6
PHENOMENOLOGY AND
GERMAN IDEALISM

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6.1 Preliminary orientation in the structure of the historical contexts of German idealism and phenomenology

The main task for any investigation with a title composed of a conjunction of two philosophical positions is either to find an historical affiliation or to establish analogies between the positions. The simple case is the case of affiliations or analogies between two systematic positions. The complex case is the case in which the names mentioned in the conjuncts refer to complex historical sequences in the development of philosophical positions. This is the case not only for “German idealism” but also for “phenomenology.” Systematic reflections on possible historical affiliations or systematic analogies (Section 6.2) presuppose first a sufficiently precise survey (Section 6.1.1) of the periods of the development of the systems of German idealism and (Section 6.1.2) of the periods of the development of the phenomenological movement in the first half of the last century. Systematic reflections presuppose secondly an approximately complete list of the explicit (Section 6.1.3) references in the different periods of the development.

6.1.1 The periods of the development of the systems of German idealism

“German idealism” is a name for the historical development of a sequence of philosophical systems. Beginning with the first edition of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason (1781), the first phase of this development ends with Fichte’s Wissenschaftslehre (1794), followed by Schelling’s Philosophie der Natur (1797) and his System des transzendentalen Idealismus of 1800.¹ The third phase starts with Hegel’s Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie (1801) and the introduction to his system in the Phänomenologie des Geistes (1807).² The final steps are his Logik (1812) and the Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften (1817).³

6.1.1.1 The different meanings of “absolute” in these periods

Though Fichte claims to propose an understanding of the spirit and not of the letter of Kant’s philosophy, the Doctrine of Science implies the rejection of Kant’s thesis that metaphysics must be restricted to a transcendental doctrine of the a priori structures of experience and has no access to knowledge about things in themselves. The claim is that intellectual intuition and speculative
thinking is able to transcend the limits of experience and to discover the Absolute that appears first in Fichte’s system as absolute Ego.

The Absolute given in intellectual intuition was for the German idealists not given as absolute indifference. Already Fichte proposed a method for the systematic explication of the Absolute. His outline is a first sketch of the basic structures of the method used later by Schelling and Hegel. Schelling was the first who used the term “dialectics” for the method of the explication of the Absolute in speculative thinking. It is sufficient for these preliminary remarks to emphasize that the foundation for these analyses, e.g., of terms like “dialectical opposition” or “dialectical contradiction” in Fichte and in Hegel can be understood as an application of what can be found in Kant’s transcendental dialectic and the logic of concepts in his lectures on logic. What is added is the principle of synthesis, i.e., the ability of speculative reason to determine the synthesis beyond the oppositions and the contradiction that plague the explication of the absolute as a Kantian ens realissimum.

6.1.1.2 The different meanings of “phenomena” in the periods of German idealism

According to the section “Phenomena and Noumena” of the Critique of Pure Reason, “phenomena” are objects given in experience a posteriori in sensory intuition. Objects given as appearances are objects of understanding only if they are given as determined by the principles of pure understanding. The main task of the Critique is to reject the claim of traditional metaphysics that noumena, as objects of pure understanding, are of objective validity for transcendent things in themselves.

“Phenomenology” is of systematic significance in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, i.e., the introduction to Hegel’s system. Any consideration of the question as to what “phenomenology” means in the context of this phase of the development of German idealism should consult the section in the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences titled “Phenomenology.” It is the phase in the development of the Absolute as the self-movement of the concept (Selbstbewegung des Begriffs) in which the Absolute appears in consciousness on the level of reflection. Kant’s philosophy is, hence, a philosophy of reflection and contains, therefore, only the phenomenology, not the philosophy of spirit.

6.1.2. Periods in the development of the phenomenological movement

6.1.2.1 The period of the first edition of the Logical Investigations

In the first edition of the Logical Investigations (LI) Husserl adopted the term “phenomenology” as a term for the method of descriptive psychology from Carl Stumpf. The phenomena of a descriptive phenomenology are, according to Stumpf, not only phenomena of psychological functions but also phenomena of the objects given in psychological functions. In the context of Brentano’s psychology, psychological functions are intentional acts and the objects of intentional acts are intentional objects. Husserl accepted Brentano’s terminology in the first edition of the LI and Stumpf had no difficulties with this shift in the terminology. It was, in general, a welcome thesis for 19th-century positivism that research in descriptive psychology for itself is able to solve epistemological problems.

