

THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION OF COMMUNITY IN THE LIGHT OF COSMOLOGIC DIFFERENCE

SOME NOTES ON EUGEN FINK

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Abstract

The present article discusses some theses by Eugen Fink on the philosophical question of community in the light of the cosmic sense of the world and the cosmologic difference. Fink centers his thoughts on community in the experience of cosmic belonging and proposes a basis for thinking the question of community beyond the dialectics of individual and bond, searching for a pre-individual notion of togetherness. The key for such a notion is the erotic body as the experience of a

belonging-together of the day and the night of being. It is from the belonging-together of a diurnal and a nocturnal principle of understanding that the cosmic sense of the world emerges as cosmic difference in the erotic body.

Keywords: community, cosmological difference, world, dialectics of individual and bond, Renaud Barbaras.

Filozofsko vprašanje skupnosti v luči kozmološke diference. Nekaj beležk o Eugenu Finku

Povzetek

188 Pričujoči članek obravnava nekaj tez Eugena Finka o filozofskem vprašanju skupnosti v luči kozmičnega smisla sveta in kozmološke diference. Svoje misli o skupnosti Fink osredinja v izkustvo kozmične pripadnosti in pri iskanju pred-individualne zamisli družnosti predloži osnovo za mišljenje vprašanja skupnosti onkraj dialektike posameznika in vezi. Ključ za takšno zamisel predstavlja erotično telo kot izkustvo so-pripadnosti oz. spadanja skupaj dneva in noči biti. Iz so-pripadnosti dnevnega in nočnega principa razumevanja se kozmični smisel sveta poraja kot kozmična diference v erotičnem telesu.

Ključne besede: skupnost, kozmološka diference, svet, dialektika posameznika in vezi, Renaud Barbaras.

“Licht bin ich: ach, daß ich Nacht wäre! Aber dies ist meine Einsamkeit, daß ich von Licht umgürtet bin.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

“There are some turns from which there is no turning back,” wrote John Sallis in an article from 2012, proposing that philosophy today is compelled to face an imperative that “requires a turn that would be both more encompassing and more disruptive in its recoil on philosophic thinking. Let us call it the cosmological turn.” (Sallis 2012, 152.) Indeed, the “planetary violence” that spreads all over the planet, a violence that is both social and political, economic and psychological, environmental and existential, bodily and symbolic, has turned more and more philosophy back to nature and the elemental, to animal studies and ecology, to trans- and post-human answers to the destructive power of what Heidegger once called the “unconditional anthropomorphy” (Heidegger 1961, 20) that defines the age of planetary technique. These attempts to respond to the violence of the times aim explicitly or not, in different senses and extents, to reconstitute the mysterious bond of world and nature expressed in the old Greek word *kosmos*, a bond that began to lose the clarity of its evidence already with the Romans when *kosmos* and its translation into *mundus* introduced a subtle and non-reflected difference between the two terms. Indeed, one of the clearest marks of Modernity is the pointed separation between world and nature as much as the one between cosmos and the world. “The cosmological turn,” which, inspired by recent physical research in cosmology, Sallis proposes as a philosophical turn with no turning back, indicates something close to what Eugen Fink at the end of his *Treatise on Human Violence* emphasized, namely:

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Maybe only the world is big enough to welcome the humans’ Promethean titanic tempest—and maybe only the wisdom of the world is sufficiently detached to affirm the play of freedom and at the same

time the impossibility to manipulate the fateful force of love and death.¹

The quotation indicates that maybe only the wisdom of the world can respond and resist to the violence of the world.

This is a departing point to engage with “the cosmological turn” in phenomenology presented by Eugen Fink mainly in his writings after WWII. In elucidative studies on Fink’s cosmology edited by Cathrin Nielsen and Hans Rainer Sepp (2011) under the title *Welt denken. Annäherungen an die Kosmologie Eugen Finks* we learn about several aspects of Fink’s cosmological phenomenology. One primary aspect is how Fink’s cosmology relates to Husserl’s and Heidegger’s respective phenomenological projects and contributes to surpass their ambivalences and aporias;² we become, moreover, insightfully instructed about how the cosmological turn in phenomenology attempted by Fink is developed through a fundamental dialogue with tradition, from the Pre-Socratic thought to Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche.³ This anthology also illuminates the way Fink’s cosmological phenomenology proposes a new path of phenomenology, called by Sepp “negative phenomenology,” a path that brings Fink’s cosmological phenomenology in close relation to the me-ontic and me-ontological tradition (ibid.).⁴ In addition to these accounts, I would like to emphasize the relation between Fink’s cosmology and his thoughts on “community” as the experience of belonging together. I will, therefore, pay attention to how the problem of community, or in Fink’s own

1 “Vielleicht ist nur die Welt groß genug, den prometheischen Titanensturm des Menschen zu empfangen – und vielleicht nur die Weltweisheit gelassen genug, die Spiele der Freiheit und zugleich die unverfügbare Schicksalsmacht von Liebe und Tod zu bejahren.” (Fink 1974, 491; trans. M. C. S.)

