

# Ontological Experience

Adam Wells  
Emory & Henry College

In the years after Edmund Husserl's death in 1938, Eugen Fink's work focused on "the problem of ontological experience." Though much of that material has been lost, I will attempt to reconstruct the idea of ontological experience by considering the intersecting trajectories of Fink's work on Husserl (culminating in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*) and his later work on Friedrich Nietzsche. In the first section of this essay, I outline a possible relation between Fink's work on ontological experience and his earlier collaborations with Edmund Husserl. In the second section, I analyze Fink's interpretation of Nietzsche's "re-valuation of values," "will to power," and "Dionysian play." Drawing on Husserlian notions of "constituting" and "phenomenologizing" subjectivity, and on Fink's analysis of Nietzsche's will to power, I argue that true ontological experience is tantamount to the experience of ontological projection.

## I. Fink, Husserl, and Heidegger

Fink's major work on ontological experience was lost during the German invasion of Belgium in 1940.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, significant clues exist about the philosophical content of that work. First, it is clear that Fink sees ontological experience as the culmination of a trajectory of philosophical thought that began with Husserl and Heidegger.<sup>2</sup> Second,

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<sup>1</sup> After Husserl's death in 1938, Fink, Ludwig Landgrebe, Malvine Husserl, and Father Herman Leo Van Breda mounted a heroic campaign to rescue Husserl's manuscripts from certain destruction in Germany. They succeeded in moving Husserl's corpus to Leuven, Belgium. Fink emigrated to Leuven in 1939, and Landgrebe and Malvine Husserl emigrated soon thereafter. He remained in Belgium until the German invasion of 1940. During that year, Fink was prolific. He and Landgrebe transcribed over 2,800 pages of Husserl's manuscripts. Fink's own work during that time-period (1938-40) focused on the problem of "*Ontologische Erfahrung*." He produced a major treatise on the subject, which was unfortunately destroyed during the German invasion. The first five pages are all that remains, along with his preparatory notes on the subject. For more information on the movement of Husserl's manuscripts, see H. L. Van Breda, "The Rescue of Husserl's *Nachlass* and the Founding of the Husserl-Archives," in *History of the Husserl-Archives Leuven* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2007), 36-69.

<sup>2</sup> Although Fink never re-wrote his treatise on ontological experience, the idea was clearly important for his later work. He returns to the theme repeatedly in his work on Nietzsche and in various writings throughout the 1950's and 60's. His posthumously published *Sein und Mensch: Vom Wesen der ontologischen Erfahrung* (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1977) also focuses on the concept of ontological experience.

Fink's work was clearly influenced by his interpretation of Nietzsche.<sup>3</sup> By following these "clues" it is possible to reconstruct a plausible notion of ontological experience.

As the culmination of Fink's early work with Husserl, the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* is an important source for Fink's later work on ontological experience.<sup>4</sup> The former is ostensibly concerned with phenomenology's "absoluteness": how can we know that phenomenology is an *absolute* science? Fink notes that Husserl's phenomenological reduction, which is supposed to lead to an apperception of the Absolute, is "for the most part under the spell of mundane prejudices."<sup>5</sup> Chief among these prejudices is the idea that phenomenological investigations pertain to Being *as such*, and that the Absolute must be restricted to ontic categories—e.g., the infinite whole, Being, the Good, the most encompassing, and so forth. This ontic prejudice prevents us from grasping the Absolute *as absolute* precisely because the Absolute is not Being, but the constitutive source of Being; it cannot be restricted dogmatically to ontic categories. As Fink puts it, "In all this *ontic apperception* there lies a *dogmatism* which fundamentally prevents grasping the concept of Absolute with phenomenological *suitability*."<sup>6</sup>

In some sense, the ontic prejudice is inescapable, for phenomenology is done by *beings*; philosophical terms necessarily reflect the ontic situations of those who philosophize. Phenomenology is caught in a paradox: the act of phenomenologizing consists in a being trying to uncover the constitutive source of Being using language derived from Being. The philosophical temptation is to forestall this paradox by restricting the absolute to the ontic—a temptation that perhaps proved too alluring to both Husserl and Heidegger. However, such a solution does not yield an absolute science, for, as Fink notes, "'being as such' makes up but one moment of the Absolute."<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the phenomenologist must think in ontic terms while understanding that those terms apply to the Absolute only in an analogous sense: "The explication of the Absolute cannot do without [ontic categories], since they are needed in that explication as the *medium for transcendental analogizing*."<sup>8</sup> What the phenomenologist must *not* do,

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<sup>3</sup> There are notes from 1937-39 on Nietzsche's "*Philosophie des Spiels*." From 1939-46, Fink returns repeatedly to the Nietzschean idea of a "*Metaphysik des Spiels*."