6.1.2.2. From “Ideas I” to “Formal and Transcendental Logic”

The first step in the development of the second period of the phenomenological movement was Husserl’s distinction between positivistic psychologism and transcendental psychologism. The second step is the rejection of any type of psychologism in Philosophy as a Rigorous Science
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(1910) because all of them end in relativism and skepticism. Husserl provided a positive answer in Ideas I (1913), the lecture on First Philosophy (1923–24), and Formal and Transcendental Logic (1929, henceforth FTL).

The new meaning of “phenomena” in this period is determined in the theory of the phenomenological reduction requiring the bracketing of the natural attitude in which the existence of the natural surrounding world together with its real and ideal objects is held in suspension. This bracketing or suspension implies neither a denial nor skeptical doubts about the existence of the world. The world as the sum total of objects is, after the reduction, given as the correlate of the synthetic activity of intentional acts. Therefore, the phenomenological reduction brackets also the assumption of affecting “metaphysical” entities behind the phenomena.

6.1.2.3 The period of the “Cartesian Meditations,” the “Crisis,” and the discussions in the Freiburg circle

The third period begins in 1928 with the work on the Cartesian Meditations and the cooperation with Eugen Fink and the Freiburg phenomenological circle. The new task of this period was the problem of an ultimate foundation or grounding of phenomenological research. The search for an ultimate foundation required an extension of phenomenology that was understood as a “metaphysical” extension that presupposes the earlier analyses of passive synthesis, inner temporality, the constitution of intersubjectivity, and finally the ontological region of the “spiritual world” as the region of the human sciences.

6.1.3 References

6.1.3.1 References to Kant in periods 6.1.2.1 and 6.1.2.2

Of significance for the first period are only the above-mentioned critique of Transzendentalpsychologismus and some fragments of drafts for lectures from 1903. Of significance for the beginnings of the second period are fragments of drafts from 1908–1914. But most important for this period is Husserl’s adoption of Kantian terms in Ideas I—terms that are of substantial importance in the Critique of Pure Reason. In his adoption of these terms in Ideas I Husserl either gives no indication of possible differences in meaning of his usage, e.g., “transcendental,” “synthesis,” and “constitution,” or he simply mentions that it is left open whether he uses the term in Kant’s sense, e.g., in the case of the adoption of the “transcendental ego” and “idea in the Kantian sense.” Husserl does emphasize, however, that there are radical differences between his phenomenology and Kant’s critical philosophy. The root of these differences is Kant’s transcendental psychology, because the method of the metaphysical constructions in Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason has its foundation in Kant’s transcendental psychologism.

The first comprehensive reflections on Kant’s transcendental philosophy can be found in First Philosophy I (lecture 27), at the end of extensive critical evaluations of the philosophical systems in the pre-history of transcendental phenomenology in modern philosophy. Further critical evaluations of Kant’s transcendental philosophy can be found in supplementary texts: a treatise on Kant’s Copernican turn of 1924, and the treatise “Kant and the Idea of Transcendental Philosophy,” also of 1924. There are also three lectures on Fichte from 1917 and some short remarks about post-Kantian German idealism from 1914. We should notice that Husserl’s source for his remarks on Hegel are not Hegel’s writings themselves but the Logical Investigations of Adolf Trendelenburg, who had no sympathy for Hegel’s Logic as a method of speculative thinking. Husserl shares Trendelenburg’s rejection of Hegel’s transition from consciousness to absolute knowledge in the Phenomenology.
6.1.3.2 References to German idealism in the period 6.1.2.3

No references to intellectual intuition and other concepts that are of significance for German idealism in the narrower sense and their possible significance for transcendental phenomenology can be found in Husserl’s writings of the first two periods of the history of the phenomenological movement. The first passage in Husserl’s work in which the German idealists, as followers of Kant, are also recognized as predecessors of transcendental phenomenology can be found in §27 of the Crisis.¹⁴ Husserl has more to say about Fichte and Hegel and their relations to Kant’s transcendental philosophy and to transcendental phenomenology in sections §55 and §57 of the Crisis.¹⁵ Of interest for a final evaluation of these references are adaptations of the terminology of German idealism in the Vienna lectures of 1935, in which Husserl uses the terms “spirit” and “absolute spirit” as a designator for his transcendental absolute ground, i.e., the primal ego (Ur-Ich).¹⁶