2 See, for instance, Janssen’s article on “Die Sterblichkeit der Irdischen nach Fink und Heidegger in Abhebung gegen Husserls transzendentalen Subjektivismus” (2011, 134–153) and Nielsen’s very insightful confrontation of Heidegger’s and Fink’s thoughts on *Physis* (2011, 154–181).

3 See Lazzari: “Weltfrage und kosmologische Interpretation von Kants *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*” (2011, 38–55), and Babich: “‘Artisten-Metaphysik’ und ‘Welt-Spiel’ bei Nietzsche und Fink” (2011, 57–86).

4 See, in this regard, Nielsen’s and Sepp’s introduction to the volume on Fink’s cosmology (Nielsen and Sepp 2011, 9–23) and Dai Takeuchi’s article “Zweideutigkeit des Meon und Kosmologie als Phänomenologie der Immanenz” (2011, 237–249).

terms of *Existenz und Coexistenz*, is decisive to understand the cosmological turn of phenomenology he stands for. Around the connection, or better the connective “*und*,” “and,” named in the title “Existence *and* Coexistence,” we may find, in which sense Fink’s cosmological phenomenology responds to the times, to our times, the times of planetary violence. Thus, in these times, the very sense of community becomes more and more empty the more discourses on community proliferate. It is the very sense of the common that becomes annihilated the more annihilation becomes the common experience of the world today.

With regard to the long philosophical tradition that, since the Socratic Revolution, understands itself as self-understanding, *gnōthi seauton* [γνώθι σεαυτόν], Fink starts his inquiry in *Existenz und Coexistenz* on the “essence of community” affirming that “community is essentially determined through self-understanding”.⁵ It is a slight, but nonetheless significant distinction that emerges here: not that through self-understanding of individuals community [*Gemeinschaft*] is built, but that community is built on its self-understanding *as* community. This means that community is not given as mountains and clouds, but it forms itself through self-understanding of community and not as a bond of individuals. With Fink’s words: “Human community is essentially constituted [*geprägt*] by which it means and longs for as a community.” (Fink 1987, 15.) Human community is defined by the paradox of being constituted by the outlined meaning of community:⁶ hence, human community is perhaps nothing but the outline of the meaning of community. Fink uses the Heideggerian concept of *Entwurf*, which is better understood if rendered as “outline” or “sketch.” This means that community is not given neither as an empirical fact nor as a pre-constituted symbolic realm: community means becoming in common from out of the sketch of a sense of the common. Moreover, this also says something about the “nature” of philosophy. Thus, philosophy is the experience of self-estrangement, indeed, of estrangement of what is taken as self-evident. If self-understanding can be considered a fundamental philosophical gesture, this is

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5 “Die menschliche Gemeinschaft ist wesentlich durch Selbstverständnis bestimmt.” (Fink 1987, 15.)

6 “Paradox formuliert: die Gemeinschaft konstituiert sich primär in ihrem Sinnentwurf vom Wesen der Gemeinschaft.” (Ibid.)

because it interrupts the self-evidence, *das Selbstverständliche*, of what is given as a “self,” an interruption, in which understanding of Being, *Seinsverständnis*, breaks through; and this in such a manner that it is from the understanding of being that the “self” exposes itself as being-with. Indeed, the understanding of being, which grounds the philosophical search for self-understanding, is the astonishing discovery of the fact that being is. Not that being is this or that, but that every this or that, in enigmatic modes, exposes the fact that being is, the existence of existence, that being is open, *en ouvert*, indeed, the fact of the openness of being. What human existence discovers philosophically is its own openness to the openness of being. Human existence is the openness for the openness of being, openness for time and space, in short, openness for the world. Only as world-openness can human existence *be* a comprehension of being and a search for self-understanding. What human existence is or is not relies on its openness to the world, which is its strange way of being in the world. Accordingly, for Fink, if there is a fundament for community, for being together, it is the one of existing in the world as openness for the world, of existing as an inside, which is open towards the openness of being. In this sense, we can understand Fink’s claim that “human community is always a communication [*Mit-Teilen*] and communicative exchange [*Miteinanderteilen*] of ‘world’” (ibid., 142). The basis for community is being in the world as open for the world, and what communicates and is communicated is the world-openness, how each individual is a world-outline.

