

THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DEATH: A RECONSTRUCTIVE  
INTERPRETATION OF HEGEL AND HEIDEGGER

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MAYA MANDALINCI

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sadettin Kirazcı  
Director (Acting)

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

---

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil Turan  
Head of Department

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

---

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Çırakman  
Supervisor

**Examining Committee Members**

Prof. Dr. Murat Baç	(METU, PHIL)	_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif Çırakman	(METU, PHIL)	_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aret Karademir	(METU, PHIL)	_____
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çetin Türkyılmaz	(Hacettepe Uni., FEL)	_____
Prof. Dr. Kaan H. Ökten	(Mimar Sinan Güzel Sanatlar Uni., FEL)	_____



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## ABSTRACT

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DEATH: A RECONSTRUCTIVE INTERPRETATION OF HEGEL AND HEIDEGGER

Mandalinci, Maya

Ph.D., Department of Philosophy

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif ırakman

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The main interest of this thesis consists in presenting an ontologico-existential understanding of death as seeking the possible ways to place and hold the nothing within being itself. Interpreting death in light of its belongingness to human being's very own being initially needs a confrontation with the deeply rooted difficulty of thinking outside the language of binary opposition. Unless this difficulty is eliminated death and the nothing remain to be left out of the domain of being, which is the only domain out of which meaning can occur. Hegel's dialectic approach will be of assistance to search for an alternative way of moving within the midst of opposites. Yet Hegel's speculative system in which finitude and infinity as well as being and nothing are shown to be in a constitutive relation can offer only a conceptual solution. As turning to Heidegger, we will then be presented with a comprehensive and rich notion of death. Being able to include death within being will introduce a new understanding of temporality as finite and ecstatic. Within the end it will become possible to question whether the relation between nothing and being can be accounted through an ontologico-existential understanding of death.

**Keywords:** Death, Heidegger, Hegel, finitude, possibility.

## ÖZ

### ÖLÜMÜN FELSEFİ ÖNEMİ: HEGEL VE HEIDEGGER'İN REKONSTRÜKTİF BİR YORUMU

Mandalinci, Maya

Doktora, Felsefe Bölümü

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Bu tezin başlıca amacı varoluşsal-ontolojik bir ölüm anlayışı ışığında hiçliği varlığın alanında tutmanın olası yollarını araştırmaktır. Ölümü temel olarak insanın varlığına ait oluşu bakımından yorumlamak öncelikle derinlere köklenmiş bir zorluğun aşılmasını gerektirmektedir. Bu zorluk karşıtlık dilinin dışına çıkarak düşünmenin zorluğudur. Bu zorluk giderilmediği sürece ölüm ve hiçlik varlığın alanına dışsal olmaya devam edecektir, halbuki anlamın ortaya çıkacağı başka bir alan mevcut değildir. Burada öncelikle Hegel'in diyalektiği, karşıtların arasında yol alabilmemiz adına bize rehberlik edecektir. Fakat içerisinde sonluluk ve sonsuzluğun, varlık ve hiçliğin kurucu bir ilişkide olduğu Hegel'in spekülâtif sistemi bize sadece kavramsal bir çözüm sunabilir. Heidegger'in felsefesine yöneldiğimizde ise orada kapsamlı ve zengin bir ölüm anlayışı ile karşılaşacağız. Ölümü varlığın alanına dahil etmek sonlu ve ekstatik olması bakımından yeni bir zamansallık anlayışını da beraberinde getirecek. Tüm bunların ışığında varlık ve hiçlik ilişkisini varoluşsal-ontolojik bir ölüm anlayışı üzerine temellendirmenin mümkün olup olmadığı sorgulanacak.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ölüm, Heidegger, Hegel, sonluluk, imkan.

To Selahattin Üçüncü



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Death, as considered most likely to be the greatest mystery common to each and every human being, would require no less than a substantial amount of philosophical interest that is alone devoted to studying this enigmatic phenomenon. Yet within the historical development of Western philosophy one cannot truly capture this interest. Various explanations can be generated on why Western tradition does not consider this notion as an independent subject matter of philosophy or reflect upon it directly within a proper study of death. Such a neglect does not imply a lack of interest on death itself but rather indicates a deficiency in the way of problematizing this notion. Within its historical development the notion of death, by itself, is not brought under an ontological consideration. Rather it is taken up in light of certain presuppositions that diminish the concern of putting this notion to an initial philosophical examination.<sup>1</sup> One of the leading assumptions that guides this discussion and leads towards a certain and fixed type of understanding of death is the dual language of the predominant Western tradition, which places death as strictly opposite to life. Within this language of binary opposition death

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible to consider this philosophical disinterest under the Heideggerian sense of a forgetfulness, in which forgetting is not an act of indifference or an arbitrary gesture but rather an outcome of the Western thinking; its tendency to begin with a pre-accepted understanding of Being without raising the preliminary question of its fundamental structure. According to Heidegger, Western thinking immediately prioritizes Being without initially questioning what this Being stands for. This gesture results in the concealment of the primordial meaning of Being in such a way that this concealment itself goes unnoticed. It appears as if Being is constantly addressed within each question regarding beings in general whereas its own ontological meaning remains untouched. As a result of the Western forgetting (a double forgetting in this sense) Being is postulated as presence and the unfoundedness of this postulation is effaced. Accordingly, Heidegger's own project is to conduct a fundamental ontology in which the question of Being will be raised anew. It will precede all other questions, forming a preliminary transcendental ground so that the rest of them can meaningfully be raised.

and life stand as diametrically opposite to each other and are considered as mutually exclusive. Here, death's meaning is drawn out of its contrast with life, that is, it represents an absence of what has made an appearance within presence. It is not only taken as opposite to life but as representing a possibility of attaining what stands in opposition to the corporeal life itself. Accordingly, this dual language of the Western tradition considers death mostly under an absolute-oriented metaphysical understanding, which mostly aims to disengage philosophy from what is subject to change. Through such an understanding death cannot find a proper place within one's own self-understanding and is rendered almost irrelevant to the truth of human beings, since because of this polarized view philosophy and truth are to engage only with what is pure and unchanging. In light of this absolute-oriented dual understanding, Western philosophy, up until late modern philosophy, has been concerned mostly with carrying philosophical knowledge to a pure state, seeking for it within the borders of the absolute whereas death as indicating finitude, decay and change cannot find a proper place within the idea of such absolute that is fixed and permanent. From such a dual and absolute-oriented outlook, death is either approached as a problem of transcendence or is rendered external and alien to the living individual. The problematization of death relapses into the ancient philosophical paradox of how non-being can come out of being, or how being results in non-being: A questioning regarding the possibility or impossibility of the transition between two opposites, life and death.<sup>2</sup> The placement of death as a border experience in between being and non-being results in the following claim by Epicurus: Death must stand irrelevant to the living

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<sup>2</sup> This question dates at least back to Parmenides. In his poem *On Nature* he writes: "For, what origin could you search out for [Being]? ... What need would have made it grow, beginning from non-Being, later or sooner? Thus it is necessary either to exist all in all or not at all." (Parmenides, *Parmenides: A Text with Translation, Commentary and Critical Essays*, Leonardo Taran, trans., Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 83 / VIII.) In the continuation of the same fragment, Parmenides states that it is "the beliefs of mortals" that divided what, in truth, is a unity; these beliefs have "established characters apart from one another". The difficulty of generating a cosmological explanation through the irreconcilable opposites of being and nothing leads Parmenides to conclude that Being has always been and continue to be an unchanging unity. Alternatively, I will try to show that this framework of binary opposition is in no way fixed and is itself the source of the problem.

individual, since life and death are never simultaneously present whereas for the living individual, as long as s/he lives, the latter cannot be a true concern. Hence, with respect to death, the problem is not only limited to how some opposite converts into its other within the same substance, but through this transition the individual (the substance) who undergoes the change itself disappears. It becomes impossible to locate where or for whom this change took place or upon what death has an effect since afterwards the subject that is supposed to be affected completely disappears.<sup>3</sup> Apart from the difficulty that death cannot be experienced by the living subject, another possible concern is that any posthumous argument regarding what follows the moment of death must remain in the domain of speculation. However, this in no way is sufficient to mark the entire analysis of death to be philosophically inadequate. This obstacle, despite being unsurpassable, does not cancel out the possibility as well as the importance of conducting an essential investigation on the meaning of death. Rather, the true difficulty lies in the nature of the subject matter as such, that is, a sheer nothingness that cannot be brought into presence. Hence the difficulty has little to do with our limited knowledge of what the empirical actualization of death stands for or what might follow after, but more significantly it is the difficulty of working with a notion that is grounded upon the nothing and upon a limit problem that is not just a limit but the ultimate limit itself. Perhaps, due to this altogether slippery ground Western philosophy has, for the most part, approached death as an externality. Yet, to dig deeper in the nature of this externalization may provide a critical outlook and set us on the track of discovering the potential richness of this notion. As long as death and life are placed under a diametrical or binary system, which is fully embraced by this tradition, death remains external to life. In discussing this problem, I will address two distinct traditions, to which I will refer as the metaphysical and the moral

