

## PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF E. FINK

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*Cultural and historical variability is completely overwhelming and within its context it is almost impossible to decipher something "essential", some "invariant variable" which would comprise a clue to what the human is, – this idea is presented as the main presupposition of Eugen Fink's philosophical anthropology. A major direction of Fink's works is a fundamental critique of traditional ontology and a search for a worldly thinking that would be more appropriate or implicit in human "worldly" existence. While following Husserl's transcendental philosophy, Fink opened up a new philosophical domain that is implicit in transcendental mode of awareness. His effort consisted in "revealing" what is already amidst us, what we have silently guessed and lived but dared not speak. This "revelation" is at the basis of Fink's conception of education. Education is a movement from authority to autonomy, from submission to "pregiven" and ready-made answers toward the creative, the free activity which is its own source.*

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### Introduction

No doubt an immediate question would surface: why another "philosophical anthropology?" After all, we have been burdened to irritation with numerous explications, stemming from diverse positions, concerning the "essence" of the human. Would it not be more fruitful to leave the answers in the hands of cultural anthropologists who at least have studied the human in its various cultural and historical settings and hence who are in a position to offer some concrete descriptions?

Such a scientific approach, after all, has demonstrated the cultural relativity of what constitutes the human across historical time and geographical locations. No final "invariant" has yet been discovered and in face of the coming historical changes, no ultimate statement can be offered until the final toll of the historical bell.

Eugen Fink accepts this verdict: cultural and historical variability is completely overwhelming and within its context it is almost impossible to decipher something "essential", some "invariant variable" which would

comprise a clue to what the human is. Indeed, Fink contends that the impossibility to discover such an “invariant” is founded on an uncritical acceptance of the Western traditional ontology. The very effort to find something “common” or “stable” across human histories might be misleading. It presumes the traditional ontology of “permanence” which is tacitly accepted by the sciences, including the sciences of human cultures. A major direction of Fink’s work, from his *Ontologische Fruhgeschichte vom Raum-Zeit-Bewegung*, through his *Nietzsche*, all the way to *Traktat ueber die Gewalt des Menschen, Spiel als Weltsymbol and Grundphaenomene des menschlichen Daseins*, is a fundamental critique of this ontology and a search for a worldly thinking that would be more appropriate or implicit in human “worldly” existence.

In light of this critique, the philosophical anthropologies, inclusive of scientific researches into the human, are insufficiently fundamental; an understanding of worldly existence is required to account for human “productivity”, “freedom”, “play”, and “temporality”. These basic phenomena cannot be designed to offer the traditional ontological conceptions of “permanence” or “essence”. They are the “taken for granted” and covered over dimensions which, while assumed, were always presumed inessential or secondary with respect to the interpretations of being as permanent. Resultantly, the understanding of philosophical anthropology requires a two-leveled discussion which, on the one hand, is concerned with the expressions and inadequacies of the traditional ontology, and on the other, reveals the tacitly assumed “fundamental phenomena”. The latter have been given the designation as transcendental conditions for all thinking and reality. Indeed, the philosophical tradition ended with the recognition of these conditions and the latter opened

an entirely new domain for philosophical explication. Eugen Fink takes on the task of arguing for such conditions as unavoidable for any future philosophy. It must be also pointed out that while following Husserl’s transcendental philosophy, Fink opened up a new philosophical domain that is implicit in transcendental mode of awareness. This opening could not be avoided and Husserl finally accepted this opening and for Fink’s philosophical efforts Husserl called him “Das phaenomen Fink”. Of course, to begin such a philosophical transformation it is prudent to attend to the phenomena closest to us: the way of being human prior to ontology.

### **The Ontology of Being**

The ontological quest for Being and its “nature” appears across numerous interpretations, from Greek substantialism through modern materialism and idealism. Negatively speaking, such a quest excludes or at best assigns to the phenomena of space-time-movement only a secondary or “accidental” role. Being fundamentally is not affected by space-time-movement. Even when it is interpreted as “being in time-space-movement”, it is still regarded either as an underlying substance, matter, composition of permanent parts, or as “law” under which such substances are submitted. In this sense, even modern sciences which seemingly reject the conception of Being of classical Greeks, are still caught in the same ontology offering a stable model for the world. While things are “in” space-time-motion, the “laws” governing them are indifferent to these phenomena. Either the “underlying” something, such as some “matter” or the “laws” of such matter remain permanent. Thus with respect to the phenomena of space-time-motion, being is characterized negatively as non-spatial, non-temporal and unchanging.

