radically split from the ontic, mundane ego. They are both unified in ‘transcendental life’. However, in a broader sense, transcendental life encompasses the mundane ego as well, as the latter is the necessary product of the ‘tendency toward being’ inherent to the transcendental. This is the third kind of dialectical unity in Fink’s philosophy, ultimately subsuming the radical differences between non-being and being. There are thus different kinds of splits and unities between the constituted, the constituting, and the reflecting ego in Fink, and it is only the domain of the *constituted* that can be properly put into ontological terms.¹²⁴ This kind of layered dialectics does not feature in Husserl. In fact, as Bruzina argues, “... Husserl does not seem to hesitate at all to speak with equal readiness of both the transcendental and the mundane as realms of being.” (1986: 22) It might be tempting to conclude that Husserl was simply not willing to subscribe to the relatively exotic ontology of Fink because of its speculative-metaphysical charge. There is, however, an epistemological reason other than the lack of evidential support, and it relates to the nature of transcendental knowledge, its acquisition, and the communication of it to others.

Husserl’s explanatory notion of ‘parallelism’ was one earlier attempt to provide structure to the rather free talk of two disparate realms of being. That strategy failed to deliver any real unity of the two, and didn’t even account for their relation in any satisfactory manner. Instead, it ended up bolstering a kind of unbridgeable dualism of the mundane and the transcendental within the phenomenological project. The collaborative work that went into the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* was an attempt to address this concern, but it introduced problems of a different kind. Chief among them, as we have argued, were the surprising doctrines of the non-human nature of phenomenology and of secondary, or non-proper, enworlding.

¹²⁴ From the point of view of understanding the structure and the dialectics of these relations, a deeper look into the parallels between this issue and the theological debates regarding the nature of the Trinity might prove to be illuminating. This is not the only theological undertone of the Fink-Husserl collaboration, though. Particularly interesting would be a more detailed exploration of the concept of analogy employed by Fink, and of its relation to the ‘*analogia entis*’ of the Thomist tradition. The historical moment worth considering here is the appearance of Erich Przywara’s *Analogia Entis* tome in 1932, which Husserl received the same year. (Cf. Husserl’s letter thanking and congratulating Przywara: Bw 7: 237f.) Przywara’s work on this scholastic concept had been known since the early 1920s, though, and it is not inconceivable that Fink was influenced by it as well. It is unclear whether Husserl ever gave Przywara’s work more than a cursory glance, and his attitude toward it in the mentioned letter is rather ambiguous. Przywara, on the other hand, clearly held Husserl in high regard, regardless of their philosophical and theological differences. In an essay from 1960, he writes approvingly of Husserl’s phenomenology, and even goes on to make this surprising claim: “It is understandable that in his old age Husserl had only one wish: that the Church of St. Thomas Aquinas might be the heir of his philosophy (a wish that was symbolically fulfilled in the final work of his favorite student and assistant, Edith Stein, whose hand penned Husserl’s most important manuscripts) [...]” (Przywara 2014: 616) There would be a lot to take issue with in Przywara’s essay on Husserl and Heidegger. However, his placing phenomenology squarely within the tradition of Thomas Aquinas is conceptually interesting. This is obviously a topic that far exceeds the possibilities of the present work, but it might be worthy of further attention and discussion.

Thus, the solutions offered by Fink came at too great a cost. Husserl's brief flirting with his position in mid-1931 notwithstanding, he was clearly aware of the different direction Fink was taking, and by late 1931 already started formulating an alternative. The goal, once again, was to address and explain the relation of the mundane and the transcendental, this time avoiding the pitfalls of merely postulated parallelism, or the unwanted consequences of Fink's ontology. As we shall now see, Husserl tried to capture this more intimate relation with the notions of 'coincidence' [*Deckung*] and 'localization' [*Lokalisierung*, occasionally *Lokalisation*]. This development has gone somewhat overlooked in the context of this debate, probably because Husserl continued using the notion of parallelism as well, and the concept of localization appears only sporadically and is never explicitly articulated as being in some way different from parallelism. Therefore, one could be forgiven for assuming that the occasional appearance of this term does not signify a development at all, but is rather merely a case of Husserl using a different word for the same concept. An example of this conflation is found in Bruzina's otherwise highly relevant discussion¹²⁵:

"Husserl uses *phenomenologically* concrete terms to characterize and conceptualize enworlding – thus 'localization,' 'coinciding,' etc. – while Fink wants to use *ontologically* concrete terms – thus '*Erscheinung*.' It is true that the terms Fink chooses, coming as they do from Hegel, might also be called 'phenomenological'; but as Fink takes Hegel, that sense of 'phenomenological' is also intrinsically ontological. And it is this ontological character of the terms that Husserl seems not to admit, rejecting 'appearance' as too suggestive of illusoriness or pseudo-reality." (1986: 25)

For Fink, according to Bruzina, "Husserl's solution is too simplistic. Simply to assert 'coincidence' (*Deckung*) will not do. It does not explicate the unity in being that could overcome the difference – the duality – but in fact highlights that difference; for both coinciding factors have a kind of being proper to each." (24) This is essentially the argument we raised against the concept of 'parallelism'. But this objection fails to appreciate that 'localization' does introduce a novel aspect into Husserl's understanding of this issue, namely, that of the *historical embeddedness* of transcendental knowledge in the mundane. This is a dimension

¹²⁵ Somewhat surprisingly, Bruzina's later and authoritative *Beginnings and Ends in Phenomenology* makes no mention of 'localization', nor of 'coincidence' in the context of this problem, but does make several references to the concept of parallelism, and to Fink's critique of it. Tellingly, Bruzina does recognize that parallelism, as it appears in Husserl's later work, specifically in the *Crisis*, doesn't feature in quite the same way as in the previous discussion of the passage from psychology to transcendental phenomenology, but he doesn't pursue this further. Cf. Bruzina 2004: 121f.

that, apart from a few scattered references to the transformative potential of phenomenology, was lacking in the previous discussions of parallelism. The problem for Husserl back then was to show how different kinds of *scientific* knowledge related to, and led into, one another. What the collaboration with Fink made obvious in a particularly poignant way was that the question had to be put more broadly, namely, how knowledge *in general* related to, and was transformed by, transcendental phenomenology.¹²⁶ In the next section, we shall see how Husserl's exploration of the transcendental's localization in the mundane anticipates his embracing of the historical-anthropological dimension of transcendental phenomenology.

5.2. "Here I sit at my writing desk..."

Terms such as 'intrinsic affinity', 'alliance', or 'inseparability' take on an increasingly important thematic role for Husserl in the 1930s. The theme they are framing is the growing need to respond to two extreme interpretations of phenomenology, namely anthropologism and Fink's meontics. The role they play is mostly operative in the classical Finkian sense, i.e., they guide much of Husserl's discussion, without necessarily being elaborated. When they do undergo phenomenological explication, the results are not always what one might expect, and they are rarely unambiguous. The ambiguous character of the manuscripts where Husserl is going over these issues was certainly at least partly a function of interlocking timelines and conflicting interests; this is especially true of the crucial moment of mid- to late 1931 that we are exploring here. Although the work on the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* would not be done for roughly another year, Husserl had worked very closely with Fink for a couple of years,¹²⁷ and their philosophical exchange clearly influenced both. At the same time, Husserl was becoming increasingly aware of their growing philosophical differences. Dorion Cairn's notes on his conversations with them are instructive here and provide valuable context and accurate dating. Thus, for example, already toward the end of 1931 (early December), he explicitly notes Fink's "... inclination to speak of the transcendental as meontic rather than ontic". (1976: 57) Tellingly, this important note closes a recollection of a talk with Fink about the possibilities of man, and of transcendental consciousness:

¹²⁶ Throughout his working notes, Fink is usually careful to distinguish between epistemology in the narrower sense, and theory of knowledge, i.e. gnoseology, in the broader sense. As his thought progresses, Husserl becomes more interested in this distinction as well.

¹²⁷ Cf. IJsseling's foreword to the German edition of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, where he writes: "From October of 1929 onwards, Husserl would invite his colleague to talk over supper more often, and starting with the first weeks of January of 1930, Husserl and Fink would carry on long conversations about their joint philosophical work on an almost daily basis." (SCM: ix)

“The possibilities of a stone are not inherent in the stone, neither is the stone conscious of them. The possibilities of a man are not inherent in the man, though he may be conscious of them. Yet the possibilities of the transcendental consciousness must be inherent in that consciousness. Unless the whole distinction between possibility and actuality is *aufgehoben* <annulled> in the transcendental sphere, even as the notion of being is *aufgehoben*.” (56)

This is somewhat cryptic, but the context seems to be clear enough: both Husserl and Fink are careful not to identify or confuse the transcendental sphere with the ontic, and are looking for ways to articulate this relation. Rudimentary features of Fink’s later doctrine of primary and secondary enworlding are present here, but there seems to be some uncertainty about the notion of possibility, specifically with respect to the preconditions and motivations for disclosing transcendental consciousness. Shouldn’t at least one possibility, namely that of performing the phenomenological reduction, be regarded as inherent to man? To be sure, the preconditions for uncovering one’s own constitutive achievements would have to be cultivated, but the potential to do so *ought* to be inherent to man if the gap between the two radically different realms is to be bridgeable in any methodically focused way, and not merely by way of, say, singular mystic experiences. By the time of completion of the *Sixth Meditation*, Fink will have developed a preliminary solution for this difficulty by analyzing the ‘primary enworlding – deworlding – secondary enworlding’ moments as part of a larger movement of absolute knowledge. This allowed him to introduce notions such as ‘transcendental fore-knowledge’ and the passive ‘taken along’ which solved the problem of motivation, both for performing the reduction, and for going back into the natural attitude, albeit only by stipulation. These Hegelian undertones of Fink’s understanding of phenomenology were very clearly present in the years leading up to the definitive writing down of the *Sixth Meditation*. They also heavily contributed to the development of Fink’s distinct vision of the phenomenological reduction as an un-humanizing act. That the epistemological anti-humanism and what we saw Crowell refer to as Fink’s gnosticism seem to go hand in hand is further illustrated by some of Cairns’s recollections from November of 1931. Thus, with respect to the relation of the transcendental and the mundane, we read the following retelling of a conversation with Fink:

“Fink thinks that Husserl’s ideal of a world which one can *bejahen* <affirm> is not a necessary result of his phenomenological investigations, but a matter of personal feeling, an expression of a hard-won optimism. Fink is more inclined to think of the relativization of the absolute as an *Ausschweifung* <digression, excess> of the absolute (Hegel). As such it is *gleichgültig*

<indifferent> and yet necessary. [...] The phenomenological reduction is not to be regarded as merely an event in the history of the world, it is essentially a catastrophic event, a *Weltvernichtung* <annihilation of the world>. This *Vernichtung* is the purpose of philosophy. He cited Hegel's phrase: Philosophy is *Zugrundegehen*." (50)

It might be tempting to pursue the latter part of this series of bold claims, but the reference to the notorious *Weltvernichtung* thought experiment is essentially a red herring in this context. Even if Fink did use this exact formulation, here it obviously does not correspond to Husserl's early and contentious formulation of transcendental idealism,¹²⁸ but is rather meant to evoke the specific kind of suspension of mundane history, the caesura brought about by the performance of the reduction. More problematic and fundamentally alien to Husserl at this point would have been Fink's progressive devaluation of the role of the mundane in phenomenology. Regardless of the reference to the necessity of mundanization, relegating it to the dimension of relativized excess of the Absolute simply fails to capture the full character of the transcendental, and threatens to misrepresent phenomenology as a quasi-mystical, rather than scientific, endeavor. Of course, this kind of dislocation of the world brings to bear on the understanding of the ego as well. By the end of 1931, Husserl and Fink already diverge significantly in their views on how to properly describe the transcendental ego and its relation to its mundane counterpart. This divergence becomes particularly conspicuous in the context of our leading question of motivation for engaging in phenomenology. We turn again to Cairns,

¹²⁸ A detailed look into the debate over Husserl's 'annihilation of the world' thought experiment would be superfluous here. However, a few brief remarks might be in order, considering how often this particular issue appears in the literature, and how potentially decisive it might be in ascertaining just what exactly the metaphysical commitments of Husserl's transcendental idealism are. The reference to the possibility of absolute consciousness 'surviving', i.e. remaining after the annihilation of the world notably appears in *Ideas I*, §49. Usually quoted in tandem with this well-known section is a contemporaneous text, itself part of a lecture course from 1913, titled 'Zum transzendentalen Idealismus', making similar claims. (Hua xxxvi: 73-79) Several other texts from roughly the same period make essentially the same point, and Husserl does indeed argue, in a manuscript from as early as 1908, that: "Consciousness, being in a radical sense, is in the radical, true sense of the word. It is the root – and in a different image – the source of everything that bears, or could bear, the name 'being'. It is the root: It carries every other individual being, be it immanent or transcendent." (70)

As is the case with most of Husserl's more controversial claims, the interpretation largely depends on how we understand a number of other supporting claims and arguments. In any case, reading these early attempts to formulate a phenomenologically grounded transcendental idealism as arguing for some kind of metaphysically causal, rather than 'merely' epistemological, primacy of consciousness is at the very least plausible. For a still relevant critical exploration of this issue, see Ingarden 1975, 1976: particularly 422ff., and 2013. However, more recent literature has contributed greatly to a subtler interpretation of Husserl's 'annihilation argument', focusing mainly on its emphatic affirmation of the possibility of consciousness in the face of largely or entirely incoherent, inharmonious, or even non-intentional experience. (cf. Zahavi 2017: 102ff.; also compare the entry on 'Annihilation of the world' in Moran & Cohen 2012: 33) For an argument that this thought experiment actually constitutes a 'rehabilitation of reality' on Husserl's part, cf. Taguchi 2017. For a detailed commentary on 'The region of pure consciousness' section of *Ideas I*, cf. Hopkins 2015. Finally, for an entirely different take praising the inherent imaginative capacities of the 'annihilation of the world' idea, see Geniusas 2013: 410-12.

who voices the concerns regarding psychological motivation. On the question of why decide to perform the methods of phenomenology without presupposing their results,

“Husserl replied by developing certain considerations which can occupy us in the natural attitude: I am in the world, the world appears to me in a multitude of experiences and other acts, and what the world is for me is always a world which is valid (*geltend*) in my own subjectivity. Existence of objects in themselves is a kind of validity for me through certain experiences of the object which is, as so experienced, said to exist in itself. This leads us to the realization that all being is constituted for a subject, and to the consideration of objects as so constituted – without preliminary consideration of the nature of evidence.” (39)

This is a rough retelling based on a possibly vague recollection, and the accuracy of a carefully written response cannot be expected. Still, one has the feeling that some crucial steps have been skipped, and some decisive details omitted. Conceding that a person in the natural attitude might be motivated to move from simply experiencing objects to recognizing them as bundles of different validities (say, by way of some particular theoretical attitude), the jump to the realization that ‘all being is constituted for a subject’ still remains jarring. The content of this realization is also unclear, as there is, at least initially, no reason to suspect that the constitution *for* the subject is performed *by* any kind of a subject, let alone a transcendental one.¹²⁹ This leads us back to the problem we pointed to in the previous chapter: so far, it seems that the only

¹²⁹ This kind of questioning could be pursued further by exercising some Nietzschean genealogical thinking. Recall the argument Nietzsche makes regarding the perils of language ossifying thought:

“A quantum of force is just such a quantum of drive, will, action, in fact it is nothing but this driving, willing and acting, and only the seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason petrified within it), which construes and misconstrues all actions as conditional upon an agency, a ‘subject’, can make it appear otherwise. And just as the common people separates lightning from its flash and takes the latter to be a *deed*, something performed by a subject, which is called lightning, popular morality separates strength from the manifestations of strength, as though there were an indifferent substratum behind the strong person which had the *freedom* to manifest strength or not. But there is no such substratum; there is no ‘being’ behind the deed, its effect and what becomes of it; the ‘doer’ is invented as an afterthought, - the doing is everything.” (2008: 26)

One can easily imagine what Nietzsche would have made of Husserl’s teleological and, ultimately, moralistic, conception of philosophy-as-science, yet one need not go so far. It would be enough to substitute ‘constituting subject’ and ‘constitution’ for ‘strength’ and ‘manifestation of strength’, respectively, to see how this kind of criticism might apply to phenomenology. This line of thought partly anticipates elements of the French reception of phenomenology – concepts such as the impersonal transcendental field and plane of immanence – but also the Neo-Pragmatist readings of, say, Heidegger. Particularly representative in this context would be John Haugeland’s early reading of *Being and Time*, which he summarizes with the simplistic, but memorable formula: “all constitution is institution.” (2013: 8) What is meant here is something along the lines of ‘all *transcendental* constitution is *social* institution’. Although this slogan might be too constricting, it encapsulates well the kind of pragmatist understanding of constitution one could perhaps extract from a Nietzsche-inspired reading of Husserl.

way to reach the specific conclusions of transcendental phenomenology is by performing the exact methods designed to reach those very conclusions. This might be a difficulty inherent to the idea of phenomenological *reduction* as method, considering the image embedded within it, namely that of a methodically guided step *back* or *return* to some kind of a fundament. We will return to this image and to a possible Husserlian alternative to it in the following sections. For now, let us point out that the provisional answer to Cairns's question above does, importantly, provide an account of the phenomenological attitude as something emerging organically *from* the natural attitude. The obvious implication here – and this is where one has to keep the 'intrinsic affinity' thesis in mind – is that the initial reasons for performing phenomenological methods can only be psychological reasons. Fink openly disagreed on this point, both with Husserl and with Cairns and "... doubted that one could come directly to a phenomenological reduction in this way. He characterized it as a way '*über die Psychologie*' <via or through psychology>." (39) Considering that Fink's ongoing work on the *Sixth Meditation* was, among other things, a reaction against Husserl's mid- to late 1920s articulation of the 'parallelism' of the mundane and the transcendental ego, it is not surprising that he was skeptical of the way into phenomenology via psychology; the same stumbling blocks of that approach that we discussed must have been glaringly obvious to Fink. About a year before completing the actual text of the new *Meditation*, his mind seems to have already been made up: instead of looking for a way to rework the doctrine of parallelism, he would go on to abandon it in favor of a more radical doctrine of absolute difference based on the un-humanizing effects of 'true' reduction. Thus, on the very same day of the conversation with Husserl, Fink shares with Cairns his view on the scope of the phenomenological reduction:

"Fink said that he was not satisfied when Husserl treats the reduction of the psyche as if it were a close parallel to the reduction of nature – particularly when Husserl speaks as if the reduction of the psyche consisted merely in the reduction of its *Einordnung* <finding a place>, via the body and the sensory and kinaesthetic fields, in the natural world. Even after such reduction, says Fink, a specifically human *Geltung* <acceptance, validity> of the transcendental consciousness remains unreduced. Namely, the finitude of consciousness as passive, 'recipient'. This must be reduced before one reaches the transcendental pure consciousness." (40)

This not only anticipates, but also clarifies in advance the need for the doctrine of motivation that will appear in the *Sixth Meditation*; although psychological motives are not entirely excised

from Fink's account of motivation and may in fact be a necessary precondition, they are not sufficient, as it is only in conjunction with transcendental fore-knowledge that the subject could be driven to shed the last remnants of its human validity.

Throughout our discussion, we have been referring to the notion of transcendental naïveté, central to the project of a phenomenology of phenomenology. It was understood by both Husserl and Fink as uncritical translation of ontic properties or modes of thinking into the sphere of transcendental insights. What was now becoming increasingly clear was that Fink's ideal of non-mundane knowledge was far more stringent and demanding than that of Husserl. For Fink, the natural attitude was not only an excess of the Absolute, but in fact a hindrance to attaining absolute knowledge. Both necessary and distorting with respect to transcendental knowledge, the world can thus only serve as the locus of a seeming truth. Nothing could be further from Husserl's understanding of the nature and role of phenomenological knowledge. For him, the world and the various attitudes it fosters are the topic to be returned to constantly precisely because they are the only soil on which transcendental knowledge can grow. There is a fundamental difference of perspectives here. As Luft points out:

“While Fink emphasizes the ‘captivation in the world’ of the natural attitude and its ‘narrowness’ in comparison to the unfettered view of the philosopher, Husserl’s approach is the opposite: The natural attitude is continually freed of its blinkers, insofar as more and more gets uncovered to it, instead of it irremediably being stuck in its narrowness. The natural experience *itself* broadens, i.e., it is broadened by the disclosing scientist, be they a positive or a transcendental one, insofar as they have new experiences and, by having them, uncover something new.” (Luft 2002: 271)

Instead of looking to abandon the world of natural experience, or even of unmasking it as somehow deficient, the task of the transcendental philosopher is much like the task of any scientist, then. This is a serious shift – and, it seems to us, progress – from the Fink-inspired parts of *Phenomenology and Anthropology*. Not only is the gap between the mundane and the transcendental not bridged in a merely seeming way, but there is in fact no gap to be bridged at all; the transcendental grows out of, and builds on, the mundane. It was this basic thought that – toward the end of 1931 – marked the beginning of Husserl's definitive move away from Fink's position. With this insight, a certain rehabilitation of the natural attitude and of the place of the mundane subject in phenomenology is effected. This naturally leads to a reevaluation, and, possibly, revalorization of the epoché and of the phenomenological reduction as well.