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<sup>3</sup> Within a contemporary discussion, Feldman entitles the claim that death is the complete annihilation of the individual as the Termination Thesis (TT): “It just says that you won’t be there”. However, Feldman warns the reader that beneath its appearing simplicity, this formulation displays the strong bias of presupposing a subject on which being dead still has an effect. The reference to the “you”, viz., the you who will not be there, seems to make things complicated and must constantly be worked out within such formulations. (Feldman, Fred, “The Termination Thesis” in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 24 (1), 2000, p. 100.)

approach, respectively represented by Plato and Epicurus. Within their separate traditions, both approaches result in working within an understanding of death that belongs to the *ethos* of antiquity. The meaning of death is drawn out of the life and culture of the Greeks, and although death remains to be an important issue within both of these (metaphysical and moral) accounts, the problematization of death remain insufficient to open up the discussion of death through the ontological relation of Being and nothing as well as the existential aspect of human finitude. My attempt is to present their basic arguments and eventually draw a critique that will enable us to show why a comprehensive ontological study on death is required and how this can be possible. For this attempt I will begin with the Chapter on the “Historical Background”, where I will firstly depict the metaphysical outlook and afterwards move on to the moral account. The metaphysical analysis will be centered mostly on the body-soul dualism, although it is able to cover only a narrow part of the otherwise vast discussions of Greek and Medieval philosophy. The emphasis will be on the externality and inferiority of the bodily, of what is subject to corruption, where death stands as an effect that is both corruptive for the body and liberating for the soul. Here, death will be regarded on the one hand as effecting the body alone, without having any relation with the pure soul or the true self of the individual. Yet on the other hand, by detaching the body from the soul it will play an instrumental role within soul’s transcendence towards a higher realm. In this metaphysical outlook, which I will firstly study through Plato and subsequently enhance the discussion by some Medieval adaptations, death will be placed within the framework of immortality and within the opposition of a changing material body against an unchanging formal soul. The other section within this Chapter will cover the Epicurean moral formulation of death that is based on the affirmation of mortality. Yet, from an opposite direction it arrives at a similar conclusion that death does not belong – is external – to the individual since death can never make a presence within the individual itself in his/her life time. By working on both accounts my aim is to show that in order to examine death within an extensive independent philosophical study there is an initial need for thinking

outside the framework of opposites, viz., not to hold on to the mutually exclusive character of such oppositions as life vs. death, being vs. nothing, presence vs. absence or finite vs. infinite. Only then we can approach death by being able to provide for its fundamental relation with absence – unable to be brought into presence – together with its belongingness to life itself. This requires one to be able to work within the threshold of opposites and search for a possible opening in which a shared interrelated domain of meaning can allow for working on death as an in-between phenomenon.

Moving from a structure of binary opposition to an interconnected understanding will then contribute to the following claim that will be discussed within the preceding chapters: Since death belongs to the individual as an existential component of his or her finite worldly being, it needs to be approached as a phenomenon of life. It needs to be considered in an ontologico-existential manner that is build out of the ontological concern of investigating the notion of death *per se* within an existential framework. Despite the difficulty of studying death in its own enigmatic nature, the search gains its full power once it addresses what death means for the individual's own being and the loss of this being. The challenge of such a study is mostly due to placing the nothing within the core of being itself. For that matter, it cannot fully adopt the language of presence. In the phenomenological sense, death within human experience, understood as one's own death, cannot appear in relation to its particular presence within human life, while this (as it is rightly defended by Epicurus) brings experience itself to an end. However, this does not bring us back to an understanding of death as absence, but rather to a deconstruction of this restricted understanding that is built upon binary oppositions. I will argue that the presence of death within life is to be grasped in a way as showing a presence through absence or withdrawal. Death by being absent makes life possible, but at the same time this absence is constantly presenting itself by showing the fundamental nothingness behind being. The possibility of such a negative presence of death within life which can stand as an alternative to the understanding that takes life and death as mutually exclusive demands to be



verified. This verification firstly needs to question whether it is possible to approach life and death not in the context of a binary opposition but with respect to their internal relatedness.

For this initial purpose, the Hegelian dialectic will be helpful in showing how we can go beyond such a dual understanding that places everything in opposition. The logic of dialectic will offer an alternative approach to the purported duality between being and nothing, as well as finite and infinite in reference to the logical interdependency that is intrinsic to the nature of opposites. Once we can move within the interrelatedness of such opposites, the question that follows is in what ways death can appear within life if not by its factual presence. For this we will turn to the “Self-Consciousness” Section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit (PS)* and show how death – or sheer negativity in Hegel’s terms – turns out to be constructive for the development of self-consciousness. Without the mediation of the negative, the truth of self-consciousness, in its pure immediacy, is doomed to fall into an indeterminate self-same absolute<sup>4</sup> that can only correspond to an empty notion. As the Hegelian claim states the truth of the absolute must rather be extracted out of the mediation of the negative. Negativity, for Hegel, will stand as the moving force of history. I will claim that once being conceptually grasped as the truth of the particular self-consciousness, death, in the form of a confrontation, will appear in history and will problematize the relation between finite and infinite from the phenomenological perspective. Without ending the life of self-consciousness, death will be brought to its notion, to its actuality since it reveals the (yet incomplete) truth of self-consciousness as sheer negativity and contributes to its own supersession on the way towards the Spirit.

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<sup>4</sup> The type of absolute or infinite that I am referring here is what Hegel defines as bad infinite, a notion that when considered in its contrast with the true infinite, will become highly important for Hegel to construct his dialectical sense of interrelation between finitude and absolute. As we will later address, separating bad infinite from the true will present an analysis of infinite, where this notion is brought about only through the mediation of what is finite. In the phenomenological context, the constitution of the infinite Spirit involves the death of the finite particulars and their superseded contribution within the unity. However, in accordance with Hegel’s holistic understanding, this does not correspond to a cumulative reiteration of dying individuals or ceasing moments; rather each particular death or moment becomes the whole itself, shares its truth, for it is these individual moments that makes the whole possible in the first place.

For the purposes of this study, it will become important to acknowledge what the supersession within the Hegelian system shows with respect to the notion of death. *The Phenomenology of Spirit* moves from the level of the individual towards the historical and cultural level of the self-knowing Spirit. As superseding each and every type of alienation, as knowing each conflict within their unity the Hegelian picture finally arrives at the infinite Spirit. This is the unity, the ultimate supersession of all alienation; a self-return that knows itself in its finite moments while at the same time knowing that these finite moments are only transient parts of a greater unity, namely the Spirit itself. Correspondingly, the analysis of death also alters within this movement so that a voluntary abandonment takes place, in which the question on how death relates to the individual self-consciousness is left behind at a certain point. Once the Spirit appears within history death is no longer regarded from the perspective of the individual. It then becomes fully present in life yet its relation with the finite being is no longer in consideration within this level of supersession. For this reason, while studying Hegel I will concentrate mostly on the “Self-consciousness” section of the *PS* where Hegel works on death on the individual level of the (master-slave) self-consciousness and in the form of a threat.

Once the Hegelian account transcends the individual perspective of the self-consciousness, the point of view of the Spirit becomes the only truth in which correspondingly the understanding of death leaves its existential meaning behind. The Hegelian doctrine is important for displaying how the active power of negativity or death can be rediscovered as a moving force of life. Yet Hegel, even within the phenomenological narrative, works upon these notions in order to demonstrate their truth in terms of a conceptual knowledge that is governed by logical necessity. Thus, the main intention of the Hegelian doctrine, even at the level of self-consciousness, is not to inquire into the question of how death can be worked out existentially in relation to the finite human being. In order to pursue this inquiry, we will then turn towards the Heideggerian account of death and show how death can be meaningfully approached within life or in consideration of

Dasein's Being-in-the-world, that is to say, with respect to the existential structure of human's finite worldly Being.