Such a fundamental ontology in turn comprises human self-understanding expressed in numerous mythologies and socio-political phenomena. These are secondary expressions of the ontological assumption and self-interpretation. Various examples can be offered which, while seemingly contrary to the traditional ontology, nonetheless take it for granted. When we speak of socio-economic conditions which result in specific political, educational, and morphological structures, we are assuming permanent components which, once deciphered, will give us knowledge of “expected” and characterizable results. These conceptions of results presume a traditional “demiurgic” notion of “production”. There is the “stuff” to be shaped, there are “models” in accordance with which the shaping takes place and there is the shaper. The demiurgic model is structured on a “craftsman’s mentality”. Following this “mentality” one regards social, political and cultural institutions as “products”, as something “made” from some pre-existing “materials” whether in space and time or “ideal”.

Similar ontology appears in the self-understanding of human temporality. The temporal changes which occur in the cosmos presume the continuity of something which does not change, whether something called “matter”, some combination of parts which, while assuming different combinations, are in principle constant, or some “applied models” such as mathematics. Hence the resultant self-understanding of the human follows this ontology. For example, in confrontation with death, it is presumed that death is a transformation either of permanent materials, coming apart of their composition, or a separation of parts whereby one, the “soul” will continue “apart” from the decomposing materials.

Even in more radical conceptions of the modern age which allow that nature “in itself”

is inaccessible, that it might be chaos, chance, on whose heaven, as Nietzsche says, all things dance, there is a topos for the traditional ontology: human rationality. It is human rationality, the light in us, which provides the stay and form against the temporality of change. We spin out the interconnected web from our rational nature. Hence we are rational, and this rationality is what provides the human with the conception of “autonomy”. In the face of the “unknown” reality, we are free because we can provide the rationality for all events.

According to Fink, this conception of “rational autonomy” is founded upon “free choice”. This conception of “freedom” is most problematic concerning its ontological foundations. It is problematic with respect to its “frequency”. We seem to live immersed in our social institutions, in our environment, in our mythologies and once in a while there occur “revolutions” in which we participate, through which we express our “choice” for a new form of political life, of productive relationships and our social institutions. We “ride the crest” of freedom. Yet after the revolution the “leaders” become either “tyrants or professional revolutionaries” who invoke the “revolutionary laws”. The ecstatic wave subsides and we sink into “daily necessities”.

Another form of this “freedom” is a choice between two courses of action, between right and wrong, good and evil, rational or irrational. The objects of choice are regarded as given. Here the permanence of being over choice of freedom is superior. In all respects, thinking and choice follow the requirements of being. Even when seen without reference to being, choice is still between “objects”. Thus Descartes’ conception of choice between cognitive elements takes those elements for granted and allows either affirmation or negation of one over the other. In a similar way we conceive of

ourselves as choosing our institutions, as if they were “objects” in nature. The current battle between the East and West is regarded as making a choice between social systems either with “free” or “unfree” institutions. Thus it is conceived that in a “free world” one lives freely because periodically one makes a choice between at least two given political parties and then acquiesces to the “free decision” of the majority. These are gilded words which cover rather than reveal human freedom.

But would not freedom be guaranteed if it were conceived in terms of rationality, specifically in its modern understanding. In the practical arena reason is evoked as something that will lead us toward the construction of “rational society”. Yet this sort of “reason” allows freedom to be a projection of a choice in its eschatological sense: the production of a rational society assumes a fatal messianic ideology and thus reverts back to the traditional ontology: everything becomes a sign toward the “true” human life which is given in the future. Karl Heinz Volkmann-Schluck is here instructive when he suggests that such a “future rational society” is the old Platonic “idea transformed into a future utopia”. This sort of freedom of choice shifts the focus from a choice between two objects toward the choice between present “irrationalities” in a society and the “rational society” of the future. This choice not only presupposes that there is an already given knowledge between “rational” and “irrational” but also takes for granted the knowledge of the aim, the *eschaton*, embodying full rationality. But what is the source of this “final rational form”? It must be somehow inherent either in nature or in the human. This means that the theoretical reason is capable of or has discerned a pre-established order and calls for human efforts to shape all affairs to attain this order. The truth is already there;

one must simply strive to embody it. Such is the *pathos* of doctrinary thinking. But such an intolerance is not a mistake which might appear in some historical dark ages. Rather it is a consequence of the traditional ontology which assumes that freedom is essentially rational and that rationality comprises a theoretical insight into the truth of being. Here the call to “praxis” is dictated by a presumed truth.