Fink’s fundamental position is close to Heidegger’s understanding of the ecstatic ontological structure of *Da-sein*, which exposes itself as being-in-the world and being-with. Being in[side] the world *as* being-in-the-world—this is Heidegger’s often misunderstood conception—*Da-sein*, human existence is being-with and not a being that is also together with other beings. *Mitsein* is for Heidegger an existential, meaning, indeed, a prefix to the verb “to be,” which builds the proper verb, let us say, the verb *to withbe*. (The existential can be read as such a prefixing function.) Similar to Heidegger’s thought of community, Fink insists that community or coexistence cannot be understood as it has been throughout the history of philosophy in the sense of transindividuality [*Über-Individuelles*]. Community cannot be understood at the basis of a reference to individuation [*Vereinzelung*] (Fink 1987, 196).

The major problem is not even of understanding being as *Vorhandenheit*, presence-at-hand, a problem that remains central for Heidegger, but as *Vereinzelung*, individuation and singularization. Philosophy begins in Athens and remains throughout its history in the mode of the political metaphysics relating the all to the singular as a derivation and causation: either in the Ancient and Medieval views deriving the singular from the universal, *das Allgemeine*, or in Modern times, deriving the universal from the individual. Indeed, since its beginnings in Greece, being has been seized “in the mode of individuation [*Vereinzeltheit*]” (ibid.). The continuous discussion about the “principle of Individuation” shows how this question remains at the core of the ontological difference between Being and the beings, which already the Greeks apprehended when discussing the distinction between *parousia* and *chorismos*. Since then, it has been from “the kingdom of individuation” (ibid., 197), that the totality of beings, the being for each other, called world, has been conceived. For Fink, the principle of individuation, which introduces a certain view and experience of difference as separation, is at the basis of any view of the world as order and adornment. Since then, world has been understood from the things in the world, not so much, as Heidegger insisted, because things in the world have been comprehended as things present-at-hands, as *Vorhandenheit*, but because they are seen as separated from each other. Only from the principle of individuation can presence-at-hand, *Vorhandenheit* become the dominant [mis-]understanding of the sense of being. The view of things as individualized, as each one for itself, as separated, and in this sense distinct and differentiated from each other, corresponds to the experience of things appearing in the day of being [*Erscheinen der Dinge im Tag des Seins*] (ibid., 197). Fink turns our philosophical gaze towards the metaphysical privilege of daylight, to the dominance of the light of being as the soil of Western philosophy, which remains a metaphysics of light⁷ up to Heidegger’s attempt to overcome metaphysics with his notion of clearing [*Lichtung*]. From the perspective of the day of being, things appear as individualized, separated from each other as what is (or should be) in itself, for itself. In the light of

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7 See Fink’s discussions on “The principle of light at the beginning of metaphysics” in: Fink 1970, 7–43 and 316–327.

day, philosophy thinks in terms of *diairesis* and *symploke*, of differentiating and reuniting, analyzing and synthetizing, through a dialectics of identity and difference, the universal and the singular, of *hen kai pan*. In the frame of the day of being, the world emerges as the encompassing circle of all things, which is itself not a thing. Even when understood as the whole of all things, which is bigger than the sum of everything, the main trait of the way the world gives itself as world for philosophical diurnal comprehension has been the way of non-thingness. The world is a thing that cannot be known as things are known. Phenomenologically, the mode of donation of the world has been seized by Husserl as “horizon” and by the early Heidegger of *Being and Time* as context of meaning, constituting two modes of seizing the non-thingness of the world, its non-objectivity, from which both things and objects can be comprehended and projected *as* things and objects. The phenomenality of the world, its worldliness emerges then in the strange way the world is *not* the things in the world: it emerges as sliding away, concealing itself in the way things in the world appear as things. Heidegger’s insistence on the aletheiological sense of truth is the insistence on how the appearing as such is the double movement of coming from disappearance into appearance and at the same time disappearing in what appears. The world as the “horizon” and “context of meaning” of everything that appears is a non-thing in the aletheiological sense of appearing as world (that is as non-thing) disappearing in what appears as things in the world.