In the Heideggerian account death is addressed as a fully philosophical problem in accord with a novel understanding of possibility and temporality. Within his philosophy the investigation of death goes beyond what is merely speculative<sup>5</sup> and arrives at what is existentially valuable with respect to the mortal but yet alive human being. Heidegger not only addresses death in its belongingness to Dasein, but also places it at the very heart of Dasein's meaning. Death primordially belongs to Dasein's own Being as Being-towards-death. Throughout Heidegger's account, worldly existence is discussed not under the primacy of an actual presence but through a self-projection that is governed by the priority of the future. Death is to be placed within a temporal understanding that is ecstatic in the sense of extending or outspreading, which moves within and reflects back from the future. Such a temporal understanding carries the meaning of death beyond its identification with a particular momentary experience or factual realization. The whole structure of *Being and Time (BT)*, as replacing the terminology of actuality with possibility, stands for such an opening in which death can be considered through its existential belongingness to Dasein – since possibility has primacy in constituting Dasein's Being in advance. This whole structure will eventually serve for a finite understanding of Being, which Heidegger is aiming to demonstrate as the ultimate claim of his philosophy. As the full meaning of death within *BT* will demonstrate, death is neither a moment that is slowly approaching nor a limit point, but rather it is an omnipresent possibility of Dasein's Being that arises out of its finitude and futural Being. It is a future possibility that is at the same time already attained, while Dasein exists such that its possibilities are what determines Dasein's Being in advance, namely as Being-ahead-of-itself. Just as the Hegelian

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<sup>5</sup> Within the Hegelian terminology “speculative” is not used for indicating uncertainty or a suppositional kind of understanding, rather it represents Hegel's own philosophical position as superseding the natural, immediate or given way of understanding things and arriving at the higher holistic perspective of Reason. It is the “positively rational” moment which concerns itself with the mediated deductive and objective results of the dialectical method. See Hegel, G. W. Friedrich, *The Encyclopaedia of Logic (EL)*, T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris trans., Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991, p. 131f §82.

self-consciousness grasps its negativity in the face of death, Dasein by hearing the summoning of death also opens up for its primordial truth, its authenticity. Under the uttermost possibility of its own impossibility, namely death, Dasein becomes free to understand itself in its primordial meaning: A temporal unfolding that is existentially structured as what Heidegger refers as the care (*Sorge*) structure. We can define this structure as being always already fallen in a world as a finite potentiality that is constantly extending towards a horizon of future possibilities delimited by death. This technical description basically shows Dasein's structure as situated in a world of significance that is not shaped by Dasein's own particular doings or understanding. Yet at the same time Dasein is destined to work within a delimited scope of potentiality for Being from which it itself is responsible. Dasein constantly constitutes its own finite Being by projecting upon its future way of Being, either authentically or inauthentically – which will turn out to be a further responsibility over which Dasein must decide or take delivery of the very act of choosing its own authentic Self. This is the way that Dasein basically exists, it understands itself as this Being by practically Being the way it is. By working on this care structure, the initial aim will be to show how death reveals Dasein within its primordial authenticity and only after then will it be possible to show how this authentic self-understanding stand preparatory for a true understanding of Being, in general.

The overall picture that I have sketched so far, although offering an introduction is not yet sufficient to cover the main arguments of Hegel and Heidegger and to adequately show why their philosophical accounts stand as constituent for an ontologico-existential study on death. Once death is understood in the peculiar way that it presents itself within life, viz., as presenting itself through the power of nothingness, it then converts into a transformative power that enables the individual to attain a complete self-understanding that does not leave out one's primordial finitude. What enables this philosophical openness to the nothing finds its correspondence in the centrality of the negative within Hegel, where self-consciousness in confronting death grasps its own negativity, its own

finite truth as nothingness and builds the infinite absolute out of this moment. On the other hand, in the existential study of Heidegger, the nothingness becomes the abyssal un-ground for Being. The practical comprehension or the projective understanding of the authentic meaning of death as the ownmost possibility of Dasein will offer the phenomenological attestation that nothingness or nullity belongs to Dasein's Being from the start. This understanding shows the belongingness of death within the existential structure of Dasein. It does this in the context of Dasein's finite temporal and potential Being. As coming to the final chapter of this dissertation, I will focus on the dimension in and through which we can draw a pivotal contrast between Heidegger and Hegel. This dimension, as I will explore, discloses the underlying structure of their philosophical orientations that is based respectively on the notions of finitude and infinity. This grand difference in their philosophical orientation will be reconsidered with respect to their account on death and what has been said up to that point.

Before investigating each account separately, a preparatory task is to raise the question on why a fundamental ontological analysis of death is lacking within the predominant Western understanding. Especially in consideration of the Western tendency of presenting death and life within a sharp opposition, as mutually exclusive, the need for an initial ontological analysis comes into prominence since working on death within life seems to be leading towards a paradox. Without restoring the rupture between life and death, as well as being and nothing, death cannot stand within the boundaries of meaning. The study of death either escapes towards a discussion of transcendence or its meaning in relation to life becomes obscure. I will argue that Hegel and Heidegger have something novel to offer as regards to the question of the intelligibility of death. As I will try to demonstrate within this dissertation, both Hegel and Heidegger eventually aim to arrive at a primordial analysis of finitude by means of a phenomenological investigation of death. Conducting an analysis of death based on human finitude successfully allows one to include death within the life and self-understanding of the human being. Yet apart from their rich contribution, both Hegel and Heidegger

work upon death in order to arrive at an ontological problematization of finitude. I argue that this movement from death towards finitude, although being an important step should not be considered as the final. As long as one does not reflect back from finitude and once again arrive at death as the ultimate shape of finitude itself, the ontological account of death still remains incomplete. Studying death through the existential structure of finitude is crucial, yet it still places the discussion back to the categorical level and once more fails to acknowledge the belongingness of death to one's own being as showing one's own nothing within this being. In other words, only in the problematization of death itself does finitude appear not just as coming to an end of some particular state, time period or property, etc., but rather appear in its ultimate form. What is indicated by the end becomes the whole existence of the human being who raises the question, so it is not only finitude but nothingness that enters the discussion through an ontologico-existential analysis on death. Hegel and Heidegger brought this discussion where finitude, death and nothingness enter within a dialogue, and opened up the ground for ontologically discussing death within the assistance of finitude and nothing. Yet their primary philosophical concern is to move from death either to the finitude of Being (as in Heidegger) or to the infinity of Spirit (as in Hegel). Throughout this dissertation I will try to present the ways in which this movement is made possible by both philosophers. Yet it is important to emphasize that this movement is not the final gesture for there is still an unsatisfied need to return and reconsider death as an ultimate phenomenon that cannot be based on the circular movement of finitude as beginning and coming to an end. Death stands as the ultimate rupture of such a cycle which is the point where finitude meets with the nothing, and in this respect, it must gain a phenomenological priority over them.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

What is the nature of death? Is it graspable in experience or in thought? Or is it even meaningful to assume that there is a nature on which we can raise such questions? The difficulty here lies in working with a notion that cancels its own ground by simply appearing. Its moment of appearance is so elusive that there occurs a constant shift within the boundaries of this question: from biology to ethics, to ontology, to existentialism, to epistemology, to metaphysics, to theology – one may even say *ad infinitum*, for infinity itself becomes another center, another possible moment in regard to which the question of death emerges.

In the biological sense, death seems to be tantamount to the irrevocable end of bodily (more properly organismic) functioning.<sup>6</sup> Even as remaining within the borders of this biological explanation alone, the meaning of death bears a vagueness. The moment of death is transitory, is fleeing; the border between life and death is far from being clear or precise. Both Ariès and Thomas, after conducting a great amount of anthropological research on death, agree on the conclusion that what separates death from life, either biologically or culturally, is not as obvious as one envisages it to be.<sup>7</sup> The biological question of when and how to classify a person as dead is still an ongoing debate, leading to many bioethical

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<sup>6</sup> For a wider discussion see DeGrazia, David, “The Definition of Death” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta, ed., Spring 2017, URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/death-definition/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ariès, Philippe, *The Hour of our Death*, Helen Weaver, trans., New York: Vintage Books, 2008, p. 22ff. Also see Thomas, Louis-Vincent, *Ölüm (La Muerte)*, Işın Gürbüz, trans., İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991.

problems such as the conditions of brain death or problems in euthanato-ethics.<sup>8</sup> Correspondingly, the cultural differences also affect the variety of definitions, that is to say religious views, burial rituals and customs all contribute to the meaning of death. Yet, if the meaning of death is sought in the spatiotemporal transient moment of its happening, where the individual is alive at one instant and dead at the other, this meaning cannot be truly attained in its full force. Death becomes a paradoxical experience that can offer nothing knowable for the experiencing subject. It remains as an ineffable phenomenon that is cast out of the domain of rational thinking or *logos* that can be approached at most in speculation.