At times the traditional ontological props are shored up by various mythologies. It is deemed that the human lives immersed in a protective security of mother earth and father sky. The human artifice, the intrusions into the wild were respectful of the will of divine and demonic beings who allotted sanctions and activities to the human. The human knew a proper place, a right time and lived in an aura of meaning which deflected all uncertainties and offered a semblance of order. The human knew his destiny, his hierarchical place in society, had a secure “knowledge” of “after life” and the appropriate actions to attain it. This is not to say that the human “knew” the myths as something to be discussed or chosen. Rather he lived from the myth and from the customs which the myth prescribed. Ontologically speaking, the human self-understanding was an image of a mythologically delineated being.

The problematic of such a “security of being” enter even into the modern conceptions of “praxis” and “productivity”, even if such productivity is profiled against the modern and current conceptions of “possibility”. The conception of “projection of possibilities” is pitted against the “already given reality”. The possibilities are deciphered as “possibilities of being” and are founded on some ontological status of inherent human needs, wants, desires which can be fulfilled on the basis of known “trends” or “patterns” in the material arena.

The knowledge of the recombination of the real in accordance with such desires yields the possible. The possible is only on the profile of the real.

The ontology of the permanent, whatever its modifications, comprises the questionable background for the explanation of the human phenomena, specifically the phenomena of human productivity and social institutions. As already noted, the latter are deemed to be the results of “choices” and in some cases are “made” in accordance with “reason”. Such conceptions of the social institutions, and the social life in general, points out Fink, are most misleading. What underlies this error is once again the conception of everything, and in this case of the human as possessing some sort of entitative essence with inherent characteristics. Such an ontology leads to speculative conceptions of the “beginning” of human society. At first there is a “state of being” such as individuals with needs who then form a society to fulfill the pre-given needs. Or one projects some “pre-human herd” which then develops into a human society. Apart from their hypothetical character, there is an effort to explain the social life by “pre-social” terms, i.e., to derive the social from non-social motivations. Other efforts to grasp the social from the pre-social are the purported studies of revolutions which would reveal how society emerges from something that is more fundamental and pre-social. Revolution repeats the fundamental condition of pre-social life, i.e., offers the “pure” ontological state revealing the inherent drives, motives, anxieties, fears which subsequently lead to social formations.

The problematic of this ontology hinges on the conception of “production”. If society, social institutions, formations and human relationships are “produced”, in what sense can such production be understood along the

traditional lines of ontological explanations? What is at issue for E. Fink is the most pervasive appearance in the modern age of the human self-interpretation as *homo laborans*, as the “productive being”. And precisely this “productivity” is what leads to the problematic of the traditional ontology and the various manifestations depicted above. Indeed, the concept of “productivity” underlies the work of most of the major modern philosophers, from Descartes through Hegel to Marx and Nietzsche, not to speak of the numerous theorists in sociology, psychology and economics. According to Fink, an appropriate understanding of this phenomenon requires the surrender of the traditional ontology of being as permanent, leading to an entirely different philosophical anthropology and of course a radically transformed ontology. His contention is that the “new ontology” is not new. It was presupposed throughout the ages and was manifest in human self-understanding. Even if such a self-understanding was covered over by the traditional ontology, it constituted the fundamental human phenomena.

### **Productivity and Nothing**

Gods need not produce, other species cannot produce; only the human produces, and produces only in confrontation with nothing. “What” is this nothing and how is it related to productivity? The answers are not without difficulties since they take for granted an “understanding” which has no terms in our ontological tradition. First prerequisite would be the radical conception of the temporality of the human. But the temporality cannot be regarded as a temporality of things, of coming into and going out of existence of shapes and forms, of temporal transformation of events and forces. The human is temporal insofar as

he is related to time and not merely immersed in time. Only this relationship reveals human temporality, transience, non-necessity and dissolution – death. But death for Fink is not revealed in Heideggerian “anxiety”, in the “care” about one’s own being. It is rather a self-understanding which appears in most diverse manifestations: death rituals, monuments to the dead, edifices of solid matter to stay the tide of time, ancestor worship instilled in the progeny, all testifying to the overwhelming presence of nothing and to human self-relationship to time. For Fink this fundamental phenomenon also signifies a different ontology from the ontology of being.