Husserl explicitly undertakes one such reevaluation of the reduction in a manuscript written in late November and beginning of December of 1931, titled ‘Die Phänomenologie in der Weltgeschichte’.¹³⁰ Written mere days after the discussions with Fink and Cairns, this text is important for two reasons. On the one hand, it is probably the first sustained attempt to formulate an alternative to Fink’s placing the reduction, and consequently the transcendental ego, outside of history, as headings such as ‘The human historicity of the transcendental reduction’ and ‘The phenomenological reduction as a human-psychological fact’ clearly indicate. In it, we witness Husserl searching for an answer and, in a way, take that road with him. Compared to the later, highly condensed critical notes to parts of Fink’s exposition in the *Sixth Meditation*, where he has already more or less made up his mind, this manuscript is more experimental, but also more illustrative of the difficulty of the issue. On the other hand, it is one of the few texts where Husserl articulates his old ‘parallelism thesis’ in terms of a ‘coincidence’, or a ‘localization’¹³¹ of the transcendental in the mundane. Unfortunately, he somewhat carelessly continues to use the notion of a ‘parallelism’ as well, thus undermining the novelty of his own thesis. Yet, it is obvious that these are two quite different images, and that ‘coincidence’ and ‘localization’ are precisely meant to solve the problems that arose from the old idea of ‘parallelism’, and which inspired Fink to develop his own solution. There is a wider appeal to this particular manuscript as well; as Luft writes in his *Editor’s Introduction*, this text “... may very well be the first manuscript in Husserl’s corpus in which a universal historical outline from the perspective of transcendental phenomenology is sketched out.” (Hua xxxiv: xlii) As Luft goes on to add, the history in question is factual history and must be understood in the context of the problem of enworlding of phenomenology, or, more precisely, of *secondary* enworlding, in Fink’s vocabulary. This is an important addition, for it underlines the point we have already hinted at in our brief discussion of the concept of generativity: not only does it make sense for transcendental phenomenology to address *worldly* history, but in fact it must do so, if its talk of a *transcendental* history is to carry any weight.

The text opens on what we may call an existential-scientific note, and asks about the psychological character and consequences of phenomenological investigations with respect to the phenomenologist. As Husserl notes, for someone simply observing from the side, there may

¹³⁰ Hua xxxiv, §22: 312-24.

¹³¹ Husserl’s use of the term ‘localization’ is not limited to this context. He uses it elsewhere to refer, for example, to the essential spatial localization of animals and humans (Hua iv: 33), but also as shorthand for designating spatial-temporal positioning in general. (Hua xxxiv: 137) Perhaps more interestingly, he also uses it to refer to the way the psychological is intertwined with the living body. (92; 375; 534) In the latter case, the term is obviously meant to convey the uniquely intimate kind of relation of mind and body, and in this sense, this image of localization closely resembles that which interests us in the context of the mundane/transcendental relation.

not seem to be any difference between the phenomenologist and any other kind of scientist. Yet, for the one who is used to practicing the phenomenological methods, the situation is entirely different. Crucially (and contra Fink), this difference is not framed in terms of a history-suspending, unheard-of method, but is rather to be understood on the basis of its results. Husserl talks of a certain habituality growing out of, or being instituted by, regular and proper performance of the epoché and the reductions.¹³² (Hua xxxiv: 312) This implies that these are methods much like any other: something to be learned about, practiced, and, importantly, teachable.¹³³ The hard-won results of phenomenological research are preserved by, but also contribute to, this growing habituality. This sets the tone for the important motif of personal and interpersonal *transformation* instituted by phenomenology. This existentially colored notion, as we will see, is a correlate of the localization of the transcendental in the mundane, and will play a role in explaining the motivation for engaging in phenomenology.

The reference to the habitual character of phenomenological research is not new. In a research manuscript probably dating back to 1924, there is mention of a certain normative and transformative potential of phenomenological methodology, and of the ways in which different attitudes relate to each other. (Hua xiii: 206) The context of this short manuscript is somewhat complicated: it's a reworking of a note probably written in 1921, which was amending a portion of a course from 1910/11 on the 'Basic problems of phenomenology'. The point of contention throughout all three is the difference between phenomenological and natural judgments, viz. between phenomenological and ontological truths. We see Husserl wrestling with the problem of their relation: although bracketing ought to imply that positivity of every kind is set aside, there is still "obviously a mutual dependence" of objective truths and truths about pure subjectivity. (202) Since Husserl in 1924 is much more decisive in acknowledging the universal character of phenomenology than Husserl in 1910/11,¹³⁴ he solves this problem in a familiar way: "Not only is positive truth, as truth, not independent of phenomenological truth, but is

¹³² Husserl is not always careful to distinguish between the epoché and the various reductions, and this text is an example of rather sloppy conflation of those distinct methods. However, given the text's focus on the general problem of phenomenology's place within history, this conflation might be understood as simply mirroring the very broad level of reflection on phenomenological methodology Husserl is undertaking here. For this reason, we generally insist on mentioning both throughout our discussion. Of course, this does not mean that the two methods exhaust phenomenology's methodological apparatus.

¹³³ For an overview of Husserl's rich and complex notions of habit and habituality, cf. Moran 2011a and 2014. The transcendental-phenomenological notion of 'passive synthesis' provides a particularly illuminating perspective on this important aspect of the person. For an overview of how Merleau-Ponty, who is usually associated with insightful analysis of habit, appropriated this Husserlian tool, cf. Beith 2018.

¹³⁴ Consider, for example, this uncharacteristically modest claim from the lecture course of 1910/11: "We are not interested here in the absolute universal science, but rather in science within the phenomenological attitude. We will let other considerations decide, if and in what way a science in such an attitude [can] be called 'absolute', and whether an absolute science beyond that is at all possible or not." (Hua xiii: 151)

actually itself enclosed within it [*beschlossen*], though never a topic in phenomenology.” (205) Yet, the last sentence must be understood in a limited and precise way. Phenomenology is happy to let other sciences in the natural, or positive attitude, deal with whatever their topics are. However, this does not mean that the knowledge attained by those sciences remains entirely shut off from phenomenological insight. In fact, as Husserl points out, once the focused performance of phenomenological methods has brought about the scientific habituality specific to phenomenology, the very positivity of other sciences is, and must be, viewed in a different light. (205f.) This echoes Husserl’s point about phenomenological insight informing other sciences, and flows into his broader perspective on science in general:

“The habitus of the phenomenological epoché is a thematic habitus enabling one to attain certain topics, certain theoretical and practical insights into truth, and a certain purely self-enclosed system of knowledge. To be sure, this thematic habitus does in a certain way exclude that of positivity: only by being closed off with respect to the habitus of positivity does it lead to an enclosed unity of a phenomenology as ‘first’ philosophy, as the science of transcendental pure subjectivity. [...] *But this does not prevent the ‘results’ of both attitudes and the sciences of both attitudes from entering an inner thematic, synthetic relation, from which new insights well up.*” (208f.)

This brief manuscript from 1924 is noteworthy because it anticipates the later response to Fink in two ways. First, by regimenting truths into phenomenological and ontological ones, but simultaneously insisting on the possibility of their synthetic, rather than dialectic unity, it eliminates the need for the meontic dimension altogether. Since phenomenological truths are understood as offering a new perspective on the same things, rather than as relating to entirely new things outside of ontology, there is no need to reach for ways to address the ‘region’ of pre-being at all. This highlights one of the claims we have hinted at earlier, namely, that Husserl had already developed a satisfactory epistemological alternative to an ontological problem that didn’t even appear before Fink. This is further reflected in the second way in which our detour into 1924 anticipates the context of the issue that would appear some seven years later. The recognition that the unity of mundane and transcendental sciences can be mutually informative *and lead to new knowledge* [... *eine innere thematische synthetische Beziehung* [...], *aus der neue Einsichten entquellen*] raises the following important point: transcendental habituality is an epistemological factor in the natural world, and it actively contributes to the knowledge of it. The ever-expanding knowledge of the natural world gains additional transcendental depth

which informs all sciences, which, in turn, further inform phenomenology. The synthetic and thematic epistemological unity of sciences that arises in this way is a kind of a positive feedback loop of knowledge. Phenomenologists are thus active participants in worldly history, and not mere observers, because their insights are part of the constant process of constitution, and not just reflections on it. This affirmation of the transformative potential of phenomenology somewhat subverts the doctrine of pure theory that would appear a few years later in the guise of the meontic disinterested spectator.¹³⁵

This line of thought is taken up again in the text on phenomenology within worldly history from late 1931, to which we now return. This manuscript, much like the lecture on *Phenomenology and Anthropology*, is occasionally ambiguous, if not downright contradictory. However, unlike in that lecture, the ambiguity here seems to play a philosophical role. Let us explore this a bit further. Toward the beginning of the text, Husserl will clarify that he operates with a simple concept of naïveté, meaning by it a worldly subject's unawareness of its transcendental achievements. (Hua xxxiv: 313) This is rather one-dimensional in comparison to the layered notion of transcendental naïveté used by Fink. Indeed, Husserl carefully spells out what he means by overcoming naïveté in this sense: I attain an understanding of the previously concealed achievements from which the *sense* the world has for me originates. In the process, worldly history, my own humanity, as well as that of others are all epistemologically transformed into transcendental phenomena which I then analyze accordingly. Note that there is no talk of ontology here: the world remains exactly as it was before performing the methods; nothing is lost, and nothing is produced. The epoché, as well

¹³⁵ We will be talking about transformation in the broad sense of *epistemological* transformation and limiting our account of the phenomenologist as 'active participant in worldly history' to the sense of participating in the continuous intersubjective constitution of the lifeworld in its different modalities. The more specific question of the possibility of transformation through some kind of political commitment or activism is outside the scope of our discussion, yet there are obvious and interesting parallels and questions that arise there. For the most part, Husserl's thought is entirely apolitical, and it might be argued that his brand of idealism simply doesn't lend itself to political or even ethical thinking, on account of its supposed "drowning reality in the flood of ideas." (Sartre 1966: 85/50) Sartre's response to this criticism is novel enough to warrant being regarded as a position in its own right. Yet, one need not go further than the last five years of Husserl's life to notice a new, overtly political charge to his writings. The complicated legacy of his relationship with Heidegger, as well as the growing anti-Semitic sentiment in the academia of the time certainly contributed to this shift in tone. The fact that these concerns are cast in terms of a much broader philosophy of history in which phenomenology plays an almost messianic role indicates that there are strong links between the rarified epistemology of transcendental phenomenology and its mundane, historical, and *relative* correlates. We shall briefly return to some of these larger points in the conclusion.

For an illuminating overview of the kind of treatment Husserl was facing in a growingly hostile academic world, cf. Moran 2011b. For a volume on the interactions between phenomenology and the sphere of the political, cf. Thompson & Embree 2000. Held (2012) offers a critical, but sympathetic overview of some strengths and limitations of the phenomenological approach to the political domain, especially in light of its indebtedness to the Ancient Greek notion of *epistêmê*.

as the various reduction that follow it, are methods designed to approach the mundane objective being precisely as it is and always was, only without taking the validity of its givenness for granted. (ibid.) This is an epistemological position through and through, and it seems to echo the points made in 1924. It is easy to imagine how phenomenological, or, if we prefer, transcendental truths, might grow out of and track ontological truths and thus enrich our understanding of the realm of ontological truths, i.e., of the mundane background of our experience. It would be enough to look at such diverse interdisciplinary fields as neuroscience, bioethics, or sociology of culture to see how they might be informed by phenomenological insight, but also vice versa: new empirical facts might, and indeed should, inform eidetic and transcendental analysis. This overarching perspective on the nature and scope of mundane *cum* transcendental knowledge can be pursued even further. Considering that the specific habituality of the phenomenologist is a uniquely broad kind of scientific habituality, straddling different kinds of attitudes, including pre-theoretical and pre-scientific ones, transcendental insight does not necessarily have to remain of use to a limited, elite stratum of top scientists. In very much the same way scientific results or literary references get filtered down into everyday life, take on a ‘life of their own’, and become part of common knowledge, so too could transcendental knowledge eventually trickle down to other pre-scientific attitudes, albeit in less stringent form and after a long process of cultural sedimentation. Consider the all-pervasive presence of, e.g., Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes in everyday modes of thinking – that kind of transformation through philosophy is unmistakable and an example of how it can enrich the natural attitude. There is no reason to believe that transcendental philosophy couldn’t accomplish the same; indeed, these examples seem to be exactly what Husserl had in mind in 1924 when he spoke of the synthetic unity of sciences which begets new or broader knowledge.

It is thus that much more curious to follow the continuation of the argument, where we read, on the very next page, that phenomenology “... does not broaden the natural sense of the world when it gives the world its transcendental sense, or, better yet, when it brings its hidden transcendental sense to light.” (314) Furthermore, Husserl suddenly includes an ontological dimension into his analysis of the phenomenological reduction, and insists that

“[...] every single being existing for me in its naturalness, meaning the real world as totality of real beings, but also every ideal world, is separate from, and remains separate, from the universe of being (if you will: from the world, the totality of absolute being) which is disclosed by the phenomenological reduction.” (318)

This ‘separation claim’ is difficult to square with the opening sections of the manuscript, because the ontological status of the newly-disclosed universe of being is unclear: if it doesn’t exist in the world, but is disclosed (and not produced), where exactly was this transcendental being previously hidden? If Husserl’s reference to the separate universe of being is to be more than metaphorical, it would seem that he has no choice but to accept a meontic interpretation of the phenomenological reduction.

This possible nod to Fink initially seems to carry over into the thesis we have come to know well by now, namely that of the absolute inscrutability of the phenomenologizing ego as long as one remains bound by the ontic constraints of the natural attitude. For example, Husserl will underline the fact that, upon performing the reduction, “I don’t live as a natural human being anymore, I live, so to speak, in a kind of an unnaturalness.” (323) This claim is at least as old as *Ideas I* (but can be traced in a slightly weaker form all the way back to the *Logical Investigations*, as we’ve seen), and it could be made plausible while still retaining a relatively grounded understanding of the kind of knowledge phenomenology delivers. However, once it gets coupled with the Delphic claim that “[t]o be a phenomenologist is something that only a phenomenologist can experience and recognize” (317), phenomenology’s subject matter and promised knowledge seem to assume a more esoteric form. Are these enigmatic references to the subject of phenomenology not concessions to Fink after all, and are they not enough to conclude that Husserl was still defending the confused and contradictory position from *Phenomenology and Anthropology*?

Not quite, as the ambiguity of Husserl’s position actually seems to have a philosophical and illustrative, or, in other words, positive role in this text.¹³⁶ The references to the radical otherness of transcendental phenomenology, and, consequently, of the phenomenologist, serve not to distance it from the mundane ego, or to un-humanize this specific scientific endeavor.

¹³⁶ Making this a rare case where Husserl embraces a style of thinking which almost revels in contradiction and dialectics. Of course, Husserl was no stranger to exploratory work in which difficult problems get carefully probed, often on the brink of self-contradiction. Yet, as a general rule, these problems are ideally something to be dissolved, rather than tools to be thought *with*. Derrida’s evaluation of Husserl’s aversion to aporia, paradox, and dilemma is thus apt (1967b: 229f./193f.), as long as we accept the implicit claim that the aporetic style of thinking is still working toward some sort of a definitive solution. In that sense, “[t]he phenomenologist, on the contrary, is the ‘true positivist’ who returns to the things themselves, and who is self-effacing before the originality and primordially of meanings.” From this stems the phenomenological promise of absolute metaphysical neutrality: “The process of faithful comprehension or description, and the continuity of explication must dispel the shadow of a choice.” (230/194) Of course, Derrida’s presentation here is somewhat tendentious, for it creates the opening for the critical rereading according to which the methodological maneuver of self-effacement through absolute neutrality turns out to be a metaphysical gesture in itself. But what about the cases where aporetic thinking *is not* a way toward philosophical decision, but is rather a function of faithful description? Do those cases, in which ambiguity or aporia somehow remain suspended in the air throughout, refer to an epistemological or ontological state of affairs? This is precisely the problem Husserl faces in his analysis of localization.

Rather, they direct the phenomenologist's attention to the fact that despite its unnatural methodological steps, this philosophy necessarily remains in the world and in history. However the universe of being disclosed by transcendental phenomenology is to be understood, and in spite of its separation from ontic being, it is embedded in the mundane and the historical. This is the "peculiarly new situation" described by phenomenology, namely, the *coincidence* of the transcendental life and of its transcendental habitualities with the "I, this man in the world". (314) How to properly understand this coincidence, now? Is it an ontological fact, or rather a phenomenological truth? Both answers seem to be correct: on the one hand, the necessary coincidence of the transcendental with the mundane is presented to us as a transcendental fact in its own right; on the other hand, the notion of coincidence tells us something about a state of affairs in the world. As Husserl goes on to recognize, my transcendental ego and those of others are the site of both the validity of the world, and of the world as transcendental construct.

There is an inner tension in this account of coincidence, as it leads the phenomenologist to the recognition that there is a continuity between mundane sciences and phenomenology, rather than a radical rupture. This forces us to rethink the distinction between the constituting and the onlooking ego and implies that phenomenological analysis cannot be conceptualized as pure non-participating theory, but is rather *both* descriptive theory and constitutive practice:

"It now appears that I'm treating transcendental science and its achievement of sense and of validity as other scientific results, namely as partaking in world-constitution, *after all*; e.g., I say: 'In 1905 I first performed the phenomenological reduction in Göttingen.' Or I say: 'Here I sit at my writing desk and find myself in a phenomenological attitude, researching and writing down the results of transcendental phenomenology.' I also speak of other phenomenologists who are working in a transcendental-philosophical community with me, and not of (usually misunderstanding) *quasi*-phenomenologists." (315)

This is quite clearly a valid way of reflecting on one's own phenomenological work, but it also constitutes, as Husserl rightfully points out in the continuation of his argument, a psychologization of phenomenological activity and frames phenomenology as a "... historical event in the history of philosophy." (ibid.) The habitualization of transcendental methods leads to the development of a specific and uniquely broad kind of scientific comportment, but this attitude, just like any other kind of scientific relation to the world, can be left at any time and freely adopted again, with enough practice. Again, these reflections must be contrasted with the underlying theme of the unique status and unnatural character of transcendental analysis.

From that perspective, the ambiguous character of the transcendental, which both is and isn't a part of the world, becomes particularly conspicuous:

“The peculiarity and a problem for us is precisely here, that I, by placing myself on the ground of the world (namely by taking it up again – as a philosopher – as a topic of experience, as a scientific topic), readily enworld my transcendental-scientific activity and its results, understand my phenomenological thinking as a mental, human-psychic occurrence, and therefore also take phenomenology to be an event in the world, specifically as an event of European history of philosophy.” (316)

It is not surprising that Husserl is uneasy about accepting this conclusion at face value: it seems to be a straightforward concession to the Heideggerian criticism he publicly denounced mere months earlier. Is this not, at best, tantamount to sticking little transcendental cores into regular people and arguing, once again, that there was simply no way around the factual human being? Against this absurd position, Husserl then argues – echoing his confused proximity to Fink from *Phenomenology and Anthropology* – that the acts of the epoché and reduction *do not* have their place in the world, nor the one who is performing them: “He is not a human being, who phenomenologizes among other human activities.” (316f.) This leads him to repeat his decisive argument against anthropologism, namely that the natural attitude is an attitude of the transcendental ego, rather than the other way around. (317, n.1)

Yet this argument is a clear outlier in this manuscript, and a prime example of Husserl confusing for a moment the ontological and epistemological claims of his philosophy, but also of the criticisms of it.¹³⁷ The decisive critical point against Husserl – particularly in the case of Heidegger's reappropriation of phenomenology – was not that the transcendental ego was some kind of a hazy component of man, hidden deep inside, as he seems to misrepresent it. (316) Rather, the question was whether the absolute theoretic primacy of the transcendental ego over the factual subject was well-founded. In any case, Husserl preemptively dismisses this naïve objection with, again, an epistemological point: the epoché and the reduction are methods with which the transcendental ego first discloses itself to itself, and thus attains a privileged

¹³⁷ This is not limited to Husserl's texts from 1931, which we have mostly analyzed so far. As a matter of fact, some surprising claims about the reduction appear even much later, for example in a manuscript from as late as 1936, where we read: “The world as universal horizon, which is included in every old kind of being, is an open infinity of possibilities, but the possibility of the reduction does not count among them; once it has taken place, the reduction transforms the old horizon and, in the process, transforms the sense of being.” (Hua xxix: 209) In general, Husserl's arguments only veer off into this kind of Finkian radicalization when he is at pains to distance phenomenology from precisely those sciences with which it has an ‘intrinsic affinity’ – a questionable strategy which is usually detrimental to the point he is trying to make.

epistemological perspective on its place and achievements with respect to the world. (ibid.) The thorny question of who is performing these methodologically focused acts cannot be avoided, and the answer we are given may initially seem to be as unsatisfactory as the ones we have already explored earlier. According to Husserl, the epoché, followed by the reductions, is performed by the transcendental I, although it is only by way of these methods that it discloses itself as transcendental. This seems to lead us back into the same vicious circle we already discussed. However, the novel notions of coincidence and localization now alter this issue just enough to salvage the dynamic between the mundane and the transcendental in a plausible way.