Once death is understood only in terms of an experience it then loses its power for revealing an immanent certainty about the human nature, namely that it is finite.<sup>9</sup> Death brings an end to this worldly being in this worldly appearance. This end, prior to any speculation or postulation (after-life, reincarnation etc.) contains a certainty which must be addressed in its immanent belongingness to the finite human being itself. Yet reducing death to a momentary external experience reduces this immanency, viz., the existential character of being limited from the start. For that reason, I would argue that death requires to be analysed first and foremost within the context of self-knowledge, as an investigation of one's own finitude. Yet before working on the nature of such an investigation we will firstly

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<sup>8</sup> I borrowed the term euthanato-ethics from Derrida which corresponds to ethical issues regarding euthanasia. (Derrida, Jacques, *Aporias*, Thomas Dutoit, trans., Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993, p.60.) An example of such an issue is, firstly, the difficulty to define at what point a patient should be considered as terminally ill, and secondly whether being terminally ill (being closer to death than any other person is) legitimize the act of killing oneself. Or to rephrase it in a more existential manner, since each human being constantly moves closer to death, on what grounds do such a difference in proximity allow us to decide that the terminally ill person is permitted to end his/her life? Regardless of how to decide on such criteria, these ethical questions demonstrate that even in biological terms, death is not easily reducible to its moment of occurrence. A similar concern arises in such cases as brain death, where diagnosing the patient as dead turns out to be gradual rather than momentary.

<sup>9</sup> As I consider death in relation to its belongingness to human existence, I will mostly refer to human finitude instead of mortality. The reason for that is because the notion of mortality draws its meaning out of or in reference to death itself. Hence, while questioning the meaning of death, mortality does not introduce something novel to the discussion. Finitude, on the other hand, denotes the relation between death and the limitedness of human life or being within its conceptual unfolding. It opens up the possibility of carrying the discussion to an ontological level and reformulating the question in relation to the category of finitude. This provides a philosophical ground for discussing one's own death within the broader context of human finitude.



examine the alternative traditional considerations on death with the aim of discussing various focal points that are open to criticism. This preliminary attempt may become fruitful not only for sketching a rough draft on the various ways Western Philosophy has historically investigated death, but also for the purposes of enlightening the major deficiencies that are to be spotted in such readings.

## **2.1 The Metaphysical and the Moral Approaches towards Death**

The categorization that I draw within this chapter, namely discussing the predominant Western philosophical approach on death under two general tendencies that I label as the metaphysical attitude and the moral attitude is by no means fixed, or even traditionally accepted – it is indeed questionable whether a canonical tradition exists within the research area of death. Rather, different motivations may inspire one to adopt various other methods or refer to different texts or philosophers while studying the notion of death. Also, one must keep in mind that the attempt to categorize and place the huge philosophical pile under a few definitions and *leitmotifs* is condemned to remain superficial. I use such a denomination only for clarification purposes, for representing the general tendency of Western thought on death as simple and accurate as possible in this limited space. However, many differences and diversities that are unique to each account that should have been present within a detailed reading will be overlooked in order to remain up to the point.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Especially, the metaphysical tradition that follows Plato, or even Plato himself is definitely not reducible to the category of metaphysics alone. Apart from the Ancient Greeks, and the medieval thinkers that I will discuss in the following sections, the metaphysical understanding of death also has an influence over modern thinkers such as Montaigne, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard. As conducting a research over death, each depends on this tradition, especially on the language of opposition and transcendence, in his own unique way. See Montaigne, Michel, *Essays*, J. M. Cohen, trans., NY: Penguin Books, 1993. See Schopenhauer, Arthur, “On Death and Its Relation to the Indestructibility of Our Inner Nature” in *The World as Will and Representation*, E. F. J. Payne, trans., Vol. 2, New York: Dover Publications, 1966, p. 463-510. Also see Kierkegaard, Soren, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness unto Death*, Walter Lowrie, trans., New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2013.

To begin with, both the metaphysical and the moral approach share the same tendency of taking death as external to life, as its diametrical opposite, as mutually exclusive. From this commonality these two accounts divide in their approach, on whether there is a possibility of transcendence that follows death or whether it results in complete annihilation. Death, then, is either praised with respect to its effects in transcendence or undervalued for it cannot reach the subject as long as s/he is alive.

In the metaphysical understanding that emerges with Plato, especially in the way that the transcendence of soul and knowledge firstly appear as part of a complete philosophical doctrine, death designates a possible promise to transcend what is corporeal and animated. Death transforms into a promise of immortality, of everlasting spiritual life. On the basis of such an investigation death takes its meaning from its indirect impact upon the incorporeal soul rather than of body. It has a functional task of freeing the soul from the bodily existence that carries the burden of the matter. This function also carries a hypothetical *telos* for attaining the realm of the unchanging; or at least the possibility to transcend the finite body, to free the soul from its corporeal ties, hence come closer to the knowledge of forms. It is reasonable to claim that, here, the relation between death and finitude is not only lost but reversed. Death becomes desirable for opening a path to infinity as represented by the unchanging forms – paradoxically promising what it cancels in appearance.

Once death is identified with a momentary experience it becomes difficult to ascribe content to it. In its isolation this individual moment can neither touch life nor truly effect the individual who will no longer exist after that particular point unless his/her soul continues onwards. Within the metaphysical outlook the emphasis is on this continuation part. Death converts into a notion that is highly speculative and is made conditional upon the body-soul account. On the other hand, the moral outlook, by leaving out the continuation part will emphasize the emptiness of the experience itself.

The second part of my historical analysis will concentrate on the latter approach that I will refer as the moral understanding of death. In particular, this is the Epicurean understanding, which tries to falsify the possibility of posthumous immortality in order to demonstrate the futility of fearing death. Within the broader Epicurean project, namely reducing pain and increasing pleasure, death is approached in terms of its effects within this scale. The fear of death becomes one of the main obstacles that stand on the way of attaining peace of mind. Once eliminating the possibility of an after-life, Epicurus and his followers struggle with the question whether death *qua* annihilation, as leading to a state of non-existence, should still arouse fear. The final aim of their discussion is to demonstrate that there is nothing harmful or fearful in death, hence there is nothing to disturb one's peace of mind. The Epicurean account, by rejecting soul's immortality, identifies death with annihilation. However, this analysis is not carried out to its possible limits. Rather it is worked out only in order to display the insignificance of death for the living human being and to show how to attain a happy life that is free from the most troublesome of all fears, specifically, the fear of death. Epicurus, in the aim of demonstrating that any sort of meditation over death is actually empty, identifies death with its moment of realization, as a definite event that brings the living human being to an end. When death takes place, the living human, to whom death is supposed to be a concern, ceases to be. The question whether death is harmful or not is the leading question of this Hellenistic inquiry, and the meaning of death is sought only in the limited point of view of the good-evil dichotomy.

Although death becomes a major concern within the Epicurean account, this concern, without touching the core idea of human finitude, remains external. According to the Epicurean conclusion, death is an issue neither for the living nor for the dead for its truth cannot be placed anywhere within this clear-cut binary scale. The externality of death is one of the important conclusions of the Epicurean view and it is also shared by the metaphysical tradition. The assumptions of the metaphysical account also depend on the framework of binary opposition, this time

*via* the body-soul dichotomy. Death can show a corruptive effect only on the body, which – contrary to the soul – is itself external to the truth (form) of the subject.

### **2.1.1 The Metaphysical Understanding of Death within the Absence of Annihilation**

Although death has always been a primary subject of wonder,<sup>11</sup> most of the philosophical discussions on this subject either shape around various arguments related to immortality or some belief models that discuss death in an auxiliary level. Once it is postulated that death is not annihilation, this converts this notion into an overly plausible or at least tolerable instrument. Death does not jeopardize the entire being of the subject but rather serves as a passageway to a certain beyond. I will refer to this line of thinking, in its most general sense, as the metaphysical understanding and discuss it mostly through Platonic themes and their historical extensions, for its roots are embedded – at least in the Western philosophy – within Platonic idealism.