The relationship to time does not mean that the human comes into being and passes away, but rather understands intimately the all-annihilating horizon. For death is annihilation. It is not a transformation, not a “pushing up daisies” where the form assumes different combinations. Rather, it is a complete abolition of the human. The human is irrevocably gone and cannot be reinstated. There is nothing hidden that remains as the “ground”. Any transformation still presumes such a ground. This is the radical temporality which comprises the human self-understanding as temporal, as irrevocably irrepeatable, as being cognizant of nothing. Even the efforts of the traditional ontology to speak of the human statically and of death as a transformation, reveals the imagery which is radically worldly.

Death, the nothing, is not a problem next to other problems for the human, not something that can be solved by science, religion or mythology. Rather it is a fundamental phenomenon, a background on the basis of which everything else takes shape as problematic. If philosophy had conceived and demonstrated a trans-temporal subject, a permanent subject, it would have ceased to be a

philosophy, and the human would confront no problems. Hence the philosophical wrestling with problems is silhouetted against the phenomenon of death. In this domain no Cartesian *genius malignus* could mislead us. Our certitude is not of the ego but of the temporality, the transience of our being.

All self-relatedness and self-interpretation arises on the problematics of our relatedness to time and nothing. And the wonder in face of the world, comprising the ground for philosophical questions of whence and whither of the transitory things and events are profiled against the fundamental phenomenon of our own relatedness to our own transitoriness. It is the ground which marks everything else with a question. The self-relationship to time and to nothing sets the world into question. Those who vanish, the ones who are closest to us comprise a break between us and an abyss which cannot be bridged. And this break is the experience on which all things “break” and vanish. This fundamental phenomenon is the source for our understanding of other fundamental phenomena: labor and play, productivity and play of the world. As is well known, productivity in modern age is made into the source of human historical being.

While the stress on *homo laborans* and the concept of “production” seems to be modern phenomena, they are a common understanding of humanity. Fink points out that even mythologies reveal an intimate relationship between self-understanding as temporal and labor. When Adam ate of the fruit of knowledge, the relationship between knowledge and death was revealed. What he acquired is not divine omniscience but his own transitoriness; he had to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Numerous Asian and African myths reveal the same relationship. Once banned from “heaven” through some misdeed, the

human is exposed to death, to self-awareness as temporal and to labor. In brief, the myths of the “fall of man” reveal a fundamental relationship between human self-understanding as temporal and mortal and labor, productivity.

The modern understanding of the human as working, as producing being results, according to Fink, in a more direct confrontation with time and nothingness in the form of nihilism. In this, Fink rejects Heidegger’s understanding of nihilism as “forgetfulness of being”. For Fink the confrontation with nothing does not throw us back upon ourselves in search of being, of the luminescence and the obedience to being, its presence in the absence, but back upon our own “self-production”. But this self-production is not comparable to “divine sui generis” where the absolute manifests itself in terms of what it already is. Rather it is a production in confrontation with nothing, a confrontation completely excluded for a divine being. And precisely this confrontation that disallows some comfortable regression to the known categories, whether humanistic, naturalistic, transcendental or mythological. The nothing appearing in its nihilistic form, rends all the preconceptions asunder and unleashes the productive energies as if to say that there are no longer any reasons, any explanations, any ethos to hold us back. We are in a “crisis” in the original sense of the word; a break, a parting of the ways from everything that once was valid.

Although modern science still considers itself as capable of offering some semblance of “truth” and hence retains the habit of the traditional ontology, in its function it too is swayed by a specific form of negativity. In its concrete “application” the scientific work not only denies, negates all the previous values, conceptions of nature, laws and explanations, but also compels nature to function as it would

not function of its own accord, i.e., “produces” nature along naturally unattainable lines. This production of nature itself releases the human from all bounds, preconceived respect for natural and supernatural powers and lends the human a self-understanding as a “maker” of his own world, and above all, a “maker” of himself. In confrontation with nothing, the basic “product” of the human is the human itself. This is to say that in the final analysis we are makers of ourselves. Regardless of the form of expression, the pervasive conception of the human is that he is a producer and a product. According to Fink, we are in no position to extricate ourselves from this self-understanding, since we have not yet grasped its ontological ground and are hindered by the pretense that the traditional ontology is still valid. This validity is only a convenience, and once it is “rejected” in the modern daily life, the self-understanding of the modern person as “productive” and nothing more comes into full relief.

