

**La crítica de Eugen Fink al lenguaje fenomenológico
husserliano**
*Eugen Fink's Critique of Husserlean Phenomenological
Language*

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Resumen

En este artículo considero la crítica de Eugen Fink al enfoque husserliano del lenguaje en la fenomenología, en primer lugar en los períodos “medio” y “tardío” de las obras husserleanas desde *Ideas I*. Fink fue alumno y asistente de Husserl y, además, fue influenciado por las ideas de Heidegger. En sus obras criticaba la atención insuficiente y la posición poco trabajada del lenguaje en las obras de Husserl. Creía que el lenguaje es muy importante para toda la teoría de la fenomenología, que no podemos realizar una verdadera reducción fenomenológica sin aclarar qué es el lenguaje, cómo se relaciona con nuestro pensamiento, si es posible pensar sin lenguaje y si es posible llevar a cabo una completa reducción fenomenológica.

Palabras clave: fenomenología, lenguaje, Fink, Husserl, reducción fenomenológica

Abstract

In this article I consider Eugen Fink's critique of Husserlean approach to language in phenomenology, first of all in the 'middle' and 'late' periods of Husserlean works since *Ideas I*. Fink was Husserl's student and assistant and, also, he was influenced by Heidegger's ideas. In his works he criticized insufficient attention and unworked position to language in Husserl's works. He believed that language is very important to the whole theory of phenomenology, that we cannot carry out true phenomenological reduction without clarifying what language is, how it is related to our thinking, is it possible to think without language and is it possible to carry out a complete phenomenological reduction.

Keywords: phenomenology, language, Fink, Husserl, phenomenological reduction

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Eugen Fink was Husserl's assistant in 1928-1936 and helped to prepare for publishing Husserl's book *Cartesian Meditations*. The most important book of Eugen Fink on phenomenology is the *Sixth Cartesian Meditations*, regarding the so-called "transcendental theory of method", which would perform as a methodological turning point and also as a clarification of the previous five E. Husserl's *Cartesian meditations*. First this book was thought to be written by Husserl himself¹. Also, he was influenced by Heidegger's ideas. He was a regular attendant of both Husserl's and Heidegger's lectures for many years and, being deeply acquainted with both the thinking of one and the other. First Fink's works were about phenomenological analysis of psychological phenomenon. Husserl called Fink his the most consistent student. In the process of criticizing the critics of phenomenology, Fink emphasized its hidden ontological aspects - the constitution of the world, the rootedness of man in the world. He strove for a deeper study of questions about being, the relationship between thing and "objectivity", object and being, focusing on the theme of "time and movement" and thereby updating the themes of Husserl's late genetic phenomenology. Fink also dealt with the problems of pedagogy, linking them with the Husserl concept of the crisis of European humanity.

Critique of Eugen Fink

In phenomenology we are facing a problem of the usage of our language. Our language is natural, common, how could we parenthesize the world in the natural attitude, but not parenthesize language? If we want to conduct strict phenomenological reduction, we should also parenthesize the language as the essential part of the world in the natural attitude. We might use some other language to talk about mental processes and other in the phenomenological attitude. But we do not have other language. Husserl wrote that philosophy should be a rigorous science, and also phenomenology is a rigorous theory that gives the apodictic fundament for all our knowledge. Phenomenologist cannot use poetic metaphors, negations and so on. So, Husserl had the only way —to use the natural language, but not in common way. He uses tautologies, Greek and

Latin words, to construct new words, phrases and meanings. In substance he had to invent new language and new dictionary based on natural language.

Husserl estimates the role of language in philosophical work implicitly. On the one hand, Husserl, in his *Logical investigations*, calls phenomenology descriptive science, and, accordingly, the question of the functioning of the language becomes inevitable. And Husserl devotes a significant part of the book to the analysis of the structure and functioning of the linguistic sign. On the other hand, starting from 'LI' and to the very latest works, Husserl, in fact, considers language as something purely external in relation to meaning. This understanding of language can be called instrumental - in his analysis, Husserl seeks to study the language with a predetermined goal: to completely subordinate it to the idea of "pure science" and to distinguish the language as a theory from natural language. It should become a suitable expression tool without introducing any distortion. The role of language in phenomenological work, Husserl believes, should be minimal and generally be reduced to "pure expression".