As we will examine shortly, in the Platonic understanding, the account of death partakes in the general discussion on the relation between body and soul and the nature of soul's independent existence. These discussions are then carried to the medieval period and adapted by the Islamic and Christian framework through the great contributions of Neo-Platonism, where the body and soul discussion took a more theological direction.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Apparently, the problematization of death reaches back as far as the earliest known fictional text of history, namely The Epic of Gilgamesh. The journey of Gilgamesh is altogether nothing but a symbolic attempt to deal with mortality. It is, so to say, as if written history opens up with a struggle on death. See, Kovacs, Maureen G. trans. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Wolf Carnahan, ed. 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Although I will not develop on this point further, the metaphysical tendency of dividing all into two irreconcilable opposites maintained to be the predominant understanding until the end of late modern philosophy. The Cartesian dualism contributed to this outlook by strengthening the language of opposition. Kant introduced a further epistemological gap between the knowable phenomena and the unknowable noumena. Yet the way Kant introduces this gap corresponds, at the same time, to the reconciliation of subject and object within the knowable. This paves the way to the Hegelian claim that all difference and unification begins and ends within the knowledge of the

### 2.1.1.1. The Platonic Understanding of Death as a Path to Transcendence

The well-known Socratic expression that “the one aim of those who practice philosophy in the proper manner is to practice for dying and death” epitomizes the importance of death within the Platonic philosophy.<sup>13</sup> This crucial statement as uttered by Socrates within Plato’s dialogue *Phaedo*, claims that philosophy functions as a preparation for death, hence demonstrates the proximity of philosophy and death within the Platonic account.<sup>14</sup> The meaning of this sentence can be interpreted in more than one way. In one sense, philosophy prepares the thinker for welcoming death through calmness, for the study of philosophy itself renders it apparent that there is nothing fearful in death. In another sense, the proximity between death and philosophy is rather connected to the similar effect that they are able to cause within the soul, namely elevating the soul towards the realm of the Intellect and away from the body. This is related to Plato’s way of apprehending the soul-body relation within a hierarchical order through the Theory of Forms.<sup>15</sup>

Consider then, Cebes, whether it follows from all that has been said that the soul is most like the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself, whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble, and never consistently the same.<sup>16</sup>

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subject, to which nothing stands alien or external for it only knows itself. (For the Kantian account on phenomena/noumena distinction see Chapter III of the ‘Analytic of Principles’ in Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Marcus Weigelt, trans., London: Penguin Books, 2007, p. 251 / B295ff, A236ff.)

<sup>13</sup> Plato, “Phaedo”, *Five Dialogues*, G. M. A. Grube, trans., Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002, p. 101 (64a).

<sup>14</sup> As there is an apparent difficulty of separating the historical Socrates from the figure of the Platonic dialogues, I will attribute the arguments to Plato himself and use the figure Socrates only as the representative of the Platonic line of thinking within the dialogue.

<sup>15</sup> This hierarchical order between the soul (as higher) and body (as lower) will transform into a fully developed scheme within the Neo-Platonic philosophy. As we will further elaborate within Plotinus, one of the results of this hierarchy will be a philosophical deprecation of the body; followed by a need to become isolated from this body as much as possible through an ecstatic and purely contemplative life style.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118 (80b).

As depending upon this opposition, Plato claims that the soul can only achieve the pure knowledge of the Forms in the absence of matter. Hence, the body becomes an obstacle for the soul on the way towards achieving true knowledge. As one studies proper philosophy, where the soul gets involved with the Forms, one turns away from the bodily, from its needs and effects. This brings philosophy close to the state of being dead, which is defined by Plato as soul's dislocation from the body:

Do we believe that death is this, namely, that the body comes to be separated by itself apart from the soul, and the soul comes to be separated by itself apart from the body? Is death anything else than that? - No, that is what it is.<sup>17</sup>

True philosophy then becomes an imitation or practice of death itself. Philosophy is a preparation for death not only by offering an understanding of it but also getting ready in the practical level: as a practice to disengage from the bodily needs and turn towards the purely intellectual act of the soul. Philosophy, then, on one side assures the idea of a posthumous continuation within the theoretical level and on the other side provides a practical readiness for death, by turning one's attention from the body towards the soul. For Plato these two meanings coincide.

*Phaedo* takes place on the day Socrates' execution is to be carried out and depicts his last conversation with his friends and pupils. The dialogue is on soul's immortality, and Plato's main concern here is to show the possible offerings of such spiritual immortality. He attempts to show why one should not fear but welcome death as a transcendent path to knowledge. Returning to the above-mentioned phrase, Socrates begins his speech by claiming that he is "very hopeful that after death he will attain the greatest blessings yonder".<sup>18</sup> In the continuation of the same passage, the possibility that death may be the end of all existence is briefly mentioned by Socrates himself; mostly in the aim of acknowledging that the true nature of death must remain unknowable to all but gods. As he states in the dialogue "Apology", even under both assumptions there is still a "good hope that death is a blessing" for it is either a tranquil "dreamless sleep" or "a change and a

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 101 (64c).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

relocating for the soul from here to another place”.<sup>19</sup> In both cases death cannot be considered as evil. Yet again, Socrates himself will build his arguments based on the possibility of soul’s continuation after death.

As moving along with the latter presupposition that death “is nothing but the dissolution, the parting from one another, of two things, the soul and the body”,<sup>20</sup> Socrates argues for the various promises that an incorporeal existence can offer. In pursuit of the truth, the body is an obstacle to the soul, in fact “an evil”<sup>21</sup> that diverges one from its path towards pure knowledge and interrupts the vocation of the soul via bodily needs and sensation. In that sense, philosophy itself imitates the work of death: the purification of the soul and the abandonment of the body. The true philosopher is the one who can turn his back to these distractions, and for this reason who is “nearly dead” already.<sup>22</sup> Philosophizing entails purifying one’s soul from the troubles of the senses. Accordingly, what becomes desirable is “taking leave of the body” and “having no contact or association with it in [soul’s] search for reality”.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the philosopher must gladly greet death just as he yearns for philosophical wisdom, for this wisdom can be achieved in its purest form only within death:

It seems likely that we shall, only then, when we are dead, attain that which we desire and of which we claim to be lovers, namely, wisdom, as our argument shows, not while we live; for if it is impossible to attain any pure knowledge with the body, then one of two things is true: either we can never attain knowledge or we can do so after death.<sup>24</sup>

The way that Plato constructs the relation between death, knowledge and philosophy, is centered on the ultimate possibility of arriving at a higher-order knowledge – wisdom that exceeds corporeal life. Hence, the way Socrates greets

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<sup>19</sup> Plato, “Apology”, *Five Dialogues*, G. M. A. Grube, trans., Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002, p. 43 [40c].

<sup>20</sup> Plato, *Plato's Gorgias*, E. M. Cope, trans., London: Bell and Daldy, 1864, p. 127, (524).

<sup>21</sup> Plato, “Phaedo”, p. 103 (66b).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101 (64b).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102 (65c).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103-104 (66e-67a).

death with “good cheer”<sup>25</sup> is mostly due to the assumption that he is prepared for a spiritual journey towards purification. This high spiritedness towards death may also cast a light on Socrates’s ambiguous last words. Just after drinking the hemlock, he utters: “Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius”.<sup>26</sup> Traditionally, it is the sick who makes offerings to Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine, and such a sacrifice is offered in return for a cure. According to a possible interpretation, which firstly appears in Nietzsche, in case of the dying Socrates this last offering signifies that death is itself a cure. Death cures the illnesses of life, or in Nietzsche’s version it is directly the cure of the “evil life”.<sup>27</sup> It is plausible to claim that the Nietzschean conclusion, that life is a disease, seems to ascribe too much to this sentence, and that this meaning seems incompatible with the general Socratic/Platonic position, in which the bodily desires may become at most a burden to the soul, whereas life itself would not be considered as evil.<sup>28</sup> However, there is still some strength in the lighter version of this interpretation: claiming that Socrates embraces death as a cure – a cure in the sense of getting better – which enables the soul to leave the body behind and to philosophically fulfill itself.<sup>29</sup> Foucault in one of his seminars (1984) participates also in this discussion and scrutinizes the mystery behind Socrates’ last words.<sup>30</sup> As taking Dumézil’s book

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 104 (67c).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 153 (118a).

<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche prefers to paraphrase Socrates’ line as “‘O Crito, life is a disease,’” and finds a sign of “pessimism” in it; meaning that in his last moments Socrates confesses that he is “suffering life”. (Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, Walter A. Kaufmann, trans., New York: Vintage, 1974, p. 272, §340.)

<sup>28</sup> It seems that Nietzsche himself is aware of this incompatibility since he presents it under the name of a final confession of a lifetime mistake. (Ibid.)

<sup>29</sup> According to Colin Wells, the assumption that there is a connection between Socrates’ offering and healing is altogether misleading. He claims that there is rather a simple explanation: Since Socrates cannot pour down a libation to the gods (for he must drink the entire hemlock in order that the poison shows its effects) he instead offers a rooster as a substitute so that his journey to the beyond would be easy and successful. (Wells, Colin, “The Mystery of Socrates’ Last Words” in *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 16 (2), Fall 2008, p. 141.) Although it is arguable that these last words are irrelevant to the condition of healing or cure, Well’s explanation is not fully satisfying. After all the dialogue *Phaedo* finishes with this last saying. Therefore, it makes more sense to assume that this offering is a symbolic summary of the rest of the dialogue.