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Fink throws a critical view over these classical phenomenological conceptions. In *Welt und Endlichkeit* (Fink 1949), a series of lectures that can be read as a critical response to Heidegger’s lectures from 1929/30, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit* (Heidegger 1983), Fink develops his concept of “cosmological difference,” which orients his critique on Husserl’s and Heidegger’s respective phenomenologies of the world. He departs from critical remarks on the traditional metaphysical approach to the question of the world based on the ontology of things. He points out how the philosophical question of the world is disguised or rather forgotten in the way, according to which the world is understood mainly as the container of the manifold of things. Fink discusses more closely Kant’s and Heidegger’s conceptions of the world, which are for him the two philosophical

approaches that open and prepare the non-metaphysical understanding of the world. Fink departs from a double difference, the one between the gathering world (*das Binnenweltliche*) and the world as a whole, and the difference between earth and heaven inside the world (cf. Dai 2011, 241). As Cathrin Nielsen and Hans Reiner Sepp underlined, Fink considers that if the world is phenomenologically no-thing, sliding away and invisible for a neutral observer, and hermeneutically unsayable, this invisibility and unsayability is nonetheless itself phenomenal. Being in the world, human existence is itself the phenomenality of this retraction or withdrawal (*Entzug*) of the world in the world, being the symbol, “the visible medium, in which the invisibility of the world presents itself” (Nielsen and Sepp 2011, 241). According to Fink, in his antinomic conception of the world, Kant for the first time explicitly thinks “the world as the encompassing horizon of the beings and their interpretation” (Fink 1949, 376). Kant shows how every interpretation of the world, metaphysical or not, scientific or existential, and even the oblivion of the world, belongs to the world and thereby presents, even if in an invisible way, that the world is the dimension of the appearing as such and not only of the manifestation of things. What Fink demonstrated in his discussions of Kant is that the Copernican turn he accomplished when admitting that the world dwells in the essence of the finite subject rendered possible to apprehend in the world the appearing of the world as world. Fink reads Heidegger as the one who brought Kant’s insight to its extreme consequences. For Heidegger, the world is an existential structure of human presence, which, as being-in-the-world, as ecstasy is the structure of being-in-the world exposed to the world. According to Fink, Heidegger could not see that the world is not only the human constitution of being exposure and ecstasy; the ecstatic exposure of human existence is, indeed, only possible, because the uncanny, immensity, and openness of the world are already there. The cosmic experience of the world is what enables the existential comprehension of the world. But how the cosmic meaning of the world gives itself in the world for the world? Fink considers that the difference between worldly things and the worldliness of the world cannot account for it, insofar as it remains thing-oriented. A concept such as “negative cosmology” can only think the non-thingness of the world (Fink 2016, 387) and, therefore, remains a metaphysical thought of the world.

Kant opened a path towards a *via positiva* to grasp the cosmic sense of the world with his antinomies. Heidegger is the decisive thinker with whom Fink dialogues since he has connected the question of the world to the relation between being and nothingness. The philosophical task Fink assumes to pursue is to think the world as the emergence of being itself (ibid., 396). Thus, from the Aristotelian interpretation of becoming to Nietzsche's, what remains being thought is rather the being becoming (*seiendes Werden*). Moreover, as Fink insists, it does not make any deep difference to speak about substance or about the event as prototype of beings (ibid.). The becoming of the world is the unsayable appearing of being, of the "there is," which is a space that gives space, a time that lets time temporalize, and a letting of appearing to appear as such (Fink 2016, 398). In its cosmic sense, the world is for Fink the play of the mixture of being and nothingness, the beating of the open, the "between" of earth and sky (ibid., 399). Rather than the question about non-thingness, the cosmic sense of the world renders "visible" the invisibility in its proper invisibility, the withdrawal appearing as withdrawal and not merely from what withdraws. The cosmic sense of the world gives itself when not giving itself, withdrawing itself when letting this withdrawal appear. In this sense the world—cosmologically understood—is a "relucence" [*Rückschein*] (Nielsen and Sepp 2011, 11). Decisive in Fink's cosmological approach to the world question is the non-formal way he thinks the withdrawal. The withdrawal emerges as the counterweight of the historically illuminated world, as the nocturnal side of the world (see Vetter 2011).