<sup>4</sup> Fink worked on *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* throughout the early 1930s. This work was so important—and so representative of his collaboration with Husserl—that Fink chose to submit it as his *Habilitationschrift* in 1946 after returning to Freiburg.

<sup>5</sup> Eugen Fink, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: 1995), 145.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

however, is mistake the philosophical “medium for transcendental analogizing” for the Absolute itself.

Fink argues that phenomenology, when done correctly, has a built-in safeguard against the dogmatic application of ontic categories (or any other categories, for that matter). Dogmatism is proscribed by the self-referential structure of phenomenology. In other words, phenomenology guarantees its own “absoluteness” to the extent that it is self-referential. In order to understand the force of Fink’s claim, it will be necessary to unpack the idea of phenomenology as a self-referential science.

Phenomenology’s self-reference derives from the phenomenological reduction, which ultimately creates a division in transcendental subjectivity: “[P]erforming the phenomenological reduction breaks open a *cleft* in the field of transcendental subjectivity and sets up a separation of transcendental being into two heterogeneous zones.”<sup>9</sup> The first “zone” of transcendental subjectivity involves the *activity* of world constitution, which consists in “the formation of world and being.”<sup>10</sup> This constitutive work of transcendental subjectivity is directly disclosed by the phenomenological reduction. In *epochē*, naïve assumptions about the objectivity, or *Being*, of the object-world are suspended, revealing through the reduction the constitutive work of consciousness in producing objectivity. The constitutive “zone” of transcendental subjectivity is the theme or object of investigation, of what Fink calls the “transcendental theory of elements.” Husserl’s work, in exploring the constituting activity of consciousness, is more or less restricted to the transcendental theory of elements.

There is also a second zone of subjectivity at play in the phenomenological reduction: the “phenomenologizing I” or “transcendental onlooker.” This zone of subjectivity does not participate in the activity of world-constitution, but it observes and reflects upon that activity. Put differently, if the *object* of the transcendental theory of elements is world-constitution (including both the constituting subject and constituted object), then the *subject*, the one doing the phenomenological investigating, is the transcendental onlooker or the phenomenologizing I.<sup>11</sup> This phenomenologizing I is different, in principle, from the constituting I. It does not participate in constitutive acts of consciousness. Fink therefore claims that the reduction introduces a cleft or dualism into transcendental life: on the one side is the constituting I, which is the theme of the “transcendental theory of elements,” and on the other side is the phenomenologizing I, which is the theme of “the transcendental theory of method.” The latter, as an investigation into the act of phenomenologizing, is tantamount to a phenomenology of

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 11.

phenomenology, a phenomenological investigation of the methods of phenomenology itself.

This is the transcendental theory of method that is lacking in Husserl's thought. Even in his later work, Husserl focuses exclusively on the constitutive action of transcendental subjectivity, while phenomenologizing subjectivity is completely neglected and remains "an uncomprehended residue in the self-clarification of transcendental subjectivity."<sup>12</sup> If Husserl's phenomenological project of transcendental self-clarification is to be completed, if phenomenology is to serve as an absolute ground for the sciences, then "the uncomprehended residue" of phenomenologizing subjectivity must be subject to phenomenological investigation. Yet this investigation cannot proceed regressively (from phenomena back to their constitutive source) because the "phenomenologizing I" is not involved in constitution. What is needed is a "constructive" mode of phenomenology.