Throughout this text, Husserl speaks of “transcendental interests”, of “transcendental habituality”, and even of “transcendental personality” (317) and emphasizes their necessary link to the mundane, psychological sphere of experience. Each lived experience, habitus, or even community, etc., has a corresponding transcendental structure that is uncovered through the performance of the reduction. Importantly, it is emphasized that the modes of *mundane*-subjective experience serve as a guide, on the basis of which “transcendental purification” leads to further insights. (319) The implication here is obvious enough: whatever kind of realm of unique experience is uncovered by phenomenology, the investigation must necessarily begin with the worldly and historically situated subject. Thus, even if it may be technically correct to claim that the epoché and the reduction are first performed by a transcendental I, rather than by a specific human being, this is only possible if the transcendental habitus had already been cultivated to some extent by the respective individual in the natural (and probably mundane-scientific) attitude. The ego that performs the originary bracketing and reduction, triggering all further analysis and cementing the novel nature of the new attitude, must be an ego which somehow straddles both dimensions of experience. In the early stages of our discussion, we hinted at the occasional porosity of the reduction, implying that some phenomena seem to resist easy categorization according to their epistemological status. This is now shown to be true of the cornerstone of the categorization itself: the foundational distinction between the mundane and the transcendental is loosened, as the two dimensions cannot be neatly separated, but are rather intertwined. The double nature of transcendental habituality means that phenomenology is doubly bound to the subject of the natural attitude: not only in the sense that its experience undergoes transcendental analysis, but also in the sense that it must first lay the groundwork for that type of analysis. This is consistent with a point Husserl makes throughout his career, namely, that the transcendental attitude is not something ready-made, to be jumped in at one’s leisure. It, like any other scientific endeavor, has to be built up, developed, and cultivated, and is informed by new experience. The initially disclosed transcendental field is a relatively barren

land, as most of the transcendental achievements remain hidden away from the scientist, to be uncovered by focused and repeated analysis. (319) Throughout this process, the transcendental field doesn't remain closed off, but is gradually filled out with insights from the natural attitude, only in a transformed manner. Constant 'communication' between the two attitudes is thus of importance, and "... the 'going back' can also have a transcendental-philosophical function, namely as all worldly experience and worldly life, so too can positive scientific life serve as a transcendental guiding thread. [...]" Husserl then formulates the conclusion quite succinctly: "Phenomenological subject matter is a transcendental-reflective one, and, as such, is in need of a preceding straightforward subject matter, the naïve one."¹³⁸ (321)

Husserl's subtle phenomenology of phenomenological methods thus leads us to the conclusion that the unique kind of relation between the two realms of experience isn't properly captured by the metaphor of a bridged gap, nor by analogical means. The ambiguous nature of this relation is perhaps better described by the image of 'localization', then:

"By virtue of the 'coincidence' of the human I and the transcendental I, and of the 'coincidence' of the psychic in all its particularities, its acts, habitualities and their respective transcendental counterparts, it ensues that all that is transcendental is singularly related to man and their psychic life. It is a kind of 'localization', *which retroactively inevitably occurs and allows for the localization of the reduction in man*. But this is never strictly speaking psychological. We will thus have to differentiate between psychology and transcendental phenomenology. And there is indeed a parallel; but that which is psychologically parallel to the transcendental still remains a unified construct of constituting manifolds." (323f.)

The second half of this passage must be understood from the viewpoint of already gained transcendental knowledge. Once the epistemological breakthrough has been achieved and pursued to a sufficiently advanced level, the entirety of experience will ideally be understood through an understanding of the constitutive processes behind it. In that sense, strictly speaking, the transcendental dimension is located 'beyond' psychology. Yet the phenomenological reflection itself is nested in the human life of the phenomenologist, with all its psychic and bodily aspects. Transcendental insights cannot be separated from the mundane consciousness reflecting on them. And while this problem may be seemingly eliminated by equipping the non-mundane subject of transcendental experience with rarified quasi-psychological categories

¹³⁸ He explores this point in more detail in a manuscript written some two years later, titled '*Universale Epoché setzt ein „natürliches“ Leben vor der Epoché voraus und letztlich das natürliche Welteben*'. (Hua xxxiv, §33: 460-66)

such as habituality or interests, the solution is, in fact, only temporary. For, as soon as the phenomenologist endeavors to enworld their insights in any way, they have already been psychologized. The concepts of *Nachträglichkeit* and of the inevitability of localization that Husserl introduces are therefore as apt and crucial as they are sudden and enigmatic, and their meaning seems to be ambiguous. On the one hand, what Husserl seems to be implying is that the transcendental breakthrough reveals that the therein disclosed ego always necessarily had to be enworlded in order to be discovered. On the other hand, the claim can be read as a slight concession to Heideggerian criticism as well: because the transcendental can only ever be grasped *ex postfacto*, the epistemologically privileged position of the transcendental ego is nevertheless a specific mode of the factual ego, and not the other way around.

While this point is explicitly contradicted by Husserl in a somewhat casual way (317, n.1), it weighs heavily throughout the text. The phenomenologist's situation, as Husserl's analysis shows, is a precarious one. Their subject matter is unprecedentedly broad, and includes everything in existence, while simultaneously reaching no further than their writing desk. This may be framed as a paradox to be resolved, but it could also be viewed as an ambiguity to be recognized and acknowledged as such. That may very well be the first step toward a Husserlian answer to the question of the relation of theory and practice.

This text from late 1931 represents a major step in the direction of rejecting Fink's doctrine of double individuation – of man and of transcendental ego – by emphasizing the epistemological nature of the concept of the transcendental in phenomenology. This becomes especially clear when we compare two seemingly contradictory statements about the nature of phenomenology. On the one hand, we find Husserl constantly reiterating the entirely novel character of this science. On the other hand, he is equally insistent that the *subject matter* of this science is not new. Instead, it is the perspective afforded by it that is radically new. (323) There is no need to undergird the distinction between the mundane and the transcendental ego with a fanciful ontology because the distinction does not properly describe anything in the world, nor outside of it. It is rather a difference of reflexive capacities with respect to our own intentional relation to the world.

We have seen how the 'localization thesis' places the transcendental squarely into the world and into history, while trying to maintain its uniquely universal epistemic status. While still remaining rather ambiguous, this attempt nevertheless leads to a reevaluation of the place of the natural attitude and of the mundane subject in phenomenological research. This reevaluation, as we shall see, means a repositioning with respect to natural human life, and to

humanity as a broader correlate ideal. In the next section, we follow this path further, as we gradually hone the phenomenological sense of ‘higher humanity’.

5.3. *Paths from, and paths toward, humanity*

Husserl’s late-1931 manuscript on phenomenology in worldly history was an incisive correction of Fink’s already pronounced methodological oversteer. But, it was also a reworked and improved response to the cluster of criticisms best represented by the kind of philosophy done by Heidegger at the time, and a step in the right direction from the somewhat hasty and superficial arguments from early- to mid-1931. How does Husserl’s new position improve on the initial response, advocated in those manuscripts and the *Phenomenology and Anthropology* lecture?

Husserl’s earlier argument against anthropologism contained two parallel claims. The first one was plausible enough from the phenomenological point of view: the factual *Mensch* of the natural attitude cannot be presupposed as the endpoint of philosophical analysis. Indeed, as phenomenology quite consistently and conclusively shows, a wealth of constitutive activity as well as the realm of universal validity remain closed off in anonymity unless the philosopher finds a way to suspend the relatively constricting perspective of naturalistic facticity. However, in the manuscripts in which Heidegger is explicitly addressed, Husserl went a step further and argued that mundane facticity, properly speaking, cannot be the starting point of philosophy either, and that the approach starting with the transcendental ego was more fundamental and indeed necessary. (Hua xxxiv: 260) This argument is more problematic: by making the transcendental ego the starting point and the endpoint of research, it effectively sterilizes phenomenology by cutting off its ties to the people doing the research, and to the people who would possibly be the beneficiaries of that research. We have seen how different aspects of this radicalization of phenomenology get tangled into a Gordian knot of difficulties, especially regarding the motivation for phenomenology. The new concepts of localization and coincidence change this perspective and finally cut this knot.

The mundane, factual ego might not be, and in fact probably is not, uncircumventable – that is for advanced transcendental research to ascertain and show. In that sense, part of the critique of anthropologism seems to be well-founded. However, that very same ego must be regarded as the starting point of phenomenology not just in the thematic, but also in the methodological sense. Whatever transcendental truths get uncovered and then retroactively

recognized as having always been true, the originary situation of the mundane ego, with all its interests, habits, inclinations, and other existential markers, is uncircumventable as the point of origin of this kind of research. This point, obvious as it may seem, is not without its own fair share of complexity. To a philosopher/scientist who is still naïvely bound to the world, this claim is so self-evident that it would be absurd to even question it: *of course* I do my scientific work as a human being with a personal history, a family, a private life, etc. Furthermore, while I approach interactions with my subject matter differently, i.e. more rigorously, than I would approach those with, say, my family, they all still occupy more or less the same ontological and epistemological plane. As I am now more and more exposed to the transcendental perspective – still only as a consequence of very particular historical, personal, economic circumstances that led me to develop an interest in it – I start to realize that I can cultivate a different, more universal perspective on any subject matter. By reading, learning, and thinking more about this perspective, I finally come to the point where my scientific habitus has taken on some characteristics of the transcendental habitus I have been working toward. As I get better and better at utilizing the field of possibilities afforded to me by this habituality, I begin to see more and more aspects of my experience in a new light, enriched by a new perspective. What I also discover is that these aspects had always been operative in my natural experience, only concealed in and by it. At a relatively advanced stage of my research, I inevitably turn my attention to the research itself, and reflect on its various stages. It is at that point that its beginnings are disclosed from a fuller perspective, and that I come to the conclusion that my factual mundane ego truly was uncircumventable as a point of origin of this research. Only now, that notion of beginning is permeated with the insight that a certain transcendental structure had already been in place, and that this structure is inseparable from the factual structure of the mundane ego. Therefore, the initial position, namely that it is obvious that philosophical work of this kind can only be done by a human being in the world turns out to be entirely true, only for deeper reasons than initially imagined. It is in this sense that transcendental phenomenology does not in any way negate the beliefs of the natural attitude, but rather divests them of their naïveté. There is a distance to be traversed, phenomenology teaches us, between the ‘obvious’ and the ‘self-evident’, but the traversal is undertaken by, and within, the one and the same subject.

On this interpretation of localization, transcendental phenomenology is something like redescription of the realm of experience with an eye out for the constitutive threads behind the aspect of experience currently being analyzed. Because of the retroactive nature of localization – which is itself a transcendental feature – phenomenological analysis is not a destruction or

elimination of natural life. Nor is it a flight from the world and others into an absolute self-transparency of that life. Rather, constitutive analysis is a way of reweaving and retightening the threads holding natural life together, threads which have been loosened and exposed by the inaugural phenomenological act of the reduction. This is quite clearly a very different procedure from the one captured by the Finkian *Entmenschung*. In fact, even Husserl's more careful phrasing, with its focus on the denaturalizing function of the reduction, risks obfuscating the central point of necessarily localized transcendental, i.e., that transcendental phenomenology does not cut the ego's bonds with world and history, but highlights them. With the concepts of coincidence and localization, we are approaching a richer and existentially charged notion of the transcendental.

Having followed the relatively short, but dense arc of Husserl's gradual movement first toward and then away from Fink, we are now better equipped to understand, and can briefly revisit, their divergences that appear at the end of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. These are key to understanding why Husserl, in the midst of Fink's increasingly obscure argumentation, suddenly makes the appeal to the somewhat vague concept of 'higher humanity'. The divergences become more pronounced as the discussion progresses, and peak in the second section of §11, the section on the enworlding of phenomenologizing activity. In this extraordinarily rich and tightly packed section, Fink's radically non-humanist vision of phenomenology is presented as the only correct interpretation of the new science. And although Fink recognizes that appearances might not be on his side (SCM: 123/112), his critique of the very possibility of an existential interpretation is direct and unmistakable. (121f./110f.) Any understanding of the transcendental attitude as a malleable artefact of human theoretical praxis, such as the one we are arguing for, misses the point entirely and badly misunderstands the nature of the phenomenological project, according to Fink: "... *every mundane interpretation falls short*, it touches only the outer form, 'appearance' [*Erscheinung*]; the inner (transcendental) essence remains necessarily closed and inaccessible to it." Fink then goes on to add the important remark: "And it remains *forever alien*, if the interpreter or the critic does not himself perform the reduction *from out of himself*, and thereby abandon the basis of all attempts at mundane and naïve interpretation." (125/114) This hermetic vision immediately evokes the difficulties we have already discussed, the chief among them being the problem of motivation and of relating transcendental knowledge to others. In a flash of critical self-awareness, Fink refers to this problem and simultaneously recognizes that his preferred solution, i.e. the idea of transcendental fore-knowledge, may be more of a crutch than a

satisfactory answer to the question of ‘why?’. The passage is pertinent to our discussion and worth quoting in full, as it sets the scene for Husserl’s response.

“After this *defense*, however, one has got to determine somewhat more closely the positive sense of the enworlding of the subject of phenomenologizing action. ‘Man’ is *the subject of the appearance* [*Erscheinung*] of phenomenologizing, that is, man is the subject that appears in the natural attitude, the *seeming* [*scheinbar*] subject. This ‘seeming’ on the part of the being of the subject [*Subjektsein*] altogether determines the problem of the relationships between certain basic (existential) attitudes in human being (‘authenticity,’ etc.) and the awakening of the disposition to make the breakthrough in those flashes of transcendental preknowledge that first motivate the performance of the phenomenological reduction. Here is a whole realm of obscure and puzzling problems. To tackle them would presuppose having *already carried out* a constitutive interpretation of the human being [*Menschsein*].

However that may be, however a particular ethical self-activation by man might be presupposed for successfully carrying out the phenomenological reduction as disclosure of the constituting ‘ground of the world,’ an ‘anthropologicistic’ interpretation of subjectivity (i.e., one that is caught up in man as constituted construct) can never reach and get a grip on the ‘actual’ subject of phenomenologizing. On the contrary, the phenomenological transcendental philosopher does not mistakenly think it is obvious from the look of things [*augenscheinlich*] that it is a ‘man’ who philosophizes. For him this ‘obvious look of things’ [*Augenschein*] is *always transparent* with respect to the transcendental truth that lies behind it.” (125f./114f.)

The difficulty here is apparent: a discussion of the subject of phenomenology is only possible if a great deal of phenomenological analysis has already been carried out, but in order to carry it out, one needs to have adopted the stance of the ‘actual’ subject of phenomenology. If that stance remains ‘forever alien’ to those who are not already ‘in’ phenomenology, all avenues into it seem to have been cut off. Now, in the second paragraph of the text we just quoted, Fink’s position in fact seems to be remarkably open to what we have sketched above with respect to three points: a) the ‘obvious look of things’, according to which man phenomenologizes, is stripped of its naïveté as soon as one adopts the transcendental attitude; b) wherever phenomenology might lead us, it must *begin* with a certain kind of ‘ethical self-activation by man’; and c) this beginning does not entail that phenomenology can never go *beyond* the anthropologicistic perspective, that it necessarily stays ‘caught up in it’. If Fink would object to this formulation, he would most probably object to claim ‘c’, for he generally seems unwilling to entertain an interpretation according to which the transcendental attitude somehow

grows out of the natural one. For him, the difference between them is always one of kind, rather than of degree. As a consequence, the anthropological dimension of phenomenology is viewed as a locus of a ‘seeming’ truth, and as such, insufficient to engender the phenomenological attitude. This is cause for concern for Husserl, and “not entirely free of misunderstanding.” (126/115, n.396) It is easy to see why: if the human being ‘can never reach and get a grip on’ the true, ‘actual’ subject, how does phenomenology ever get started? Perhaps even more importantly, why does it even exist and what good is it to anyone?

As a response to these questions, Husserl develops a more grounded picture of the scientific sense and applicability of phenomenology, and he does this with the help of the concepts of coincidence and localization developed in late 1931. Thanks to the transcendental mechanism of coinciding of the two realms of experience, transcendental knowledge opens a new horizon for the natural attitude and so broadens it. This means that the subject after the performance of the reduction is now aware of the various attitudes it can find itself in, and “... now masters the possibilities of running through them one after the other in their coherence in a unity.” (ibid.) The broadened natural attitude, in which the transcendental attitude has now become embedded as a specific kind of habituality, allows the subject to also understand the process of the self-objectivation of the transcendental ego as a natural human being. But this does not mean that there was a transcendental ego existing before (neither in a temporal, nor in a meontic sense) the mundane ego, which then took on an ontic mantle. There is only the one subject, only now it is retroactively aware of the transcendental structure and processes which consistently and constantly contribute to its constitution. For that reason, Husserl rejects Fink’s vocabulary of ‘seeming subjects’ and ‘appearances’, and insists on ‘localization’: “... secondary enworlding is a necessary ‘localization’ of the transcendental in the world and to that extent precisely not seemingly [*scheinbar*] existent in the world and yet, on the other hand, not in the world in the natural sense, thus nonetheless pseudo-mundane.” (134, n.428/122, n.427) The immediate nature of localization therefore basically eliminates the need for the notion of secondary enworlding almost entirely,¹³⁹ because phenomenology illuminates

¹³⁹ We are here leaving out the question of whether the two kinds of enworlding are to be interpreted in terms of a temporal succession. Fink does not seem to consider this question, and Husserl’s silence on the issue is not particularly surprising, considering his overall tendency to question the need for secondary enworlding altogether. Luft rightly points out that the terms imply a temporal progression, at the very least. (2002: 267) However, we must be careful here. The provisional character of Fink’s discussion in the *Sixth Meditation* is not merely a reflection of the book’s complicated writing and publication history, but also echoes the problematic relation between transcendental insight and mundane language. Thus, ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ might very well be yet another example of *Verlegenheitsausdrücke*, insofar as they try to describe and express a relation which has no straightforward mundane counterpart. A deeper investigation into the relations between temporal or quasi-temporal structures and the meontic could be very rewarding, especially in the light of Finkian *Urzeitigung*. To

primary enworlding *within* and *to* the natural attitude, rather than re-inhabiting it in some seeming way. This seems to be the meaning of the natural attitude ‘having’ a transcendental horizon. The reference to the ‘pseudo-mundane’ status of phenomenological-transcendental insight is a bit odd in this context, and seems to be a case of Husserl repeating Fink’s vocabulary from the passage on which he is commenting, rather than a well thought-out claim. This becomes clearer when we look at other marginal notes. Husserl insists that transcendental phenomenology is localized, and not merely appearing in the world (128/117, n.402), and uses the fact of localization as a powerful argument for phenomenology’s *worldly* scientificity and usefulness:

“Transcendental science quite rightly has its ideal being in the world of monads, but also in the mundane world, and the phenomenologizing activity that works this science in an actual present moment has spatiotemporal locations here and there in the corresponding sense. On both sides this performative action of phenomenology is addressed to eventual cophenomenologists and has a horizon of monads and human subjects that are dogmatically naive. They can, however, be taken as subjects that could phenomenologize and remove their dogmatic blinders, and science can be done from the beginning with the intention of gradually opening mankind’s eyes, etc. In this sense accordingly phenomenology is itself and in a good sense in the world and analogous to a positive science in its intentions of addressing [someone], etc.” (126/115, n.396)

This is as good a summary as any of Husserl’s vision of phenomenology’s tasks and goals, and a clear expression of the nature of the relation obtaining between transcendental philosophy and non-philosophers. True to their calling as ‘functionaries of mankind’, – a phrase that would become solidified as part of the Husserlian vernacular a few years later, but already looming throughout the *Sixth Meditation* – phenomenologists play the *edifying* role of removing the *Scheuklappen* of the natural attitude: first their own, then ideally of their colleagues, then hopefully on a wider scale, etc. This series of jumps from a specific phenomenologist’s ‘transcendental solitude’, to a broader academic and social community, and then finally to the highest imaginable community of reason is not inconsiderable, but entirely understandable, given phenomenology’s universalist pretensions. Thus, the ultimate goal of phenomenology,

what extent could ‘ontification of the absolute’ be understood as a temporal process, and what kind of temporality would that imply? Furthermore, how would the reduction, understood as a kind of wedge in worldly history, relate to this kind of temporality? There seem to be no good phenomenological avenues to approach these questions; whether speculation or construction could be ‘phenomenologically motivated’ is a difficult question.

while perhaps only asymptotically reachable and an ‘infinite task’,¹⁴⁰ can be nothing less than the *edification of mankind*. This important point then opens up the conceptual space for the claim that “... man, breaking through his humanity in transcendental cognition, achieves thereby the possibility of a new, higher humanity.” (143/130, n.496) The ‘new humanity’ is to be understood in two complementary ways here. It refers, first and foremost, to the humanity of the mundane ego, now aware of its transcendental underpinnings, and ‘in possession’ of a broadened understanding of its situation with respect to the being of the world. This broader understanding radically affirms the historical and worldly character of the ego and discloses to man their universal necessity: “Now he gains the possibility of a new *mundane* being [*Dasein*] in transcendental self-cognition, everything transcendental projected back into mundaneness and determining worldly life in this new mundaneness.” (ibid.) The new mundaneness is not meant to be a private outlook on the world, however, but directly flows into and transforms the humanity of others, i.e., mankind itself. Therein lies the pedagogical task of the philosopher, “... his *life in the world* and in community with other men has a *new worldly style*, it gives him as man in the world new tasks.” (ibid.) Because it would be unrealistic to expect everyone to personally develop and cultivate the habitus of the transcendental philosopher, it is the phenomenologist’s scientific task to address the non-phenomenologists and to contribute to the syntheses of knowledge beneficial to all.