However, the closest students of Husserl: M. Heidegger and E. Fink, approach the language quite differently: they proceed from the givenness of the language, from the fact that language in one way or another determines thinking and cognition, including philosophical. Heidegger follows the path of ontologization of language and develops his own philosophical teaching. Fink wants to raise the question of language as a problem, remaining within the boundaries of Husserlian phenomenology. In the *Sixth cartesian meditation* (1988) he mentioned the problem of language, whether the resources of natural language are up to the demands upon it by self-formulation of phenomenology as the transcendental science.

First of all, it should be noted that Fink's position is a position within the phenomenological tradition: he sees himself not as the initiator of a new philosophy, but as a successor. Therefore, his approach to the problem of language is determined not only by the task of expression and fixation. The understanding of the problems facing the language in the 'Beginning of Geometry' is expanding significantly, but the ideal of the language defined in the Logical Investigations remains unchanged. Fink's starting point is the question of reading and understanding of phenomenological texts, of joint phenomenological work, of existential and practical (and not just theoretical and cognitive) aspects of the phenomenological method. He asked how the phenomenological tradition could and should exist and how the phenomenological method itself could be conveyed.

It is precisely the collision with a lack of understanding of phenomenology that makes Fink think of this; not without reason his early articles bear noteworthy titles: “The phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl and contemporary criticism” (where he explains why the interpretation of phenomenology by the Neo-Kantianism is incorrect and unpromising), “What does the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl want to accomplish?”. Fink sets off from this, at first glance, circumstance that is external to the philosophy of misunderstanding, and before him a whole spectrum of questions is revealed related to the correlation of language and meaning, language and givenness, phenomenological method and phenomenological tradition.

A kind of “linguistic turn” in phenomenology, begun by Fink and Heidegger, is inherited and continued by French phenomenologists. Phenomenology comes to France not just as the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger; Husserl’s works are read largely through the optics given by Fink. In the works of M. Merleau-Ponti and J. Derrida, we find explicit references to his works, and —perhaps even more importantly— the problems of the phenomenological method inherited from Fink: the question of understanding reduction and (not) the possibility of complete reduction and its connection with the interpretation of subjectivity, a survey on the role of language in phenomenology, the question of the specificity of phenomenological concepts, the relationship between givenness and expression. Through the question of language, phenomenology includes the problem of intersubjectivity and historicity of philosophical work, its actual implementation within the philosophical community.

1

For Fink, language is a medium, a medium with density. Therefore, a “pure” expression is impossible, it will always be a disturbance of the existing linguistic environment. The fundamental ambiguity of the word allows you to shift its meaning. Moreover, in the phenomenological description should be indicated not only the affinity between the ordinary and transcendental meaning, but also the discrepancy between them. Fink calls such a structure a “negating metaphor”: the first place in it is the distinction between related meanings. It indicates a break in the course of understanding that takes place in the act of reduction. When reading this failure in understanding should provoke philosophical surprise and require the reader to repeat the experience of reduction.

Natural language reveals its inadequacy in describing the transcendental realm, and Fink claims the need for a “transcendental language.” Such a language is impossible as a descriptive description, but partly possible in the form of speculative reasoning.

Fink almost equally uses the terms “transcendental language” and “speculation”. The difference between them can be made as follows:

- the first term is used in texts written with Husserl, the second - in Fink’s copyright texts;
- the first term focuses on the scope of description, the second on the method of formation and use of concepts;
- the first term emphasizes the difference between the language of phenomenology and ordinary language, the second —the embeddedness of phenomenology in the philosophical tradition.

Speculation is not a groundless assumption of metaphysical foundations, but an outlet to the (internal) boundaries of the phenomenological given and their understanding, problematization of the phenomenological method.