The tendency to establish the human through human productivity, to construct all human relationships, to plan all human institutions, characterizes our times. In all respects, the self-understanding as productive has no force which can alter it. Although there might be voices proclaiming that the human is dependent on and is part of immense natural forces, the modern man regards even such forces as something that can be submitted to technological controls and human mastery. The conception of “production” finds no longer any opposition from any moral or ethical counter force and assumes an unconditional status. Even the “opposition” thinks along the lines of “production” or remaking of the institutions and the human to fit some preconceived “ethos”. All in all, the humanity of the future is regarded as something which will be completely produced.

Fink demands that we rethink this “productivity” more radically and basically than is permitted by our current day most radical “revolutionaries”. This is because even the revolutionaries attempt to “deduce” the phenomenon of productivity either from some “natural” needs, or from “scientific” preconceptions. Fundamentally, in the modern self-understanding, the human is not deducible either from nature or even from society, either from his products or from something that is socially institutionalized; all these are the results of “productivity”. In principle, the “world revolution” and its attendant explanations and ideological props are subtended by a more fundamental phenomenon of human self-understanding as productivity without precedent, precondition or predecessor. All explanations, enumerations of conditions, motivations, trends and causes either in nature or society have no necessity. The very social formations, institutions and scientific techniques are “products” of “human productivity”. This productivity is propelled by nothing. Thus no known ontology is adequate to explicate such a productivity.

Eugen Fink is careful to avoid ontological importation of “human needs” which would compel or motivate productivity. He takes for granted the many analyses showing that even “needs are produced. In this sense productivity is presumed but not explained. That is why he calls it “fundamental phenomenon” of being human in the modern age. After all, if one surveys the diverse theories of epistemology, linguistics, semiotics, one discovers an invariable claim that they are “produced”. Of course such claims fall short of the abysmal thought of nothing and allude that such epistemological forms, linguistic grammars or semiotic signs are “products” of socio-economic forces, without realizing that the latter

are also “products”. Moreover, such explanations are “ideological” and these are also produced.

This fundamental phenomenon of productivity as the self-understanding of the modern man is exposed to another danger of misinterpretation which traces with it the residua of the traditional ontology. We tend to call our productive understanding “technological”. It is modeled on the ontological preconception of demiurgic production: the pot maker who shapes clay or a bridge builder who designs and uses material to build a bridge, or even a park planner who designs patterns for planting trees and laying walkways. This view stems from antiquity in which the demiurgos glances at the pre-given archetypes and thus gives shape to either amorphous matter or chaos. This demiurgic conception originates with the pre-given understanding of a craftsman.

Indeed, this sort of “making” is coextensive with the modern interpretation of “production” which, according to Fink is valid but not fundamental. The conception of *homo laborans* subtends the technological productivity. No doubt, modern technology is the most powerful and transformative event of human condition. And no doubt that the modern man is immersed in a technological understanding and language which is used to depict all of his activities and relationships. When speaking of political institutions, the modern man speaks the language of a technocrat. One “builds” new political institutions, one draws up five-year social and economic plans and sub-plans like one draws up a plan for road construction. Of course, even at this level of interpretation one is already engaged in confrontation with negativity: one negates what is there in nature in order to transform it in accordance with technical means and the “new plan”, and one negates the political institutions in order to

“rebuild” them in accordance with “new needs”.

This conception of “building” by the *homo laborans* fails drastically when confronted by “political production of society“. Political compositions do not constitute some chaos, some stuff which can be molded by applying some utopian model. They are “sense structures” and comprise human relationships which cannot be “made” as if they were a bridge or a clay pot. These sense structures and relationships comprise a fundamental self-understanding of humans as being with one another. We cannot go behind them in order to discover their origin in some “natural state” and presumed “herd motives” or security needs. All such attempts take for granted the self-understanding as related to others, as “political”. Just as productivity, this “political” self-understanding is a fundamental phenomenon which cannot be derived from something “more fundamental“. Hence it cannot be understood “technologically” as a production of something but as a constitution of sense.

In light of these considerations Fink claims that technological conception of productivity is secondary, derivative and is based on a fundamental phenomenon of political sense constitution which comprises human self-understanding with each other. Such a self-understanding does not grow, develop from some biological region of nature. Nature does not grow an underbrush of political institutions and relationships. What this means, says Fink, is that neither our technological understanding nor naturalistic preconceptions are adequate to conceive of political institutions and their “production“. The primacy of political production over technological making has not yet been explicated, precisely because the traditional ontology offers us no concepts for such political “production“. Thus there arises a

requirement to decipher such fundamental phenomenon.