The "constructive" approach may be contrasted with Husserl's "regressive" approach: "If regressive phenomenology is the whole of the primordial and intersubjective explication of reductively opened up transcendental subjectivity, then there is not alongside it still another new region of *reductively given* transcendental life now to be offered as the theme for a constructive phenomenology."<sup>13</sup> Regressive phenomenology opens up, through the reduction, the entire realm of givenness. There is, therefore, no remnant or new region of *reductively given* transcendental life available to serve as a theme for constructive phenomenology, yet the reduction also reveals a hidden depth of transcendental subjectivity, the phenomenologizing I which is *not given* but which is able to investigate or phenomenologize about that which is given. Thus, constructive phenomenology, which is primarily concerned with the phenomenologizing I, differs from the regressive approach, which is concerned with the analysis of phenomena. The "transcendental cognitions" of constructive phenomenology cannot be disclosed by regressive phenomenology:

The "object"—or better, *the objects*—of constructive phenomenology are *not given*." The theorizing directed to them is not an "intuitive having given" [*anschauliches Gegebenhaben*"], is not "intuitive" [*intuitiv*"]; but as referral to something that precisely by its transcendental mode of being is *in principle* deprived of "givenness," is "non-given," this theorizing is *constructive*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 56.

Constructive phenomenology is not concerned with *given* phenomena (and their source in subjectivity), but with the pre-given or non-given source of both phenomenal object and subject.

In the act of reduction, the transcendental onlooker (phenomenologizing I), “*inquires back from experience of the world to constitution of the world, inquires back from finished and ready ways-of-taking-things-as-holding-in-being [Seinsgeltungen] to the processes of the formation of those ways of accepting things in being and thus also to the deep constitutive strata of acts of reflection.*”<sup>15</sup> What is discovered in this inquiry is a “teleological tendency” that structures all constituting life: namely, a tendency toward Being. The *telos* of constituting activity is Being, or worldly existence: “[*T*]he existent is only the result of a constitution, and that constitution is always constitution of the existent.”<sup>16</sup> Fink refers to the constitutive activity of transcendental subjectivity as “enworlding.” It is important to note that the enworlding tendency of transcendental subjectivity applies to both phenomenal objects and subjects: “The world-aiming tendency of transcendental constitutive process terminates not only in mundane ‘*Objects,*’ as the end-products of constituting performances, but just as much in the mundane *subject*: in man, who likewise represents a *result* of a constitutive sense-bestowal.”<sup>17</sup> Both the world and mankind, as beings-in-the-world, are the *results* of constitutive acts on the part of transcendental subjectivity.

Where does this leave the phenomenologizing I? Can its activity be characterized as enworlding? As Fink asks, “is this *uncovering* of the being-tendency of all constituting life itself caught up *in* the being-tendency?”<sup>18</sup> The answer to Fink’s rhetorical question is clearly “No.” The act of phenomenologizing—i.e., the act of reflecting on the constitutive work of subjectivity—does not itself constitute anything; the phenomenologizing I is not involved in the work of constitution. With the advent of the phenomenologizing I (in and through the phenomenological reduction), a counter-tendency is introduced into transcendental subjectivity: “Now, in the reductive epochē a *countertendency* is formed in transcendental life, a countercurrent to itself, a noncompliance and nonassociation with the direction that life takes in performing the action of constitution; and there is instead a movement back *against* this direction of life, a *breaking up of the tendency of life toward the world as its finality.*”<sup>19</sup> The teleological tendency that structures the phenomenological I is not a being-tendency, but a tendency

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 24.

against the enworlding activity of constitution. The phenomenological I, produced in the reduction, uncovers a transcendental subjectivity that is the source of the constituting action that terminates in worldly existence. The horizon of the world (and of Being, which necessarily appears within the horizon of the world) is recognized as a constituted result, a *telos* whose source is transcendental subjectivity: “The onlooker discloses, by reduction action, the transcendental source and dimension of origin for belief in the world, he ‘discovers’ transcendental subjectivity as constituting.”<sup>20</sup> This division in transcendental subjectivity is essential to the phenomenological project; in order to investigate the constituting activity of consciousness, transcendental subjectivity must be “stretched” beyond its constituting functions so that those functions might be evaluated and investigated. Subjectivity must divide itself against itself to investigate its own constituting activity.