Fink describes the work of language in speculative reasoning as the creation of “transcendental appearance”, where the word “appearance” combines the meanings of “illusion” and “manifestation”. Transcendental appearance as an illusion is described as the problem of the “second world” of the transcendental subject.

By “primary deconsecration” Fink refers to ordinary human life in an unbroken natural setting. An attempt to describe the transcendental sphere leads to “secondary secularization”: natural language provokes understanding, proceeding from a natural setting. The prevailing in the course of the description of the existing, the language gives the subject of the statement the status of the existing, which in the case of the description of the meonic self and the entire transcendental sphere is an illusion. And the question of their reality is the question of the second meaning of “transcendental appearance”.

Fink makes a distinction between “regressive phenomenology”, which studies phenomena in their living reality, and “constructive phenomenology”, whose “objects” (appearance and death of a transcendental subject, his identity, givenness and self-giving, being, thing and thingness, world) fundamentally elude given by

virtue of its mode of being. These are the ultimate horizons of analysis, which determine the analysis and can only be manifested in the sense of some visibility. Fink correlates constructive phenomenology with Kant's transcendental dialectic:

- both are engaged in what is not given in experience;
- both are aimed at the methodological unity of knowledge;
- both there and there the problem of the givenness of the subject is considered;
- in both cases we are talking about changing the way of cognition and description; emphasizes the need to maintain the problematic nature of concepts.

The only way of philosophical work in the field of constructive phenomenology is the conceptual understanding, which has the character of a sketch and a problem. The quintessential of the phenomenology of the given is the consideration of the problem of the Absolute (the primary unity of the world and its meontic source). Understanding the transcendental appearance as a phenomenon of the Absolute itself refers to Hegel's philosophy, which Fink interprets in a phenomenological spirit: the idea of development through the denial and the problem of the self-alienation of the Absolute and its return to itself takes a key place. Fink describes the phenomenon of the Absolute as the self-estrangement of the meontic source, which cannot be given with obviousness. It is pure negativity that undermines any complete conceptual system.

The meontic source is not described descriptively, but it can be pointed out due to the structure of the speculative concept and reasoning. Such reasoning has a sketch structure, which allows you to define an understanding environment in concepts, at the same time revealing the problematic nature of concepts. Thus, it preserves and radicalizes surprise as a driving force of phenomenology. The language of speculative reasoning differs in the way of correlating words and meaning. Becoming a concept, the word undergoes a speculative transformation. For Fink, as opposed to Husserl, natural language is too unambiguous, while the concept is mobile, "operational" and indefinite. However, this uncertainty is not arbitrary —the concept is motivated by a "transcendental analogy" between ordinary and transcendental meaning. The strictness of a concept consists in the fact that it is reinterpreted every time, since speculative reasoning is "operational" and concepts mutually define each other.

Fink warns against the false clarity of phenomenological texts. The criterion for a correct understanding for him is continuing wonder. But this is not an ordinary wonder. Fink in his works develops the concept of philosophical wonder as the beginning of philosophizing. The special features of philosophical wonder are:

1. *Universality*. A philosophical surprise is not a surprise of some strange thing, but a surprise to existing as a whole, and ultimately to the world as a space of possible existing. This is a new way of dealing with the world, in which the question is taken for granted.
2. *Duality*. Total in its scope, surprise, at the same time, implies maintaining the gap in understanding, therefore, it cannot simply be a rejection of the previous understanding in favor of the new.
3. *Eventual character*. Fink describes surprise as an event that “happens” to a person. This is a special kind of experience when a person surrenders to an event, goes into a “suspended” state and deliberately holds it, making surprise more and more radical. Therefore, it is important not to overcome surprise by bringing it to clarity, but to “withstand” it and think while maintaining surprise.
4. *Focus on rational development*. Philosophical surprise is different from that which underlies religion or art. It requires a rational understanding: “a radical and universal knowledge of the world”.

The philosophical wonder is correlated with phenomenological reduction.