<sup>30</sup> Foucault, Michel, *The Courage of the Truth: The Government of Self and Others II*, Graham Burchell, trans., Frédéric Gros, ed., New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 95-114.



*The Riddle of Nostradamus* as its reference point Foucault points to the usage of the plural pronoun within the sentence, “we owe a cock” and repeats Dumézil’s claim that this may be an indication of an intellectual cure that Socrates’ philosophy had brought to his fellow students, a cure for which they are all indebted and must repay together. As Foucault writes, the cure is not death itself but being cured from false opinions; replacing them with the right philosophical knowledge as “obtained through logos”.<sup>31</sup> In this particular case, the false opinion was that “it was better for Socrates to live than die”.<sup>32</sup>

Regardless of the exact truth behind this last ambiguous sentence, the Platonic dialogue altogether aims to show that death is not an end but a potential transcendence towards the higher level of forms, and a possibility to attain pure knowledge. The way Socrates of *Phaedo* encourages his listeners to be calm in face of his approaching execution is by arguing for the immortality of the soul and defending that pure knowledge can become fully attainable to a bodiless (postmortem) soul; where both assumptions indicate that there is no reason to fear death. Here, the philosophical significance of death lies not in its limiting effect, but quite the opposite, in releasing the soul to attain pure actuality (that of the forms) and wisdom. The courage and almost cheer that Socrates displays towards death substitutes the meaning of death, as coming to an end or limit, with a strive for transcendence.<sup>33</sup> He states that “Those who practice philosophy in the right way are in training for dying and they fear death least of all men.”<sup>34</sup> The philosophical practice is to appease the feeling of fear and turn it into courage by revealing the truth behind death. I will return to this contrast between courage and fear in the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> As I will discuss further in the Heideggerian account, this courageous attitude becomes a major point of criticism, even though Heidegger does not mention it with regard to the context of the Platonic position. The courage in the face of death, not only covers up the primordial relation to death, which is attuned with anxiety, but also prevents anxiety to ascend under the accusation of cowardice. For the relevant discussion see Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time (BT)*, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, trans. New York: Harper&Row, 1962, p. 297f / H253f. From now on all references of *Being and Time* will be written as H followed by the page numbers of the German edition.

<sup>34</sup> Plato, “Phaedo”, p. 104 [67e].

following chapters, since this distinction will reappear in both Hegel and Heidegger as an indication of why courage cannot stand as the true relation towards death in contrast to dread (in Hegel) or anxiety (in Heidegger).

### **2.1.1.2 Neo-Platonism**

The general tendency of the Platonic tradition of considering death as a partitive and transformative point along the journey of the soul is brought to its limits by Neo-Platonism, where it meets with the doctrine of emanation and the One.<sup>35</sup> As merged with the Neo-Platonic ideas the Platonic doctrine is then adopted by the medieval thinkers; and this in return provides a fruitful philosophical ground out of which theology can cultivate. Although death itself is not a primary concern for Plotinus, nonetheless his profound evaluations on the inner relation between the soul and the divine become significant in demonstrating the metaphysical inclination of turning towards the absolute – according to Plotinus this is rather a turning back, for what must be restored is the divine ties that have been damaged by the intervention of the corporeal.

According to Plotinus, the soul is not only prior to the body but stands as the sheer possibility of its very being. As Clark writes, “there can be no body at all, not even the smallest visible unit, without soul”.<sup>36</sup> The body requires the soul for coming and maintaining in existence whereas soul’s relatedness to the body is of a different kind. The way that the soul relates to the body is through an intentional act rather than a necessary dependence. Hence the soul does not need the body to maintain in existence whereas the reverse is not true: The vitality of the body is

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35 For the purposes of this work I will cover only a very limited portion of Plotinus’ otherwise very complex system. The details of the relation between the principles “One”, “Intellect” and “Soul”; the differences (as well as the essential sameness) between the Higher Soul and the lower (individual) soul; as well as the one-and-many problem that is spread throughout all of Plotinus’ discussions makes this account more holistic and less dualistic. Yet, with regard to the points that I am trying to demonstrate I will consider his account on body and the soul, which is mostly dualistic and presupposes a diametrical hierarchical relation between the two.

<sup>36</sup> Clark, Stephen R. L., “Plotinus: Body and Soul” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Lloyd P. Gerson, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1999, p. 279.

fully conditioned by the soul. The body shows a natural and necessary dependency on the soul, which continues until the body is no longer fit for the soul, until physical death whereas the soul can be detached from the body even before death. Yet, the intentional act of the soul does not indicate that its relation with the body is merely arbitrary and that the soul can stop depending on the body whenever it intends. Rather, this relation is built upon a strong habituation that needs to be worked out constantly in order to free the soul.

According to Plotinus freeing the soul from its material relations is attainable prior to death, because the individual human soul is always in connection with and is able to turn fully towards the intelligible world and Higher Soul by means of philosophical contemplation alone.<sup>37</sup> As the later Neo-Platonists such as Porphyry and Ammonius claim, in this contemplation or philosophical practice the soul can turn completely away from the bodily requirements although the body still remains “fit to be animated by the soul”.<sup>38</sup> This voluntary ascetic escape is possible since soul’s attachment to the body depends upon soul’s own intentions, attitudes or desires. As long as the bodily urge is replaced with the intellectual contemplative act, the freedom of the soul is attainable in the highest degree. Nonetheless, it will always encounter the material constraint and carry the potential of relapsing back into the corporeal, until the moment of death.

Similar to the Platonic account, it is possible to imitate death within the philosophical practice of turning away from the desires of the body and towards the act of the intellect. Yet in Neo-Platonism this corresponds to an ascetic life. Various Neo-Platonists approach to this analogy between death and the ascetic life with suspicion and try to show that there is an asymmetrical side to it. Soul’s voluntary escape from the body through a philosophical gesture is not the same with body’s necessary detachment from the soul – no longer being able to function – within

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>38</sup> Gertz, Sebastian Ramon Philipp, *Death and Immortality in Late Neoplatonism: Studies on the Ancient Commentaries on Plato’s Phaedo*, Leiden: Brill, 2011, p. 29.

death.<sup>39</sup> The soul is tied to the body by its own volition whereas the body is tied to the soul naturally and “brought to life by it”.<sup>40</sup> Showing this difference ultimately contributes to the Neo-Platonic premise that death can only act upon the body. The soul endures this effect only in the mediation of the body, as separating from the body, but yet preserving its own existence.<sup>41</sup>

Another Platonic theme that reappears here, yet in a stronger form, is the tendency of identifying what is bodily with the evil. According to Plotinus, “a Soul becomes ugly – by something foisted upon it, by sinking itself into the alien, by a fall, a descent into body, into Matter”.<sup>42</sup> It necessarily follows that the soul must turn away from this alien body by an intellectual “disengagement”.<sup>43</sup> As Kalligas writes in his commentary on *Enneads*, escaping the body corresponds to “an internal conversion toward Intellect [Noetic Mind] through virtue”.<sup>44</sup> Or in Plotinus’ own words: “we must let the hearings of sense go by, save for sheer necessity, and keep the Soul’s perception bright and quick to the sounds from above”.<sup>45</sup> The duality between body and soul, or matter and form is placed in the hierarchical model of Plotinus, which besides representing a moral ordering with regard to the highest good and evil offers a solid ontology. The ordering between the worldly body and the heavenly soul presents an ontology that is placed within the wider cosmological emanation model; meaning that soul is prior to the body not in an abstract (or metaphorical) manner but due to an ontological proximity to the

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<sup>39</sup> It seems that one of the motivations behind keeping the voluntary separation apart from the physical one is to avoid the problem of suicide, viz., explaining why choosing death voluntarily would not be preferable for attaining transcendence. As keeping these two types of separation apart from each other, one can posit a conceptual gap between them, in which the former may not stand substitutive for the latter and vice versa.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>41</sup> It is even possible that the soul may continue to be connected to the body in death. Both Porphyry and Ammonius indicate that even in cases where the body is no longer connected to the soul, the soul may not leave the body and remain attached to it and “still ‘identify’ with its defunct body (...) as shadow-like phantom”. (Ibid., p. 29 fn.)

<sup>42</sup> Plotinus, *The Enneads*, Stephen Mackenna, trans., London, England: Penguin, 1991, p. 51 (I.6.5).

