
I. RECEPTION: INTERPRETATION, ASSIMILATION AND ELABORATION AROUND THE WORLD AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

GERMAN PHENOMENOLOGY FROM LANDGREBE AND FINK TO WALDENFELS

Ludwig Landgrebe and Eugen Fink can rightly be considered as the *Dioscuri* of German phenomenological thought of the period after World War II. In addition, the course that their human and philosophical lives took was parallel from several points of view, marked as it was by the teachings of Husserl and their close collaboration with the master, for both were his assistants and also editors of some of his fundamental works.¹ In both cases, their personal and intellectual lives were profoundly characterized by their political distance from the Nazi regime during the years of their philosophical maturation and later by their common support for the cultural project of preserving the phenomenological tradition proposed by the Husserl Archive in Leuven.² A non-dogmatic attitude toward the phenomenological school, openness to other varieties of contemporary philosophy, whether or not of a phenomenological matrix, and especially to Heidegger's philosophy, as well as their constant solicitude for the philosophical tradition, working to impart Husserl's ideas and the training of the younger generations represent other common features characterizing their thought and their lives. The Catholic University of Leuven made a very happy and appropriate decision to grant them honorary doctorates on April 2, 1971, at a time when both were already emeritus professors at their respective universities and also internationally well known for their scholarly work. This was almost as if to place a seal on a twinning far more profound than the differences that yet separated the two men.³

LUDWIG LANDGREBE

Landgrebe was born in Vienna on March 9, 1902 and died in Bergisch Gladbach on August 14, 1991. During the years immediately following World War II, he sought new beginnings by which to rebuild the foundations of thought from the rubble of a tradition which had seemingly gone to ruin, but which in actual fact was still vital and capable of being regenerated. With this end in view, right from the beginning he turned to phenomenology, the philosophy of life, the metaphysical tradition of German idealism and Heidegger's reflections, not least of all with a view to sketching a new phenomenological metaphysics, a new inquiry into being itself.⁴

In particular, Landgrebe attributed central importance to the theme of historicity and the ultimate and irreducible fact of human existence. So the late Husserl (together with Dilthey and Heidegger) was therefore his privileged fount for defining the problem of the historicity of consciousness, life, and the world.⁵ For Landgrebe, the centrality of the question of human beings must not be understood in the sense of a simple emergence of an anthropological type. Rather, human beings were the ultimate principle of philosophy, their being the true fount of every apperception, their facticity and corporeity. In Landgrebe's opinion, their being together with others in a common world and historical situation represented the radicalization, fulfillment and abandonment of the Cartesian assumption, all of which he held to have been realized first and foremost in Husserl's phenomenology, but then also in Heidegger's thought and in contemporary philosophical reflection bearing the German and French imprint.⁶

For Landgrebe, the constant reference to Husserl and Heidegger was certainly not that of a relationship of "respective exclusion" of particular ideas, but rather one of a "reciprocal integration" that Landgrebe sought to highlight.⁷ As far as Landgrebe was concerned, the intentionality of consciousness, the process of reduction to absolute subjectivity and of constitution—with its correlates of passivity and activity, on the one hand, and the thematization of facticity of *Dasein* and its historicity, on the other—could not but be inseparable conditions for rethinking the great themes of the philosophical tradition and even the absolute of an Aristotle or a Hegel.⁸ Phenomenology, and particularly genetic and transcendental phenomenology, had to be rethought as a transcendental theory of history, and in this connection he especially sought textual support for his interpretation in Husserl's notes of the 1930s about the founding 'fact' of the I as absolute and originary foundation and in his manuscripts of the 1920s about history as 'the great fact of absolute

being'.⁹ In the aporia between 'fact' and 'essence' that characterizes the 'absolute fact' and the '*Faktizität*'¹⁰ with which the late Husserl concerned himself, there appear the two fundamental reference points of the I and history. Inseparable one from the other, they are therefore to be thematized, precisely in their inseparability, as transcendental genesis, transcendental history of consciousness, on the one hand, and as history of its experience, as empirical history, but also as absolute history, on the other. "Consciousness is in itself this history. It is not consciousness of a history, but rather the place of its formation".¹¹ Yet, "history is the sphere of absolute factuality and, inasmuch as it is such, it is the theme of metaphysics".¹²