6.2 Systematic reflections

There are no references with positive evaluations of German idealism in the first period of the phenomenological movement. There are positive but also critical references to Kant in the second period. The presupposition of an interest in post-Kantian German idealism in the third period is Husserl’s transition from what Fink called the “naïve” phenomenological reduction of Ideas I to an ultimate grounding of phenomenology in “metaphysical”—perhaps better, “ontological”—speculations about the primal ego, the Ur-Ich, as “absolute Being.” Disregarding the problems connected with Husserl’s later adaptation of the term “absolute spirit” in the Vienna lectures, Husserl’s transition from “naïve” phenomenology to “metaphysics” can be understood as an analogy of the transition from Kant to Fichte’s absolute Ego.

6.2.1 Husserl’s critique of the methods of the constructions of German idealism

An analysis of the analogy between the transition from a “naïve” phenomenology to a metaphysical phenomenology and the transition from Kant to Fichte and German idealism in general (Section 6.2.2) must be postponed, because not only Husserl’s but also Fink’s critique of the constructions of the German idealists implies serious consequences for determining the scope and the limits of the analogy. Answers to questions concerning the reasons behind the phenomenological critique of the constructions of post-Kantian German idealism presuppose an account of Husserl’s critique of the constructions in Kant’s transcendental philosophy.

6.2.1.1 Husserl’s critique of Kant

According to the references mentioned in Section 6.1.3.1, Husserl, in the first edition of LI, criticized logical psychologism and psychologizing ideal objects in general as Transzendentalpsychologismus. The psychologism of empiricism recognizes only empirical universals of real objects. Kant’s Transzendentalpsychologismus is, according to the second edition of the LI, a transzendentalen Psychologismus or transzendentaler Anthropologismus. Transcendental psychologism or anthropologism recognizes a priori structures but reduces these structures to a priori structures of human understanding and reason.

This understanding of the a priori presupposes the metaphysical constructions of a non-empirical “rational” psychology. Kant’s analysis of the “presuppositions of the possibility of experience” presupposes firstly, by way of general metaphysical constructions, the powers of sensible sensory intuition, imagination, understanding, and reason. It also presupposes, secondly, the con-
structions of a metaphysical “in itself” as the “cause” of sensory affections and then the in itself of the spontaneity of the unity of transcendental apperception in its synthetic activities.

The method of phenomenology in the first two periods presupposes strictly descriptive accounts of eidetic intuitions. It is incompatible with constructions that presuppose the formal and material structures of modern dogmatic rationalism or other types of theoretical constructions. Modern philosophical traditions can be considered as predecessors of transcendental phenomenology only to the extent to which they offer descriptions of structures of consciousness that are evident with additional applications of constructive methods. Such descriptive contents can be found in Kant after eliminating his transcendental psychologism and its presuppositions in the metaphysical constructions of dogmatic rationalism.

6.2.1.2 The Kantian background of the speculative constructions of post-Kantian German idealism

Formal logic in Kant’s sense and, hence, also metaphysical constructions presupposing this logic, was for the post-Kantian idealists not acceptable for conceptual explications of the Absolute given in intellectual intuition in speculative thinking. Their account of the method of speculative thinking presupposes, nevertheless, basic elements of conceptual structures of the Kantian doctrine of the concept (Lehre vom Begriff) because the contradiction that emerges in the assumption of the highest genus is precisely the logical foundation of the contradiction in the ens realissimum that Kant discovers in the “Transcendental Dialectic” of the Critique of Pure Reason. This “most real being” of Kant can be found in Fichte’s philosophy, i.e., the first period in the development of the post-Kantian idealism, the absolute ego.