We recall Fink’s sporadic references to the pedagogical impulses of phenomenology, ultimately leading to secondary enworlding, i.e. to the ‘appearance’ of transcendental truths in

¹⁴⁰ There are difficulties here, and a proper analysis of the kind of openness of phenomenological research Husserl had in mind would probably demand a study of its own. Consider Werner Marx’s remark that Husserl’s phenomenology finds itself in a state of a perpetual ‘and so forth’, and thus in a constant state of Hegelian bad, or spurious, infinity. [*schlechte Unendlichkeit*] (1987: 29) This is the case, according to Marx, because Husserl’s notion of experience is modeled after intuitive experience, which is infinite in this sense. It might be objected that Marx’s reading betrays his biases, yet a real problem is uncovered here.

Husserl certainly would have objected to the image of mere endless stacking of transcendental insights, as his interest in a systematic presentation of phenomenology attests. But, would a phenomenological system be able to escape Hegelian criticism? Bad infinity is spurious precisely because it is not truly infinite, according to Hegel, but limited by the finite. As long as the ‘transcendental’ is understood as an oppositional concept to the ‘mundane’ (Fink’s explicit position in the *Sixth Meditation*, and occasionally Husserl’s as well), a similar problem seems to persist in phenomenology.

Husserl’s general response to this difficulty is remarkably Hegelian, insofar as he claims that the very opposition between the two is absorbed by sufficiently advanced transcendental understanding. The two are then not opposed, since the mundane ego is shown to be an objectivation of the transcendental ego, and not a different entity. This is the kind of infinity of the transcendental that makes for its absoluteness. But this breeds further difficulties, for we have good reason to believe that the transcendental is very much constrained by the factual, empirical circumstances of the natural ego. The good, genuine infinity of the transcendental thus reaches only as far as its necessary localization in the mundane, and the limit is re-inscribed into infinity. Husserl’s doctrine of the immortality of the transcendental ego is perhaps a response to this difficulty, but one has the impression that it functions as a necessary premise, rather than a result, of transcendental egology. The tension between the mundane and the transcendental seems to be found wherever one looks, and the ambiguous nature of their relation resists simple hierarchy.

the world. Husserl's perspective on this issue, sketched out above, is different in two crucial ways and must be considered superior on both accounts.

The first difference concerns the possibility of imparting transcendental knowledge to people who aren't phenomenologists. As with any science, one would expect various levels of receptivity to the relevant arguments. For example, someone trained in philosophy, but not in transcendental phenomenology, would presumably be relatively quick to understand its main results; someone with an affinity for the humanities might be more receptive to the main thrust of its claims than someone with a degree in chemistry, etc. Many other examples could be used to illustrate the same point, namely, that the openness to the transformative potential of phenomenology depends on a myriad empirical preconditions, but that it is in principle possible and achievable even in phenomenological laymen. Fink excludes this possibility entirely, as we have seen, by claiming that an understanding of phenomenology remains 'forever alien' unless the phenomenological reduction has been personally performed. Husserl's line from late 1931, that "[t]o be a phenomenologist is something that only a phenomenologist can experience and recognize" (Hua xxxiv: 317) is similar in tone, but is more measured, and leaves a door open for the more inclusive concept of phenomenology that would be articulated in the *Sixth Meditation*. One can understand it as claiming that the *habitus* of the phenomenologist is something only fellow phenomenologists could share and experience; this still allows for the possibility that the basic *insights* emerging from that *habitus* are shareable with others.

This weaker interpretation of the exclusivity and radicality of transcendental insight is not perfect. For example, it is not very useful in determining what is understandable to laymen who haven't themselves performed the reduction, and what isn't. It certainly seems possible that a charitable and patient non-phenomenologist might understand, or at least *believe* to understand, *all* the main points of this new science without engaging in it actively. One possible retort would be to maintain that they still remain bound to natural attitude and naïve acceptance of being without being aware of it. But this only raises the further question of how one would ever be certain of having properly adopted the transcendental attitude at all. The problem with the 'proof in the pudding' nature of phenomenology is that any doubt about it casts a shadow on the entire project. The absolute truth of transcendental phenomenology ought to become clear and unquestionable once one has successfully performed the relevant methodological steps. If I have never reached the stage where I don't have any doubts or misgivings about the project as a whole, does that mean I'm still misunderstanding it, or has my performance of the methods somehow 'misfired'? The third possibility would be that the methods themselves are somehow limited in what they can truly deliver.

These are not easy questions for phenomenology to answer, and Husserl acknowledges the difficulty. Reflecting on the phenomenologist's task of imparting knowledge to others, he writes:

“Accordingly, the problem of *transcendental misunderstandings* stands in another order, misunderstandings, e.g., on the part of readers of transcendental writings who just do not stand in the transcendental attitude, but also those who already ‘have understood something’ but do not know how to ‘hold on to it’ (here the real questions.).” (SCM: 143/130, n.469, emphasis in original)

The ‘real questions’ concern the phenomenologist's relation to fellow phenomenologists, with those being ‘guided to the phenomenological reduction’, but also with people in everyday life, similar, as Husserl points out, to the relations between any other scientist and non-scientists. In all these cases, there is a fundamental asymmetry in place, because the phenomenologists now approach these situations with an entirely different outlook, and can only understand their earlier naïveté – still present in their interlocutors – as an abstraction. The most difficult issue, then, is whether this asymmetry can somehow be redressed: “A problem proper here is how far it is possible to follow and understand [phenomenology] without actually concomitantly *performing* the reduction.” (127/115, n.396) Husserl revisits this issue a few months later, in a manuscript written in early 1933.¹⁴¹ The question is posed in a slightly more detailed way:

“Can I understand the phenomenological reduction of another human being without performing it myself or, or at the very least, arriving at the motivation in which it would seem to me necessary – thus, an entirely different situation from my understanding someone else's anger or judgment, without at all being capable of actually experiencing it or making it? Can, therefore, a phenomenological reduction at all occur for me in the world, without me personally performing it?” (Hua xv: 537)

Unfortunately, in this manuscript, much like in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, Husserl doesn't answer this question. Instead, he goes back to the case of the one who has already performed it, and continues the analysis of the thereby engendered profound transformation of their world-

¹⁴¹ Cf. Hua xv: §31. Going through the manuscripts written in early 1933 and 1934, it is not surprising to find that Husserl's interests in these problems coincide with his first reading of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* in late 1932 (probably from mid-August to late October), and subsequent re-readings in the summer of 1933, and again in early 1934.

having experience. The one important modification to note here is the inclusion of the notion of adequate motivation as a possible minimal precondition for understanding the reduction. If one could sufficiently grasp the results of phenomenology by understanding its motivation, that would help immensely in affirming its scientific status, and would simultaneously dispel the vague hermeticism surrounding it. Indeed, by the end of this manuscript, Husserl finally settles on a certain theory of motivation. Any striving for knowledge, whether natural-scientific or philosophical, will eventually reach a point where a certain gap between the subjective and the objective is apparent: how can subjective immanence transcend itself and, so to speak, reach out of itself in order to grasp that which lies outside it? From a phenomenological perspective, we now know that this is a poorly framed question which leads to poorly framed answers. The decisive step, according to Husserl, was to realize that there was no way of resolving that issue as long as one remained within the framework of naïve acceptance of the world. Once that has been put into question, it became obvious that the old alternatives of idealism and realism were both incoherent. Neither the world nor natural consciousness can both carry, and be the subject of, this new, universal questioning. A universal perspective, comprising both, is needed. Husserl then concludes: “Naturally, this is the motivation that compels the transcendental reduction and the transcendental research within it.” (554)

This may not be a very satisfying explanation, and seemingly very little has changed in comparison with some of Husserl’s accounts from the late 1920s we discussed earlier. As before, the push for the new science can only really be retroactively justified, on the basis of its results, and the story is told in a way which makes the road to this science seem unavoidable. The relative importance of this post-Finkian theory of motivation, however, lies precisely in the fact that it *remains* mundane and circular. This certainly means that phenomenology loses some of the luster it developed after Fink’s meta-phenomenological polishing. However, if it is to retain its basic sense of science, transcendental science must be communicable. This is certainly the mindset with which Husserl wrote his remarks to Fink. Non-phenomenologists must be approached as having all my possibilities, including that of developing a transcendental habitus. ‘Dogmatically naïve’ subjects must be understood as potential co-phenomenologists.¹⁴²

¹⁴² In connection to this, see also the several pages Husserl wrote during his second reading of the *Sixth Meditation* in July 1933 on the human possibility of acquiring and developing an interest in science and theory. (SCM: 199-203/174-78) This text is remarkably nuanced in its treatment of the intertwining of historical circumstance and human motivations, and already signalizes Husserl’s growing interest in the genealogy of science and the origins of the theoretical attitude, topics that would famously be the focus of some of the best-known passages of the *Crisis* work a couple of years later. That the text could be read as a thematic precursor to the opening sections of the *Crisis* is indicated by the interest in understanding Galileo’s motivation in instituting a scientific renewal,

We will return to the question of motivation once more in the following section and see whether we cannot extract a more comprehensive understanding of it. This, in turn, should help us attain a firmer grasp on the meaning of ‘higher humanity’, now understood as the central aim of phenomenology. Before we turn to these issues in more detail, however, let us briefly consider a second way in which Husserl departs from Fink’s presentation of phenomenology-as-science, which also constitutes a significant departure from Fink’s strongly *theoretical* understanding of transcendental philosophy. According to Fink, phenomenologizing activity is decidedly not part of constitution and doesn’t exhibit the same ‘tendency toward being’ that other transcendental achievements do. This axiom is explicitly stated early in the book:

“It is precisely because the subjective performance of phenomenologizing is *different* from the transcendental performance of constitution, precisely because the uncovering of constitutive becoming itself is not ‘constituting’, that the *problem*, the *question* of the transcendental ‘being’ of phenomenologizing exists in the first place.” (SCM: 24f./22f.)

The scare quotes in reference to the ‘being’ of phenomenologizing announce the problematic of the discussion quite well and foretell the centrality of the distinction between the constituting and the onlooking, phenomenologizing ego. The latter’s absolute passivity is in stark contrast to the active nature of constitution that is primary enworlding:

“[...] the constituting I makes itself mundane through its own active constitution performances. These sweep the ‘nonparticipant’ phenomenologically theorizing I along into the mundanization that, for it, becomes only a *non-proper and seeming* [*scheinbar*] enworlding, for it does not rest *upon its own activity*.” (119/108-09)

For Husserl, this is “a dubious way of expressing things”. (ibid.) He underlines the unity and the universality of one single, continuous constitution, which from the very beginning functions as “an intentional web of activity” [*das intentionale Geflecht der Aktivität*], where subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and the world are co-present and co-determining. There is nothing which is outside the scope of constituting activity. Therefore, radical reflection on the natural attitude must, in an essential way, belong to the horizon of possibilities of that attitude, although as a transformative, broadening possibility. That the epoché and the reduction for a moment inhibit

a topic which, as Husserl rightly notes, necessarily leads one to reconsider the relation between scientific truth and history.

the constituting activity going on in the world does not in any way prevent phenomenologizing from being enworlded in exactly the same way as any other act. The ‘making thematic’ through reduction is thus part of the unique transcendental habitus which, as we have seen, straddles all possible attitudes thanks to the transcendental mechanism of retroactive localization.¹⁴³ In an appendix written during one of the later readings, Husserl notes:

“If we consider, now, that what was ascertained in the first step as the thematic, explicated ego is inseparable from the functions which we apprehended under the title phenomenologizing I, which as anonymous are nonetheless accessible to reflection, then it is clear that, just as the ‘phenomenologizing I,’ and hence these anonymous strata of the ego, are also taken into account, they are also immediately included in the thematic transposition into worldliness.”
(188/164)

The unity of the constituting and the phenomenologizing I suggests itself, and implies that the phenomenologizing ego does, indeed, necessarily take part in constitution. As Luft points out, universal constitutive activity encompasses all other people, including phenomenologists and scientists, *and* the theoretical attitudes they adopt as part of their methodology: “In this sense, the phenomenologist is also a product of constitution of a higher order; the fact that the human being becoming a phenomenologist must leave the natural attitude for this purpose has no bearing on the question of their constitution.” (2002: 267) The fact that the phenomenologist is a product of constitution means that the passivity of the onlooking ego must be rethought in light of that very constitution. This rethinking must go in two directions. The universal and unified character of constitution certainly implies that the phenomenologist cannot be viewed as something outside of it, merely ‘taken along’ or ‘swept’ by it. On the contrary, the specific phenomenologizing activity is itself an advanced product of constitution and rests on a newly acquired human possibility of adopting a transcendental attitude, and, eventually, habitus. This new possibility in no way annuls or eliminates the human, corporeal reality of the human being adopting the transcendental attitude. It would be a catastrophic mistake to suppose, as Fink at least occasionally did, that the constituted world of human beings can be simply equated with the natural attitude. To do that would be to sacrifice the true richness of the phenomenological concept of the natural attitude, and to ignore the possibility of transcendental opening inherent

¹⁴³ In a manuscript from the very same period, probably written in January 1934 (thus coinciding with his third reading of the *Sixth Meditation*), Husserl seems to conceptually equate ‘localization’ with ‘enworlding’. (Hua xv: 644-47)

to it: “If everything that is ‘worldly’ is constituted, constitution can then be understood as a certain ‘making-worldly’. The transcendental is ‘brought into the world’ by way of constitution and this means: *disclosed* in its worldliness [*Welthaftigkeit*].” (Luft 2002: 267) A unique kind of a double movement, resembling a Möbius strip, is at play here. The phenomenologist, guided by his research, is able to illuminate the structure of his experience and of his own being to such an extent, that he recognizes himself and his activity as an advanced product of constitution. At the same time, his uncovering and gradual grasping of this constitution already at play is, in itself, a further act of constitution, because it adds additional depth to the world which is simultaneously the backdrop and a continuous product of this process. Luft refers to this depth as ‘*transzendentaler Schweif*’, evoking the image of the tail of a comet. We read: “In a certain sense, the phenomenologist researches *vertically*, insofar as he ‘mounts’ a constituting system ‘onto’ the already encountered being. He thereby broadens the world itself.” (270) This certainly seems to be in line with Husserl’s understanding of the humanist, scientific role of phenomenology. The task of phenomenology is not to obviate or sublate the natural attitude, but to expand it in accord with the horizons of possibility it contains within itself. Since these possibilities are in fact the possibilities of the worldly human beings in and of the natural attitude, the *telos* of phenomenology is, ultimately, to cultivate and realize this potential. Thus, the regulative ideal of a ‘higher humanity’ [*höheres Menschentum*] (SCM: 143/130, n.469) is installed into the center of the phenomenological project.

The goal of attaining ‘higher humanity’ is as practical as it is theoretical, and certainly as historical as it is defensible on a priori grounds. In fact, at this stage of Husserl’s thought, these distinctions seem to break down and give way to a thinking on the precipice of irreducible ambiguity.¹⁴⁴ We constitute, but are also constituted; we dive deeper into transcendental depths only to find that we are expanding the horizon of mundane knowledge; we try to maximize the distance between us and our naïve worldliness, while recognizing that a constant proximity to it is irreducible. The breakdown of the strict distinction between the constituting and the non-participating, theorizing onlooker is unavoidable if phenomenology is to become a science. It is not surprising that we find Husserl expressing doubt about it sometime between 1933 and 1934: “I am the transcendental ‘onlooker’ – that is not an adequate expression –; I am the one phenomenologizing, who discloses all that I myself am and thereby make it into that which is existent in the true sense, existent cognitively.” (192/168) The undertones of activity and

¹⁴⁴ For recent and insightful discussion on the topic of the ‘historical a priori’ with a focus on Husserl and Foucault, see the papers collected in Aldea & Allen 2016.

constitutive agency are unmistakable: the phenomenologist discovers new aspects of the world and imparts his knowledge to others, thereby *making* a new world for himself and for others.

With this, the basis for the recognizably rich, ‘baroque’ style of phenomenology (Moran 2003: 51) that would mark the last creative period of Husserl’s life has been developed. It is characterized by a profound interest in the historical interplay of contingency and necessity, but also by a new sensitivity to radical otherness, most notably with respect to rationality.¹⁴⁵ The horizon within which these topics can thematically appear for phenomenology is opened by the two crucial aspects of Husserl’s reaction against Fink: localization of the transcendental in worldly history, and a rethinking of phenomenology’s relation to the natural world of the non-phenomenologists. There can be no doubt that these methodological transformations indicate a deep continuity between phenomenology and other ‘allied’ endeavors of the still naïve scientific attitude, thus pushing it toward sciences such as anthropology or psychology, rather than away from them. This could be mistaken for an ‘existential’ interpretation of phenomenology, and Husserl certainly would have rejected such a label. But that would be an incorrect label only insofar as one would identify an *existential* interpretation with a *historicist* one. If, on the contrary, we understand it as telling us something essential about the intertwining of the transcendental with the factual reality of the human being doing phenomenology, then the label might in fact be apt. As early as *Ideas II*, Husserl plays on the ambiguity of the situation: the transcendental attitude is very natural, but its naturalness rests on a concept of nature larger than that of the natural sciences. In that sense, this unique habitus is both natural, and a ‘*Widerspiel der Natur*’. (Hua IV: 180/189) This contrast is later elevated into the crucial methodological concept of the localized transcendental. The sense of an irremediable difficulty still lingers, but, as we have argued, the see-saw of the two registers of experience might not be an expression of momentary unclarity, but the characteristic of a proper and successful phenomenological description. Merleau-Ponty offers a therapeutic view on this issue:

“[...] the ultimate task of phenomenology as philosophy of consciousness is to understand its relationship to non-phenomenology. What resists phenomenology within us – natural being, the ‘barbarous’ source Schelling spoke of – cannot remain outside phenomenology and should have its place within it. The philosopher must bear his shadow, which is not simply the factual absence of future light.” (1960: 225/178)

¹⁴⁵ Husserl’s analyses of home- and alien-worlds is perhaps the most well-known example of this. On this topic, cf. Steinbock 1995, especially Part 2. For discussions of Husserl’s understanding of ‘primitive’ cultures and of ‘primitive’ rationality, with further relevant references, cf. Luft 1998 and Moran 2011b.

In the following sections, we turn again to our question of the ‘who and why’ of phenomenology, and see how the tension between the mundane and the transcendental ultimately leads us to a richer account of both.

5.4. *The ambiguity of the ‘who?’*

Earlier in our discussion, we referenced a small disagreement between Husserl and Fink over the question of how to begin the general exposition of the system of phenomenological philosophy. While Fink wanted to approach it by immediately focusing on the radical kind of knowledge offered by phenomenology, Husserl preferred to begin with a discussion of the general scientific impulses behind it. We now have a much more detailed picture of the various factors determining this disagreement. Husserl’s preference was not merely a stylistic one, reflecting the wish for the work to be more approachable. It must have been driven by a prescient philosophical realization as well, namely, that phenomenology *had* to be modeled after mundane science, regardless of whether its subject matter was worldly or not. The broadly communicable and actively constituting features of transcendental knowledge can only be properly grasped if phenomenology is principally continuous with other sciences. Therefore, when it comes to its results, phenomenology is a significant evolution, rather than a rupture, within the natural attitude.

This line of argument now provides us with substantial clues with regard to our guiding puzzle of who does phenomenology, and why. In particular, some of the fog around the first part of the question seem to have dissipated. The doctrine of the coinciding of the mundane and transcendental ego, coupled with retroactive localization of the transcendental, points us in the direction of a natural human being who, forming a scientific habitus with very specific methods, is able to significantly expand and transform the boundaries of their experience. This is not a conversion to anthropologism, nor is it a return to psychologism: transcendental insights are necessarily retroactively localized in the world, psychologically *and* linguistically, but they point to a non-mundane sense. The transcendental horizon belongs to the mundane horizon, though it is not a part of it. (Luft 2002: 276) We are dealing here with a relation that is clearly difficult to conceptualize. The difficulty derives at least partly from the fact that the transcendental is volatile and transient, and that its localization is too quick and too effective. One is reminded here of Gorgias and of the skeptical arguments for non-existence: even if the transcendental existed and one could somehow know it, there would be no way to impart that

knowledge to others, and even if one could, they wouldn't understand it without themselves knowing it personally. Even then, one could argue, the phenomenologist is somehow always a moment too late, already back at his writing desk and confined by his factual consciousness.

Doesn't this problem lead us back to square one, to the recognition of the purely preliminary and analogical nature of enworlded phenomenology, and ultimately to the kind of vague 'gnosticism' of Finkian ilk? Not necessarily, for the concepts of history, coincidence, and localization now open a new interpretative avenue for us, one based on the powerful concept of subjective and intersubjective *transformation* through phenomenology. As we understand it, this notion, intimately related to the idea of achieving 'higher humanity', involves an evolution in phenomenology's self-understanding. More specifically, it leads us to interpret the continuously developing transcendental habitus not as a path toward some kind of self-transcendence, but rather as a path toward bettering oneself and others. This must be understood correctly, for it would be all too easy to dismiss this notion as a trivialization of the phenomenological project, reducing it to a popular ideal of 'self-improvement'. For Husserl, phenomenological activity is clearly axiologically charged, and its normative and evaluative potential is in equal parts epistemological and ethical. These two pillars of phenomenological praxis feature, in more or less obvious ways, throughout Husserl's work, yet it is after the 'encounter' with the *Sixth Meditation* that they come to the foreground in an explicit way. For example, in one of Husserl's last critical notes on this book, written in January of 1934, he briefly reflects on 'the genesis of phenomenological science and the development of the phenomenological community'. After once again pointing out the necessity of enworlding of the phenomenologizing ego, Husserl first underlines that "phenomenologizing humans" stand "... in the historical course of mankind" and use "phenomenological science to search into the world and its mankind, its human-historical world, and the positive sciences there." (SCM: 216/191) But phenomenologizing science does not exist for its own sake. These enworlded phenomenologists

"... will be able as phenomenologizing humans to have an effect upon their fellow men, training ever new fellow men into phenomenology, and then out of phenomenology laying down norms for human being as a whole (keeping constantly in mind the distant horizon of non-phenomenologists) and in accord with those norms endeavoring to train them in a new humanity." (ibid.)