The highly ethical aspect of phenomenological reflection is constantly stressed by Landgrebe, for example, in his accentuation of the relationship with the other and the world, in underscoring the phenomenological theory of constitution as the foundation of a philosophy of absolute responsibility or in exalting the highly practical significance of every reflection.¹³ In this connection, the phenomenological concept of the horizon of possibilities becomes of fundamental importance, just as does its rooting in consciousness of an 'I can' that is genetically preliminary to every 'I am'.¹⁴ Here we have the philosophical foundation upon which it becomes possible to think the radical contingency on which every society, intersubjectivity or ethico-political action is based.¹⁵ As far as Landgrebe is concerned, here we also have the foundation of every philosophy of politics. Indeed, in human '*Sein-Können*', we have the ontological foundation on the basis of which one has to think the roots of the phenomenon of capacity and power, as well as the process of action and connected projections of possibilities to be realized. Here we have to also concentrate our attention on the problem of utopia, which must not be considered insignificant as if were just a question of fantasies without any context and must rather be understood according to its productive and directional potential.¹⁶ Even though this aspect of Husserl's reflection is not pursued further, considerable significance attaches to the fact that Landgrebe repeatedly underscores the crucial nature of the phenomenological concept of possibility and, more particularly, that of '*Vermöglichkeit*', i.e., facultative possibility, dispositional capability, the true root of consciousness of what is possible and the difference between what is possible and what is real, as well as the crux of the dual characterization of subjectivity and its corporeity as both constitutive and constituted, as *possibilitas* and *potentia*.¹⁷

His untiring activity as an organizer of cultural events, a member of academies, institutes, scientific commissions

or committees of philosophical journals and participant in publishing initiatives,¹⁸ his commitment to the dissemination of philosophical theories and ideas through the mass media as well,¹⁹ the fame that his writings enjoyed abroad and the repeated invitations to be lecturer and visiting professor,²⁰ as well as his indefatigable intellectual support for the younger generations have conferred upon Ludwig Landgrebe the aura of a master and made him one of the most significant points of reference of international phenomenological scholarship in the period after the World War II.²¹ Among the phenomenologists directly influenced by his teachings and his writings one may mention, among others, Gerd Brand, Lothar Eley, Ulrich Claesges, Klaus Held, Paul Janssen, Antonio Aguirre, Ante Pažanin, Önay Sözer, Ram Adhar Mall, all of whom worked the vein of an inquiry into transcendental consciousness, intentionality or genetic phenomenology, the life world and history, in confrontation with the philosophy of language and intercultural issues.²²

EUGEN FINK

Eugen Fink was born in Constance on December 11, 1905 and died in Freiburg on July 25, 1975. During the 1930s, thanks not least to his closeness to the master and the task of refashioning *Cartesian Meditations* that had been entrusted to him, as well as Husserl's work on *Crisis*, Eugen Fink had become—as it were—the depository and custodian of phenomenology in Germany, this to the point that Husserl himself, in presenting one of his student's articles, could say that he fully shared the ideas contained in it and could underwrite every single sentence.²³ Fink's writings of the 1930s already prefigure the attention that he was to pay to the phenomenological problem of the world, which was to become a constant feature of his thought, and to the ontological issues, also based on Heidegger's thought, that were eventually to become a significant reference point.²⁴