<sup>43</sup> Disengagement simply means “that the Soul withdraws to its own place”. (Ibid., p. 20 [I.2.5].)

<sup>44</sup> Kalligas, Paulos, *The Enneads of Plotinus: A Commentary*, Elizabeth Key Fowden and Nicolas Pilavachi, trans., Vol. 1, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton U Press, 2014, p. 233.

<sup>45</sup> Plotinus, *The Enneads*, p. 360 (V.1.12).

source of all Being, viz., the One that has necessarily become many. As this model states, all things overflow from the One and return to this source.<sup>46</sup> This emanation from the source takes place in a hierarchical model as each lower level moves further away from the source. Plotinus draws a firm distinction between the higher-leveled soul that is directed upwards, ultimately towards the One and the inferior material body that attempts to drag the lower soul down to the level of corporeal formless matter.<sup>47</sup> In this bidirectional flow the in-between lower soul is what is in relation with the body whereas the higher soul is preserved within its purity, and keeps in touch with the World Soul. This hierarchy also corresponds to the Aristotelian categories of form-matter. As Lloyd Gerson writes, “The evil in bodies is the element in them that is not dominated by form.”<sup>48</sup> The actual form, the pure Soul, the One stands as the highest level and source of all Being whereas the matter and body stands at the opposite edge of this emanation: at the lowest point of the causal chain, within the finite sublunary world that is governed by becoming. Only in this corporeal level can death, corruption and evil be in effect, as affecting the body and through its mediation the lower soul. Considering this model that begins with an initial flow from the One and that has the ultimate return as its *telos*, Neo-Platonism aims to display that the individual (or lower) soul’s true inquiry ought to be introspective, and through an exclusion of the body that it renders as alien. As Plotinus writes, when “the object is alien the search [becomes] futile”.<sup>49</sup> In contrast with the One, the body is not only something inferior but also alien to the soul. Thus, the finite contingent character of the body that is open to the effects of corruption and death is rendered alien to the essence of human, which is identified with the immortal soul from which it departed and towards which it will return.

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<sup>46</sup> “The One is all things and no one of them; the source of all things is not all things; and yet it is all things in a transcendental sense – all things, so to speak, having run back to it”. (Ibid., p. 361 [V.2.1].)

<sup>47</sup> Although it is easier to present and grasp the emanation theory over a hierarchical diagram, one must be cautious not to consider this overflow in spatiotemporal terms but rather as a cosmological model that is based on causality.

<sup>48</sup> Gerson, Lloyd. “Plotinus”, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta, ed. Summer 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 348 (V.1.2).

This brief analysis so far seems sufficient to demonstrate what is to be addressed within the Neo-Platonic picture. In building the body and soul relation through the emanation theory, the individual is made alien to its own death. The truth of the human being is ontologically elevated within the borders of a higher transcendental realm, as identifiable with a true divine essence, which will turn out to be the infinite One out of which all have emanated. As Hadot writes, the Neo-Platonic asceticism “was intended, above all, to stop the lower part of the soul from diverting toward itself the attention which should be oriented toward the spirit”.<sup>50</sup> Yet, regardless of what one subjectively holds as a metaphysical or ontological position, it is questionable whether a genuine self-knowledge can take place without the consideration of the body itself. In Neo-Platonism the ascend towards the One overlooks any sort of corporeal relation or determination and directly tends towards an absolute source, namely the unity, which is attainable only by turning away from differentiation. Here, from the opposite perspective, it is also possible to claim that this search imprisons the individual into a greater alienation that is caused by the essential impossibility of the task.<sup>51</sup> By placing the absolute alone at the core of its domain, this tradition, overlooks the fact that human beings are left in a constant comparison with the infinite and so suffer from an empty desire to overcome their own ‘lack’ as finite. Of course, there are no definite, final answers to such questions. After all, the answers depend mostly on one’s metaphysical presuppositions and philosophical position. According to Dastur, within “the metaphysics of death” the possibility of the “recognition of the mortal condition of mankind” is through “situating this in relation to the immortality of an absolute in which its meaning has its sole source.”<sup>52</sup> Still, as I have already mentioned, there is an undeniable reality to death: that it ends the world-life as we are undergoing as

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<sup>50</sup> Hadot, Pierre, *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, Michael Chase, trans., Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard U Press, 2004, p. 159.

<sup>51</sup> This is the impossibility of attaining an abstract divine absolute as being a finite individual. Whether this impossibility can be superseded through another understanding of the absolute will be an important discussion in Hegel, especially with respect to the “Unhappy Consciousness” section.

<sup>52</sup> Dastur, Françoise, *Death: An Essay on Finitude*, John Llewelyn, trans., London: Athlone Press, 1996, p. 20.

the particular being that we are. I would claim that this ending by itself, as independent from any possibility of a post-mortem endurance, carries an existential meaning that must initially be worked out within the boundaries of mortality.

As Neo-Platonic thinking encounters with theological themes, as being adopted by both Islamic and Christian philosophy, the central arguments of Plotinus (inherited from Plato) are met with affirmation and merged into the holy promises of the monotheistic religions. In the medieval Neo-Platonic period, questions such as the body soul relation, the essence of human nature or the relation between finite and infinite are reexamined within the light of a novel purpose: Affirming the sacred texts through philosophical reasoning.<sup>53</sup> In order to give an idea on how the specific points that we have discussed so far made an appearance within the Medieval period, we can turn towards one of the most important representatives of Islamic philosophy, namely Avicenna.<sup>54</sup>

Similar to his predecessors, Avicenna likewise places the body in an inferior position as opposed to the immortal soul. The soul is the “activating principle”, it is the form of the body, the actuality, whereas the body stands as the instrument, the matter and the potential.<sup>55</sup> Under the heavy influence of the

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<sup>53</sup> At this point it can be useful to comment on the distinction between the medieval philosophy and theology as much as possible, for this is actually an ambiguous task. The thinkers of these fields mostly overlap and the boundaries are far from being clear-cut. Nonetheless, I will appeal to a general difference in regard of their ways of argumentation: While theology rely mostly on some religious/sacred set of axioms or presuppositions, the medieval philosophy of religion tries to arrive at these basic presuppositions by firstly showing their validity through the use of philosophical inferences: such as Aquinas’s five proofs of God, which do not presuppose God’s existence but aim to derive it from logical proofs. Or Avicenna’s demonstration of the immortality of the soul based on the Aristotelian dichotomy of actuality and potentiality. Apart from these examples there are significant amount of medieval philosophers who adhere to their philosophical conclusions even when these conclusions contradict with the canonic religious beliefs, such as denying God’s free will in creating the universe or its omnipotence in intervening with nature’s laws through miracles in order to postulate a divine necessity. In his book *The Incoherence of Philosophers*, Al-Ghazali attacks many Islamic philosophers based on such arguments, as accusing them of prioritizing philosophy over religion. (Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Michael E. Marmura, trans., Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2000.)

<sup>54</sup> Avicenna’s philosophy can be regarded as reconciliation between Neo-platonism and Aristotelianism *via* Kalam (Islamic speculative theology). More precisely, he tried to investigate some major Islamic questions through a certain Aristotelian philosophy that is based on a neo-Platonic version of it.

<sup>55</sup> Heath, Peter, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, p. 54.

Aristotelian philosophy – and as parallel to *De Anima* – Avicenna discusses the body-soul relation under the framework of form-matter. Yet the Aristotelian assumption of the coexistence of form and matter within the object poses an obstacle to defend soul's independent existence out of the body. According to Avicenna the soul cannot exist before attaching to the body<sup>56</sup>, yet it will maintain in existence after its detachment. The soul is analyzed under three parts: vegetable, animal and rational/human soul. The vegetable soul (which is responsible from reproduction, growth and nourishment) and the animal soul (perception and movement) “pass away upon the death of the body” whereas the rational soul is an “independent, immaterial, immortal substance”, which will continue to live in the afterlife.<sup>57</sup>

Still, Avicenna rejects any sort of causal dependency of the soul to the body. As addressing the soul, he writes, “it is impossible that either accidents or forms subsisting in matter should produce the being of a self-subsisting entity independent of matter or that of an absolute substance”.<sup>58</sup> According to Avicenna, the body cannot cause the soul in any possible way; cannot even stand as its material cause.<sup>59</sup> Rather the role of the body (in the sense of animal faculties) is only constitutive for the initial stages of soul's self-development. The body becomes a mean for acquiring empirical knowledge by which the soul can then develop premises, fundamental concepts, relations, and such.<sup>60</sup> As Avicenna writes, the higher act of the rational soul is to “receive the impressions of the

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<sup>56</sup> Avicenna tries to prove this point through the claim that soul can be neither multiple nor one single unity before its embodiment. Whereas multiplicity would require individuation within body, thinking of a single soul would be misleading for it cannot be divisible or shared by different bodies. For the relevant discussion see, Avicenna, *Avicenna's Psychology: An English Translation of Kitāb Al-najāt, Book II, Chapter VI with Historico-Philosophical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition*, F. Rahman, ed., Westport, Connecticut: Oxford Hyperion Press, 1981, p. 56f.