Fink seeks a non-metaphysical interpretation of the world. The cosmological "turn" he inaugurates in phenomenology introduces the distinction between cosmos and world, which he calls the cosmological difference. It no longer designates the metaphysical difference between being and not-being, nor the ontological difference between Being and beings, nor the phenomenological difference between appearing as such and the appearances, as proposed by his friend Jan Patočka, but the cosmological difference between cosmos and world, the open immensity of the world and the world as relatedness of every being. Fink considers that the phenomenological turn, in which being is apprehended as appearing, remains prisoner of the metaphysics of light that have been orienting the whole history of western philosophy. The phenomenological

turn of the sense of being into the sense of appearing is for him not phenomenological enough. What is lacking is not only the perspective of the night of Being, the nocturnal view of Being, but also the enigmatic perspective of the *day and night of being*. Since ancient philosophic views, metaphysics has to do with the difference between being and non-being, between the visible and the invisible; Heidegger claimed that this is only the first aspect, since metaphysics has rather to do with the difference between Being and the beings, and therefore with the determination of the meaning of Being as *Vorhandenheit*, presence-at-hand, as substance and subjectivity. For Fink, all these views are still views from the perspective of daylight, the light of individuation, the light of distinctions and differences, which is the light of separateness. What this light builds is the perspective of the self, self-identity, and essence, that is, differences seized from the diurnal viewpoint of the universal. From the diurnal perspective, every attempt to think community remains captivated by the principle of individuation, understanding community and coexistence, the fundament of togetherness as connectedness of separated individuals, “that elevate themselves up to the ether of the ‘universal’” (Fink 1987, 199). Thereby, it becomes impossible to seize togetherness and belonging as constitutive to what is called the individual; each one being as much as the eachness of each one is seized from its separateness. Fink’s question is, however, if there is “in human landscape” closed in the notion of “bond” another archaic community that does not arise from the idea of freedom, which since a long time has remained tied to the principle of individuation. For him, only a view, meaning, a thinking capable to think from the day *and* night of Being is capable to answer this question. Only from the viewpoint of the night of being and how day and night belong together, it becomes possible to discover the *cosmic sense* of the world, which diverges from its existential metaphysical meaning. Thus, if there is something that metaphysics, philosophy, and even phenomenology still cannot think, it is the night of Being and the way the day belongs to the night. For metaphysics, both the philosophical and the phenomenological, the night remains a pre-day, and darkness “an unclear prefiguration of clarity” (ibid., 203).

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It is from the experience of thinking from the night of being and thereby apprehending the belonging together of day *and* night, which lies at the core

of Fink's cosmic sense of the world, that we can understand, in what sense human togetherness, human community can be seized beyond the principle of individuation and separateness, and thereby no longer confused with whatsoever meaning of "trans-individuality." With other words: from the nocturnal light, in which the belonging together of the day and night of being emerges, it becomes possible to think being-together beyond the dialectics of universal and singular, general and particular, and to discover another meaning of the singular. The realm of the night exposes the limit of clarity and hence of philosophical commitment to elucidation. In the night, all cows are black, things lose their contours, the gaze becomes blind, differences turn into undifferentiation; the night is the realm of closed eyes, either as sleep or as abandonment. The night imposes a mysterious loss of distance, a gain of abyssal proximity, which explains that in the night one enters the realm of touching, and the other way around. In the dark, in which nothing can be seen, touching becomes the main sense, acquiring the privilege of emerging as the sense of senses, recalling Aristotle's doctrine of the senses. It is, indeed, when discussing sleep, wakefulness, and touching in the seminar about Heraclitus that Fink holds together with Heidegger that a profound discussion about the nocturnal light of being and the belonging together of day and night can be found. Fink insists, here, on the difference between seeing and touching. Seeing is the sense, which presupposes distance and daylight and from which a relation between the perceiver and the perceived things is established, a relation marked by distance [*Abständigkeit*] and remoteness [*Ferne*] (see Heidegger and Fink 1970, 224f.) It is from the clarity of this distance that the manifold of things, *ta polla*, appears. "This distant remoteness is a fundamental way of understanding."⁸ In opposition to the diurnal vision's way of understanding, there is touching, which is constituted by immediate proximity [*unmittelbare Nähe*] and immediate touch [*unmittelbares Anrühren*] (ibid.). Touching is a way of understanding, which is fundamentally other than the visual one. Touching is the touch of the night of being in the day of being. The position of human existence in the cosmos is the one of closeness to light. Fink admits

8 "Diese abständige Ferne ist eine Grundweise des Verstehens." (Fink and Heidegger 1970, 226.)