1. The totality of wonder is brought to the limit in terms of installation and epoch as a change of installation. Developing surprise, reduction makes it possible to comprehend the usual way of living as a natural attitude and turn to its constituent source - but this does not mean to come to a new confidence, rather the opposite. In reduction, not only the being of being and twenty the world as a space of possibilities, but also the being of the subject as a human being in the world.
2. Reduction in the understanding of E. Fink is not a one-time act, but a process, the beginning and the goal of phenomenology, and Fink emphasizes the unattainability of complete reduction. Surprise becomes not only its starting point, but also the driving force, and the language of phenomenology should ensure the retention of surprise.

3. Philosophical work becomes the task of discovering the transcendental source of the world - one of the dimensions of the Self called the “transcendental subjectivity” acts as such.
4. The eventual nature of wonder and the self-presumption of reduction is developed by Fink in the concept of subjectivity as the interaction and unity of the three Selves. Their unity and at the same time the split within transcendental subjectivity simultaneously opens up the possibility of reduction and does not allow a complete and final transition to a transcendental attitude.

Fink not only looked for ways to represent those vivid and most relevant acts of understanding, which guided the phenomenological philosophy, but also emphasized the urgent of the need to combine their results to overcome their philosophical naivety. This naivety was associated with the initial (and inevitable) exclusion of principle issues related to phenomenology as a transcendental system as a whole, as well as issues related to the completeness of evidence in relation to the transcendental field of experience in particular. Such incompleteness must be overcome by a thorough “criticism of the transcendental reason”

For Husserl the task of such self-criticism was aimed at studying the evidence acquired in a transcendental sense, then for Fink this task meant a completely different challenge, resulting in an innovative vertical displacement of the horizontal structure of Husserlian phenomenology. From the start, Fink worked on a full-scale system of phenomenological philosophy and on the architectonic concept of various levels of pure phenomenology, in which the new progressive followed by regressive phenomenology (transcendental aesthetics and analytics) phenomenology (transcendental dialectics), supported by a constructive method.

2

Fink sees another difficulty of Husserlian phenomenology (technically, however, more clearly fixed) —the ambiguity of the correlation of description and analysis. It is known that phenomenology as a philosophical methodology was created precisely as a descriptive methodology, allowing you to describe what is given, as it is given. But it turns out that the subject to description is always somehow articulated, articulated, that is, there is already a subject to analysis in itself, and therefore the very possibility of pure phenomenological descriptive (albeit latent) articulation.

This rebuke to the traditional phenomenology is well known —here, rather, it's interesting Fink's hypothetical argument. Is it because things in their self-identity elude direct description that they have already revealed yourself against the background of the speculative present, which, as they say, is always “somewhere nearby”?

Description without sketch, without assuming the concept of a given is blind to positivism; analysis without connection with speculative thinking, that is, analysis that only vastly unfolds this knowledge, is chatter (Fink, 2022, p. 7).

It used to be considered that Husserlian phenomenology is a methodological implementation of the philosophy of life. It seems that Fink says: no, Husserl's phenomenology is a method that reanimates, rehabilitates the most ordinary positivism. He is also trying to show that his criticism of psychologism (Brentano), positivism (Mach, Avenarius), scientism (Weierstrass) Husserl himself in fact sets the limits of its phenomenology, from which it, as from life imprisonment cells will now never be able to get free.

In fact, this criticism of Fink has a lot of fair, at least provocative. Which, according to Fink, drove Husserl into a hopeless triangle of psychologism, which is by no means overcome by the “fantastic metaphysics of subjectivity”, positivism and scientism? The first is Husserl's complete disregard for history. Husserl turned to the history only in his least book *Crisis*.

This difficulty Fink, secondly, circumvents the negative ways, hinting that Husserl's neglect of history is already inherent in his positivist scientism: the very project of substantiating philosophy as a (strict) science is supposedly rooted in the project of scientific knowledge of the Modern Age, primarily in mathematical science (from which Husserl so painfully tried to dissociate science from philosophy).

Attributing philosophy to a scientific status profane philosophy, creates, as Fink shows, a discord between philosophizing and program (and program here refers to the project of philosophy as a science, which always remains only a program). Fink states:

In an effort to remain true to its previously proposed “methodological program”, Husserl's phenomenology thereby falls below its true philosophical level (Fink, 2022, p. 37).