### **Productivity and Plan**

Neither technologies, their scientific underpinnings, used to negate and to transform nature and to “produce” more needs and more technologies, nor political life and institutions follow heavenly edicts or natural rhythms. They are “created”. The modern person, thus, regards himself as possessing an ability to create. In face of nothing, the human can be creative. Does it mean that the human always creates? Obviously not. This “can create” must be understood in an entirely different way than any other “can”. One can use the eye, the hand and one can stop using them. It is an ability to employ a power which seems to be pre-given. But such abilities cannot be equated with the ability to create. It cannot be said that we have another biological or psychological ability called creativity. A creativity which does not occur, does not exist. Hence it is not a potency waiting to be realized. The difference and relationship between act and potency fail whenever we are confronted with this basic productive creativity. In this sense production is not a potency, a power to shape things and to “make” institutions.

In face of nothing, the human creativity and production, indeed self-production if self-founded. The human is the ground of the human. This cannot be understood in the traditional theological sense. After all, the human is not an “absolute” or a necessary being. To the contrary, he is a fortuitous and transitory being, intimately cognizant of the transitoriness, and incapable of transcending his finitude. Yet precisely the finitude is not a barrier, an ultimate limit, but a ground of our creativity. If the modern man understands

himself as a ground of himself, such a grounding must be understood against all of the traditional conceptions, whether theological or ontological. The human cannot be a ground of himself as one fact is a ground of another, as the sun is the ground for the warmth of the stone. This is to say neither causal nor biological grounding are adequate. According to Fink, the preeminent form that such a grounding assumes is that of the “will”.

Although at the first sight it might appear that Fink is reintroducing the same “explanation” which was available within the framework of modern conception of the “will” as autonomous, nonetheless he claims that autonomy of the modern will does not show how such a will can become “practical and productive”, specifically when it was understood as “freedom to choose”. As was already noted, such a “freedom” is inadequate for the understanding of “productivity”, since it presupposes the traditional ontology with all the ready-made objects, functions and possibilities among which the will enacted its choices. Fink suggests that an entirely different understanding of freedom must correlate to the basic phenomenon of creativity as productive. Will and action in such an understanding cannot be separated. This is not to say that the action excludes deliberation, planning and projection; rather these processes are not yet confronted with some pre-given objects, but emerge with them, emerge with the plan, with relations which are constituted and not “already there”. In this sense the “planning” pervades the “material” and lends it directions and combinations which are not found in nature. In this sense, even political institutions are not something among which we choose, but something which we enact, participate in constituting and maintenance. “Production” of political relationships and institutions is an emergence of sense and its

upholding, a sense which subsequently is taken for granted and projected into the ontological substance such as psychological need for security, herd instinct or material interest. But all these subsequent explications make sense because the emerging sense of the “political” is available and can never be jelled into an object. This continuous emergence of the sense in activity is a more fundamental “freedom” of our engagements not with fixed objects, but with a continuous constitution of something which is not yet an object of choice.

The active “production” of sense is always a self-understanding with others and hence “political”. Any political transformation, “establishment” of “new institutions” takes for granted this active sense production which institutes and constantly maintains the institutions and their transformations. Hence technological productivity “makes sense” because the human is already engaged in the “political” building of sense in self-understanding with others. This suggests not a minimal conception of the freedom of choice, but a maximal understanding of freedom as productive (creative), as participating in the very constitution of sense which emerges and would vanish without active maintenance. One tempting ontological interpretation must be avoided: objectification. Since we build sense as self-understanding with others, it might seem that the sense is in us and we “project” it as if it were a readily available “category” in human interiority. The sense is not in us; it arises in the activity in the world and is taken for granted when in our epistemologies and ontologies we attempt to “locate” it in us. The enacted and produced sense yields our self-understanding as active and productive beings, having no other ground but ourselves.