that, differently from all other living beings, the human way of existence is “light-close,” “*lichtnah*” (ibid., 230), and as such a tendency to wisdom, *sophon*, to an interpretation of things in their essence, a wisdom that carries in itself the risk of seeing things neglecting to look at the clarity [*Helle*] of the light, from which a human understands. In clarity, one never sees only one thing. One sees many and the manifold, one sees each thing delimited against others and all others things; one sees the similar and the unsimilar. At stake is an articulated understanding [*artikuliertes Verstehen*]. Nonetheless, it is very rare that the gaze gazes the light, which enables the gaze. Moreover, as Fink remarks, there is a sort of dark and non-articulated understanding, a kind of “nocturnal touching [*nächtliches Anrühren*]” (ibid., 231) that shows how much the human existence is not only a being of lucidity [*gelichtetes Wesen*], but also a being of nature, obscurely immersed in nature. This obscure immersion in nature is what the lightless light of the night brings to “clarity” in the experience of touching. Moreover, it does so by letting appear how the night is another way of understanding, “a dark understanding [*dunkles Verstehen*],” which presupposes an “ontic proximity,” a proximity that appears most clearly in how the awakened one touches the sleeping and the sleeping the dead. “[T]he sleeping and the dead are figures that show the belonging of the human beings to living and dead nature” (ibid.), says Fink.

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The concept of “ontic proximity” is for Heidegger a central point of divergence with Fink. He considers it “difficult,” since there is also an ontic proximity between a glass and the book (ibid., 232). For Fink, this proximity is however only spatial and not at all ontic, that is, a proximity in the way being is. This discussion refers to a passage from Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, which Fink meditates upon throughout his thinking life, namely that Dasein is closest to us ontically, since we are it itself, but nonetheless, and maybe because of that, is the farthest ontologically.⁹ The point is not the mere ontological distance of Dasein to “us,” the way Dasein is not only close or the closest, but the way we are Dasein—“je”—each time—itself. To Heidegger’s

9 “Das Dasein ist zwar ontisch nicht nur nahe oder gar das nächste – wir sind es sogar je selbst. Trotzdem oder gerade deshalb ist es ontologisch das Fernste.” (Heidegger 1986, 15.)

question of how Fink understands “ontic proximity,” Fink answers the following:

The ancients knew two principles of understanding: like cognized through like and unlike cognized through unlike. A human is distinguished from all of what is. Nevertheless, that does not preclude him from understanding and determining all the rest of what is in its being. Here the principle functions that unlike is cognized by unlike. But in so far as a human is a living being, he also has still another character of being with which he reaches into the nightly ground. He has the double character: on the one hand, he is the one who places himself in the clearing, on the other, he is the one who is tied to the underground of all clearing. (Heidegger and Fink 1970, 232; English translation: Heidegger and Fink 1979, 145.)

200 By ontic proximity, Fink means the being touched by the night of Being precisely in human daylight self-understanding of him/herself in the understanding of everything that he/she is not. After listening to Fink’s answer, Heidegger observes that this meaning of ontic proximity can then only be understood by the phenomenon of the body: “This would become intelligible first of all through the phenomenon of the body.” (Ibid.) To which Fink adds, “as, for example, in the understanding of Eros” (ibid.). Fundamental for understanding the way human existence is not only self-understanding by the light of being, but also, and perhaps even more so, a way of understanding through the night of being, an understanding impossible to be understood by diurnal perspective, which not only the body, but above all the erotic body and its touching renders present as nightly ground of the world. Recalling Zarathustra’s words: “Body am I entirely, and nothing else” [*Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und nichts außerdem*], Fink claims that “through the body and the senses a human is nigh to earth” (ibid.). The erotic body shows not only the touch of the night of being in human existence, but the way the day and the night of being touch each other in the way human existence understands itself as separated from every other existence. Human existence exposes the enigmatic belonging together of two opposing principles of understanding:

the one, by which the like is cognized by the like, and the one, by which the unlike is cognized by the unlike. Indeed, human existence is this doubleness. Understanding itself as separated by everything that the human understands, the human mysteriously shows how he/she is not separated from everything that he/she is not. “Human lack of affinity with other entities belongs together with the ontological understanding of his manner of being.” (Ibid.) How can we understand this? In the sense that the lack of affinity, the separateness, through which human existence understands and apprehends him/herself, a sense, which brings the presence of light, already shows, in this very lack, the non-separateness from the realm of the undifferentiated, from the “nightly ground,” which is the realm of the cognition of the like by the like. Recognizing him/herself as being unlike every other way of existence, human existence has no means to recognize—through the means of daily recognition how he/she is like the nightly ground, the way of understanding the like by the like. The non-being able to recognize the separating way of diurnal recognition is already a non-cognoscible recognition of being touched by nocturnal (un)clarity. This is what touching the erotic body renders explicit, in its own mysterious and overwhelming way of understanding without understanding what daylight path of recognition calls the individual, the singular, the eachness of each one.

