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PHENOMENOLOGICAL METAPHYSICS OF EVENTS*

Abstract: This paper advances a realist interpretation of the late Heidegger's philosophy of being as event. My central claim is that Heidegger's understanding of the event of openness undergoes a decisive transformation in the 1930s and thereafter: What was originally conceived as an existential structure of *Dasein* (the event of transcendence) becomes progressively de-anthropocentrized. The event of unconcealment is no longer confined to human existence but is instead approached as a universal, even cosmological, occurrence — something that takes place with beings themselves, independently of their relation to human beings. In this respect, I argue, Heidegger's discourse of the event can be understood as a distinctive form of metaphysics: not a metaphysics of presence, but a metaphysics of the event.

While this event-metaphysics already carries a realist inclination, it remains weakened in Heidegger by his continuing insistence on the indispensability of *Dasein* for the event. Drawing on Eugen Fink's cosmological reworking of Heidegger's later thought, I argue that this commitment is not necessary and that Heidegger's conception of the event can instead be interpreted in a radically realist manner. In Fink's cosmological perspective, the event assumes the character of a fully subject-independent occurrence.

Building on these developments, I propose a systematic generalization that, I argue, possesses systematic significance in its own right and can be pursued independently of Heideggerian or phenomenological scholarship. I conclude by sketching two possible directions for such a metaphysics: A speculative, monistic conception of the event as singular reality, and an empiricist conception of reality as a plurality of finite events of appearing. Both approaches, I contend, provide resources for integrating phenomenological insights into ongoing debates in contemporary theoretical philosophy.

Keywords: *Heidegger, Fink, phenomenological metaphysics, metaphysics of events, phenomenological realism*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the *event* occupies a special place in twentieth-century European philosophy. A number of influential thinkers have constructed their original philosophical projects around this notion, employing it as a way of formulating alternatives to the traditions they sought to critique. Thus, for Alain Badiou, the event designates a rupture in ontology that opens the space for new regimes of truth;¹ for Gilles Deleuze, it signifies the pure, immanent becoming that underlies his critique of representational thinking.² For Heidegger, finally, the event assumes a decisive role in the project of articulating a non-metaphysical mode of thought.³ Within post-Heideggerian phenomenology, the notion of the event comes to mark the essence of the phenomenon once phenomenology is reconceived as the overcoming of traditional onto-theology.⁴

This singular, almost exclusive status makes it difficult to undertake a systematic investigation of the category of the event without at the same time restricting it to a particular author and to the specific problems that orient his thought. And yet such an investigation seems indispensable from the perspective of theoretical philosophy. In particular, any systematic philosophical account of the event is required to clarify the status of the event itself, and it must do so by responding to questions such as: Is the event to be regarded primarily as a concept of metaphysics, of ethics, of the philosophy of history, or of theology? Is it an essentially anthropological concept, one that describes human existence and experience, or can one speak of events independently of human beings altogether? Do events occur in nature, or only within the horizon of human practice? What, finally, is the ontological status of events themselves? And what contribution do the approaches of the major authors of so-called “continental philosophy” — each in their own way elaborating discourses of the event — make to the broader project of a systematic philosophy of the event?

The aim of this paper is to prepare the ground for such a systematic study by offering a reinterpretation, articulated in a more neutral and systematic vocabulary, of one of the most influential philosophies of the event in the twentieth century — a philosophy that is, however, at the same time particularly resistant to attempts at such neutral interpretation: Namely, the later Heidegger’s philosophy of being as event. More precisely, I will address a tension characteristic of Heidegger’s later thought, a

¹ See Alain Badiou, *L’être et l’événement* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1988), 199 ff.

² See Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1969), 9 ff., 122 ff.

³ See, primarily, Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2007), 24 ff.