Few passages in Husserl do as good a job at encapsulating the logic and purpose of his late philosophy as this one. There is a sense of grandeur in the expression ‘new humanity’, and the implication that phenomenology can *institute* norms is as firm an affirmation of the constituting and transformative potential of phenomenology as any. There are still difficulties here: the scope of the initial ‘solipsistic’ phenomenology is one, and the leap from it to a community of phenomenologists is another. (ibid.) Yet another is the question which has been on our mind from the beginning, that of motivation. The first two might be a relic from a different time, so to speak. Considering the direction we have been following, it is now difficult to entertain the notions of a solitary phenomenologist, or even of ‘transcendental solitude’, with the same earnestness as before. There is no clean break or boundary between the philosopher who has ‘performed the reduction’ and his colleague who still hasn’t, because the differences between them are those of degree, focus, and nuance, rather than one in nature. Indeed, it has to be so, if the idea of a community of phenomenologists is to be realizable. Of course, this does not mean that there are no difficulties in phenomenological pedagogy, but overcoming them is a matter of sufficient time and successful teaching, and not of metaphysics. As for the question of ‘why do any of that?’, it seems that an answer is slowly emerging together with a better understanding of who is doing phenomenology. This is not surprising, considering that the two questions have so far always appeared together, intertwined and mutually determining. The notion of motivation which is now starting to take shape is noticeably richer than the ones we discussed earlier insofar as it includes an explicit ethical component. While this may have been implied in Husserl’s meta-phenomenological reflections from the 1920s, for example, we recall that those analyses generally stumbled because Husserl tried to develop a thoroughly epistemological account of the progression from worldly science to phenomenology. Before we make one final push in our analysis of the possible motivation for phenomenology, let us briefly return to the correlate question of the status of the phenomenologizing ego and some secondary accounts of it, and see how a fuller understanding of the ‘who’ ultimately helps us in understanding the ‘why’.

The full-fledged subject of phenomenology, we have seen, is uniquely determined by the coincidence of the mundane and the transcendental. All sorts of possible interpretations of this relation suggest themselves, however, because the notion of ‘coincidence’ is still open-ended enough to accommodate various metaphysical positions. For example, although Husserl consistently denied that he was any kind of a metaphysical dualist, it might still be plausible to interpret coincidence as a purely epistemological fact masking an ontological asymmetry. Depending on how one would choose to frame this background ‘hierarchy’, one register of

experience could then be viewed as a derivative modality of the other. We have explored some of these approaches, and have seen how Husserl and Fink vacillated between them in the crucial years leading up to their divergence in the *Sixth Meditation*. Another possibility, driven by Husserl's conceptually innovative notions of 'localization' and 'coincidence' then presented itself, allowing the phenomenologist to argue for an essential and irreducible *intertwining* of the two domains. This argument turned out to be stronger than the earlier 'parallelism argument' because it introduced the crucial dimension of historicity into the relation. This notion of necessary retroactive localization opened an avenue for accounting for the transcendental's 'flowing into' worldly history, and underlined the constitutive and transformative capacities of the phenomenological habitus.¹⁴⁶ Yet the basic puzzle still remains: how are we supposed to understand the coincidence of the two? One possible response would be to insist on embracing their intertwining as a fundamental phenomenological fact. Considering the twists and turns of the various approaches we have tried so far, this would seem to be the most honest conclusion, speaking from the perspective of phenomenological evidence. The two regions have turned out to be separated by a loosely knit net, rather than by an impermeable screen, and their interactions too numerous to neatly order. The habitus of the transcendental philosopher is therefore bustling with activity, for it reflects the entirety of constitution, including its own reflection:

“Transcendental subjectivity is in an infinite reflectivity, in an iterative infinity of actual and possible reflection, and in addition is always constituting the world in such a way that it projects all its transcendental [constitutions] displayed by pure and absolute self-reflection, into the world, into the always already constituted world, into the world that continues to be constituted. That, however, in correspondingly incremental sense: for every such action of projecting is itself a sense-bestowing performance. But what is meant by that the sense of the world, issuing from here, from the action of phenomenologizing, is in constant change.” (213/188f.)

This is not a description of a solitary ego that silently and passively observes. This is a human being reflectively grasping the world in which it is firmly rooted, thereby changing itself, the world, and others in it. To be sure, there is a curious proliferation of clashing perspectives at play here, for this reflection uncovers that the phenomenologizing subject is the locus of three

¹⁴⁶ The concept of *Einströmen* appears in the *Crisis* text, for example (Hua vi, §59), where it is explicitly linked to the transformative potential of phenomenology: “... every new transcendental discovery, by going back into the natural attitude, enriches my psychic life and (apperceptively as a matter of course) that of every other.” (214/210) For an analysis of the concept of *Einströmen* highly relevant to our discussion, cf. Luft 2002: 279-88.

different kinds of constitution. The anonymous constitution *by* my transcendental ego, the coeval constitution *of* my ego (by the world and others), and the higher-order, no longer anonymous constitution by myself and other fellow phenomenologists now reflecting on this, all intersect to create the complex and continuous flow of one historical constitution.

This thought would be eloquently expressed by Merleau-Ponty a couple of decades later, and parts of his interpretation of Husserl might be worth briefly mentioning here as additional illustration of the view we are outlining. On the character of the reduction, for example,¹⁴⁷ we read: “This isolating method of thinking is intended more to reveal than to break the links of the intentional web.” (1960: 219/173) What is achieved by phenomenological methods is a thoroughgoing reaffirmation of the natural attitude, because “[r]eflection is no longer the passage to a different order which reabsorbs the order of present things; it is first and foremost a more acute awareness of the way in which we are rooted in them.” (1960: 131/105) Merleau-Ponty refers to the unique and intimate relation of the mundane and the transcendental – that which Husserl was trying to articulate as their coincidence – in terms of their “reciprocal envelopment” (128/102), and is quick to recognize that the blurring of the borders between the two registers of experience amounts to a historicization of the transcendental: “[t]hus the transcendental descends into history. Or, as we might put it, the historical is no longer an external relation between two or more absolutely autonomous subjects but has an interior and is an inherent aspect of their very definition.” (134/107) While this last sentence refers the reader to the problem of transcendental intersubjectivity, its scope is broader and applies to the relation of the worldly and transcendental knowledge as well. Both suffused with history, these two dimensions feed off each other, and intersect at the subject, now understood as being both mundane and transcendental. One of Merleau-Ponty’s favorite images for this type of ambiguous relation is that of the *vinculum*, a concept surely meant to evoke both the anatomical meaning of connection (perhaps echoing the notion of ‘flesh’ from the same period) and the mathematical meaning of grouping.^{148, 149}

¹⁴⁷ While we will focus on several of Merleau-Ponty’s later texts on Husserl, it might very well be argued that they form a continuation and development of his relatively early – but probably most famous – insight, namely, that “[t]he most important lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction.” (1945: viii/lxxvii)

¹⁴⁸ The notion of the ‘vinculum’ appears in the context of the relation of “the self and things” (1960: 210/166), as well as of “brute being and the body” (215/170), but it also appears in Merleau-Ponty’s posthumously published lectures on nature, for example, where it refers to the nexus of ‘Nature-Man-God’. (1995: 265)

¹⁴⁹ As always, ascertaining how much of Husserl truly is present in such an interpretation is not easy, and depends on the hermeneutic framework one chooses to adopt. It is by no means an accident that some of Merleau-Ponty’s best writings on Husserl contain long preliminary meditations on the nature of understanding and utilizing someone’s work. Yet, as long we remain beholden to the distinction between the spirit and the letter of a body of work, the question of the legitimacy of an interpretation will inevitably suggest itself. (cf. Toadvine 2002: 263)

This is an attractive and prescient reading of Husserl, very nearly mirroring the position we have been reconstructing from his manuscripts written from late 1931 onward. But, it is not without its own issues. Perhaps the central question that seems to remain unanswered is that of the medium of this *vinculum*. It shouldn't come as a surprise that Merleau-Ponty's later thought aims at a rehabilitation of the ontological notion of 'element', explored via ontologically potent but somewhat obscure themes of 'flesh', 'visibility', 'reversibility', and the like. In that sense, Merleau-Ponty's rich interpretation of Husserlian 'coincidence' and 'localization' truly could be read as "... an example of what phenomenology without epistemology might look like." (Cerbone 2016: 365) But it is not clear that this kind of restitution of ontology can be supported by an immanent reading of Husserl, especially considering our insistence on an epistemological interpretation of transcendentalism. Cerbone is certainly right in pointing out, together with Quine and Merleau-Ponty, that proper and faithful phenomenological description precludes us from attaining what Quine refers to as 'cosmic exile', and Cerbone names 'transcendental exile', namely, an absolute vantage point which seems to have been the dream of so many philosophers. It may also be correct that phenomenology, with its emphatic affirmation of human beings' rootedness in the world, effects a kind of a re-enchantment of the world, giving it back some of its 'absolute mystery': "Phenomenology freed of epistemological demands releases us from exile (or, more accurately, our longing for exile), but leaves us at home in a world that is nonetheless mysterious. That this is so may help us in understanding why we wanted to leave in the first place." (379) But with this interpretation, one has the impression that the ambiguity and mystery of man's situation in the world have been elevated to the status of a metaphysical statement. After all, how could the insight that there is no absolute epistemological vantage point – predicated on some kind of an impossible *pensée de survol* (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 102/73) – be anything but an epistemological conclusion?¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ This question echoes one of the foundational debates in theory of knowledge, and Husserl has often been seen as standing firmly on one side of that debate. For example, a reader unsympathetic to transcendental philosophy might argue that Husserl's disagreement with Heidegger mirrored the disagreement between positions of a 'view from nowhere' and some sort of a sophisticated perspectivism. But this schematic overview would be simplistic, and would do injustice to both Husserl and Heidegger, but particularly to Husserl's complex position. The later developments in his philosophy contribute to a subtle theory of knowledge which manages to combine situational (in Heidegger's sense) or perspectival awareness with a critique of naïve naturalism, while still maintaining the claim to a kind of a privileged epistemological position.

Cerbone is particularly good at highlighting the various aspects and complexities of this view and often uses Quine as the spokesman for the kind of naturalist who outright dismisses the idea of a transcendental point of view as 'make-believe', not just in the paper we referenced above but elsewhere as well. (2012: 20ff.) The point is to show that Quine succumbs to the same impulses he vehemently criticizes as grandiose theory-building. (For a more positive outlook – admittedly, with a different approach and goals – on the similarities between Quine and Husserl, cf. Smith 1994.) However, when reading these papers, one occasionally gets the impression that Cerbone believes that phenomenology's subtle balancing act between these extremes is something that happens *in spite of* Husserl, rather than thanks to him. What remains overlooked is that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, for example,

Merleau-Ponty's tendency to emphasize the ontological, elemental intertwining of the transcendental and the mundane at the expense of their partial epistemological duality might itself be overemphasized here. It certainly shouldn't be taken to signify a dismissal of the epistemological problematic altogether, for the ambiguity of their relation certainly translates into the sphere of theory of knowledge as well.¹⁵¹ Certain interpreters, such as Carr, have been somewhat wary of Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of Husserl, as they have taken him to be implicitly criticizing a perceived – but in reality, according to Carr, non-existent – metaphysical dualism in Husserl. (1999: 139) But there is no reason to believe that the relative 'unification' on the ontological end means a leveling conflation on the epistemological end (which is the aspect of Husserl's thought Carr is most interested in preserving). Nor is there any reason to believe that Merleau-Ponty thought of himself as somehow working *in opposition* to Husserl when he emphasized the bodily, linguistic, and historical aspects of transcendental experience. (ibid.) As we have seen, these dimensions play a central role in the writings where Husserl is working out his disagreement with Fink. Thus, when Carr correctly maintains that "[n]othing in the transcendental tradition [...] requires that subjectivity be disembodied or separated from language, society, and history" (ibid.), this reaffirms the point made explicit in the 'coincidence thesis', and later taken up and enriched by Merleau-Ponty.

This issue of interpretation notwithstanding,¹⁵² Carr's reading of Husserl's philosophical project is insightful and useful in bolstering the picture of the phenomenologizing ego we have been developing by tracing Husserl's manuscripts and critical remarks on the *Sixth Meditation*. This is especially true with respect to Husserl's rejection of the metaphysical underpinnings of Fink's reinterpretation of transcendental methodology. As we have seen, the pushback against the notion of secondary enworlding entailed a fundamental divergence on the issue of singular or double individuation of the mundane and transcendental subjects. Whereas Fink cast their difference in terms of ontology and me-ontology, Husserl's epistemological perspective on that issue stayed more or less consistent throughout. This meant that

was not merely loosely inspired by Husserl. Merleau-Ponty seems to have believed that the transcendental philosophy *sans* a 'longing for exile' was extracted precisely from Husserl, and perhaps that it was his greatest theoretical novelty.

¹⁵¹ For an early study of aspects Merleau-Ponty's thought in the key of the concept of ambiguity, cf. De Waelhens 1951. Although Merleau-Ponty himself might have objected to being labeled a 'philosopher of ambiguity' (Spiegelberg 1994: 542), the concept has played an important role in the subsequent reception of his philosophy. Cf. Silverman 1979.

¹⁵² As we have used Merleau-Ponty's work solely as means of further illustrating the emerging conception of the unified ego in Husserl's thought 'after' Fink, we can omit the discussion of the exact scope and faithfulness of his interpretation. For a good introductory overview of the different aspects of this hermeneutic question, see two excellent collections: Burke & Van der Veken 1993 and Toadvine & Embree 2002.

phenomenology was understood as a way to provide a new perspective on already known things, and not a way to disclose a dialectic unity of ‘old’ and radically new things.¹⁵³ Finding a stronger theoretical basis for this view ultimately allowed Husserl to definitively abandon Finkian anti-humanism and recast phenomenology as a scientific path toward a new humanity. This retelling of the story of phenomenology is in many ways compatible with Carr’s deflationary interpretation of phenomenology’s metaphysical potential, and his claim that Husserl by no means offers, nor wants to offer, a ‘metaphysics of the subject’. According to Carr, the transcendental tradition offers “... not a metaphysical doctrine at all but a method of reflection, what today is called a ‘research program’. What it reveals is a paradoxical situation that philosophers feel inclined to try to resolve metaphysically.” (137)

We have been drawing attention to occasional ambiguities appearing in Husserl’s descriptions of phenomenological activity, as well as to the fact that those cases could be reflecting limitations, rather than mere failures, of the phenomenological method. These are an expression of man’s fundamental possibility of adopting clashing attitudes and of maintaining contradictory perspectives. The genius of phenomenology is that it creates an additional and focused possibility in and for the human being, that of reflecting on these already existing possibilities. Carr, much like Merleau-Ponty, also embraces these ambiguous and multi-faceted relations:

“It has been my contention that the transcendental tradition introduces us to this radical opposition and provides us with no means for getting beyond it. According to my account, neither of these forms of self-consciousness takes precedence over the other; they are just alternatives. From the perspective of each, the other appears somehow bizarre, unreal. From that of the natural attitude, the transcendental subject seems artificial, contrived, a mere fiction. From that of the transcendental attitude, the world as a whole, including my (empirical) self within it, looms as ‘phenomenon,’ its reality placed in abeyance or suspension. When this happens we feel what the existentialists try to capture by speaking of nausea, vertigo, anxiety, or anguish. It thus leaves us with the paradox that the self is correctly described in incompatible ways.” (135)

¹⁵³ This has more or less been the mainstream view in recent scholarship. For example, in a book on the legacy of Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, Zahavi writes: “After all, the relation between the transcendental subject and the empirical subject is for Husserl not a relation between two different subjects, but between two different self-apprehensions. The transcendental subject and the empirical subject is but one subject, though viewed from different perspectives.” (2017: 158)

We might quibble over the choice of words here. For example, it is questionable whether it is helpful to adopt Husserl's reference to the 'paradox of subjectivity', considering that Husserl is more than happy to announce its "resolution" through phenomenology. (Hua VI, §54) Yet it is not a matter of sheer acceptance of the radical opposition either. We cannot agree with Carr's claim that transcendental philosophy does not offer any way of going beyond the opposition, unless 'going beyond' is precisely meant in the sense of 'eliminating'. In that sense, the radical opposition may very well be ineliminable; however, if 'going beyond' is taken to mean something like 'recognizing and properly articulating', then the natural human being, now transformed and enriched by localized transcendental knowledge *has*, in a crucial way, left the old radical opposition behind. The mundane and the transcendental inform each other, and the opposition is no longer disconcerting, but informative. That is the meaning of higher humanity for Husserl: a community of subjects who embrace the field of active and passive constitutive forces they find themselves in, both constituting and being constituted at the same time. The medium of this continuous constitution is history, and its telos a constantly growing self-understanding.¹⁵⁴

The ambiguous or paradoxical nature of the phenomenologizing ego is therefore not an expression of philosophical defeat; the ambiguity of the 'who?' does not obscure, but rather plays a crucial informative role. Indeed, the overarching humanism of Husserl's philosophy now implicitly resolves a difficulty we mentioned at the end of the third chapter of our discussion. The difficulty concerned the *point* of transcendental research, most broadly put. If transcendental achievements are inherently concealed and anonymously functioning, and if transcendental phenomenology is the only science capable of disclosing them (and even then, only by way of difficult and specialized methods), then we will inevitably have to question this self-contained system. Is this elaborate construct simply a discursive invention, or even a case of philosophical sophistry? Is the transcendental ego nothing more than a "theoretical fiction"? (Carr 1999: 95) Even if we agreed that it is a necessary fiction, this would only make sense within the context of this particular philosophy and would, as Carr point out, push the question back one step: "The transcendental subject may be required by the method, but is the method itself required?" (ibid.) Accepting some circularity will initially be necessary in order to even begin answering this. Because Husserl thinks of phenomenology as a method and a 'working philosophy', there will have to be some give and take between circumstances, methods, leaps, expectations, and results. In the process, a better understanding of the natural attitude is both

¹⁵⁴ On the conjunction of teleology, rationality, and progress in Husserl, cf. Aldea 2017.

the goal and the result of this method. (97) What emerges in this process is certainly somewhat contrived. The transcendental ego, according to countless assertions on Husserl's part, does not exist in the world; yet, it is not worldless. It does not partake in our worldly ontology, yet it is not wholly outside it either, for there is no *me-ontology* in Husserl. Surely, we would be better off conceding that the only possible interpretation would be an existential one? In Carr's words:

“Why not say, then, that in the end the transcendental subject is nothing but a description – a description, that is, that applies to nothing in the world at all? Why not say, in other words, that there *are* just empirical subjects, ordinary people, some of whom, because of certain very complicated historical-philosophical considerations, have devised this odd, somewhat self-aggrandizing way of describing themselves?” (122)

For Carr, the answer is relatively straightforward. Pronouncing the transcendental ego a theoretical fiction would be an ontological ‘decision’ in its own right, and would betray the absolute neutrality of the phenomenological method. (123) The transcendental ego is, then, “... not so much a thing in the world as an absence from it – an absence defined by what it is absent from.” (134) While this echoes Fink's oppositional understanding of the ‘transcendental’, Carr's position is different from Fink's insofar as the phenomenological reduction, for him, is not a productive act in any sense. The transcendental dimension is a reflective capacity of the empirical subject, and not something disclosed via pure theory of the produced onlooker. As he goes on to argue, “[...] these two different senses of the subject, and the distinction between them, are not artifacts of the method of investigation but emerge out of experience itself.” (ibid.) This is crucial in rejecting the objection of ‘phenomenology as pointless exercise’: “Even though something like a transcendental-reflective method is required in order to articulate and clarify this distinction philosophically, it is a distinction that is discovered, not invented.” (134f.) This seems to be the exact inverse of Merleau-Ponty's position, then, as it tries to articulate and preserve the difference and unity of the mundane and the transcendental in purely epistemological terms. Carr's reading of Husserl is subtle, but it is both greatly aided by, and highly dependent on, his strong rejection of the very possibility of phenomenological metaphysics. This makes it vulnerable to objections in that vein, and such objections seem unavoidable. It is by no means obvious that a philosophy of subjectivity (which he takes both Kant and Husserl to offer) can simply do without an accompanying ‘metaphysics of the subject’, no matter how much Husserl might have wanted that. For example, the question of *whether* and *how* transcendental subjectivity essentially depends on mundane subjectivity (or

the other way around) is a legitimate eidetic question even within brackets, and if that question turns out to be unanswerable without seeping into the causal order, some part of the supposedly universal eidetic method will have to be rethought.¹⁵⁵

There is no reason to believe that these two different interpretations of the ambiguity or paradoxicality of the mundane/transcendental relation have to be mutually exclusive, but this is not a question we necessarily have to pursue here. They both offer insight into a profoundly difficult issue, and depending on the context of our analysis, we might choose to frame that issue in ontological or epistemological terms. Yet, this richer perspective on the subject of phenomenology is an advanced rendering, itself an insight of higher-level transcendental experience. We are still left with the problem of motivation for performing the phenomenological reduction in the first place, for “[t]he reasons for performing it can only be discerned after it has been performed, from within the phenomenological attitude!” (95) The various positions we have discussed so far, along with the problems intrinsic to them, seem to have done little to dispel the impression that phenomenology begins with an *acte gratuit*. (127) Carr doesn’t linger on this problem too much, but he is sympathetic to the Sartrean existential reinterpretation of the epoché and the reduction, which argues that “... Husserl’s full-fledged phenomenological method is the explicit articulation and working out of a pre-philosophical, even pre-rational, form of awareness.” (128) To be sure, Carr’s presentation is subtle enough to acknowledge the early-Heideggerian influences behind this, as well as to recognize that Sartre was probably overestimating the actual distance separating him from Husserl. As we have seen, the subversive originality of an ‘existential’ reinterpretation of phenomenology is somewhat diminished by a more focused look at Husserl’s mature thought which Sartre didn’t know well, as far as we know. In any case, there is something to be said about grounding the motivation for performing the methods of bracketing and reduction in existential experiences such as anguish, anxiety, and nausea. As Carr rightly points out, the partial terminological revisionism and critical orientation of Heidegger or Sartre does not get them as far from Husserl and Kant as they might have wanted, nor does it lead them out of the transcendental tradition. (130) As far as our discussion goes, we might also add, there is nothing in the transcendental philosophy of Husserl that would preclude it from incorporating these existential moments into

¹⁵⁵ For more on the topic of metaphysical possibilities and limitations of phenomenology, see the exchange between Carr (2002), Drummond (2002), and Zahavi (2002). While the main focus of most debates on phenomenological metaphysics has been the idealism/realism dispute, there are other topics that fall under the scope of metaphysics proper in phenomenology. Husserl’s writings on various such ‘limit problems’ are instructive. (Hua xlii, section 3) For a recent study on the possibility, scope, and limits of phenomenological metaphysics, cf. Tengelyi 2015.

an all-encompassing analysis of the puzzling phenomenon of motivation for philosophy. In the last section, we explore how the different pieces of the puzzle of the ‘who and why?’ that we have collected fit together, and what kind of personal and interpersonal transformation emerges from that fit.