The case study is that Husserl actually does not have true ontology, although he does declare the need of its creation. His so-called formal ontology is allotted to nothing more than logic and only logic, that is, again, science in the scientist-positivist sense of the word. As a result, the Fink's conclusion sounds like this:

Husserl's philosophy knows no *metaphysica generalis*, then there is no theory of primordially clarifying concepts. Husserl's philosophy refers to the new European tendency to expel a genuine being from the sphere of human inquiry, refers to a situation where a person is proud of himself as an "autonomous cultural subject" (Fink, 2022, p. 32).

In his 1939 article (Fink, 1966), Eugene Fink gives his interpretation of philosophy Edmund Husserl based on a question about the guiding problem of philosophy. In the introduction, Fink emphasizes that the beginning of all philosophy is including phenomenological, is an event of philosophical surprise, "Overtaking" a person and experienced by him. The specifics of philosophical teaching are determined by how it conceptualizes and designs this philosophical surprise.

Exactly in this understanding is formed a guiding problem characteristic of a particular philosophy. And the topic philosophical consideration, and philosophical method can be understood only based on the problem. As the guiding problem of phenomenology, Fink identifies the problem finding evidence. Next Fink gives a plan for the interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology. In this article only the first two are revealed list item: the concept of an existing phenomenon and the problem of intentional analysis.

Fink understands the famous Husserl motto "back to the things themselves" as a requirement, breaking self-understanding and discarding the existing interpretations, wonder about what is being. This is the task find the being in its original given. Access to being as reveals a self-giving phenomenon only intentionally understood consciousness. So, the question is about being becomes a connection issue existing and consciousness. Intentional analysis, in turn, is a method of studying the life of consciousness and returning to the beginnings of knowledge, that is, to the evidence. As such is understood as the original and direct reality in the vision. The purpose of phenomenology understood as reversal human thinking and return through questioning from the evidence of everyday life to their semantic source.

3

The subject of the joint work of Husserl and Fink was first first of all, the doctrine of the methodology of phenomenology is a question that Husserl considered the most important at the end of his life. The problem of the method and Husserl's later methodological considerations are now one of the most actively discussed topics in phenomenology (Luft, 2022; Overgaard, 2015), so that Fink's self-criticism cannot but arouse much interest. First of all, it should be said that the intonation of Husserl himself.

First of all, it should be said that the intonation of Husserl himself in relation to his own early works, sometimes little inferior to Fink's sharpness. Husserl's *Remarks on Ideas I* served to consolidate the "phenomenological naivety", indicate the radical reflexivity of his late project.

His 'phenomenology of phenomenology' is aimed at the phenomenological disclosure of philosophical experience and calls into question the prerequisites on which the phenomenological enterprise is based are, first and foremost, the prerequisite for the problem-free feasibility of the reduction procedure and bracketing of a devoted world (Husserl, 2002).

In the same way that the transcendental phenomenological attitude made the object of criticism naive-natural the installation in which science and philosophy were before the formation of phenomenology, "phenomenology of phenomenology" puts under the question is the installation of a phenomenologist, and therefore, under the fire of criticism, it is not Descartes or Kant, but Husserl himself.

Trying to get out from the evil infinity of the splitting subjectivity, the late Husserl is looking for a stable metaposition, which would give the last substantiation to the phenomenological method.

However, in addition to listing the vulnerabilities in the reduction methodology that Husserl himself was well aware of (problems "Prerequisites for non-repetitiveness", "interest in disinterestedness", grounds for reduction in pre-predictive experience), Fink's criticism also contains something else —an attempt to solve the Husserlev problem of finding a metaposition.

Only this metaposition can qualify for an assessment of Husserl's phenomenological project in the general context of a philosophical enterprise, and only proceeding from it it is possible for Fink to criticize Husserl for his rash attitude to philosophical tradition.