⁴ See, for example, Yusuke Ikeda, “L’événementialité du phénomène selon ‘Neue Phänomenologie in Frankreich’,” *Revue Internationale Michel Henry* 6 (2015): 177–202.

tension that can be described as oscillating between a *transcendentalist* — or, more broadly, *correlationist* — account of the event, and a *human-independent, realist* or *cosmological* account. One could argue that this very tension marks the whole of Heidegger's late thinking of being. On the one hand, the turn toward the discourse of being as event is typically interpreted as an attempt to think being from a less anthropocentric perspective — that is, to approach being as the truth of being itself rather than as the sense of being in relation to *Dasein*.⁵ On the other hand, even in his later writings Heidegger repeatedly insists upon the indispensable role of the human being in the occurrence of being which, as Heidegger formulates it, “needs humans in order to occur essentially”.⁶ The de-anthropocentrization of Heidegger's discourse of being as event therefore proceeds in a peculiar and paradoxical way: It cannot culminate in a complete autonomization of the event with respect to the human, but must continually restrain itself and acknowledge that the event — although not constituted or projected by the human — nonetheless remains dependent upon it.

This tension has given rise to ongoing discussion in the secondary literature. The majority of commentators argue that the most faithful Heideggerian interpretation should preserve the circular, correlative structure of the event, without reducing it either to being (*Sein*) on its own or to human being (*Dasein*).⁷ Yet outside the strict confines of Heidegger scholarship, the problem takes on a somewhat different form. For philosophers who seek to develop a philosophy of the event on the basis of Heidegger's conception, but without being strictly bound by it, a natural question arises: Can the framework of the event be applied to a world without human beings? For instance, can the concept of the event serve as a framework for thematizing nature, or is it necessarily limited to the lifeworld of human existence? While the prevailing tendency is toward the latter view — treating the event as a purely correlative structure, as the occurrence of sense that is inconceivable apart from the human⁸ — there also exist a smaller number of readings that move in a more realist direction.⁹

⁵ See Martin Heidegger, *Seminare* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1986), 344 ff.

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 198.

⁷ For a canonical example of an orthodox interpretation of Heidegger's problematic of the event, see Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Wege ins Ereignis: Zu Heideggers “Beiträge zur Philosophie”* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994).

⁸ See, for example, Thomas Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: a Paradigm Shift* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 234 ff.; and Alexander Schnell, “*Ereignis et Da-sein* dans les *Beiträge zur Philosophie*,” in *Lire les Beiträage zur Philosophie de Heidegger*, edited by Alexander Schnell (Paris: Hermann, 2017), 159–178.

⁹ Prominent examples of realist interpretations of Heidegger's conception of the event in contemporary scholarly literature include James Bahoh, *Heidegger's Ontology of Events* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh

This paper aligns itself with those latter approaches. Its aim is to explore the possibility of a deliberately realist, metaphysical interpretation of Heidegger's discourse of the event. I ground this reading in certain motives already present in Heidegger's own being-historical treatises, motives which, as I will argue, can be understood in a realist sense, and in the radicalization of these very motives in Eugen Fink's cosmological account of the event. On this basis, I argue that the late Heidegger's philosophy of being as event gives rise to what may be called a *realist event-metaphysics* — not in Heidegger's critical sense of “metaphysics” as onto-theology,¹⁰ but rather in the more classical and, so to speak, more neutral sense of a discourse of what there is. Such a metaphysics, I suggest, represents a systematic philosophical project in its own right, one that therefore should not be confined exclusively to the limits of Heidegger scholarship. This metaphysics, as I will attempt to show, should be understood as an essentially *phenomenological* metaphysics, precisely because the event in Heidegger is intrinsically related to the problematic of phenomenality, or the question of appearing as such.

My goal in this paper will not be, however, to provide a full and systematic outline of this possible metaphysics, which would in any case exceed the limits of a single study, but rather to demonstrate that the event-problematics of the later Heidegger at least in principle allows for such a metaphysical interpretation. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the purpose of this paper is not to deliver a historically or textually faithful reconstruction of Heidegger's thought in all its details. Instead, my approach will be deliberately interpretative, attempting to read Heidegger's texts not only immanently, as is usually the rule in the history of philosophy, but in a more general and openly systematic perspective. For this reason, I will deliberately adopt what can be called a heterodox strategy. This means that I will not hesitate to employ a vocabulary that is overtly non-Heideggerian — speaking, for instance, of realist metaphysics, or of the “mode of being of being” (*Seinsart des Seins*), and so forth. Such expressions, while foreign to Heidegger's own formulations, are nonetheless, I contend, helpful in clarifying what is at stake when one attempts to approach his philosophy in a more explicitly systematic way.

The paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, I argue that eventfulness can be understood as a “mode of being of being” (*Seinsart des Seins*) for Heidegger, and I reconstruct the existential account of the event in his early thought. In the second section, I examine the metaphysical and realist motives that emerge in Heidegger's later event-thinking. The third section is devoted to the

University Press, 2020), and Richard Capobianco, *Heidegger's Way of Being* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

¹⁰ See Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2006), 63 ff.

radicalization of these motives in Eugen Fink's cosmological reworking of Heidegger's problematic. Finally, in the concluding fourth section, I outline a project of a phenomenological metaphysics of events, which can be understood as a systematic generalization of both Heidegger's and Fink's philosophies of the event.

2. EXISTENTIAL CONCEPTION OF THE EVENT IN EARLY HEIDEGGER

In Heidegger's writings, two key terms carry an "eventful" connotation and can, at least in principle, be translated into English as *event*: *Ereignis* and *Geschehen*. Heidegger himself repeatedly insists that *Ereignis* should not be understood in its ordinary German sense of "event" or "happening", but rather from its etymological root *-eigen*, corresponding to the English root "proper",¹¹ so that *Ereignis* may be rendered as "appropriation" or "enowning".¹² Nevertheless, most contemporary English translations of Heidegger's works simply render *Ereignis* as "event".¹³ By contrast, the term *Geschehen* — which Heidegger also employs frequently, though in a less systematic and thematic manner — corresponds more closely to the English word "occurrence". A crucial feature of Heidegger's philosophy of the event, as will become clear in what follows, is that these two terms — *Ereignis* (as another name for Heidegger's being¹⁴) and *Geschehen* — are intrinsically interrelated and, so to speak, mutually descriptive. *Ereignis*, as appropriation, is inherently eventful — that is, it is something that occurs — and conversely, the only genuine occurrence is that of *Ereignis*, of appropriation itself. In this paper, however, I will use the term *event* primarily to designate what Heidegger calls *Geschehen* — specifically, *Seinsgeschehen* — rather than *Ereignis*. As for the latter term, I will not attempt a systematic interpretation here, but will take it as more or less synonymous with the concept of being in Heidegger's later thought — what he himself refers to as *beyng* (*Seyn*).¹⁵

What exactly does *Geschehen* mean in Heidegger? Speaking in very general terms, it can be understood as the way in which there is being (*Sein*), or, more provocatively, as the "way of being of being" (*Seinsweise des Seins*).¹⁶ If one recalls that one of the central features of Heidegger's concept of "being" is the openness or

¹¹ See, for example, Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, 45; and Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 26. See also Sheehan, *Making Sense of Heidegger: a Paradigm Shift*, 232–238.

¹² For more on this issue, see Bahoh, *Heidegger's Ontology of Events*, 10 f.

¹³ See *ibid.*

¹⁴ See Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 26.

¹⁵ See Martin Heidegger, *Das Ereignis* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), 16.

¹⁶ The formula "*Sein des Seins*", however non-Heideggerian it may sound, appears in Heidegger himself; see Heidegger, *Seminare*, 373.

unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*) of beings,¹⁷ then *Geschehen*, or event, designates the manner in which such unconcealment is, or takes place.

Already in his early writings Heidegger describes the openness of beings as an event (*Geschehen*). Thus, for example, in *On the Essence of Ground*, Heidegger argues that the openness of beings — referred to in this text as “entry into world” — “is something what ‘happens’ (*geschieht*) ‘with’ beings.”¹⁸ What Heidegger understands by world here is not the physical world as the sum of material things in space and time, but rather the “medium” or “field” of the appearance of beings.¹⁹ Yet “appearance” here must be understood from an essentially existential standpoint, namely, as the *accessibility* of beings for the human being, or *Dasein*. This accessibility is taken by Heidegger as something inherent to human existence, such that he determines this existence as *being-in-the-world*.²⁰ That is, human being exists in such a way that other beings are disclosed to it by virtue of the very essence of its existence. For that reason, the world as a field of appearance is understood by Heidegger as an existential of *Dasein* — that is, as a determination of its existence.²¹