Put differently, in the phenomenological reduction, the subject rises above its being-in-the-world to analyze the constitutive source of that being in the “innermost ground of its life.” The transcendental subject is thus both a being-in-the-world and a non-being—a “μηον.”<sup>21</sup> It is this “meontic” subjectivity that is the constitutive source of Being. If Husserl’s error consists in not recognizing the meontic implications of the “phenomenologizing I,” Heidegger’s error consists in not recognizing that Being is constructed. Ontology is not, therefore, a regressive science that sweeps away philosophical presuppositions to uncover the fundamental ontology of *Dasein*; rather, ontology is radically constructive. “Being” *results* from the play of meontic subjectivity.

## II. Fink and Nietzsche

In the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, Fink establishes the necessity of constructive phenomenology by analyzing the phenomenological reduction. The phenomenologizing subject, however, is left essentially bifurcated: the constituting I stands over-and-against its counter-tendency, the phenomenologizing I. But what exactly is this new phenomenological form of bifurcated subjectivity? What content does it have? Is it simply the capacity to analyze the processes of constitution? What difference does phenomenology make in the *life* of the subject? Through his work on Nietzsche, Fink comes to see phenomenology as the experience of ontology, but not, as we have seen, fundamental ontology; rather, phenomenology is the experience of the constitutive *projection* of ontology. Three Nietzschean concepts are particularly important here: the revaluation of values, the will to power, and Dionysian play.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 1.

Nietzsche's critique of a religious re-valuation of values is well known: the original, life-affirming morality of knightly-aristocratic peoples has been inverted by the priestly (particularly Christian) veneration of powerlessness and weakness. Religious people, who are relatively powerless and unable to accomplish their goals through action, obtain *spiritual revenge* by venerating powerlessness and denigrating power *in eternity*:

The miserable alone are the good; the poor, powerless, lowly alone are good; the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly are also the only pious, the only blessed in God, for them alone there is blessedness – whereas you, you noble and powerful ones, you are in all eternity the evil...you will eternally be the wretched, accursed, and damned!<sup>22</sup>

The priestly caste, poisoned by its own *ressentiment*, projects the struggle for power into eternity, where it imagines a decisive triumph against its earthly oppressors. Priests effect a startling re-valuation of moral value: what was good (e.g., power, beauty, wealth, nobility) becomes evil, and what was bad (e.g., impotence, ugliness, poverty) becomes good. Moreover, those values are projected into eternity: earthly strength (nobility, wealth, power) will earn you eternal torture in Hell, while earthly weakness (poverty, powerlessness, ugliness) will earn you an eternity in Heaven. In Heaven, as an added bonus, you will get to watch the eternal torment of your earthly oppressors! The life-affirming morality of the noble “blond beast” is thus replaced by the life-denying morality of the priest. The problem, for Nietzsche, is that the historical process of re-valuation has been forgotten. It is no longer seen for what it is—namely, a move within a historical power-struggle. Rather, priestly morality is now treated as objective and as simply “there.” Platonic philosophy has enshrined the re-valuation of values in the metaphysical concepts of “the Good” and “Being.”

For Fink, the significance of Nietzsche's critique of priestly values is not simply moral; it has more to do with the human capacity to “posit value.” By questioning the “objectivity” of priestly values, Nietzsche gives the lie to objectivity *as such*: “Nietzsche believes that so-called objectivity is precisely nothing but an invention of the human being which has been forgotten as such. Human life implies the positing of value. In most cases it forgets its posits. The posited is encountered as the binding power of the moral law.”<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche's critique of values reveals the transcendental dimension of human life: value is created, or posited; it is not simply “there” as an object. Only when human existence “forgets” its positing activity, its creative capacity, does value appear objective. Nietzsche's foray into transcendental life is monumental for Fink: “His philosophy is thus an ultimate turning point, the centre of time, the great noon, because it

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<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Maudemarie Clark and Alan Swensen (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 16f.