The key concept that allows Fink to find such perspective, is the concept of “position”, or “posture” (Haltung). “Position” must be distinguished from the concept of “attitude” (Einstellung). Despite the fact that the “attitude” is one of the central concepts in the doctrine of the method, Husserl never gave him a clear definition (Fischer, 1985; Staiti, 2009).

Attitude is a basic characteristic of consciousness, its type, and when Fink speaks of an “anti-metaphysical” or “anti-speculative” position, he offers a non-phenomenological a description of consciousness, and an analysis of the philosopher’s attitude to life; also speaks of ‘Lebenshaltung’, a “life position”.

The word ‘Haltung’ was quite popular in philosophy. 1930s and, apparently, allowed to grasp the ratio between subjectivity and life. Husserl himself uses from time to time (for example, in “Crisis” he talks about the special position that a psychologist must take for a specific psychological theming) (Husserl, 1976).

Heidegger uses the concept of “posture” as one of the key parameters for the existential characteristics of science (as opposed to pre-scientific and extra-scientific attitude to the world) (Heidegger, 1976). And Georg Mish in the important book *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Life* defines the contrast between the philosophy of Husserl and William Dilthey precisely through the difference in their poses:

To look from things to thoughts of one’s own space, where everything that has a name and form, freeing itself from its burden of reality, cleared and comes to the clarity of “contemplation”, which gives this name and this form unshakably clear meaning and limitation. This rejection of reality (Entwirklichung), in which everything is repelled by anthropological, and imaginary empirical facts are revealed as “the essential laws of empiricism,” is a specifically philosophical posture (Haltung). Could there be more contradiction than between this metaphysical claim of purely contemplative thinking and Dilthey’s “thirst for reality”, which requires positive science quenching? (Misch, 1931, p. 194).

The categorical status of a “position” will be given later by Otto von Bollnow (von Bollnow, 2009). In Fink’s criticism, this term indicates the special position of the Husserl-phenomenologist, which he takes in relation to history, life, the living world. Fink identifies three possible positions (Bollnow, 2009):

- **Dogmatic faith** is a borderline type of position, since self-awareness and self-mastery are practically absent here. The need to overcome the naive dogmatism of the “general thesis” from the very beginning was devoted to Husserl’s doctrine of reduction.
- Satisfied with their own negativity, **skepticism**. In this position, Husserl leads the image of “strict science”, inherited from science and prescribing “Bracketing”, suspension of the proposition of being items. Husserl’s method contains a strong skepticism: the concept of epoch inherits Pirron’s philosophy (Held, 2013), and Fink draws his criticism precisely on the indifference to life (ataraxia) that can lead to implementation of such a methodology.
- A truly **philosophical position**. This design causes greatest interest: here Fink is trying to go beyond the original phenomenological method. From his point of view, the key to this position should be its rootedness in the philosophical tradition. Perhaps Husserl’s most famous attempt to fit into the history of philosophy was undertaken by him in his report “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man...” (Husserl, 1965). Declaring himself heir to Plato, Husserl refuses indifference of skepticism and claims on the implementation of “heroic metaphysics”, which inspires European modern science and climaxes in the phenomenology project. However, Fink is not satisfied with this reconstruction. Husserl does not explain why should we consider the new European science as the continuation of ancient philosophy. In Husserl’s phenomenology, a paradox arises: on the one hand, the position of the scientist of the New Age is the position of a philosopher who seeks to overcome everyday experience, doxes; on the other hand, all-natural science itself produces a “substructure” of the life world and turns into a special kind of doxa, which the phenomenological project is designed to overcome. What is the position of a scientist and how does the position of a philosopher relate to it? Is it possible to reconcile the criticism of science by Husserl with his search for “genuine” science?

The main requirement that Eugen Fink presents to the phenomenological philosophy, is the development of a conscious and responsible posture in relation to life, history and science.

Notes

- 1 This text was considered for a long time as a work of Husserl's authorship. On this historical matter, a note by Sebastian Luft is quite elucidative: "Among the first generation of French phenomenologists, the VI Meditation was taken as a Husserl's writing; this was, for example, Berger's and Merleau-Ponty's view" (Luft, 2002, p. 5).

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