In actual fact, many of the texts published after World War II reproduce his university lectures, some published posthumously by the Eugen Fink Archive established at the Pädagogische Hochschule of Freiburg University.²⁵ In the engrossing, explanatory style of a teacher, they sketch the fundamental lines of a theoretical approach that moves between Husserl and Heidegger, but also between Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche and the tradition of Greek thought, this in the sense of a redefinition of subjectivity and existence and within the great metaphysical questions connected with being, truth and the world.²⁶ The first course that he taught at Freiburg during the summer

semester of 1946 had systematically moved from an inquiry into the starting point of philosophy, starting, above all, with Husserl and the intentional analysis of the horizon of the world, but integrating into this phenomenological perspective Heidegger's question about being, the ontological difference and *aletheia*, Hegel's concept of the absolute and the associated need for a first philosophy, and Kant's question about the transcendental: here we have the fundamental questions of metaphysics that were to constitute a constant point of reference also for Fink's subsequent work.²⁷ Against this backdrop, what was subsequently above all studied was the problem of the world, a true source of torment for every theory. It was examined as the transcendental horizon of the problem of being, an open horizon anchored and centered in one's own body (*Leib*), i.e., as the ultimate starting point of every orientation, a horizon whose essence expresses itself by giving space and leaving time to entities and being itself.²⁸ It is the problem of the world rather than the problem of being that has to be subtracted from the oblivion of metaphysics. It is the cosmological difference between world and thing that has to be rethought, rather than the ontological difference between being and entity, this being the only way in which one could at long last pose the problem of human openness to the world.²⁹

Fink's thought also represents the attempt to reformulate an expressly mundane philosophical anthropology intended to analyze the fundamental phenomena underlying *Dasein*, commencing with a self-interpretation of existence.³⁰ Death, work, conflict, love and play represent the five fundamental reference points, sign posts along the way, formal indicators, each with a specificity of its own, but each comprehensible only in relation to the other, in a kind of circular, mutual implication and in common reference to corporeity.³¹ Only human beings, as distinct from both animals and God, are essentially "*workers, players, lovers, fighters and mortal*".³² It is above all awareness of one's own finitude, and therefore of time and death in their relation with nothingness, that characterizes every inquiry intended to be radical, and it is here that Fink's thought comes particularly close to Heidegger's in *Being and Time*.³³ Death, the most disquieting indicator of our finitude, is at one and the same time also the ground upon which human historicity is constituted, since it is human beings who interact with and transform the world, since it is human beings who fight and even kill.³⁴ Faced with the misery of surviving, but also proudly conscious of their productivity, human beings—on account of their work—know themselves to be a factor in the reality that surrounds them and that they dominate with their technology, but also to be part of a society.

In love, they know themselves to be no more than a fragment in need of completion, while in playing—and it is here that Nietzsche's influence emerges in a rather lively way—they can inhabit the intermediate spaces of the 'as if' and the passages between the real and the imaginary. However, it is precisely in the unreality that inaugurates playing that there emerges the hyper-reality of essence and being and that sense and meaning announce themselves.³⁵ The relationship with the future, what is possible, the horizon of what is feasible, what is potential or imaginable are what characterize these five fundamental dimensions of life. They are underlain by a common project or planning, but also by the reminder of one's own impotence and the reference to the others within an intersubjective horizon and a common world.³⁶

In particular, Fink considers playing to be an authentic philosophical problem.³⁷ Inasmuch as it is human playing, playing not only has a mundane significance as a phenomenon that can be analyzed, but is also a fundamental existential phenomenon and even symbol of the world. Inasmuch as it is also the playing of the world, in this form it becomes a metaphor for the very essence of being.³⁸ In an ideal continuation of Heraclitus (according to whom the course of the world is like a child playing with dice) and Nietzsche (according to whom the world is the playing of a god),³⁹ Fink's ideas about playing set out to highlight above all the relationship that becomes established between reality and such really existing unrealities as—for example—a story put on stage, or the reflection of something on a surface mirroring it.⁴⁰ As far as Fink is concerned, it is precisely in the character of the unreality of playing and in its visionary modality that there most clearly emerges its confrontation with the imaginary, its being the recovery and enjoyment of lost possibilities,⁴¹ a variation full of fantasy that proffers not the real, but its essential and authentic core, as shown, for example, by the experience of the feast, the cult, magical practices, the mask, sacred representation. But more than a relation with being, playing is a relation with the world, openness to the world, which is like a whole without any foundation, without purpose and without sense, and must therefore necessarily be thought of as a game without players.⁴²