What misleads us, what deflects us from this primordial freedom and creativity “out of

nothing” is the old ontology of the “is”, of “existence”. Politically, we say that there “are authorities”, there “exist states” and “political institutions” under whose rod we live, in whose cradle we think ourselves encompassed and protected from the fleetingness, temporality of our being. We still think that we “choose” institutions as we choose apples and pears. But institutions are “produced” and comprise sense configurations in which “authorities” with their “edicts” and promises make sense. Institutions do not face us; they are us in the process of active production, emergence of sense and its continuous maintenance, wherein we maintain and “produce” ourselves. In this sense freedom is not a will to choose, a function which we may exercise in accordance with institutionally prescribed intervals or among the appropriate means of production. Nor is freedom a “subjectivity” confronting “brute being”. It is coextensive with “production” of sense originating neither with the wind of extra-terrestrial laws nor with a terrestrial human nature. Freedom is not a “given” but coextensive with its “productivity”.

Ontologically speaking, such “freedom” which is at the base of our political self-understanding and the latter as a base for technological interpretation of “making” and “homo laborans”, might be better understood as “play”. Play is an activity which primarily occurs without pre-given rules. Even the “play rules” emerge either in play or in “playful deliberation” and consultation. They do not stem from a “need” to play in opposition to “serious” tasks. It is an activity which brings about formations of rules without “eternity”. Such formations might transform, subsume, modify the sense of formations which were once upheld, but without a pre-given standard or criterion. Formations which intersect, break up and are recombined without finality. This

allows us to play with the institutional formations, technological innovations which are not yet available. This play “draws” its formation out of nothingness which sets no ontological criteria.

The play-freedom as productive active creativity in self-understanding with others avoids and undercuts the conception of freedom of choice. The constant formation and maintenance of the sense of human relationships comprises a “play-field” which offers the only resolution: we produce, establish the institutions as sense configurations and set up our “play rules” which are exposed to change not in accordance with a pre-established plan or harmony, but with the enactment of novel sense and with the production of work implements which too are not pre-established but are “created” in trial and error, under no causal or biological compulsion or necessity. It is a playful self-production and self-commitment with others which will change without a final issue. This “playfulness” stems from no reason, for all reason takes for granted the sense within whose confines it functions. Nietzsche already laughed at the modern attempts of “progress” toward a “more rational” and hence “most rational” state and recognized the playfulness of all such attempts. But what releases us to this creativity is precisely our finitude, our self-understanding as temporal, our confrontation with nothing. This is the most recent and the oldest truth; its full force is still to come.

### **Postscript**

Perhaps no other thinker has “sensed” the underlying human predicament better than Eugen Fink. His effort was not to obfuscate, interpret or explain; rather it consisted in “revealing” what is already amidst us, what we have silently guessed and lived but dared not

speak. This “revelation” is at the basis of Fink’s conception of education. Education is a movement from authority to autonomy, from submission to “pregiven” and ready-made answers toward the creative, the free activity

which is its own source. Teaching of “facts” is an education founded on the traditional ontology. The inadequacy of such an ontology is equally the inadequacy of our educational practice.

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#### E. FINKO FILOSOFINĖ ANTROPOLOGIJA

##### Algis Mickunas

##### Santrauka

Straipsnyje supažindinama su nepelnytai mažai dėmesio sulaukiančia Eugene’o Finko filosofine antropologija. Pagrindinė jos prielaida – gilus įsitikinimas, kad kultūrinė ir istorinė įvairovė yra visa apimanti, todėl tuščios filosofų viltys atskleisti kokią nors „esminę“ žmogaus prigimtį kaip „nekintantį kintamąjį“. Svarbiausiu Finko darbų tikslu tapo fundamentali tradicinės ontologijos kritika ir bandymas rasti pasaulišką mąstymą – tokį, kuris būtų imanentiškas žmogaus pasauliškai egzistencijai ir todėl vienintelis tinkamas jai peršnekėti. Nors sekė Husserlio fenomenologija,

Finkas atvėrė naują filosofinę sritį, glūdinčią transcendentaliniame žinojimo moduse. Filosofas siekė „atskleisti“ tai, kas jau esti tarp mūsų, su mumis, – ką mes jau gyvenome ir tyliai spėjome, bet apie ką neišdrįsime prabilti. Šis „atskleidimas“ padėjo pagrindus Finko švietimo sampratai. Švietimas aiškinamas kaip judėjimas autonomijos link – nuo paklusimo bet kokiai išankstinei duotybei į kūrybišką, laisvą veiklą, kuri neturi kito šaltinio, vien pačią save.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** būti žmogumi, laikinumas, laisvė, produktyvumas, kūrybiškumas, politinė savivoka.

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