Of basic significance for the development of post-Kantian ontological and metaphysical idealism—not transcendental but absolute—are the concepts of identity, as opposed to non-identity, and indifference, as opposed to difference. The absolute indifference in the identity of the absolute I and together with it the absolute difference of non-identity of the absolute Not-I is given in intellectual intuition. This opposition is understood as contradiction. Fichte recognizes explicitly that his “deductions” of the acts, the Tatthandlungen, of the absolute I imply the “laws of reflection,” i.e., the basic principles of formal logic. These “laws of reflection” are firstly relevant in their application to the logic of concepts. They are secondly relevant in their application to the categories, first of all of reality, negation, and limitation, and only in last place as laws of reflections for empirical judgmental syntheses. The laws of reflection are also the determining ground for the third principle, guiding the third step, i.e., the deductions of speculative syntheses. The strict disjunction between analytic judgments and synthetic judgments based on experience does not hold for the deductions of speculative thinking in “intellectual intuition.”

Fichte did not use the term “dialectic” for the method of the “deductions” of the Doctrine of Science. The term was introduced by Schelling, but there are no changes in the reflections on the origins of the basic concepts that applied in his account of the dialectical method before 1809. Schelling’s merits are only the adaptation of the term “dialectic” from contemporary interpretations of Plato and then the consideration of the Absolute not as absolute Ego but as Subject–Object/Object–Subject, i.e., as the identity of difference and indifference.

Hegel’s Logic starts with thinking the dialectical opposition of Being and Nothing, and considering Becoming as the synthesis in the transition from Being to Nothing and vice versa. To think the Absolute in intellectual intuition in the beginning as the dialectical contradiction of Being and Nothing means, however, according to Hegel, only to think it as immediately given in itself and not in and for itself in the form of reflection and the laws of reflection. Intellectual intuition does not think in concepts; it is rather the immediate result of the elevation of the
representations of empirical consciousness to the level of speculative thinking. The next definition of the Absolute uses the concepts of qualitative infinity, of dialectical oppositions and contradictions and the principles of synthesis as the principle of synthetic dialectical “deductions.” The final step of the methodologically significant steps of the *Science of Logic* begins with the explication of indifference and difference.19

6.2.1.3 The significance of Husserl’s *mathesis universalis* for his rejection of the dialectical constructions of German idealism

Research interested in analogies between phenomenology and German idealism must keep in mind that Husserl’s conception of logic and Kant’s conception of logic (and with it the conception of logic of post-Kantian idealists) are different. Husserl understood his system of formal logic and ontology as a realization of the Leibnizean program of a *mathesis universalis*, i.e., as the sum total of deductive systems and the principles of consistency and completeness.20

Kant tolerated the first steps of Leibniz and others in the development of modern logic as interesting without being bothered by the differences between his conception of logic and the new type of logic. Hegel, however, condemned the conception of logic of Leibniz, Plouquet, Euler, and Lambert as talk about concepts without concepts (*begrifflose Weise über den Begriff zu reden*). Such talk, for Hegel, is empty calculating thinking and is utterly useless in philosophical reflections in general and especially for attempts to explicate the method of speculative thinking and its task to think the self-movement of the concept, the *Selbstbewegung des Begriffs*.21

Crucial differences between logic as *mathesis universalis* and basic logical structures that are implicitly presupposed in the method of dialectical constructions are the concepts of opposition and contradiction, of identity and non-identity, and of indifference and difference. The reason behind the principal consistency, i.e., of non-contradiction, for deductive systems in mathematical logic for Hilbert as well as for a Husserlian *mathesis universalis* is the possibility of deducing all other possible propositions and their negations according to the laws of logical deduction from pre-given contradictory propositions. It is a gross misinterpretation of the meaning of “contradiction” in post-Kantian idealism and especially in Hegel to use this modern understanding of contradiction in investigations asking “What is dialectic?”22 It is, however, also obvious that the reason for Husserl’s “inability” to understand Hegel has its roots in Husserl’s inability to give a meaningful explication of the concepts “contradiction” and “opposition” that are presupposed in the explication of Hegel’s dialectical method.

6.2.2 Phenomenological ultimate grounding and the Absolute of German idealism

Critical reflections (Section 6.2.2.3) on analogies between Husserl’s transition from the phenomenological reduction of *Ideas I* to a metaphysical understanding of ultimate grounding between 1930 and 1937 on the one hand, and the transition from Kant’s critical transcendental philosophy to the Absolute in post-Kantian idealism on the other, presuppose firstly (Section 6.2.2.1) an interpretation of a phenomenological transition to metaphysics and secondly (Section 6.2.2.2) an interpretation of the transition from Kant to post-Kantian German idealism.