Active and indefatigable in his commitment to cultural activities, convinced proponent of the need for dissemination and pedagogical mediation, Fink was one of the promoters of the so-called Bremen Plan of 1960 for the reform of the school system and for a new type of training for teachers.⁴³ He also taught at *Volkshochschule*, from the lectern of numerous academic institutions in Germany and abroad, in continuing education radio courses

intended for industrial workers.⁴⁴ Like Landgrebe, Fink, too, gathered entire generations of students around him, and not just Germans, who were to make his work internationally known, as is readily evident also in the bibliography of his writings, bearing witness not only to the wide spectrum of his interests, but also to the penetration of his thought into other linguistic environments.⁴⁵ Recent decades have seen his philosophical views made the subject of numerous international symposiums, testimony to the great interest with which his work continues to be read.⁴⁶

However, phenomenological research in Germany after World War II not only developed around heirs and perpetuators of Husserl's tradition like Ludwig Landgrebe and Eugen Fink, but also and above all around the institutions established to edit and publish his texts and to sustain common discussion. Apart from the two branches of the Husserl Archives in Cologne and Freiburg—where Landgrebe and Fink were succeeded by Elisabeth Ströker and Werner Marx respectively⁴⁷ (and which are now headed by Klaus Düsing and Klaus Erich Kaehler, and by Micheal Großheim and Hans-Helmuth Gander)—the task of perpetuating German phenomenology fell, above all, to the Husserl Archive at Leuven and, more particularly, to its publishing endeavors.⁴⁸ Another important institution that has also acted to stimulate the confrontation of ideas and the encounter of phenomenologists is the Deutsche Gesellschaft für phänomenologische Forschung, which, founded in 1971, has organized numerous meetings and since 1975 has been publishing the *Phänomenologische Forschungen* series (published by Alber) that, twenty years later, was to be transformed into a regular journal directed by Ernst Wolfgang Orth.⁴⁹

Among the various phenomenological groups that formed around personalities of philosophical scholarship and production I shall here recall only the Bochum Circle that had Bernhard Waldenfels at its center during the years that he taught at the university and which continues to be a true breeding ground of ideas and initiatives.⁵⁰ Waldenfels, who benefited from Franco-German training, for at Munich he was in contact above all with Helmut Kuhn and in Paris with Maurice Merleau-Ponty, mainly sought to transform Husserl's transcendental and intentional approach into a 'dialogic' founded on the phenomenology of existence and bodily co-existence, proposing a reflection at the level of intercorporeity and polyrelationality.⁵¹ The phenomenological question of what is '*fremd*' (in English foreign, alien, strange and unknown!), which—inasmuch as it is a solicitation of and appeal to the extraordinary—reaches beyond the limits of what from time to time constitutes our personal and

collective order, has been developed, above all, in his most recent writings, in which he proposes a 'responsive' phenomenology, posing the problem of the other neither in the nominative, nor the accusative, but in the dative, in that '*to which*' that motivates the response and the responsibility, unbalancing any pretense of symmetry.⁵² Attentive to the findings of the human and social sciences, stimulated also by the critical and dissident Marxism of Eastern Europe, by analytic philosophy, by structuralism and, of course, by the more significant expressions of recent French work in philosophy (for example, Foucault, Levinas, Ricœur and Derrida), Waldenfels has acted, and is still acting, as a mediator for French phenomenology in Germany and for German phenomenology in France and other countries, thus giving proof of a *synphilosophie* that goes well beyond a mere twinning on the borders of the Rhine.⁵³ Before concluding, deserving brief mention is the bi-annual *Journal Phänomenologie* published under the auspices of Vienna's Gruppe Phänomenologie and the Bochum Phenomenological Circle.

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NOTES

¹ As is well known, Landgrebe was Husserl's assistant in the period 1923–30, Fink in the years 1928–38. The former was the editor of *Erfahrung und Urteil*, the latter looked after the supplement of *Krisis* and also the *VI. Cartesianische Meditation*, which was to be published only after Fink's death. Cf. E. Husserl, *Erfahrung und Urteil* (1976); *Id.*, "Die Frage nach dem Ursprung der Geometrie als intentionalhistorisches Problem" (1938–39); E. Fink, *VI. Cartesianische Meditation* (1988).