5.5. *The axiology of the ‘why?’*

Simply stating that Husserl’s phenomenology is in principle capable of accommodating some existential elements still doesn’t get us very far. The major difficulty that arises concerns the problem of properly describing the ‘interaction’ between the existential moments which, in a certain sense, ‘happen’ to a person, and more rational states of mind, or attitudes, that one ‘opts into’ and, to a greater extent, chooses to adopt. In her admirable books on the parallels between Hegel and Husserl, Stähler (2003, 2017) raises the issue of motivation for philosophy and tends to contrast the relative ‘activity’ of Husserl’s position regarding motivation with the relative ‘passivity’ of Hegel’s.¹⁵⁶ (2003: 146) Of course, the situation turns out to be more complex than that, and Hegel’s and Husserl’s respective conceptions of history complicate this picture significantly. Still, one could easily conclude that a beginning in philosophy is, for Husserl, a rational act or exercise of our freedom. However, as Stähler points out, Husserl’s analysis of the transition from naïve disinterestedness to scientific *theoria*, driven by the notion of wonder (cf. the *Vienna Lecture*, Hua vi: 328ff./282ff.), is caught up in a certain difficulty. Husserl’s tendency to identify this specific kind of open wonder before the world as an attitude would seem to imply that one can choose or decide to adopt this attitude. Stähler, on the other hand, implies that wonder is better described as a specific *pathos*, a kind of an *attunement* [*Stimmung*] with respect to the world. Husserl is thus somewhat ambiguous on the point, not really thinking like a ‘phenomenologist of attunement’, but still acknowledging the fact that

¹⁵⁶ The passivity at stake here is precisely the one we saw Fink capture by the concept of the ego’s being ‘taken along’ into secondary enworlding. That movement was inscribed into the larger necessary movement of the Absolute on its way to absolute knowledge through self-understanding. This sounds suspiciously Hegelian, and Stähler’s aptly chosen phrase for the title of one of her books, *Die Unruhe des Anfangs*, is evocative of the axiomatic restlessness standing at the base of this movement, in both Hegel and Fink. For Hegel, it is ultimately the restlessness of the spirit that is the driving force, or the motor behind the breakthrough of philosophy, because, to use Nancy’s words, “... restlessness is already thought at work, or at stake.” (2002: 6) For this reason, the Sartrean claim that the inaugural act of phenomenology appears as a miracle is actually not true of Fink after all. The miracle, if we adopt the Hegelian/Finkian perspective, only appears as a miracle, but in fact harbors a hidden logic tied to the movement of the absolute, i.e. tied to a strong conception of teleology. There is no comparable structure at play in Husserl.

motivational factors are not entirely within the horizon of our personal freedom. (Stähler 2003: 139)

Keeping in line with our reading of Husserl, we are now in the position to say that this ambiguity is a feature, rather than a deficiency, of his mature philosophy. Much like with the question of whether the mundane/transcendental coincidence ought to be interpreted in an ontological or epistemological way, it seems here that phenomenology would do well to articulate an intermediary position between a radical rationalism and a blind anti-intellectualism concerning motivation. Husserl's earlier thought had already moved in that direction implicitly, but it was not until Fink that this set of problems became central to the transcendental theory of method; his mature, post-*Sixth Meditation* thought then explicitly took up these issues in a way that retroactively illuminated much of what had previously been taken for granted. Let us see how some of these earlier insights help us in clarifying 'higher humanity'.

An overview of Husserl's thoughts on motivation throughout the years reveals a marked increase in subtlety, both of descriptive techniques and, importantly, of descriptive interests. While he was quick to recognize the unnatural heading of the burgeoning science he was developing – referring to it as early as 1901, and later with increasing frequency – the 'early' Husserl was still remarkably uninterested in actually accounting for the reasons behind treading this unnatural path. Let one example suffice here. In 1910/11, as part of a course on the 'Basic problems of phenomenology', Husserl dedicates only a few terse remarks to the question of motivation in a short section titled 'The unmotivatedness of the phenomenological reduction'. These remarks cannot really be called a discussion at all, for Husserl dismisses the hypothetical question of 'why?' entirely: "One need not attribute to phenomenology any motives for neutralizing the positing of experience. As phenomenology, it has no such motives; the respective phenomenologist might have these, and these are private matters." In a footnote to the last sentence, he then goes on to add: "Or, one might say, there are scientists to whom phenomenology might be of use; these are then precisely the interests of these sciences. Phenomenology itself, however, can stand for itself. It can begin with the epoché and need not ask about any further motives." (Hua XIII: 157) We might be tempted to view this as a glaring flaw of Husserl's early phenomenology, but it nevertheless makes sense once we take the context of this course into account. This was before the transcendental breakthrough was fully understood, and certainly well before the broader conception of transcendental philosophy (the 'second' first philosophy of Husserl) would develop. Still viewed as the only way to properly philosophically ground other sciences, and not yet as a science with its own unique subject matter, phenomenology was thus understood as the foundational part in Husserl's synoptic

view of the sciences. This explains why the general interests of the scientist basically coincide with the interests of the phenomenologist for Husserl. (But it doesn't quite explain the puzzling reference to the possible 'private' motives of the phenomenologist – foreshadowing the issues that would come to the foreground of Husserl's analysis a couple of decades later.)

By the early 1920s, phenomenology's self-understanding has significantly expanded, and an awareness of its own specific transcendental tasks leads Husserl to question the motives that guide the phenomenologist much more studiously. A more focused analysis of the possible motivations is intertwined with the methodologically central discussion of the paths toward the phenomenological reduction. To make the matter more complicated, Husserl also correctly recognizes that the latter issue is not ahistorical. Thus, the question of motivation becomes part of a broader discussion of historical-philosophical circumstances which led to phenomenology, and contributed to the development of the various paths into its particular subject matter.¹⁵⁷ The lecture courses and public lectures from the early 1920s – such as the *London Lectures* (1922), *Introduction to Philosophy* (1922/23), and *First Philosophy* (1923/24) – reflect this historical perspective. Also instructive in this context are the so-called *Kaizo articles*, and perhaps most notably the fifth one, written in 1922/23, discussing the 'Formal types of culture in mankind's development.' (Hua xxvii: 59-94)

The different psychological, historical, and scientific elements that are now thematized all contribute to an appealing, albeit somewhat loose, theory of motivation. For example, in a 1919 course on one of Husserl's favorite topics, *Nature and Spirit*, he is already careful to distinguish between an *uninterested* and a *disinterested* approach to science, and, *eo ipso*, to phenomenology. While the phenomenologist, by virtue of the methods he employs, must be disinterested – and that is indeed the true sense of the bracketing method he conscientiously employs – he cannot be said to be *uninterested*: "Not even he can be actually uninterested in every sense, after all, he wants to research, carry out scientific research, that is to say, to determine in a theoretical way that which is given to him in a kind of intuition, given as

¹⁵⁷ It has become commonplace in Husserl scholarship to distinguish between the Cartesian, intentional-psychological, and ontological paths toward the reduction. This distinction has entered the mainstream with Kern 1962, and has since been discussed in numerous publications. For critical discussion and expansion of Kern's views, see, for example, Drummond 1975 and Moran 2013. It is not necessary to engage these arguments here, especially considering that we covered some of the elements of these paths in our discussion of Husserl's arguments for the parallelism and coincidence of the mundane and the transcendental, respectively. Suffice it to say that there is disagreement about the scope of these approaches, as well as about the boundaries between them. In particular, there is some disagreement on the exact status of the later 'ontological' approach, and whether it supersedes the other two or not. As with most issues in Husserl, this one is not simple and trying to separate the three approaches forcibly would certainly further skew the already elusive 'objective interpretation' of the development of his thought. For a good presentation of how persistent the Cartesian elements in Husserl are, cf. Welton 2000: 96-130.

existing.” (Hua Mat iv: 103f.) Husserl expands on this difference in the following years in a number of ways, particularly with regard to the method of phenomenology. These reflections show a great deal of subtlety and openness to the different modalities of methodology. Thus, in *First Philosophy*, while the phenomenological reduction of a Cartesian provenience is put forth as the necessary tool of every phenomenologist (Hua VIII: 80/284), it is also distinguished from an apodictic reduction, which could only properly follow *after* the phenomenological one. This leaves open the possibility that the phenomenological reduction itself be modified. (80/285) The possible modification depends on the results of the meta-phenomenological analysis Husserl undertakes. For example, he points out that following the method of epoché allows one to ‘cognize and, indeed, see transcendental subjectivity’, but as soon as one starts reflecting on that method, doubt creeps in as to whether it truly is the suitable method, etc. (87/290f.) Here, there is already room for a small expansion of our understanding of the method used, namely, with the recognition that I always “... begin my reflection naturally as natural self-reflection <or> reflection. [*natürliche Selbstbesinnung <oder> Reflexion*].” (87/291) This insight is part of the rich eidetics of phenomenological methodology Husserl develops in the *First Philosophy* lectures. Another one builds upon the distinction between a scientifically disinterested, and merely uninterested observer made a couple of years earlier. Scientific disinterestedness, Husserl argues, “... cannot merely mean a mere privation, a mere passivity, ceasing of doing what I normally do.” (98/301) It is not as if anyone could become a philosopher simply by virtue of abstaining of judgment, nor even by focusing on their reflection on judgments, etc. I, as phenomenologist, need a “special motivation” in order to perform big enough of a shift from my worldly, everyday interests and validities. Husserl’s understanding of this problem in the early 1920s still stands relatively firmly on the side of transparent reasons and active deliberation when it comes to motivation:

“Only through the *free deed of abstention from judgment*, through a letting-lose-willingly [*Willentlich-sich-loslösen*] of the original co-interest, can this attitude of unparticipating observing arise, through which for me, in the observation of my own perceiving, the perceived ceases simply to exist as something valid or experienceable in my field of being.” (98/302)

The special motivation needed for this free act of willing abstention, however, is itself not a one-sided affair, something found entirely within the space of rational, scientific reasons. In a wonderful showing of phenomenological subtlety (and of polished writing style, for the section occasionally even reads quite beautifully), Husserl then goes on to analyze the intertwining and

overlapping of various aspects of experience, of thematic and non-thematic interests, and the multifariousness of acts and of their corresponding objects of experience. The notion of *habitus* again appears as crucial, for it allows the phenomenologist to account for the different aspects of, and ways of looking at, experience which can be united in a single person without any contradiction.¹⁵⁸ This is decisive in explaining how a phenomenologist, or scientist in general, does not actually *lose* any of the facets of experience he previously bracketed, but retains them in a different, modified sense. (110/313) There is, therefore, an underlying existential, factual reality to the creation, but also promulgation, of different thematic interests that can then find their way into larger scientific communities and become anchored as points of reference for everyone. This process presupposes a constant flux of theoretical and practical concerns and goals:

“Thematic interwovenness lies, of course, not only in concatenations of ends and means, but all that can be said to belong together factually is already an indication of the type of an inner transition from interest to new interests, which soon becomes an inner interwovenness and creates, in the progress from aiming to aiming, an ever new synthetic unity of an encompassing aim, whose fulfilling realizations are, in the logical sphere, a logical nexus that comes to the fore, and, in the practical sphere, the purposive nexus.” (103/306)

An awareness of this rich interplay of factors then allows Husserl to distinguish between theoretical attitudes aimed at cognition and truth – what he calls the theoretical interest in the strict sense –, and the so-called interests of the heart (*Gemütsinteressen*) which are directed at questions of value-judgments. (103ff./306ff.) Husserl does not go very far in analyzing the unity and possible codependence of these different kinds of interests, but he does point out that the relevant acts, interests, ‘occupations’, and habitualities do in fact intersect, as well as that “... several thematic spheres of one subject can exist alongside one another, they can interfere with one another and can alternate at times purposely and without interference.” (314/510f.) All this points to an “interweaving of themes and thematic attitudes” [*Durcheinanderschieben*].

¹⁵⁸ See also a short text from December of 1931, titled ‘Interest and situation’, where the notion of a ‘horizon of interests’ is employed to account for this overlap of different perspectives (of a father, scientist, etc.). (Hua xv: 414f.) The concept of ‘situation’ becomes more prominent in Husserl’s manuscripts of the 1930s, appearing in a number of analyses concerning the historical lifeworld and our praxis within it. (cf., for example the ‘Meditation in Schlagworten’ text: Hua xlii, §4) In an unpublished manuscript from May 1932, Husserl defines ‘situation’ as our living in a continuous and multi-faceted practical interest, or rather in a series of intertwined subjective and intersubjective practical interests. This worldly praxis is, according to Husserl, a characteristic of a community understood in its ‘normalcy’. The signature of this particular manuscript is A v 19. The ‘A v’ convolute has been tellingly titled by the editors as *Intentionale Anthropologie (Person und Umwelt)*.

There is much more to be said about this topic, but this discussion would lead us far beyond the scope of our present interest. Let us close our brief overview of this earlier phase of Husserl's thought by pointing out that his formulation of phenomenology in the first half of the 1920s has a decisively ethical undertone. We have already mentioned the axiological side of the phenomenological project, which is present throughout. However, this implicit axiology is not limited to epistemology and grounded in a radically disinterested and *purely* theoretical phenomenologizing ego. In that respect, Husserl's brief Finkian (and anti-Heideggerian) phase of early- to mid-1931 was an outlier. As early as the *London Lectures* and *First Philosophy*, there is a distinct *ethical* dimension to the undertaking of the phenomenologist which stems from a growing self-awareness of phenomenology's task with respect to mankind. An ethical decision is inscribed into the heart of philosophy, as it was Plato's *earnestness* with which he sought to overcome sophistry and corrosive skepticism regarding truth which led him to ground both true knowledge, and the idea of science as the highest goal and striving of such knowledge. (Hua xxxv: 313) Thus, although it may be true that the "seeds of transcendental philosophy" are historically found in Descartes (Hua viii: 4/208), the idea of truth driving his project, and, consequently, that of Husserl, is older than both of them, and guides these endeavors.¹⁵⁹ There is a tension here between universal truth and factual life and history, much like the one we found in *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, and much like there, a certain appeal to the inherent generativity of universal truth is necessary. The philosopher is dedicated to pursuing the truth *in statu nascendi*, but this does not mean that his pursuit is any less worthwhile:

"But truth may indeed be called an attainable good. It has a worth, just as untruth is worthless; as a practical value it becomes the aim of cognizing striving and cognizing action. As with any other action, however, cognizing action can attain its goal more or less imperfectly; it can fall short of it openly or without being so noted. The cognition can remain at a certain distance from the matter in question; it can have an imperfect clarity, one that indeed views but only pre-views and is not yet fully self-grasping or does not yet achieve self-giving with respect to all the sense-moments of the belief. In this way, a new striving is motivated to examine this cognizing action reflectively and to justify it: to refashion it, by way of a reflective critique of the supposed, the still imperfect, attainment, into an actually perfect one." (9/213)

The decision to engage in such a pursuit, for Husserl, is in the true sense of the word a willful resolution, driven by a desire for absolutely justified and universal knowledge, i.e., philosophy.

¹⁵⁹ For additional discussion of the ethical charge behind phenomenological methods, cf. Hart 1992: 26-40.

In that sense, while there is certainly a dimension of passivity to the radical ‘leap’ into this new kind of activity – grounded in immensely complex social and historical circumstances – the beginner in philosophy begins with a *decision*. As Bernet argues, “... this leap out of natural life is ventured, dared by the subject who *wants* to know more, who *wants* to have a clear mind, who *wants* to give a verdict in the name of scientific evidence.”¹⁶⁰ (1994: 258) Husserl then underlines the value-laden character of philosophical activity by pointing to its radically transformative power. For the one who wants to philosophize in the genuine sense, this decision amounts to an “... absolute and radical life-decision in which his life becomes a *life rooted in an absolute calling*.” (Hua VIII: 11/215) There is a sense of an absolute giving of oneself to this new vocation, and these passages, which certainly must count among Husserl’s most inspiring, foreshadow the extraordinary claim that would appear about a decade later in the *Crisis*, where we read:

“Perhaps it will even become manifest that the total phenomenological attitude and the epochē belonging to it are destined in essence to effect, at first, a complete personal transformation, comparable in the beginning to a religious conversion, which then, however, over and above this, bears within itself a significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to mankind as such.” (Hua VI: 140/137)

The possible inner tension between the apparent passivity of ‘being called upon’ and willfully deciding to pursue this ‘call’ need not worry us here, for we have by now become accustomed to embracing ambiguity in these situations where the empirically factual intersects with the ideally rational. The interlacing of the active and passive contributing factors is, after all, a function of life itself, and of the fact that the *kind* of transformation of life instituted by adopting this new habitus allows us to reflectively grasp very long stretches of it. (cf. §50) What emerges from my new transcendental habitus – now enabling a “universal critique of my entire life up to now” (154/355) – is a radical, “complete and continuous self-responsibility” (8/211), manifested in “the noblest sense of ethical self-reflection, self-critique, and self-governance.”¹⁶¹ (154/355) The possibility of this kind of universal ethical reflection, according to Husserl, is intimately tied to the possibility of the universal epoché, although perhaps in a surprising manner. It is not the case – or, rather, not only the case – that we can attain universal

¹⁶⁰ However, we would have to disagree with Bernet that the same kind of implicit voluntarism holds for Fink.

¹⁶¹ With its focus on these virtues, Husserl’s philosophy evokes the Ancient Greek ideal of philosophy as a spiritual-exercise leading to a specific kind of ‘way of life’. For a general and highly instructive overview of this topic with a focus on various historical figures, cf. Hadot 1992; 2002.

ethical insights by employing phenomenological methods. On the contrary, it is the possibility of universal ethical reflection (to the extent that it is possible) that prepares us for properly understanding the epoché. (155/356) All the relevant passages in *First Philosophy* imply that this relation entails more than a mere structural similarity. Phenomenology's relation to values is inscribed deep into it, and the fact that the kind of universal reflection it offers can be at least partly modeled after universal ethical reflection implies that phenomenology consciously adopts some of its self-rationalization from already existing ethical discourse and builds upon it. This point reminds us of Descartes' provisional moral code sketched out in the *Discourse on the Method*. Although the phenomenologist is a radical beginner, their theory is embedded in a historical and ethical framework which it then, through its own extraordinary power of reflection, further transforms and expands. Several years later, in a manuscript written in 1931, Husserl will revisit the problem of the intersection of the factual and the transcendental, and talk of a "core of 'primordial contingencies' in eidetic forms" (Hua xv: 386) in transcendental subjectivity, thereby affirming the double dependency he had been articulating at least since the historically oriented lectures on first philosophy: "Not only the 'primordial fact' of the 'I,' but also the fact of its historical world as such, appears here to form the starting point for philosophy, even such that much of what Husserl says in this context is reminiscent of Heidegger's hermeneutic of facticity." (Bernet, Kern, Marbach 1996: 213/234) But, as we have seen, the starting point of philosophy appears in its worldly and transcendental complexity already in the historically colored lectures on first philosophy of the early 1920s.

Perhaps the most powerful statement of this starting complexity and ambiguity from this period – and an early announcement of the concepts of coincidence and localization that would appear about a decade later – is found in a supplemental text titled 'Reflection as Activity. On the Phenomenology of Reflection Upon the Goal of a Universal Science.'¹⁶² This relatively short discussion presents a generative overview of the idea of an infinitely stretching universal science, covering its development from localized beginnings to an intergenerational endeavor. The past life of the scientific or philosophical beginner is viewed as "motivational soil" of their future practical-rational possibilities. (Hua viii: 203/451) Virtually in the same breath, Husserl points out that this idealized beginner cannot be a solitary point of origin, from which the idea of science would then spring forth. A practical evaluation of their cognizing life which leads to reflecting on their future possibilities is essentially and from the very beginning related to others:

¹⁶² Hua viii: 203-11/451-58.