Therefore, one can argue, the openness is for the early Heidegger not an inherent feature of beings as beings, but exists — or rather, occurs — only to the extent that the human being exists. The latter constitutes the openness in what Heidegger calls *transcendence*.²² And since openness as world is dependent on the existence of the human being, the occurrence of openness is likewise grounded in existence. For that reason, eventfulness as the way of being of openness is in effect understood not so much as a feature of openness itself but as a feature of existence: It is existence that is, properly speaking, eventful, and only through its eventfulness does openness also take on an eventful character.

Therefore, one can argue, in this early conception the occurrence of openness is identified directly with the fact of the existence of the human being, or *Dasein*: “such occurrence [that is, occurrence of the openness of beings – A.S.] is the existing of *Dasein*, which as existing transcends [...] And only if [...] transcendence occurs, i.e., only if beings having the character of being-in-the-world irrupt into beings, is there the possibility of beings manifesting themselves.”²³ That is, beings are open because there is a human being who understands them as beings. In other words, the event in which beings are disclosed as such is nothing other than

¹⁷ See Heidegger, *Das Ereignis*, 35.

¹⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 123.

¹⁹ See Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 120 f.

²⁰ See Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1967), 52 ff.

²¹ See *ibid.*, 64.

²² See Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 106 ff.

²³ *Ibid.*, 123.

the very event of human existence: “with the fact of Da-sein, such surpassing [that is, realization of transcendence – A.S.] is there.”²⁴

3. REALIST AND METAPHYSICAL MOTIVES IN THE EVENT-THINKING OF LATER HEIDEGGER

The core argument of this paper is that Heidegger’s understanding of the event of openness — the fact that beings are revealed as beings — changes decisively in the second phase of his thought. More precisely, I propose to interpret his development in the 1930s and thereafter as a *de-anthropocentrization* of his earlier existential conception of the event, such that the event of openness — now thematically designated by Heidegger as *unconcealment* — becomes detached from human existence. Heidegger still describes the realization of unconcealment as an event; however, this event is no longer identified with the existence of a particular *Dasein*. In other words, unconcealment is no longer conceived as something that occurs within an individual existence but rather as something that occurs *with beings themselves*. It is no longer primarily understood as the accessibility of beings to human existence but as the unconcealment of beings themselves, immanent to their very being.²⁵ That is, beings are disclosed not insofar as they are perceived by human beings but insofar as they exist as beings. Accordingly, the event of unconcealment does not consist in the appearance of beings to a particular human being, but, to use Heidegger’s own formulation, in the fact that there are “beings at all, and not rather Nothing”.²⁶ The event thus takes on a more “*universal*” — one might even say *cosmological* — meaning.

The event in this universal or cosmological sense still requires human participation, but such participation is itself radically reinterpreted. It is no longer conceived as the constitution of a sphere of accessibility of beings for the human being (what the early Heidegger referred to as world), but rather as an “accomplishment” of the occurrence of being which, as Heidegger explicitly emphasizes, is already in some sense there prior to the activity of the human being.²⁷ With respect to the existential conception of the event of transcendence in the early Heidegger, one could therefore argue that in his later thought he comes to regard this event not as something occurring within each individual existence but as an over-individual event encompassing somehow *all* individual existences. The reality of this event is no longer restricted to the reality of an individual existence, but it remains one and the same for all its participants. The

²⁴ Ibid., 109.

²⁵ See Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 112.

²⁶ Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 289.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, 239.

universality of this event finds one of its clearest expressions in Heidegger's conception of the History of being (*Seinsgeschichte*), where he describes singular epochal events of unconcealment of beings as a whole.²⁸ These events do not depend on individual existence but are the same for all human beings who participate in them.