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Eros—the erotic touching body—shows that human existence is not, first and foremost, self-understanding, that is to say, understanding of oneself in contrast to other beings, but an abyssal relation to the day and night of being. “A human exists between light and night, and relates himself to night differently than to light and the open, which has the distinguishing, joining together structure.” (Ibid.) It is, indeed, from the viewpoint of the separateness of being that human existence understands itself as both separated from the beings and as the only one capable to bring beings together, through discursive reason—through *logos*. Eros—the erotic touching body—is, as Plato already said, rather a tension than a joining together. Eros, the first of all Gods, is a tensional force. Because Plato grounded philosophy upon the perspective of daylight, he could not show how Eros—the erotic touching body—is rather the experience of how day touches the night precisely when not being able to show the night of the day during the day. The erotic touching body does not touch “another body,” but the play of day and night, of nature and world in the

touched body. Erotic love is never the love of the “other,” but the dissolution of diurnal perspective of individuation, thus it is the cosmic force of the world—the play of world and nature—touching the erotic touching bodies.

202 In *Existenz und Coexistenz*, Fink tries to render clear how community can be understood beyond every thought of the individual and the singular, distinction and difference, which are thoughts that follow exclusively the diurnal principle of unlike cognized by unlike. It is clear that by bringing the experience of community, togetherness, and belonging to the mysterious “*und*,” “and” exposing itself in the dual way day *and* night are indissociable without mixing one in another Fink’s concept of community cannot be taken as fusion and fusional dissolution of the self. It is not trans-individual, neither in the sense of an empty formal rational universality nor in the sense of a fusional passionate self-dissolution. It is, indeed, neither individual nor common, when these notions are taken from the viewpoint of separations that can or should be brought together. Insofar as this perspective is the one, from which human existence understands itself in contrast to all other beings and the world is apprehended as non-thing, which exhibits its worldliness sliding away in the thinghood of things, every attempt to think community remains indebted to the diurnal principle of individuation. Fink’s attempt is to search a “pre-individual [*vor-individuell*]” (Fink 1987, 203) sense of community, beyond the dialectics of *diairesis* and *symploke*, separation and bond, which can only be achieved when considering community from the cosmologic difference, the way the world is immersed in nature when separating itself from nature. This concerns a way of thinking that is entirely non-dialectical, that experiences how being *is* itself non being itself, that experiences what I would propose to call the *Zwischendeutigkeit*, the tension-vocity rather than what Fink himself calls *Zweideutigkeit*, the ambiguity, and *das Widersprüchliche*, the contradictoriness of the world. The experiential index for such an experience is “the erotic light,” the chiaroscuro of the erotic touching body, in which the belonging together of day *and* night, of cosmos *and* the world touches the human touching. Thus, Eros, which arrives as a “*fremde Macht*,” an overwhelming foreign power, shows how the human is not merely a “self,” but at the same time also “sex”,¹⁰

10 There are interesting points of contact between Eugen Fink’s cosmological idea

Geschlecht, at the same time and at once “alone” and “connected to all,” both immortal and mortal, infinite and finite (Fink 1987, 205). Eros shows how human existence, this “cosmos-fragment” is precisely as finitude “life’s inner infinitude” (ibid., 203). The cosmologic difference invites to a non-differential understanding of difference, to the difficult experience of one being others, not as others or in contrast or similitude to others. It invites to the difficult thought of *sameotherness* and of tension-voicity, *Zwischendeutigkeit*, of the day and night of being, from which it becomes possible to maybe bring to failing words how we dwell at the same time homely and uncanny in the whole.¹¹ Fink’s attempt, particularly in both the lecture from 1955 entitled *Grundphänomene des menschlichen Daseins* as well as in *Existenz und Coexistenz*, is to develop the philosophical question about “human community” based on “cosmology” (Fink 1987, 286), which has to be understood as the cosmology of “cosmological difference.” It is upon this basis that he discusses two other fundamental experiences and concepts, the one of work [*Arbeit*] and dominance [*Herrschaft*], “the relations between hammer and sword,” as the cosmic relation of love and death (ibid.). Many questions and problems arise from his attempts. But the main philosophical contribution Fink achieves is to connect the philosophical question of community to a cosmological understanding of the world and thereby to open the path to a phenomenological cosmology, which searches “the nightly ground” of the play of world and nature in human existence.