6.2.2.1 The “metaphysical” turn in phenomenology

Though the term “metaphysical” does not occur in §53 of the *Crisis*, Husserl’s reflections on the paradox of subjectivity and its solution can be called “metaphysical.” What is said there marks the transition to a phenomenology as the science of *Being qua Being*. Subjectivity (*Subjektsein*) is
given in oblique intention as *being* a subject of the world and also as *being* an object (*Objektsein*) in the world. The emphasis on *being* in the first part of the formula implies that subjective consciousness, as a necessary being, is the subject of the contingent *being* of the world as the totality of objects. The second part says that subjective consciousness has itself and its objective correlates as *being* only because it is given to itself as a contingent being among other contingent beings in the world. Husserl’s way out of this paradox is his ontological interpretation of the paradox in the *Crisis*, i.e., the interpretation of the first horn as referring to the primal ego and the interpretation of the second horn as referring to the mundane ego. The problem is whether the subject behind the paradox that experiences the paradox can be the ego as pole of the synthetic activity of intentional acts as the ego of *Ideas I*.

In the last instance are presupposed two abstractive phenomenological reductions, the egological and the primordial reduction, within the residuum of the first “naïve” phenomenological reduction. Of significance for the development leading to these abstractive reductions are the reductions determining the distinction between the natural world as the world of the natural sciences given in the naturalistic attitude and the life–world or the “spiritual world,” i.e., the cultural world given in the attitude of the human sciences, i.e., spiritual sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) in *Ideas II*. The constitution of the world of the natural sciences presupposes an abstractive reduction. Left in the residuum of this reduction is only the givenness of the world in intersensory, i.e., intersubjective, perceptions. The cultural and intercultural spiritual world is constituted as the cultural life–world of concrete intersubjective communities. Intersubjectivity is, in this case, pre–given as a necessary structure of the world given in the natural attitude as life–world, i.e., the transcendental that is the foundation for all further methodological reductions. The spiritual world has, therefore, priority over the natural world.

The phenomenological analysis of the constitution of intersubjectivity requires the reduction to the givenness of the Other as living body in the passive syntheses of the egological sphere. A phenomenological analysis of passive syntheses requires, in turn, the primordial reduction to the primordial sphere of passive syntheses and its temporal structures, i.e., the temporal structures of the living present. The transcendental ego in the residuum of the “naïve” phenomenological reduction is only given as the identical pole of the active syntheses in the process of intentional acts. This ego is an abstract moment in the region of the immanence of active syntheses as the pole of these syntheses and their intentional correlates in the life–world as intersubjectively given intentional objects in the world. Phenomenological reflections of these structures end in the paradox of subjectivity. The analysis of this paradox and its solution has to re–trace the ultimate ground, the primal ego (*Ur-Ich*), as the “absolute” activity behind the emergence of the contents and the passive syntheses of the structures in which contents are given in the actual now and its horizon of passive retentions in the living present. It follows that the primal ego is the phenomenological ultimate metaphysical ground.

### 6.2.2.2 The transition from Kant to post-Kantian German idealism

According to Fichte’s interpretation of Kant’s transcendental deduction, consciousness (as the experience of objects) has its ultimate condition of any possible experience in the unity of transcendental apperception, the transcendental ego, an ultimate condition that is itself not given as an object of experience. The other necessary condition and ground for the experience of objects in consciousness, i.e., the experience of the objects that are given for consciousness and as such outside consciousness, is for Kant the thing in itself.

According to Fichte, Kant’s transcendental ego qua unity of transcendental apperception goes beyond Kant’s claim that transcendental unity of apperception is merely the “I think that must
be able to accompany all of my thoughts.” For Fichte, the transcendental unity of apperception of the first Critique is identical with the transcendental ego of the Critique of Practical Reason and can be understood as an indicator of the absolute Ego given in intellectual intuition. Further, for Fichte, Kant’s thing in itself as the transcendent condition of the experience of objects in sensory intuition is the non-Ego. The non-Ego is given in an op-positing, that is, the logically necessary correlate of the self-positing of the absolute Ego. This contradictory opposition of positing and op-positing given in intellectual intuition is the ultimate ground for the chain of the deductions of syntheses and the further contradiction of speculative thinking in the Doctrine of Science.