Another domain where this de-subjectivization, or de-anthropocentrization, of the event becomes particularly evident is Heidegger's account of the Fourfold (*Geviert*). Here, the unconcealment of an individual thing is described as the gathering of four elements — earth, sky, mortals, and divinities. Each thing appears as what it is only insofar as it “gathers to itself in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals”.²⁹ In this account, unconcealment is no longer primarily approached from the perspective of human beings but from that of the Fourfold itself: The decisive point is not that things appear to humans, but that in the appearance of things the interplay of these four principles is enacted.

In this sense, one can argue that the focus shifts: From openness as existentially tied to the human being in the early Heidegger, to the occurrence of openness — now described as unconcealment — as such in the later Heidegger. For this reason, the central thesis of Heidegger's “being-historical thinking (*seinsgeschichtliches Denken*)”,³⁰ as he names his later philosophy in distinction from classical metaphysics, consists in asserting the reality of the event of unconcealment as *the only true reality*.³¹ He describes this as the “essential occurrence of beyng [*Wesung des Seyns*]”: “The full essential occurrence of beyng in the truth of the event allows the recognition that beyng and only beyng is and that beings are not.”³²

This thesis — what Heidegger himself calls “the Be-ing-Historical ‘Saying’”³³ — takes the form of a classical metaphysical thesis, insofar as it *posits* something as real, as ‘that which is.’ Yet with respect to its content it is explicitly non-metaphysical, since what is posited here is not a being, but the occurrence of the unconcealment of beings, which Heidegger repeatedly stresses is radically distinct from beings. Traditionally, in describing the relation between being as unconcealment and beings as that which is unconcealed, Heidegger argues that beings (*Seiende*) are what there is, whereas being

²⁸ See Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens*, 13 f.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 151.

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Mindfulness* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 51.

³¹ The use of the notion ‘reality’ for the designation of Heideggerian being may seem problematic because of its origin in Aristotelian and medieval metaphysics that Heidegger seeks to overcome. Here, however, this notion is used deliberately with the aim to highlight the paradoxical character of Heidegger's thesis that *being itself is* — see Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event*, 372. If one understands ‘reality’ as a general designation of ‘that which is’, then Heidegger's thesis can be seen as positing being as the only true reality.

³² Ibid.

³³ Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, 63.

(*Sein*) is not — otherwise, it would not be different from beings. In this fragment Heidegger, however, proceeds in a radically different way: He ascribes reality not to beings but to being itself. One could therefore argue that this thesis indeed constitutes a kind of metaphysical gesture, but of a very peculiar kind — not as a metaphysics of beings, which Heidegger seeks to overcome, but as a metaphysics of the event which should be distinguished from beings. This provides an important insight into the form of Heidegger's overcoming of metaphysics. Unlike deconstruction, where the aim is to avoid the metaphysical gesture of metaphysical positing altogether, or transcendental philosophy, which refrains from metaphysical positing and instead explicates conditions of its possibility, Heidegger's critique of metaphysics retains the gesture of positing but radically shifts its object: What is posited as real is not beings but the event of their unconcealment. This shift allows us to specify more precisely the systematic status of the notion of being (*Sein*) in Heidegger. Being is not the foundation of beings, nor a transcendental condition of their accessibility; it is what there is, where "is" must itself be understood not in terms of presence but in terms of event.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that in saying that being is and beings are not, Heidegger is not simply negating the reality of beings, nor is he suggesting that they are in some way non-real, illusory, or merely apparent. Rather, his thesis must be understood as a rejection not of the factual reality of beings but of their metaphysical autonomy, their supposed "self-sufficiency" as independent entities. In other words, when Heidegger claims that only being is while beings are not, what he is asserting is that beings are always already implicated in, or "involved" with, something that is not itself a being. That is, beings do not stand alone as self-grounding presences; they are instead to be regarded as "moments" of a more encompassing and more originary occurrence which cannot be adequately described in terms of beings or in terms of presence. This more complex picture includes both beings and that which is not a being, which Heidegger conceives as the event of unconcealment of beings. In this regard, the thesis that only being (i.e., only unconcealment of beings) is, while beings are not, entails that beings should be regarded not autonomously, but as moments of the event of their unconcealment. In this context, as Heidegger argues, the proposition "beings are" should be read as "*beings belong within the essential occurrence of beyng (Seyn)*".³⁴

Hence, one can see that the problematic of the eventfulness of openness in the later Heidegger differs significantly from the earlier existential conception. One could say that eventfulness is no longer understood primarily as a feature of human existence but rather as a feature of openness itself. In other words, the relation between eventful openness and existence is now in effect reversed: While in the early

³⁴ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event*, 212.