² Landgrebe left Germany in 1933 and, after having obtained his *Habilitation* with Oskar Kraus at Prague's Charles University with a thesis on Marty's philosophy of language—cf. L. Landgrebe, *Nennfunktion und Wortbedeutung* (1934)—worked there until 1939, animating Prague's Philosophical Circle in close collaboration with Jan Patočka. Between 1939 and 1940 both Landgrebe and Fink worked alongside one another at the Husserl Archive in Leuven, editing the manuscripts left by the master. The war then obliged the former to work with a commercial firm in Hamburg (in the years 1940–45), while the latter served as a private in the German army. The years immediately following the war saw Landgrebe first as professor at Kiel (1947–56), until he was called to Cologne University to take on the chair previously held by Heinz Heimsoeth (1956), where, together with Karl-Heinz Volkmann-Schluck, he also directed the Husserl Archive, which had been set up there in 1951 as a branch of the archive at Leuven. Fink received his *Habilitation* at Freiburg University in 1946, where he was to

receive appointment in 1948 as Visiting Professor and later as Ordinary Professor of Philosophy and Science of Education. Ever since 1950 a branch of the Husserl Archive has existed also at Freiburg University, and Fink remained its director until 1971.

³ Cf. H. L. van Breda, "Laudatio für Ludwig Landgrebe und Eugen Fink", in *Phänomenologie heute*, (ed.) W. Biemel (1972), pp. 1–13.

⁴ Cf. L. Landgrebe, *Phänomenologie und Metaphysik* (1949), pp. 7–11 ("Vorwort"), 132–147 ("Das Problem einer absoluten Erkenntnis"). With the exception of the "Gedächtnisrede auf Edmund Husserl 1938" (pp. 12–21), the commemorative speech made at the Prague Philosophical Circle and the essay on "Das Problem der Geschichtlichkeit des Lebens und die Phänomenologie Husserls" (pp. 22–55), which goes back to a lecture given at Göttingen's Kant Society in 1932, the other articles of the late 1930s and the 1940s were all re-published in the essay collection published by his pupils in honor of his sixtieth birthday; cf. L. Landgrebe, *Der Weg der Phänomenologie* (1969³), pp. 9–110. Landgrebe's doctoral thesis, directed by Husserl and presented at Freiburg University in 1927, was devoted to Dilthey's philosophy; cf. L. Landgrebe, "Wilhelm Diltheys Theorie der Geisteswissenschaften" (1928). Cf. also L. Landgrebe, *Philosophie der Gegenwart* (1961³), p. 18 ("Einleitung"); the philosophical parabola outlined by this text proceeds from a question regarding the essence of man and, by means of an inquiry about the world as nature and history, poses the problem of artistic expression, of knowledge and action, and eventually concludes with a reflection about the problem of being; cf. in particular Chap. VII: "Das Problem des Seins. Philosophie und Theologie".

⁵ About the late Husserl of *Erste Philosophie* and *Krisis*, cf. for example L. Landgrebe, "Husserls Abschied vom Cartesianismus" in *Der Weg der Phänomenologie*, pp. 163–206. Cf. also S. Poggi, "Filosofia della vita, fenomenologia ed esistenzialismo in Ludwig Landgrebe" (1973).

⁶ Cf. L. Landgrebe, *Philosophie der Gegenwart*, p. 43 (Chap. I: "Das Wesen des Menschen"); in this text Landgrebe refers also to the highly topical discussion going on at the time and animated by, among others, Heidegger and Jaspers, Sartre and Camus. Cf. also *Id.*, "Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre. Trois aspects de la phénoménologie" (1964). For a confrontation with Dilthey and Gadamer, cf. also *Id.*, *Phänomenologie und Geschichte* (1968). On the theme of corporeity and the confrontation with Merleau-Ponty, see in particular *Id.*, "Die Phänomenologie der Leiblichkeit und das Problem der Materie" and "Merleau-Pontys Auseinandersetzung mit Husserls Phänomenologie" in *Phänomenologie und Geschichte*, pp. 135–47 and 167–81. For a discussion of the problem of philosophical anthropology in confrontation with the tradition and the contemporary debate and for a prefiguration of an ineffable universality of the subject of an experience that is absolute, but true in its being alive and responsible, cf. *Id.*, "Philosophische Anthropologie—Eine empirische Wissenschaft?" in *Die Welt des Menschen—Die Welt der Philosophie*, ed. W. Biemel (1976), pp. 1–20.