“Practical life as such is acting effectively besides others, with others, in recognition of others and thereby it is the achievement of something that is not isolated in the world practically forming itself, but something that creates, in conjunction and intertwinement with other achievements, the communal surrounding, which continues to shape itself. The acquisitions are in part private possessions, partly communal acquisitions. Accordingly, *theoretical life is a branch of the general practical life*, whose practical field is cognition, and, on a higher level, the unity of a theory, at highest the unity of a universal theory.” (ibid.)

Of course, here as elsewhere, Husserl is adamant about the need to ‘stage a new life’ which would enable reflection to rise above everyday mundane practice and thereby extract normative and lawlike generalizations from cognition. But this suspension of the quotidian is not a method for its own sake; the theory enabling it still remains a kind of practice with communal goals and a practical-theoretical telos. These are central to Husserl’s axiological theory of truth grounded in eternal values around which the vocation of a scientist is based: the truths that the scientist discovers are not private truths, but “... continue to hold valid in the recognition and insight of all future scientists – for all eternity.” (204/452) What characterizes true science, then, is its directedness at ‘supra-temporal’ and ‘supra-individual’ goods which only appear within the horizon of infinity. This is a science, as Husserl says, “for eternity and for humanity.” (205/453)

The text in question is densely packed, and there are other subtle arguments contained in it. For example, the discussion of the differences between purely practical and spiritual goals, and, accordingly, between practical ends and ends in themselves is interesting and instructive. We need not go into detail here, but it is worth noting that Husserl recognizes that the idea of science he is sketching is ‘uniquely peculiar’ in the sense that it is a field where all different kinds of ends, values, and motivations meet and intersect, practical and theoretical, relative and absolute. (209f./456f.) Science and philosophy, as they are presented here, are not products of mere utility; yet, their beginnings are not purely theoretical and always entirely transparent either: “In science, as in every spiritual achievement aimed at something ideally valuable in itself, the reflection beginning with a relatively unclear, vague, and distant idea and further via goals and paths leads to what is intended in the mode ‘it itself’.” (209/457)

Therefore, the idea of a universal science ideally extending into infinity is a unique kind of historical product, which, at certain decisive points of self-development, makes controlled jumps into supra-temporality, i.e., into supra-historical validity. Before such transformations can occur, however, the early-stage empty notion of universal science must be clarified by way

of focused meditation on its goals and paths, as well as the norms it would institute. This reflective capacity of theory is itself to be distinguished from pursuing the sciences proper, yet it is, at the same time, inseparable from it, insofar as this originary reflection institutes the very norms according to which the sciences then operate: “Insofar as both are *inseparable*, the work of *reflection* is not to be viewed as something *prior to* the universal science, as something external to it, but as its *beginning and grounding element*.” (211/458) The very beginning of all science, including philosophy, is therefore infused with an ethical dimension based on unconditional valuing of truth, and on absolute responsibility to oneself and others in pursuing it. Phenomenology, as the ultimate ground of philosophy and science, is basically a methodic expression of this ethical injunction. This is illustrated well by Cairns, who, recalling a certain conversation with Husserl and Fink taking place in September of 1931, has the following to say on these foundational impulses of phenomenology:

“The whole of life and the-activity of self-constitution and the constitution of objects, is guided by a telos, is directed toward the achievement of consistency and harmony. The unethical is that which is contrary to this telos. In the individual, *Ehrlichkeit* <honesty> is a characteristic of this self-consistency. Acts of all sorts that I cannot affirm genuinely are unethical. This is applicable not merely to the individual but also to society. The harmony of monads is something to be striven toward. I must be able to affirm the acts of others as well as my own acts. Husserl quoted Dostoievsky as saying each is guilty for the guilt of all. There are various levels of *Einstimmigkeit* <harmony>. The ultimate goal may be called *Seeligkeit* <bliss, blessedness>.”¹⁶³ (Cairns 1976: 35f.)

The phenomenological methods are, according to this, the most advanced way of living up to the ideal of honesty and responsibility to oneself and others. (And even then, as Cairns further points out – perhaps echoing Husserl’s words – there are things that one cannot properly back, where even the phenomenologist cannot assume absolute honesty.)

The radical intellectual honesty phenomenology promotes is both a personal and a communal goal, then.¹⁶⁴ This reflects Husserl’s notion of transformation through reduction which, as we have seen, appears throughout his writings on phenomenological method. What

¹⁶³ Cairns uses the opportunity to point to the religious charge of these proclamations, particularly with respect to Husserl’s references to the ‘calling’ of phenomenologists. It would undoubtedly be worthwhile to further explore these parallels, especially in light of Husserl’s later reflections of ‘philosophical theology’ and ethics. (Cf. Hua xlii, sections 3 and 4)

¹⁶⁴ For excellent discussions of the rich senses of ‘community’, ‘social habitus’, and ‘social world’ that can be extracted from Husserl’s work, cf. Perreau 2013 and Caminada 2019.

we have called the ‘plasticity of life after the reduction’ – namely, the fact that one can never go back to the old naïve life in the same way again – has ramifications both for the one whose life has been irrevocably changed, but also for those who will, led by example, work toward reshaping their lives in accord with the ultimate values and ideals, “... the highest goals of life, which are the goals of the transcendental ego.” (35) Husserl’s life-long resistance to historicism and, in particular, corrosive forms of irrationalism, might have ultimately led him to a somewhat naïve and unbound optimism about the power of rationalism. This optimism, according to the strict standards of phenomenology itself, might have been unfounded and, in a sense, dishonest. Yet, regardless of the practical tenability of this uniquely optimistic attempt to fuse historical circumstance with universally-binding ideals, we are now at the very least in a position to better understand it. In particular, we have a better idea of how the complex goals of natural life can be identified with the goals of the transcendental ego without dissolving the former in the latter. As we have tried to show, this can only work under the assumption that the transcendental ego *is* the natural ego with sufficiently developed reflective capacities. This has nothing to do with the anonymous transcendental achievements taking place in the background, and all to do with the correct historical and personal circumstances which make the development of the necessary reflective habitus possible.¹⁶⁵

Our discussion of Husserl’s writings – ranging from the middle-period lectures on first philosophy, to the important work on phenomenological psychology, and finally onto the period of direct collaboration with Fink and immediately thereafter – has revealed that there is an ineradicable *asymmetry* in place when analyzing the beginning of phenomenology. This asymmetry extends both to the question of who phenomenologizes, and to the question of why. Although in both cases phenomenology rightly refers to the transcendental underpinnings of experience as its ultimate subject matter – that is, to the transcendental ego and transcendental motivations – those can only ever be reached by beginning in the natural world, with the natural subject and its natural motivations. The unique radicality of phenomenology leads to a gradual

¹⁶⁵ This implicitly solves a different problem for phenomenological analysis, namely, how to fully account for the egos of those who lived before the transcendental-scientific breakthrough ever took place, of children, or of those people who are physically or mentally inhibited in a way which prevents them from reflecting on this dimension of their ego. If we understand transcendental constitution as an anonymous process, rather than as something performed by a transcendental ego, then the problem disappears. If we, however, insist that such constitution is tied to a special kind of non-natural ego, then this difficulty remains and must be acknowledged. Tellingly, Fink supposedly intimated to Cairns that he “... questioned the legitimacy of regarding Greeks and Romans as transcendental egos.” (Cairns 1976: 34) Because he presumably would not have denied their anonymous transcendental achievements, we might be tempted to believe that Fink’s position was ultimately very close to the one we are describing above. But then, there seems to be absolutely no way to defend the un-humanizing reading of the phenomenological reduction. We hint at this slight tension in Fink’s thought toward the end of the second chapter.

rarefication of these elements, insofar as some parts are left aside as momentarily irrelevant, and some parts are accepted as guiding threads (recall Husserl's claim that natural experience serves as a *transzendentaler Leitfaden*). The result of this progressive sharpening of the subject matter is a special kind of scientific attitude called the transcendental attitude. This attitude, as we have seen, is uniquely positioned with respect to the world insofar as it is a part of it, but relates to strata of experience which are only mundane in the limited sense of retroactive mundanization. Considering how profoundly transformative the adopting of this attitude is, we have then opted for another piece of Husserlian terminology and decided to refer to it as a transcendental habitus. In this way, we underlined the ambiguous character of this new kind of life, binding different attitudes and different spheres of experience, while retaining a link to the underlying, habitual nature of these attitudes.

Husserl's strategies for dealing with the starting asymmetry changed over the years. His mid-1920s attempts to formulate a psychological way into phenomenology tried to retain the asymmetry but still ground it in the absolute difference of the two attitudes and their corresponding realms of experience. This attempt, while not without subtlety, proved to be unsuccessful because the concept of parallel kinds of experience couldn't really account for the transition between them. The intentional-psychological way simply didn't provide a good access point to transcendental phenomenology, because the construct 'phenomenological psychology' was ultimately a theoretical fiction. The lack of success on this front coincided with several other philosophical events: the arrival of Fink and the simultaneous ascent of Heideggerian phenomenology. Because Heidegger based his philosophy on a slightly different account of the same kind of asymmetry, Husserl's somewhat knee-jerk reaction was to go in the opposite direction. With the help of Fink's developing understanding of phenomenology, he then tried to turn the asymmetry on its head, and instead of acknowledging the necessity of a natural beginning, briefly argued for a variant of Fink's epistemological anti-humanism. This was the wrong turn, but fortunately, it didn't take long for Husserl to understand that this approach went against the ambitious, but ultimately profoundly human and humane conception of phenomenology he had developed some ten years earlier.

The blueprint for this conception of phenomenology was found in the writings and lectures from the early 1920s, and Husserl then used them in the 1930s to great effect, but he also expanded on them. The telltale sign of this expansion was the concept of higher humanity, which now comprised two emphatic confirmations: not only of the fact that phenomenology's telos is a humanity held to a higher standard of rationality, but also of the fact that this project could only be carried out by human beings. In other words, phenomenology was no longer

understood as a pathway to the fixed goal of transcendental subjectivity, but was an open journey of improvement along which the new, higher sense of humanity was built.

This change is reflected in a marked evolution of Husserl's phenomenological methods. In particular, it is visible in the way Husserl introduces the notions of reflection and self-reflection [*Besinnung*, *Selbstbesinnung*] in order to grasp the specific kind of philosophical reflection *before*, but also possibly during, the performance of the phenomenological reduction. For, one of the insights of Husserl's progressively historical analyses was that the very method of reduction, as well as the scientific motives for it already in place, had to be contextualized. As we have seen, this kind of contextualization was already present and underway in the *First Philosophy* lectures,¹⁶⁶ and by the time of the *Crisis*, this historically charged reflection will have been elevated to the status of a phenomenological method in its own right, serving as a preliminary step toward the more concentrated static and structural analyses phenomenology could then offer. In an appendix to the *Crisis* titled 'Denial of scientific philosophy. Necessity of Reflection. The Reflection [Must Be] Historical. How is History Required?'¹⁶⁷, while discussing the historical embeddedness of philosophers and of their projects, Husserl writes: "The historical reflection we have in mind here concerns our existence [*Existenz*] as philosophers and, correlatively, the existence of philosophy, which, for its part, is through our philosophical existence." (Hua vi: 510/392) He then goes on to add:

"Here we can also say more simply, and, at the same time, in preliminary generalizing way: The reflection in question is a particular case of that self-reflection in which man as a person seeks to reflect upon the ultimate sense of his existence [*Dasein*]. We must distinguish between a broader and a narrower concept of self-reflection [*Selbstbesinnung*]: pure ego-reflection [*Ichreflexion*] and reflection upon the whole life of the ego as ego, and reflection in [*Besinnung*] in the pregnant sense of inquiring back into the sense or teleological essence of the ego." (510f., n.1/392, n.)

It is important not to understand this method as somehow opposed to, or as replacing, the epoché and the various phenomenological reductions.¹⁶⁸ Instead, it seems best to

¹⁶⁶ See also Boehm's *Editor's Introduction* to Hua VIII (xvi f.; xl f.) for some useful remarks on the links between the appearance of this kind of reflection in *First Philosophy* with respect to Husserl's later work.

¹⁶⁷ Hua vi: 508-13/389-395.

¹⁶⁸ On this topic, see Heffernan's paper on *Besinnung* and *Selbstbesinnung* as Husserl's method(s) for dealing with ethical, existential, and metaphysical questions. (unpublished) Heffernan is particularly good at contrasting the various senses of *Besinnung* with the phenomenological reduction, and does an excellent job at tracing its lineage and scope throughout Husserl's work. To the best of my knowledge, the paper still hasn't been published, but it can be found online in its full form.

understand it as a thematic expansion, allowing the phenomenologist to look at cases where a straightforward analysis is not (yet) possible, i.e., where the intentional and constitutive threads cannot be entirely untangled. These are cases, as Dodd puts it, where the phenomenologist is dealing with a givenness “[...] which is not unambiguously available as an object for intuition. Intuition here must be led by a series of questions posed with the awareness that what is given is often a complicated combination of given and non-given, of evident and non-evident, of fixed and relative.”¹⁶⁹ (2004: 193) The motivational situation of the beginner in philosophy is suffused with this kind of ambiguity of the fixed and the relative, and of the given and the non-given. Their situation is necessarily one of hazy horizons of possibilities and of unclear motivations, partly personal, partly inherited. Indeed, how else could it be? The jump into radical uncertainty cannot possibly be motivated purely by the promise of absolute, radical transparency, for it is still unclear what is supposed to appear in this transparency. For that reason, the very term ‘reduction’ might be misleading, because it seems to imply a return to some earlier, or at the very least, pre-existing state. But here, difficulties abound, as we have seen, because the ‘state’ isn’t, and never was, a conscious state, but an underlying structure which is perfectly capable of supporting natural experience while staying anonymous. ‘Reducing’ natural experience to this elementary structure by initiating a rupture in it only makes sense once we have at least an inkling of what we are looking for, and why. This preliminary state of investigative vigilance, as Husserl seemed more and more ready to accept as time went on, could only be reached by exercising some “contemplative consideration specifically of an existential kind” (Moran 2012: 49), namely, *Besinnung*. Thus, a kind of open-endedness is introduced even into the phenomenological reduction. In a recent article which does an excellent job at capturing the fluidity of this situation, Bernet writes of the reduction:

“It is an act in which philosophical thought affirms its own freedom without claiming to be in complete possession of its *arché* or its *telos*. As such an act of freedom, the phenomenological reduction can never be fully *motivated* by what precedes it and by what may follow from it. To make a new beginning in philosophical thought without knowing in advance where it will lead, is an act of freedom that only a thinker’s pronounced concern for integrity and responsibility can sufficiently motivate.” (2016: 314)

¹⁶⁹ Moran follows Dodd in contrasting this type of reflective questioning with the more static Cartesian way toward the transcendental reduction. (2012: 49f.) Both generally seem to view *Besinnung* as belonging to the ‘lifeworld path’ into phenomenology, and, as such, opposed to the relatively straightforward static-apodictic analysis of the Cartesian one. Yet, even in Husserl’s highly Cartesian meditations on *First Philosophy*, for example, there is already a great deal of historical and worldly awareness. Indeed, as Boehm points out, one could already speak of the appearance of all three ways into phenomenology (Cartesian, psychological, ontological). (Hua VIII: xxxi)

At best, Bernet further argues, the multifarious experiences of natural life can serve as an *occasion* for performing the reduction. (320) This seems to point us in the direction of constant and radically self-responsible reflection and self-reflection as ways of continually chipping away at natural experience whenever we feel there might be more to it than what naïve cognition directly offers us. Gradually transforming this existential restlessness into a focused habitus of questioning by way of repeatable methods is how any human science, including phenomenology, comes about.¹⁷⁰ What separates phenomenology from the rest is the scope and normative potential of its results, and these are the function of the unprecedented applicability of its methods. But these are, as we've seen, themselves a product of gradual development, and thus continuous, for all their radicality, with those of other sciences. Certainly, what we are describing here is a kind of a hermeneutic circle. Yet, such circles need not always be vicious, and can lead to valuable insight.¹⁷¹

What Husserl correctly recognized was that accommodating the starting asymmetry into transcendental phenomenology necessitated a rethinking of the ways into it. Specifically, it necessitated a reevaluation of the *conditio humana* of the phenomenologist, and a repositioning with respect to anthropology. We can now understand the reasons for this quite well: if the preliminary reflection must be a historical one, incorporating as many relevant elements of one's worldly situation as possible, then a convenient and reliable way of attaining that information is a boon to the investigation ahead. Enter anthropology: although Husserl never recanted his criticism of *anthropologism*, his later work is marked by a newfound appreciation for the phenomenological relevance of the empirical results of this science,¹⁷² and he even seriously considers the possibility of a 'phenomenological anthropology' and the general sense and scope of such a science.¹⁷³ We cannot go into the details of all the various

¹⁷⁰ In this sense, the radical self-reflection is not only a preliminary action that leads to the 'real' phenomenology of the reduction, but also remains a determining characteristic of phenomenology in general. This point is forcefully made by Alwin Diemer in a book which, although written quite early, has proved to be remarkably prescient and still remains relevant. Cf. the last chapter of the book titled 'Phenomenology as mankind's self-reflection'. (1956: 389-92)

¹⁷¹ For some later discussions of *Besinnung*, see §§34, 37 from Hua xlii, written in 1931 and 1934, respectively. Particularly the later text is noticeably existentially colored, and dominated by references to concepts such as happiness, love, sympathy, and altruism. This may be at least partly connected to Husserl's already difficult conditions of living in 1934, but these broad themes are entirely consistent with the topics and the general thrust of his thought of the preceding years.

¹⁷² Moran and Steinacher offer an excellent overview of Husserl's interest in the work of the French anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. (2008) For a slightly different perspective on this topic, see also Sato (2014). A brief but sound overview of phenomenology's interactions with anthropology is found in Struyker Boudier (1986). Of course, any mention of Husserl's late reflections on the factual reality of the human situation would be incomplete without a reference to Merleau-Ponty's articles which focused the attention of later scholars on his correspondence with Lévy-Bruhl. (Merleau-Ponty 1960; 1964b: 85ff.)

¹⁷³ See Hua xv, §§29, 30.

places where Husserl touches on the intersections of history, psychology and anthropology, as they span the remaining years of his life, and are scattered across highly complex and ambitious writings. Yet, we now have a much better understanding of the developments that led to the *possibility* of phenomenologically exploring these issues. Additionally, we see how they all contribute to a determined effort on Husserl's part to deliver a *phenomenology of humanity*.¹⁷⁴

The perfect vessels for this phenomenology were the concepts of coincidence and of localization, and we have presented them as significant conceptual innovations. The former allowed Husserl to eliminate the problem of bridging the gap between the mundane and the transcendental, and the latter provided him with the historical medium for their synergy. What emerged was a phenomenology of positive ambiguity, presenting the full-fledged subject of phenomenology as a locus of open possibilities, rather than a dialectical unity of opposites. Transcendental investigation itself turns out to be a way of cultivating one of these possibilities, and thus retains its link to the concrete *investigator*. Understood in this way, transcendental phenomenology can no longer be understood as a “philosophical Sahara”, and its subject no longer as a “naked self”.¹⁷⁵

It may be objected that this had been Husserl's view all along, and that it makes no sense to delve into so much detail in order to correct interpretations that are obviously wrong (or misinterpretations with an agenda). Alternatively, it may be objected that the very fact that one has to go through so much trouble in order to tentatively demonstrate something so obvious means that they are patching up a sinking ship. Yet, both of these objections miss something crucial. In the first case, one misses the immense importance of Fink's critical intervention. As we have argued, Fink's position, while ultimately wrong, created the conceptual space for the correct interpretation of phenomenology's relation of humanity. ‘Higher humanity’ as telos of phenomenology only makes sense if it has been tested against the telos of a radically opposed, and yet somehow still plausible, conception of phenomenology. In that sense, while Husserl's ‘post-Finkian’ thought resembles, in broad strokes, his earlier reflections on this issue, the notion of ‘humanity’ now appears as critically illuminated and therefore phenomenologically more founded and honest. In the case of the second criticism, what Husserl's detractors often

¹⁷⁴ As Luft points out, Husserl's phenomenology can “... also be understood in a certain ‘application’ as an anthropology, if one understands by this term a philosophical science devoted to the question of the human subject. Indeed, this would be an anthropology with a special meaning of *anthropos* and in a transcendently clarified framework. Hence the term ‘anthropology’ is used here not as a term for a positive science but as the title for a philosophy that considers the question of man as a basis for further inquiry.” (2005: 146) This is precisely the sense of the full-fledged subject of phenomenology we have been pursuing and formulating in contrast with the sense of subject emerging from an anthropologic philosophy. In other words, as we have repeatedly stated, the human being, for Husserl, is necessarily the starting point of investigation, but not the endpoint.