Heidegger both eventfulness and openness were interpreted in terms of existence — that is, as features of the existence of *Dasein*, which is both eventful and transcendent — in the later Heidegger the occurrence of the openness of beings is no longer restricted to the existence of an individual human being, but instead precedes it. In this sense, one could argue that Heidegger's later understanding of the eventfulness of the openness of beings acquires a much more explicitly metaphysical character. Eventfulness is now taken as a determination of the very way of being of openness itself — of how openness 'is' — and not as a determination of human existence. The eventful openness of beings, accordingly, should be understood as a form of 'reality', which must be distinguished from the reality of beings. From this perspective, the core gesture of the later Heidegger can be described as an expansion of the very scope of the notion of 'reality': Reality is no longer restricted to beings but is extended to include the non-being event of the unconcealment of beings. This entails a radical denial of the autonomy of beings: Beings, including the human being, are to be understood as moments or parts of the event of their unconcealment.

This gesture may justifiably be described as metaphysical, since it consists in specifying the notion of reality which is reinterpreted in an eventful sense. Moreover, since this event now possesses a certain autonomy with respect to individual human existence, one can say that Heidegger's later thought bears a certain realist bias. This bias, however, is weakened in Heidegger himself by his continued insistence on the dependence of the event on the human being.

Such dependence, however, does not seem to be necessarily implied by the very notion of eventful openness. Rather, it appears to have been retained by Heidegger as a residue of his earlier existential conception of openness. From a broader systematic perspective, openness as such — understood as the unconcealment of beings themselves, and not as the accessibility of beings for human perception — does not in principle need to be conceptualized as human-dependent. In this regard, before moving to a systematic generalization of the metaphysical implications of Heidegger's event-thinking, it is instructive to turn to the example of Eugen Fink's cosmological reworking of the problem of the event. His philosophy can indeed be seen as a radicalization of the metaphysical and realist motives already present in Heidegger's later thought, and for precisely this reason Fink proves particularly important for the problematic pursued in the present paper.

4. FINK AND THE RADICAL DE-SUBJECTIVIZATION OF PHENOMENALITY

The central topic of Eugen Fink's philosophical project, developed from the late 1940s onward, is the problem of the world understood as a non-ontological totality of intraworldly beings — a totality that he seeks to conceptualize as irreducible to the

beings themselves. What is particularly important in the context of this paper is that, in order to elaborate such an original cosmological discourse, Fink appropriates Heidegger's notion of openness,³⁵ along with a number of related Heideggerian concepts — *Lichtung*,³⁶ *Zeit-Raum*³⁷ — and reinterprets them in a rigorously subject-independent, realist manner, while nevertheless retaining the radically eventful character that is already manifest in Heidegger's own usage.

Without delving into the detailed historical complexities of Fink's development, his approach can be outlined in broad strokes as follows. First, he introduces the notion of a *cosmological difference*,³⁸ which is meant to stand as an analogue to Heidegger's ontological difference. By *cosmological difference*, Fink understands the distinction between intrawordly beings, or things, on the one hand, and the world as the totality within which all particular beings exist, on the other. While all individual beings are essentially intrawordly — that is, they exist in the world — the world itself is not an individuated being or thing. Yet, Fink insists, the world is not a merely speculative abstraction: It is real, though its mode of reality differs essentially from that of intrawordly beings.