The absolute Ego was, as mentioned in Section 6.2.1.2, replaced by Schelling’s absolute subject–object and then by Hegel’s absolute spirit. The method of Fichte’s deductions was transformed and refined first in Schelling’s dialectic and then in the explications and applications of the dialectical method of German idealism in Hegel’s Science of Logic.

6.2.2.3 The significance of German idealism for understanding the idea of ultimate grounding in Husserl’s phenomenology

The first task for a search for such analogies is to determine which period in the development of German idealism is of central significance for the analogy. Reading the Vienna lectures of 1935 tempts one to assume that Husserl recognized in his last years something like a Hegelian interpretation of the phenomenological solution for the problem of an ultimate grounding (Letzbegründung). Of interest in this respect are the adoptions of such terms as “spirit” and “absolute spirit revealing itself” in “absolute history.” However, closer considerations indicate clearly that the immediate source for these terms in the Vienna lectures is not Hegel but Dilthey and Windelband and their respective accounts of the human sciences, i.e., the Geisteswissenschaften (sciences of the spirit).25

The final word in Husserl in this regard is what he says about German idealism in the Crisis.26 Hegel, though he represents a weaker version of the original power of Kant’s project, can be recognized as a predecessor of transcendental phenomenology according to the references in the texts of Husserl’s last decade only because he is the last follower of Kant. No references to Schelling that are relevant for the basic problem (Section 6.2.2) can be found in the writings of Husserl. What is left according to Husserl is that the writings of Schelling and Hegel may include descriptive contents that can be of interest for phenomenological analyses.

According to Fink, Husserl’s position can be compared with the late philosophy of Fichte, but Husserl was not able to grasp Hegel’s thought.27 Thus, only Fichte’s transition from Kant’s transcendental ego as the ultimate “condition of the possibility of experience and self-conscious experience” to an absolute ego is of interest for any critical evaluation of the analogy between the transition of German idealism to the Absolute and the phenomenological transition to ultimate grounding presupposing a primal ego. However, the descriptive phenomenological elements of Fichte’s attempt to restore the aims of traditional metaphysics on the level of intellectual intuition and speculative thinking beyond Kant’s critical deconstruction of traditional metaphysics are not acceptable. The descriptive basis of Fichte’s constructive account of the transition from Kant’s transcendental ego to the absolute positing and op-positing Ego has its descriptive foundation in reflections on “Fichte’s own empirical ego.” Fichte’s explication of the self-positing, op-positing, and synthetic positing of the absolute Ego as the underlying pattern of the construction of the deductive sequences of speculative thinking is, seen from the viewpoint of phenomenology, only the indicator of his hopeless entanglement in the dilemmas of the paradox of subjectivity.

Fichte’s transition is, seen from the viewpoint of Husserl, the general foundation for the step beyond Kant toward a metaphysical explication of the Absolute in intellectual intuition and
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speculative thinking of German idealism. This step beyond Kant’s critique of metaphysics leads to the highest level in the development of the methods for metaphysical constructions because it presupposes as its foundation the method of “dialectical” deductions in the explication of the self-movement of the Absolute in German idealism after Fichte.

6.2.2.4 The significance of Hegel for members of the Freiburg circle

Before Fink developed his interpretation of the “metaphysical” turn in Husserl’s thought in the Cartesian Meditations and the Crisis, French existential phenomenology showed an interest in Hegel, but this interest was restricted to applications of Hegel’s early theological writings and his Phenomenology for phenomenological descriptions of practical existential engagements in human experience.28 Hegel’s Phenomenology was not of interest as an introduction to his system and the explication of the self-movement of the concept in the Science of Logic.