⁷ L. Landgrebe, *Der Weg der Phänomenologie*, p. 11, Note 3 ("Husserls Phänomenologie und die Motive zu ihrer Umbildung"). For a problematization of the mutual integration of Husserl's thought and that of Heidegger, cf. also *Id.*, "Faktizität und Individuation" in *Faktizität und Individuation* (1982), pp. 102–16.

⁸ Cf. L. Landgrebe, *Phänomenologie und Metaphysik*, pp. 148–99 ("Phänomenologische Bewußtseinsanalyse und Metaphysik", reprinted also in *Id.*, *Der Weg der Phänomenologie*, 75–110). For a reflection about the problem of the relationship between phenomenology and dialectics, cf. in particular *Id.*, "Phänomenologische Analyse und Dialektik" in *Dialektik und Genesis in der Phänomenologie*, ed. E. W. Orth (1980), pp. 21–88. Cf. also *Id.*, "Das Problem der Dialektik" in *Phänomenologie und Geschichte*, pp. 80–134. Landgrebe was also well known as a persistent inspirer of studies concerning classical German philosophy and as a proponent of a philosophical approach to the thought of Marx.

⁹ Cf. L. Landgrebe, "Die Phänomenologie als transzendente Theorie der Geschichte" in *Phänomenologie und Praxis*, ed. E. W. Orth (1976), pp. 17–47. Cf. also L. Landgrebe, "Meditation über Husserls Wort 'Die Geschichte ist das große Faktum des absoluten Seins'", "Faktizität und Individuation" and "Faktizität als Grenze der Reflexion und die Frage des Glaubens" in *Faktizität und Individuation*, pp. 38–57, 102–16 and 117–36.

¹⁰ The German 'Faktizität' has been variously translated into English as 'factualness' and 'facticity', the former being generally used in connection with the later Husserl, the latter in connection with Heidegger, his lectures of the 1920s being a case in point. Cf. D. Cairns, *Guide for Translating Husserl* (1973), p. 50; M. Heidegger, *Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität)* (1988); English transl. *Ontology: the Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1999).

¹¹ Cf. L. Landgrebe, "Lebenswelt und Geschichtlichkeit des menschlichen Daseins" (1977), p. 55.

¹² L. Landgrebe, "Meditation über Husserls Wort 'Die Geschichte ist das große Faktum des absoluten Seins'" in *Faktizität und Individuation*, p. 39.

¹³ In this connection cf. L. Landgrebe, "Das Problem der passiven Konstitution" in *Faktizität und Individuation*, pp. 71–87, in particular 87; *Id.*, "Das Problem des Anfangs der Philosophie in der Phänomenologie Husserls" in *Faktizität und Individuation*, pp. 21–37, in particular 30 and 35–36; *Id.*, "Vom Sinn der transzendental-phänomenologischen Reflexion" (1983), in particular pp. 113, 114, 116. The latter text is also a kind of assessment of the development of the author's thought.

¹⁴ Cf. L. Landgrebe, "Der phänomenologische Begriff der Erfahrung" in *Faktizität und Individuation*, pp. 58–70, in particular 66–67. It is interesting to underscore that even the artistic phenomenon and aesthetic experience are considered from this point of view; cf. *Id.*, "Was ist ästhetische Erfahrung?" (1983), in particular pp. 134–39, 142–43.

¹⁵ Cf. L. Landgrebe, *Der Streit um die philosophische Grundlage der Gesellschaftstheorie* (1975), in particular pp. 19, 40 and 35, Note 46.

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