Secondly, Fink conceives of the world in a genuinely phenomenological — indeed, post-phenomenological — sense, since his account of phenomenality differs radically from the canonical correlationist accounts of Husserl and the early Heidegger. In this cosmological project, he undertakes to distinguish his notion of the world as a non-ontotheological totality of all that is from classical concepts of totality, such as the sum of beings, the aggregate of things, or an organized whole of parts.³⁹ For Fink, the world should not be regarded as a totality of presence but rather as a *totality of appearance* — as that in which the “coming-to-appearance (*Zum-Vorschein-kommen*)”⁴⁰ of things takes place.⁴¹ Things, accordingly, are essentially appearing things, phenomena: their being is not to be conceived as stable presence but as a movement in which they manifest themselves as what they are. In this regard, Fink argues that “self-showing belongs as an essential moment to the being of beings”.⁴²

At the same time, in sharp contrast to Heidegger, Fink insists explicitly on the subject-independence of the world as openness of beings. Whereas Heidegger —

³⁵ See Eugen Fink, *Zur ontologischen Frühgeschichte von Raum-Zeit-Bewegung* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1957), 171 ff.

³⁶ See *ibid.*, 191.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, 141.

³⁸ See Eugen Fink, *Welt und Endlichkeit* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990), 16 ff.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, 12 ff.

⁴⁰ Eugen Fink, *Sein, Wahrheit, Welt: Vor-Fragen zum Problem des Phänomen-Begriffs* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958), 112.

⁴¹ See Fink, *Zur ontologischen Frühgeschichte von Raum-Zeit-Bewegung*, 37.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 198.

despite his efforts at de-subjectivization — never completely abandons the idea that unconcealment requires the participation of human existence in order to occur, Fink maintains that the world, understood as the unconcealment of beings, both precedes and exceeds human being. To articulate this point, he distinguishes between an existential interpretation of openness, which confines its reality to that of the human being,⁴³ and a cosmological interpretation, which conceives openness as a fully human-independent occurrence.⁴⁴ The human being still participates in this occurrence, but this participation is no longer constitutive: Rather, human being *takes up* openness⁴⁵ which is always already there independently of human participation.

This explicitly realist interpretation of the openness of beings is inseparable from Fink's equally realist understanding of phenomenality. As was shown above, phenomenality is for Fink an inherent feature of things themselves: Each particular being, insofar as it is what it is,⁴⁶ is an appearing being, a phenomenon. And this is not because it appears to a subject, but because it appears *in the world*. The very act of appearing is in turn, in Fink's terms, nothing other than a "pure event".⁴⁷ Thus, the de-subjectivization of openness and of the appearance of beings entails for Fink also a *de-subjectivization of the event itself*. The event is no longer to be regarded as dependent on subjectivity but as a completely subject-independent feature of appearances as such.

In contrast to Heidegger — whose discourse of the event remains suspended between correlationist and realist tendencies — Fink advances toward a consistent cosmological interpretation of both event and openness. In this sense, his philosophy provides a crucial resource for the argument of the present paper: If Heidegger's later thought makes possible, but does not fully realize, a realist metaphysics of the event, then Fink carries out a decisive step toward its systematic articulation, detaching the eventful character of openness once and for all from its dependence on human existence. In the following, concluding section, I will briefly outline some perspectives for event-thinking that are opened up by these realist developments.

5. TOWARDS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL METAPHYSICS OF EVENTS

Having discussed the realist motives in the event-thinking of Heidegger and Fink, we can now return to the question posed in the introduction: How can these authors contribute to the broader problematic of the philosophy of the event?

⁴³ See Fink, *Welt und Endlichkeit*, 154.

⁴⁴ See *ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 183.

⁴⁶ See Fink, *Zur ontologischen Frühgeschichte von Raum-Zeit-Bewegung*, 98.

⁴⁷ Fink, *Sein, Wahrheit, Welt: Vor-Fragen zum Problem des Phänomen-Begriffs*, 129.

First, one can argue that in both thinkers we encounter an explicitly *metaphysical* conception of the event. This conception must be distinguished, on the one hand, from the classical metaphysics of presence and, on the other, from its *correlationist* critique in *transcendental phenomenology*, both Husserlian and post-Husserlian.⁴⁸ As has been shown, the event is not a thing or a being, not something that is present, but rather something that occurs. At the same time, the event is not understood as the transcendental ground of beings or of their experience. Its systematic role in Heidegger and Fink is not transcendental but metaphysical: The event is described as *what there is*, as the ultimate form of reality, of which the reality described by classical metaphysics — namely, the reality of beings — is only a particular moment.