Fink was not interested in work in the field of phenomenological reflective analyses. He was first of all interested in the problems of a transcendental phenomenological critique of the method of such reflective analyses, i.e., the ultimate grounding of phenomenology that was considered by Husserl already in 1924 in his First Philosophy. Fink’s solution for these problems requires that one go beyond phenomenological analyses to speculative constructions. Such methods are already required for a phenomenology of primal temporality, Urzeitigung, because primal temporality is prior to and the ground of the subjective inner temporality that is still accessible for naïve reflective phenomenological analyses. It is with this phenomenological speculation about primal temporality that one is confronted with the “question of Being” and discovers beyond this question the absolute ground of primal temporality in the me-on.29

An essential aspect of Fink’s interpretation of German idealism was his interest in Hegel, which was originally influenced by lectures of Heidegger.30 The absolute spirit is, for Fink, an absolute extramundane “consciousness” that has no being at all.31 Of basic significance for Fink’s position is his interpretation and critique of Hegel’s conception of the absolute spirit in the Phenomenology of Spirit. The Phenomenology considers the stages of the development of the appearance of the Absolute in the human mind. The reader is left with the impression that the Absolute can still be understood as absolute subject. That the Absolute is beyond any difference of finite beings and of subject/object can only be seen in the beginning of the Science of Logic.

But on this point the analogy between Hegel and Fink’s idealism breaks down. The Absolute is for Fink the Absolute as being Other, the Nothing in which all ground falls away, and it can be thought only in the "via negationis" of a "me-ontology."32 Though Fink characterizes his own speculative approach as “constructive,” he rejects Hegel’s dialectical construction of the Absolute and ends in the me-on, the negation of being. Urzeitigung (primal temporality) could perhaps be understood as Hegel’s “Becoming”, but there are no dialectical constructions in new dialectical oppositions and syntheses in the self-movement of the concept in Hegel’s Logic.

Notes

1 Fichte’s Wissenschaftslehre is referred to in this paper under the title Doctrine of Science (Fichte 1970). For the translation of these two works by Schelling, see Schelling 1978 and 1988.
3 Hegel 1969 and 2010.
4 Doctrine of Science, Parts I and II, especially §§1–4.
5 Critique of Pure Reason, Book II, Chapter III, The Ideal of pure reason, Section I, The Ideal in general. For Kant’s logic lectures, see Kant, Logic 1974.
6 Critique of Pure Reason, B 211.
Critique of Pure Reason, B 298; see also B 33.
Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, §§413–439 (Hegel 2010).
Ideas I, Second Section, Chapters 1 and 2. Ideas I was first published in 1913 (Hua III/1). There have been three English translations of Ideas I; the most recent is Husserl 2014.
Hua VII, Section I, Chapter 4 and Section II, Chapters 1–3.
Hua VII, 208f; and sections VI–VII.
For the Fichte lectures, see Hua XXV, 267–293. The short remarks on German idealism from 1914 can be found in Hua VII, Supplement XXII.
Trendelenburg’s anti-Hegelian Logische Untersuchungen from 1840 is a defense of Aristotelian logic against Hegel’s Logic.
Hua VI, §27; See Husserl 1970.
On Hegel, see §56; on Fichte §57.
The Vienna lectures of 1935 can be found as a supplement to the Crisis, Hua VI, 314–348/269–299.
Wissenschaftslehre, Part I, §§1–3.
See the end of §3, and §8. The laws of reflection appear only on this level as judgmental, i.e., in the context of modern logic as “propositional” opposition, contradiction, and consistency. For a comprehensive account see Seebohm 1994, 17–42.
Hua XVII, §31.
See, for example, in the Logic, Volume Two: Subjective Logic or The Doctrine of the Notion, the “Remark” in Chapter 1 on “The Common Classes of Notions” (Hegel 1969, 612–618) and also the Remark in Chapter 3, “The Common View of the Syllogism,” 681–686.
Popper 1963, 312–335; Popper 1965, 257 ff.
Hua IV, Part III. See Seebohm 2013, 125–140.
See Seebohm 1994, 21ff. and especially the references there.
Seebohm 2013, 125–140.
See section 6.1.3.2.
See Fink’s comments on a lecture by A. Schutz (1957) with references to the late Fichte (Schutz 1966, 84–87).
Bruzina 1997, 253ff; and the extensive interpretations of Fink’s VI Cartesian Meditation and other writings in Bruzina 2004, especially Chapters 5–7.
Bruzina 2004, 147ff. and 570 footnote 110.
Bruzina 2004, 152.
Bruzina 2004, 405ff, 450.

References