<sup>23</sup> Eugen Fink, *Nietzsche's Philosophy*, trans. Goetz Richter (New York: Continuum, 2003), 109.

uncovers, as he states, for the first time the apparent objectivity of value and its dependence on value-positing life. It breaks the dogmatic slumber which usually envelops the creative powers of human existence.”<sup>24</sup> Nietzsche’s critique of the re-valuation of values reveals the original transcendental capacity to posit values, breaking the “dogmatic slumber” which treats value as objective.

Additionally, Fink argues that the transcendental capacity to create values is not restricted to the realm of moral guidelines; it has ontological ramifications as well, inasmuch as traditional philosophy tends to ontologize values. For example, the Socratic idea of “the Good,” which gives Being to all other forms, functions as a metaphysical objectification, an ontologization of life-denying values. Indeed, the very idea of abstract Being, as distinctly separate from worldly becoming, implies a denigration of worldly life. Traditional ontology is little more than a philosophical objectification of the life-denying impulse that springs from *ressentiment*: “Traditional metaphysical ontology regards as ‘being’ what is in truth merely an illusion and a fiction and rejects non-being as unauthentic existence when it is in truth the only effectively real being... ‘Being’ as opposed to ‘becoming’ is not; becoming alone is.”<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche opposes traditional ontological metaphysics because it enshrines abstract Being as that which is *opposed* to the world of becoming, as the highest good: “[I]t is dominated from the beginning by the attempt to expel becoming from being, to deny that becoming truly exists and to keep itself free of any form of becoming.”<sup>26</sup>

For Fink, Nietzsche’s critique of metaphysical ontology opens up the problem of “ontological experience” by reframing the idea of ontological difference (i.e., the difference between *beings* and the *Being of beings*). All philosophy, Fink claims, attempts to think the ontological difference: “Ever since its beginning philosophy thinks about the ontological difference. It thinks about the being of the many things (the *polla*) as a being mixed with nothingness and contrasts this with a more essential Being either as *physis*, as *eon*, as *apeiron* or as the *idea*.”<sup>27</sup> The ontological problem consists in trying to reconcile the existence of the whole (*hen*) with the existence of each part of the whole (*polla*). For the Presocratics, this problem amounted to a cosmological one: “The primordial one is regarded as true. The many finite things are regarded as unauthentic while providing at the same time the basic distinction between infinite and finite.”<sup>28</sup> With Plato, an important shift takes place: “Plato changes the primordial cosmological

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 130.

difference between a one, whole and real world and the many finite, apparently real things in this world into a difference between infinite, eternal, supersensual ideas beyond space and time or universals and the finite, individual things within time and space.”<sup>29</sup> This “shift” has nothing to do with Platonic dualism (a fact sometimes lost on Nietzsche himself), but with Plato’s identification of the Good (*bonum*) as the highest being (*summum ens*): “The ‘authentic,’ the ‘existing being’ becomes a highest being or a *summum ens*... It is supposed to be the Good itself in relation to which all things achieve their measure.”<sup>30</sup> In short, Plato transforms the ontological difference into a theological difference: the difference between God (as *summum ens* and *summum bonum*) and the created world.

At first glance, it may seem that Nietzsche wants to reject the ontological difference altogether, to be rid of *Being* once-and-for-all and to restrict the Absolute to the finite world. On the contrary, Fink argues that Nietzsche does not reject the ontological difference itself, but Plato’s theological formulation of it:

Nietzsche opposes the theological form of the ontological difference and attempts to conceive it cosmologically... He does not make the realm of the finite things absolute but he inquires in a new way into their depth in interpreting the change of all finite being as the will to power and temporality itself as the eternal return of the same.<sup>31</sup>

Nietzsche does not negate the ontological difference, but he re-inscribes it within the *cosmos*—a *cosmos* characterized ontologically by the “will to power” and “eternal return.” Ontology, then, is not abstract reflection on Being, as something opposed to the world, but reflection on the existence of the world.