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In 2019, Renaud Barbaras published an important work in this direction, entitled *L’Appartenance. Vers une cosmologie phénoménologique*, an extremely coherent, solid, and inspiring development of his own phenomenology. It is interesting to remark the closeness, but also the distance between Fink’s and Barbaras’s phenomenological cosmologies, which share not only the need to show the cosmic sense of the world and cosmological difference between beings and world, but also to center this cosmic sense in the bodily belonging, in the body as belonging. A dialogue between Fink’s and Barbaras’s phenomenological cosmologies should aim to do more than merely trying

and Jean-Luc Nancy’s thoughts on touching and “sexistence,” even if Fink remains in a traditional metaphysical frame when insisting in liberating Eros from animality and elevating it towards divinity.

11 “Wir wohnen heimatlich und fremd zugleich im Ganzen.” (Fink 1987, 278.)

to demonstrate either how Barbaras, despite not referring to Fink, elaborates the notions already presented by Fink or how one would have more “reason” to prefer one over the other. The task is to develop a thought of the world from the world to the world. In *L’Appartenance*, Barbaras does not engage with Fink’s cosmological phenomenology. But in a recent article, Barbaras (2022) discusses his own views on Fink’s cosmological thought, which for him remains still too close and indebted to Heidegger’s concept of the world. A problematic issue in Heidegger’s thought relies, according to Barbaras, upon how the distinction between Dasein, the way of being proper to the human, and the other beings spreads over the very mode each being is itself, generating a kind of rupture between world and being. As Barbaras explains: for Fink, the world is world when it produces itself as the individuation of whatsoever being, but it must be understood as being when it gives itself to comprehension, glittering in us. Is the world what reigns over each being or what gives itself to us for comprehension? Or asked otherwise: is phenomenality a work of the world or a work of the subject? Barbaras considers that, for Fink, the only way to respond to this question is admitting two senses of appearing: an anonymous appearing that should be opposed to the appearing as such, namely, the appearing to a subject or a consciousness. World as appearing means, hence, the appearing of all things—the process of individuation—in the common presence and the appearing to a subject. Barbaras reads in Fink’s cosmology the reiteration of the distinction between the human mode of insertion in the world and the mode of insertion of everything else that exists in the world. For Barbaras, the dilemma that Fink’s cosmological phenomenology cannot account for is why the belonging to the world of beings differs from the belonging to the world of human existence qua finitude. Barbaras considers that Patočka’s thoughts on the movements of existence point to a path of thought that is more satisfying than Fink’s. Upon the basis of these thoughts by Patočka, it is possible to overcome the phenomenological distinction between the appearing as such and the appearing of individuated things, thinking rather the way a belonging gives itself as belonging: belonging is in the world, of the world, to the world. Barbaras proposes rather a phenomenological cosmology, which is in fact a phenomenology of the belonging (*appurtenance*), which reveals the “topophany” of a cosmic belonging, the articulation of ground, site, and place.

A central thesis is that, in its cosmic meaning, the world does not originate the differentiated beings in the sense that it would precede them, but the world—the cosmos—is nothing but what it gives place to, the world makes itself be by making the beings be. Eternal is the very deflagration of beings, the plural “*éclats*” of the beings, a movement at the core of the origin that renders each singular existence a constant birth. In this sense, the presence of the world in the beings is as such the presence of the world to the beings—and not only to the subject of a consciousness of the world.

Barbaras’s readings of Fink could, of course, be further discussed and developed.¹² An important issue to be addressed for the purpose of developing philosophically-phenomenologically the question of cosmology and thereby a critique of the phenomenological concept of the world is the need to bring to language the “singular” qua “ipseity” as belonging (Barbaras 2022, 12), to critically scrutinize the metaphysical problem of individuation, to ground the phenomenological sense of being no longer as appearing, but as belonging, and hence beyond the dialectical difference between individual and common or universal; and furthermore, to give more clarity to the metaphysical belonging of love and death, of immortality and mortality, of infinitude and finitude, which for Fink remains crucial, whereas for Barbaras rather shows the need to overcome the “ontology of death” and the privilege of temporality at the basis of every dualism and dialectics operating in western metaphysics. Accordingly, to approach the question of cosmology as belonging to the question of coexistence and being-with can in this direction shed new lights onto the endeavor to reflect further upon the cosmological sense of the world, for the urgent task to think the belonging together of world and nature in a world empty of world.

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12 For a very good discussion of Fink’s and Barbaras’s cosmological phenomenologies, see, in this volume, Karel Novotný: “L’espace et le corps vécus du point de vue cosmologique. Eugen Fink et Renaud Barbaras.”

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