¹⁷⁵ For the context behind these qualifications, cf. Luft's *Editor's Introduction* to Hua xxxiv: xlvI, n.1.

miss is that his brand of radical questioning of the obvious leads to a better understanding of it, and not to its rejection. The most obvious example is the bracketing of the validity of the world. The case we focused on, namely the questioning of the phenomenologist's humanity, is perhaps even more illustrative. In a way, it is not at all surprising that Husserl took Fink's reinterpretation seriously and even briefly entertained it as his own position. How could he not, considering his own scientific responsibility and the fact that Fink's interpretation was the result of a deep understanding of, and commitment to, phenomenology? The result of his engagement with Fink's challenge was a position which was, in a way, more sensitive to the nature of humanity than that of Heidegger. This is illustrated by a short debate on Kaufmann's Heideggerian interpretation of the essence of man and how the latter is disclosed by the phenomenological reduction. (Cairns 1976: 42f.) The Kaufman-Heidegger claim that man not only *has* an essence but in fact *is* an essence was supposed to be a criticism of Husserl's overly limiting notion of reduction, according to which "Husserl sacrifices the most fundamental for the sake of the most certain." (43) But Husserl's reduction, as we've seen, was never about doubting any part of human existence, nor of emptying it out in order to reach indubitability. Rather, it was precisely aimed at disclosing the kinds and interactions of human possibilities. It is not that man merely contains within himself all the possibilities of authentic or inauthentic being (ibid.) and stumbles upon them. Rather, what phenomenology emphatically demonstrates is that the very notion of human essence is pliable and open to improvement. That is, ultimately, the point that tips the scales in favor of decision and willful activity in Husserl: despite all factors determining us passively, our active constitution can lead to transformation and let us actively build toward a more rational and, hopefully, happier life.

It is perhaps appropriate to close our discussion with Husserl's last written remark on the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, written in early 1934, which summarizes this ultimate striving:

"With the question, how long can I phenomenologize as *solus ipse*, as the 'only man,' how long can I remain at it, I get to the question of the motivation for my passage into the phenomenological reduction and the whole of my phenomenologizing. How long can I *want* to remain at it? Motivating me further is that which motivated the breakthrough of science. Hence in the first place: I wanted science, serious science, radically self-responsible science. But for what purpose did I want science? I was motivated to self-reflection by the course of my human life, our human life in which the one that is mine is interwoven, as a life on the whole unsatisfying or one that, from its normal, relative satisfaction, which is nonetheless uplifting to me and to us, falls into dissatisfaction, into hopelessness. I become reflectively aware of the

fact that through all human existence [*Dasein*] there moves a striving for happiness, life is striving and all striving stands in the unity of a striving for satisfaction, human life however is we-life, and is a striving for self-satisfaction that, in a way which each has to understand in a sense appropriate to himself, is a striving of the we toward unity in a we-satisfaction, the correlate of which is a cultural world constantly in motion, in motion as to the way it already is and in motion with the horizon of future forms of continual self-satisfaction or correlatively of the creation of a new environing human world.” (SCM: 241/192)

Husserl crossed out most of this passage, evidently not satisfied with it. We may speculate as to why, and a reasonable response would be that it simply reads in a way that leaves little room for any interpretation of the nature of phenomenology other than an existential one. Yet what better way to illustrate Husserl’s dazzling vision of phenomenology than this one? Concerned with human striving, happiness, and future, it is a phenomenology whose dazzling quality is a reflection of its optimism.

Conclusion

Philosophical concepts are supported by, and are to a large extent a product of, two interlocking histories. One is the larger history of the discipline, determined by a sprawling context of circumstances, philosophical and non-philosophical alike. The other is a more intimate history of the philosopher and of their immediate situation. The two histories inform each other, and seem to be essentially intertwined; it is only through great and laborious efforts of abstraction that we are occasionally able to untangle these strands and definitively point to an ‘inner’ or an ‘outer’ development which was supposedly decisive in bringing about a certain aspect of some concept. Even then, a minor change in perspective might be all that it takes for these isolated strands to again escape our grasp and flow back into the stream of ideas, where the two histories perpetually merge and bounce off of each other. The outer history can comprise many smaller ones, and the latter can be sufficiently different to create numerous, and entirely contradictory conversations with the larger tradition. These conversations, which are oftentimes someplace halfway between long tradition and personal history, give birth to philosophical concepts. But these are often prone to a curious and insistent forgetfulness regarding their doubly historical origin. As a consequence, much of philosophy has striven to occupy a realm beyond history, deeming discovering or creating some kind of universal validity a realistic and worthy goal. In almost the same breath, a countertendency appeared, and reaffirmed what the other approach viewed as a limitation; if someone wanted to go beyond the transient reality of the historical and worldly stage, it was because they missed the fundamental and all-encompassing character of that stage. According to this perspective, ‘pulling philosophy down from the heavens’ is not merely a way of addressing more pressing concerns first, but a way of negating the possibility of a philosophical-conceptual heaven altogether.

It seems appropriate to end our discussion with this rather broad characterization of the nature and history of philosophy for two reasons. On the one hand, we opened with an equally broad overview of the basic approaches to conducting philosophy, and although we focused on a relatively limited set of issues within a limited timeframe, they turned out to reflect those very basic questions about how to do philosophy and why. These questions are themselves philosophical, and part of a long tradition of questioning. Our discussion has therefore had the structure of a kind of a Möbius strip, because it turned out that no question was answerable, and no difficulty eliminable, without presupposing answers to other, equally philosophically

charged questions. Philosophy does not seem to be able to jump over its own shadow, and somehow become the source of light illuminating everything else. And yet, whatever light illuminates it is itself not wholly outside and above philosophy. Much of Husserl's and Fink's work was, at one point in time, aimed at finding an absolute philosophical vantage point that would somehow cast no shadow. They never succeeded in finding it, but Husserl discovered something else in the process: that the transcendental of such a vantage point feeds off of historicity, instead of running parallel to it.

This leads us to the second reason why the broad historical brushstrokes are appropriate here. Few philosophers have managed to embody the entire movement of philosophy, with all its interlocking and spiraling histories and opposing points of view, as completely as Husserl. His dedication to, as well as command of, the history of philosophy is famously spotty, though a marked progress over the years is tangible, and it mirrors an evolution in phenomenology's self-understanding. The shift from 'merely' grounding *other* sciences to the new task of self-grounding was made possible by a clearer awareness of phenomenology's indebtedness to the rich historical tradition arising out of ancient philosophy. It is thus not surprising that the evolution of transcendental science unfolded through a gradual fusing together with the history of philosophy. That transcendental phenomenology gradually started understanding itself as an integral part, legitimate heir, and in some ways the proper culmination, of a historical tradition of thought was not a minor development; it marked the beginning of the transcendental's descent into worldly history. Yet, as any reader of Husserl will recognize, there is palpable tension between this claim and many others he makes throughout his work. It is a frustrating reality of Husserl scholarship that his terms are slippery and oftentimes counterintuitive to the point of becoming unrecognizable to the reader otherwise versed in philosophical terminology. Perhaps the most notorious example is that of 'transcendental idealism'. Husserl will claim, usually in the same breath, that no philosopher had ever been as big of a 'realist' as he is, *and* that the doctrine of realism, as it is usually understood, is nonsensical. Similar examples abound in his work. Of course, one could easily neutralize any charge of contradiction. What these examples demonstrate are not failures of thought (although occasional sloppiness of expression does plague Husserl's writings), but rather the limitations and dangers of ossified terminology: original thought can push the boundaries of what can be expressed in a particular vocabulary, or break that vocabulary entirely in search of a different paradigm. Husserl was aiming for the latter, but arguably never quite went past the former. Consequently, much of his philosophical terminology is an example of trying to express new ideas with old concepts. The collaboration with Fink exposed him to a more forceful attempt to adopt a new vocabulary, although that

attempt was ultimately unsuccessful for two reasons. On the one hand, it didn't actually succeed in delivering a new vocabulary at all, but instead concluded that the phenomenologist was necessarily 'stuck' with imperfect means for expressing insights that went beyond any mundane language or, indeed, experience. On the other hand, that which was supposed to fill this explanatory gap, an incisive description of the radically non-mundane side of experience, was fraught with difficulties of its own, and not phenomenologically viable in the sense Husserl might have hoped for. An entirely separate, but not independent factor in this story was Husserl's implicit and explicit debate with Heidegger. If Fink showed him what a radicalization of focus on the non-mundane might mean for phenomenology, Heidegger was certainly instrumental in showing what a radicalization of the worldliness of the subject might mean for the phenomenological project. It could be argued that Husserl severely misunderstood what Heidegger was trying to do in *Being and Time* and elsewhere, but that is ultimately not important for this story. From Husserl's perspective, although Fink and Heidegger were pulling in different directions, both extremes were dislocating transcendental subjectivity from the only place where Husserl really wanted it: at the exact intersection between universal validity and worldly historicity.

However, as we have argued in the last chapter, the occasionally messy terminology is not always a consequence of some ineffably original philosophical concept. Sometimes, as in the case of the puzzling relation between the mundane and the transcendental ego, it is a sign of an inherently ambiguous situation under description. Is it not true that the irreducible and inescapable psychological make-up of the phenomenologist makes their entire endeavor a thoroughly worldly affair? "In a certain sense yes, but in truth not really", Husserl tells us. (Hua xxxiv: 396) The puzzling ambiguity of such claims is not there for its own sake: as we have seen, it captures different but simultaneous aspects of a single situation. By transcendently disclosing specific universal structures that are valid regardless of their ontic instantiation, the phenomenologist truly does uncover certain anonymous regularities which are at place and operative whether one actively recognizes them or not. Yet everything about and around this investigative effort is entirely worldly: the reasons for it, the decisions guiding it, the books detailing it, and the other people benefitting from it. Indeed, the ambiguity is present at every single instance of the phenomenological investigation, even before it is expressed to others, or written down and thus literally incorporated. The phenomenologist can't escape instantaneous psychologization of the results of their investigation. Husserl captures this well with the notion of the coincidence of these two registers of experience. The retroactive localization that he mentions is crucial, for it provides the link between the world and transcendentality, and that

link is historical. The two radically different kinds of experience are not passively suspended without communication, as if they were merely parallel, but interact and intersect, and are both localized in the phenomenologist. The concepts of coincidence and localization thus allowed Husserl to unite the existential reality of the phenomenological investigator with the special kind of selective investigation of that reality's essential structure without accepting the costly commitments of Finkian dialectics. It was perhaps altogether mistaken to regard this situation as somehow paradoxical or aporetic, for that kind of focus only reinforced the idea that the human being had some kind of a spectral double that emerged after the correct incantations were directed towards it. What Husserl was really aiming at, as it now seems, was to show that our inherent reflective capacities could be methodically honed to such an extent, that they could conceivably describe and possibly explain even those structures and facets of experience which made reflection meaningful in the first place. That this highly ambitious type of reflection by definition encompasses all other kinds of reflection based on some sort of evidence need not mean that it has to be somehow radically separate from them, however. Indeed, this was a mistake that both Husserl and Fink committed on various occasions. As we have seen, it took a great deal of effort and some serious epistemological confusion about the motivation for, and telos of, phenomenology for Husserl to finally realize that transcendental phenomenology *had* to be continuous with natural experience and mundane sciences for it to have any scientific sense and transformative power.

Of course, putting phenomenology on the far end of the same spectrum occupied by other sciences is a certain kind of concession: there is no radical epistemological rupture anymore, and no absolute vantage points. In particular, there is no apodictic beginning anymore: motives for engaging in phenomenology are still psychological motives, and all the accompanying limitations apply. The transcendental attitude is about as far removed from the mundane-scientific one as the scientific one is from the personalistic attitude; no radical jumps, but a sliding scale, where each specific habitus includes some of the traits of the other ones. No attitude is self-contained, and no habitus self-sufficient; instead, they all form a supportive net of habits on which one can fall back, depending on the context. Therefore, a kind of circularity is installed into phenomenology. While Husserl was certainly no friend of epistemological circles and presuppositions,¹⁷⁶ he was insightful enough to realize that this new perspective – favoring affinity rather than the differences between these sciences – allowed for

¹⁷⁶ For an overview of Husserl's complex, but ultimately limited understanding of the philosophical concept of circularity, see Heffernan's excellent paper on the 'epistemic kuklophobia' governing Husserl's notion of evidence and his critique of Descartes. (1997)

an entirely new perspective on the telos of transcendental phenomenology. Through an osmosis of knowledge, phenomenology could now hope to illuminate, and therefore enrich, even the lives of those who have no interest in science as such, let alone phenomenological science. To be sure, the details of that process would be the subject of a phenomenological pedagogy that would still have to be developed and improved over time. The major upside of such an osmosis, however, would be that transcendental insights could contribute to a better understanding of our experience of ourselves and of the world we find ourselves in.

The cornerstone of this enlarged perspective on transcendental phenomenology was the concept of humanity, and the correlate goal of ‘higher humanity’. Throughout this dissertation, we have focused on the narrower meaning of ‘humanity’, using it mostly to refer to the nature of the individual phenomenologizing ‘who’. We have seen how this problematic unfolds in the years before Fink would start working as Husserl’s assistant, and then in the years leading up to the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*. The complex influences of psychology and anthropology, as well as Husserl’s criticisms of psychologism and anthropologism, all contributed to making the question of whether phenomenology was a human activity an immensely difficult one to answer. By the time the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* would be finished, Husserl had already come up with the notion of higher humanity as the goal of phenomenology. That was a clear reference to the transformative potential of transcendental science with respect to the singular investigator, and an affirmation of their humanity. However, this notion also already contained, *in nuce*, the entirety of Husserl’s later thought that would form around the *Crisis*-stage of his work. There, as in the first dense notes on higher humanity written a few years earlier, it was obvious that the unmistakable mark of transcendently clarified humanity was a rediscovered spirit of *rationalism*, understood here as the true heir of the “*teleology of European history*.” (Hua vi: 347/299) This would be no longer be a false rationalism losing itself in a rampant naturalism, nor would it be an abject rationalism cowering in the face of mysticism or irrationalism. In the closing lines of the *Vienna Lecture*, which must count among Husserl’s most beautiful and inspired, but also his most bathetic, he calls for “the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy through a heroism of reason.” (347f./299) Regardless of what we may think of this wildly ambitious call, we cannot deny the almost irresistible appeal of the phrase ‘heroism of reason’. Its appeal is surely a function of its simultaneous precariousness. For, the teleology in Husserl is not a retelling of a preordained march of history, nor an eschatology. Rather, it is an unfolding plagued by the constant danger of downfall and barbarity, and thus essentially in the hands of those experiencing it. This potential for action and change is what lends Husserl’s phenomenology its eminently human and humane flavor. It is also the source

of both the optimism and the melancholy saturating the pages of his last works, but it is perhaps precisely this combination that makes phenomenology so appealing. We could speculate as to why: maybe the heroism it is proposing only makes sense because the stakes are so high, and effectively amount to a choice between catastrophe and triumph of reason? Some of these thoughts are captured well by Merleau-Ponty, who famously ends his *Phenomenology of Perception* with a reference to such heroism.¹⁷⁷ (1945: 520/483) Equally instructive is his lecture *Man and Adversity*, which goes over the perils of naïve humanisms, and deftly navigates between naturalistic rejections of ‘humanity’ as something meaningful, and the various forms of “*shameless humanism* of our elders” which turn a blind eye to the “misery and danger” lurking in their background. (1960: 287/226) Furthermore, one could easily point to the work of Levinas or Patočka to corroborate the claim that true humanism is only meaningful if it is exposed to the possibility of its negation.

We have outlined a path from individual humanity of the phenomenologist to humanity writ large, and have proposed an interpretation of Husserl’s phenomenology which tries to locate both its origins and its end goals in the historical world. The transcendental attitude, we have argued, can only be understood as a scientific habitus growing out of the natural attitude. The transcendental ego, in turn, is a specific theoretical mode of the mundane ego, and is not purely theoretical, but responds to practical concerns and takes an active role in the continuous constitution of the world. It might be objected that these were not Husserl’s claims. It seems to us, however, that they are deeply Husserlian claims. Of course, the line between what Husserl said and what he should have said is thin, but perhaps we do not have to decide for one side over the other at all. As Scharff puts it in a recent study, “[i]t is not a matter of understanding Husserl better than he understood himself; it is a matter of learning to say better what Husserl appears somehow to have understood.” (2019: 95) This kind of understanding is an open-ended process, as determined by external circumstances as the endeavor of the phenomenologist, or of any other person engaging in some kind of reflection. For some philosophers, this kind of an outlook is worrisome, for it seems to flout precisely those firm principles Husserl apparently sought to uphold.¹⁷⁸ Yet not even the principles of rigorous science are plucked from above, but grow out of the endlessly rich soil of human experience. Husserl appears to have understood

¹⁷⁷ For a book-length discussion of the rich context behind Merleau-Ponty’s reference to Saint Exupéry, with particular focus on the notion of heroism, cf. Smyth 2014.

¹⁷⁸ A good example here would be Crowell’s insightful review of Steinbock’s *Home and Beyond* book. As Crowell puts it toward the very end of the review, Steinbock’s interpretation of generative phenomenology would ultimately mean that the “philosopher’s participation ... will be *essentially* ideological” – a proposition which, while perhaps troubling for some, is not easily put aside, as he notes. (1998: 95)

this well, and he accordingly built a philosophy around the attempt to demonstrate how this ever-changing soil could give rise to universal and infinite goals. This demonstration may very well turn out to be an infinite goal in itself. Consequently, transcendental phenomenology still has most of its work ahead of it, especially if it wants to effect the kind of transformative blossoming of rationalism Husserl hoped to instate or reinstate. But even infinite tasks have to start, and go, somewhere; the recognition that phenomenology draws all its potential from the wealth of human possibilities seems to be a good first step in the right direction.

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Abstract (English)

The remarkable ambition of Husserl's transcendental phenomenology derives from its promise to deliver a unique kind of universal and normatively charged knowledge by way of focused and repeatable methods. The universality of this knowledge is a function of its non-mundane character. Accordingly, the main focus of phenomenology's distinct methodological apparatus is the transition from the everyday, natural style of living to the special investigative attitude of the transcendental phenomenologist. However, the fact that transcendental knowledge can only be attained and disclosed by making a seemingly radical break with the worldliness of the knower gives rise to two practical difficulties. If this investigation presupposes a rupture within natural life, the question of who is actually doing the investigating immediately arises: who is the subject of phenomenology, and what is its relation to its mundane counterpart? The second difficulty concerns the initial reasons for this radical rupture: given that the true results of transcendental investigation are supposedly only recognizable after suspending natural human life, what could possibly motivate this unnatural epistemological shift? I refer to these two questions as the 'who and why of phenomenology'. In this dissertation, I contextualize Husserl's collaboration with Fink in the early 1930s and argue that it is key to reconstructing Husserl's mature understanding of the nature, role, and motivation of the phenomenologist. This understanding hinges on the concept of 'higher humanity', that Husserl specifically develops as a critical response to Fink's new blend of phenomenology and epistemological anti-humanism, on the one hand, and to the perceived anthropologism of Heideggerian phenomenology, on the other. This notion of transcendently clarified humanity is traced and analyzed across a number of Husserl's works, and viewed in conjunction with the guiding questions of who engages in phenomenology, and why. What emerges from this discussion is a plausible and captivating image of transcendental phenomenology as an eminently human undertaking, motivated by practical tasks and axiological impulses.

Abstract (German)

Das bemerkenswerte Anliegen Husserls transzendentaler Phänomenologie entstammt ihrer Versprechung, über fokussierte und reproduzierbare Methoden eine einzigartige Art universeller und normativ aufgeladener Erkenntnis abzuliefern. Die Universalität dieser Erkenntnis ist auf ihr nicht-mundanes Wesen angewiesen. Demzufolge legt das eigenständige methodologische Instrumentarium der Phänomenologie den Schwerpunkt auf die Überleitung von dem alltäglichen, natürlichen Lebensstil zu der besonderen, untersuchenden Einstellung des transzendentalen Phänomenologen. Dass die transzendente Erkenntnis wohl nur durch einen scheinbar radikalen Bruch mit der Weltlichkeit des Erkennenden gewonnen und offengelegt werden kann, birgt jedoch zwei praktische Probleme. Wenn diese Untersuchung eine Entzweiung innerhalb des natürlichen Lebens voraussetzt, erhebt sich sofort die Frage, wer genau untersucht: Wer ist das Subjekt der Phänomenologie, und in welcher Beziehung steht es zu seinem mundanen Gegenstück? Die zweite Schwierigkeit behandelt die ursprünglichen Gründe für diese radikale Entzweiung: In Anbetracht dessen, dass die genauen Ergebnisse transzendentaler Untersuchung angeblich erst nach dem Unterbrechen des natürlichen menschlichen Lebens erkennbar seien, was könnte die Motivation zu dieser unnatürlichen epistemologischen Umschaltung überhaupt sein? Ich nenne diese zwei Fragen das „Wer und Warum der Phänomenologie“. In dieser Dissertation kontextualisiere ich Husserls Zusammenarbeit mit Eugen Fink aus den frühen 1930er Jahren, und stelle die Behauptung auf, dass sie entscheidend für das Nachvollziehen von Husserls späterem Verstehen der Natur, Rolle, und Motivation des Phänomenologen ist. Dieses Verstehen hängt vom Begriff des „höheren Menschentums“ ab, den Husserl gezielt als Antwort auf einerseits Finks neue Verschmelzung von Phänomenologie und epistemologischem Antihumanismus, und andererseits auf den vermeintlichen Anthropologismus der Heideggerschen Phänomenologie entwickelte. Dieses Konzept des transzendental aufgeklärten Menschentums wird gemeinsam mit den Leitfragen, nämlich, „Wer betreibt die Phänomenologie, und warum?“ durch eine Reihe von Husserls Werken hindurch verfolgt, analysiert, und betrachtet. Was aus dieser Darstellung herauskommt, ist eine plausible und hinreißende Vorstellung von transzendentaler Phänomenologie als ein überaus menschliches Vorhaben, das von praktischen Aufgaben und axiologischen Impulsen motiviert ist.