This metaphysical conception of the event can, I suggest, be further developed in two distinct directions, which one might very roughly designate as *speculative* and *empiricist*.

From the speculative perspective, the realism of the event aligns naturally with a monistic tendency present in both Heidegger and Fink. In their writings, the event is conceived as a *singular, unique* reality — either as the event of unconcealment or as the event of the world. From this standpoint, one can argue that the metaphysics of the event exhibits a certain affinity with the speculative metaphysics of the One, as it is elaborated in Neoplatonism, Spinoza, or German Idealism. Within this perspective, the relation between the event and beings resembles the relation between the One and the many: The singular event is conceived as radically distinct from the multiplicity of beings and as their truth, since all particular beings are essentially non-autonomous and must be understood as moments of the event itself. Thus, adopting this speculative perspective, Heidegger's and Fink's philosophy of eventful openness can be read as a contemporary reactualization of the discourse of the One.⁴⁹

Yet another possibility is to pursue a more *empiricist* perspective on the event. While both Heidegger and Fink display a marked tendency toward speculative hypostatization of the event as numerically one and singular reality, their thought also contains resources for a more moderate alternative. Specifically, the realist account

⁴⁸ For a detailed account of the position of phenomenological transcendentalism, see, for example, Alexander Schnell, *Seinsschwingungen: Zur Frage nach dem Sein in der transzendentalen Phänomenologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

⁴⁹ For more details on parallels between the late Heidegger and Neoplatonism, see primarily Jean-Marc Narbonne, *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis (Plotin-Proclus-Heidegger)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001). See also Jussi Backman, *Complicated Presence: Heidegger and the Postmetaphysical Unity of Being* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), for an interpretation of Heidegger's later philosophy as a non-ontotheological thought of the One. For more details on parallels with German Idealism, see Anton Sverdlikov, *Metaphysik des absoluten Geschehens: Eine systematische Interpretation des Zusammenhangs der Geschichtlichkeit, des Denkens und der 'Realität' bei Heidegger und Hegel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming in 2026).

of phenomenality — which already emerges in Heidegger but is articulated more clearly in Fink — can be used to develop not a speculative metaphysics of the one singular event (analogous to the One or the Absolute of speculative philosophies), but a phenomenological metaphysics of *finite*, multiple events, or of things as events.

In this view, the very coming-to-appearance or the self-manifestation of things should be taken as inherent to their being. On this basis, one could construct a systematic metaphysics in which reality consists not of objects or substance-like entities but of events of appearing. Such a realist phenomenological metaphysics of events would represent an original alternative to the current projects of phenomenological metaphysics,⁵⁰ which typically attempt to articulate a phenomenologically grounded, non-ontotheological metaphysics while still remaining within a framework of transcendental phenomenology. For this reason, these projects remain fundamentally experience-based, or correlationist. By contrast, the metaphysical project proposed here adopts an explicitly realist stance: The events of coming-to-appearance, posited as basic metaphysical entities, are not dependent on experience or subjectivity but exist — or more precisely, occur — independently of them.

This realist event-metaphysics thus holds the potential to contribute both to current debates about realism in contemporary continental philosophy and to more general discussions within systematic metaphysics, including projects of analytic metaphysics and scientifically informed metaphysics.⁵¹ A more systematic exploration of these two alternatives — speculative and empiricist — as well as the question of their possible articulation, must, however, remain a task for future work.

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⁵⁰ See primarily László Tengelyi, *Welt und Unendlichkeit: Zum Problem phänomenologischer Metaphysik* (Freiburg i. Br./München: Karl Alber, 2015), and Alexander Schnell, *Die phänomenologische Metaphysik Marc Richirs* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2021).

⁵¹ In particular, the empiricist perspective on the phenomenological metaphysics of events can contribute to ongoing debates on phenomenological approaches to physics. For more on this topic, see Harald A. Wiltsche and Philipp Berghofer, *Phenomenological Approaches to Physics* (Cham: Springer, 2020).

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