For Nietzsche, the “will to power” is fundamental to existence, yet he offers no ontological investigation to prove that the “will to power” is an essential characteristic of Being. The will to power is simply presupposed as “the essence of life... the essential pre-eminence of the spontaneous, attacking, infringing, reinterpreting, reordering, and formative forces.”<sup>32</sup> The will to power is not, however, the sort of presupposition that can be wiped away by the phenomenological reduction; one cannot “get behind” it by getting “back to the things themselves,” for the will to power is prior to any phenomenon. As Nietzsche puts it, “It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 132

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 52.

like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm.”<sup>33</sup> For Fink, the phenomenological, ontological, or metaphysical “gaze”—that is, any cognition whatsoever—is a function of the will to power:

[The will to power] is not overcome as is naively believed by an approach of the phenomena without prejudices or by the thinker who observes and describes them in a descriptive phenomenology and lets the “thing speak for themselves.” There are no such “things as such” nor is there a thinking which faces being without presuppositions... Thinking has already been at work where we find being, things and properties of the things at hand. Things themselves only exist where in some ways the substantiality of the thing is pre-reflected. Being exists only in the horizon of an ontological conception and interpretation.<sup>34</sup>

Being and beings are constituted within an “ontological experience”—i.e., an *a priori* experience of ontological categories—but ontological experience is not *basic or fundamental*; it is projected through the will to power.

For Nietzsche, the experience of Being as *a priori*—the ontological experience—is the original lie: “[I]n truth there are no things, there are no substances, there is no ‘being.’ There is only the wavering flood of life, only the stream of becoming and the incessant up and down of its waves. Nothing endures... but our cognition forges its reality and changes the flow falsely into the being of enduring things.”<sup>35</sup> The real, for Nietzsche, is the flux, the ceaseless flow of life itself. Because of our need to live, to *thrive*, in the world, we distort the flow of life, positing enduring individual “things” along with broader categories of Being that allow us to cognize and to achieve mastery over the world: “[T]he categories represent a humanization of the world and they are the anthropocentric interpretation which ‘fixes us up’ in positing fixity.”<sup>36</sup> In other words, the experience of Being as *a priori* is a creative fiction that allows human existence to succeed: “Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for *life* is ultimately decisive.”<sup>37</sup> Hence, the will to power, which posits Being by arresting the flux of life, is the primordial movement of life against itself, “the dissolution of the unity of life” into various ontological constructions. Yet this Dionysian play of life—i.e., the creation and destruction of various beings and modes of Being

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<sup>33</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Random House, 2011), 267.

<sup>34</sup> Fink, *Nietzsche's Philosophy*, 146.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 148

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 149

<sup>37</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 272.

within the ceaseless flux of life—goes mostly unrecognized: “Ordinarily, we succumb to the deception of this appearance. We even call this very appearance being.”<sup>38</sup>

### III. Conclusion

Fink’s idea of “ontological experience” springs from two sources: (1) the investigation of constituting subjectivity and its phenomenologizing counter-tendency in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation* and (2) a critical appropriation of Nietzsche’s re-valuation of values, will to power, and Dionysian play. I have shown that the ordinary experience of ontology as *a priori*—i.e., the experience of Being as that which is always already *there*—is false or, at least, naïve. Being, as Fink demonstrated in the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, is a constituted *result*, not an *a priori* origin. Being arises, as Fink’s reading of Nietzsche shows, as a projection out of the flow of life. Nietzsche’s will to power opens up a new sort of ontological experience—an experience of ontology not as *a priori*, but as *projected*. True ontological experience is the experience of ontological projection.

Phenomenology, for its part, is the philosophical experience of ontological projection. As such, its goal is not to become presuppositionless, but to analyze “presuppositionality.” Phenomenology explores the projection of ontological presuppositions. With this idea of phenomenology as the experience of “ontological projection”, Fink achieves what eluded Husserl: a well-developed notion of phenomenology that potentially functions to ground the sciences, for what are “the sciences” if not modes of investigation suited to particular ontological experiences? By recognizing those experiences as ontological projections, phenomenology can meet the sciences at their points of origin, analyzing their particular ontological *projections*.

Far from undermining science, the idea of “ontological projection” has the potential to re-connect the sciences to their original motivating questions: for Biology, “What is life?” For Biblical Studies, “What is revelation?” For Theology, “What is God?” For History, “What is time?” In radicalizing Husserlian phenomenology into a science of ontological projections, Fink demonstrates that the “dream” of phenomenology as a rigorous, absolute science is far from over.

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<sup>38</sup> Fink, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy*, 151.