<sup>57</sup> Heath, p.55.

<sup>58</sup> Avicenna, p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> Here, Avicenna refers to Aristotle's four causes, and by examining each cause individually argues for the impossibility of a causal relation between body and soul. (Ibid.)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 55.



universal forms abstracted from matter”.<sup>61</sup> It is again the case that the universal forms are attainable by the immortal soul, as long as the soul turns towards this higher knowledge that is purified from the matter.

It is as if our soul has two faces: one turned towards the body, and it must not be influenced by any requirements of the bodily nature; and the other turned towards the higher principles, and it must always be ready to receive from what is there in the Higher Plane and to be influenced by it.<sup>62</sup>

As the soul grows in strength, as it “has obtained all the principles it needs for conception and judgment” it no longer requires the mediacy of bodily faculties; quite the contrary, in this later stage the body keeps the soul from conducting its proper activity.<sup>63</sup> As much as the soul does not causally depend on the body it also does not require it for maintaining in existence. The body may stand as the “kingdom and instrument” of the soul; however, it is not necessary for its continuation.<sup>64</sup> As Druart states, “the soul owes its existence to an immaterial being and to the body only owes the instant appropriate for its existence”, hence the body becomes a source only “of individuation”.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, after learning to acquire the knowledge of universals, which have been residing in the Active Intellect, the development of the soul depends only “on its own nature”, to which the bodily faculties then become mere distractions.<sup>66</sup>

Under the same reasoning, one can broadly interpret Avicenna’s well-known thought experiment of the Flying Man as showing that it is the soul that represents the truth of the human being. The gist of the experiment is that one can image him/herself without any apprehension of the bodily organs, as hanging in the

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 56. Since it is impossible to acquire the knowledge of universals without leaving behind the material, or the potential (while universals do not contain any potentiality) the body, after some point, converts into a burden. It can no longer contribute to the intellectual development but only interfere through needs and desires.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>65</sup> Druart, Thérèse-Anne, “The Human Soul’s Individuation and Its Survival after the Body’s Death: Avicenna on the Causal Relation between Body and Soul” in *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy 10*, 2000, p. 270.

<sup>66</sup> Avicenna, p. 58.

void. Even though there is no concept of a body, no sensual perception, the 'I' is still imaginable as "an intellect with full rational capacities".<sup>67</sup> Hence, self-awareness, in the most primitive sense, requires only the presence of the soul. This, once again, allows us to trace the development of the fundamental metaphysical ideas that we have been following since Plato. The soul is not only prior to the body but also represents the truth of the subject. This truth is fulfilled only in soul's movement within the purely universals towards the divine, the active Intellect.

What has been depicted so far under the name of the metaphysical approach offers only a limited fragment of what rather stands as a vast and complex tradition. Tracing this Platonic line was with the intention of presenting a particular way of philosophizing that has been predominant within Western philosophy from the early beginning: A diametrical outlook whose dominance will continue to strengthen until the late modern period. In the context of an opposing understanding between the body and soul, death itself converts into a pragmatic tool that is external to the truth of the human being. Avicenna's following formulation perfectly summarizes the gist of the problem. "But it is absurd that a single thing in the same sense should possess both, the potentiality of corruption and the actuality of persistence".<sup>68</sup> As empowered by this gap, the essence of human beings is placed under the absolute and infinite as represented by the soul whereas the body and its effects are rendered alien to this essence. The individual, then, as yearning to identify with the absolute can no longer form an essential relation to death in terms of his/her mortality, or as something that will bring one's own worldly existence to an end. Death rather appears almost as accidental. As it becomes apparent in the identification of death with the practice of philosophy, it seems as if death cannot even generate a true effect upon the soul that is already capable of breaking its ties with the material, as in a state of contemplation, by

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<sup>67</sup> Black, D. L., "Avicenna on Self-Awareness and Knowing that One Knows" in *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition: Science Logic, Epistemology and Their Interactions*, Rahman, Shahid, et al., eds., Springer, 2010, p. 64.

<sup>68</sup> Avicenna, *Ibid.*, p. 61.

becoming occupied with the universal forms or the higher level of the intellect. Especially for the true philosopher who has already drawn itself away from the corporeal concerns and towards the highest Good or Intellect, death remains almost ineffective, if not advantageous. Correspondingly, relating to one's own death as a truth that belongs to one's own essence cannot be possible under the alienation that is employed towards the body. Until now we have covered in what ways the metaphysical tradition attributes an externality to the notion of death. Within this externality, death touches upon the soul only within a moment of transition in which the soul becomes uplifted. Now, we will turn towards the moral understanding and investigate how this externalization is once again postulated, but this time from an opposite direction, as identifying death with total annihilation.

### **2.1.2 The Moral Understanding of Death: Death as Annihilation**

The second section of the historical overview chapter focuses on the moral understanding of death that is based on the work of Epicurus. Here, the attention shifts away from the domain of metaphysics towards the ethical life of the Hellenistic period. This also marks a substantial shift in the purposes of conducting philosophy: While the Platonic aim behind philosophizing is to achieve to the ultimate form of the Good, the Epicurean emphasis on the good is to attain a pleasurable life. The Hellenistic period is often portrayed as reflecting a decay in Greek civilization mostly due to the tendency of turning away from the Platonic and Aristotelian texts towards a philosophy that is more Eastern oriented.<sup>69</sup> In line with this accusation, the Epicurean way of exalting pleasure as the ultimate aim of human activity is mostly interpreted in a superficial sense and underestimated as an empty and selfish hedonism. However, the Epicurean way of achieving pleasure is highly sophisticated in that the pleasure lies not in a sensory level, but rather requires an investigation on the conditions of achieving tranquility of mind. Within this investigation, the notion of death plays an important role in becoming one of

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<sup>69</sup> Hadot, *Ibid.*, p. 92.

the major obstacles among the way, as disturbing the peace of mind. Through the work of Epicurus, death becomes studied in connection with mortality. It becomes an immediate object of interest with regard to its possible effects on human welfare through the ethical vocabulary of pleasure/pain and good/evil.

### 2.1.2.1 The Epicurean Understanding of Death

Epicurus approaches death through the perspective of mortality and annihilation. Death's cancelling effect on life is the reason why Epicurus concerns with death since it becomes the source of a great fear that prevents the individual from living a pleasurable life. Yet, as Epicurus claims, understanding the true nature of this notion will simply reveal that there is truly nothing to fear. For that reason, a proper study of death becomes necessary for showing that any kind of fear of it is actually baseless.

Perhaps the most recognized sentence on death within Western philosophy is as follows: "Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not."<sup>70</sup> Epicurus' main point here is to show that death cannot constitute a substantial threat for human beings, since at the moment and after the actualization of death there will no longer be a human being that suffers the consequences of this threat. As Lucretius writes, "there will be no second self, to live and mourn to himself his own loss."<sup>71</sup> Within the contemporary discussions this is referred as the Existence Condition: Something can only be harmful to the person if that person exists at that time to undergo this harm.<sup>72</sup> Various philosophers question this Existence requirement and try to generate examples in which later events may bring

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<sup>70</sup> Laetius, Diogenes, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, R. D. Hicks, trans., Vol. 2., London: W. Heinemann, 1925, p. 651 (X. 125).

<sup>71</sup> Lucretius, *Lucretius on the Nature of Things*, Cyril Bailey, trans., Oxford: Clarendon, 1948, p. 135 (III 867-896).

<sup>72</sup> Feldman, Fred, "Some Puzzles about the Evil of Death" in *The Philosophical Review* 100 [2], 1991, p. 205.

misfortune to the already dead individual.<sup>73</sup> Yet, this discussion by itself displays that the loss of the subject reappears as a difficulty for attributing a moral worth to death.

As the Epicurean conclusion follows, since the experience of death results in the annihilation of the subject altogether, this experience cannot be harmful either for the living subject or for the dead. Death and life, as standing in opposite poles, cannot coexist; rather they are mutually exclusive and for that reason, death cannot be considered as an experience that has meaning in life. This doctrine, being a form of hedonism, makes use of a pleasure-pain scale for determining the standards of a good life. Basically, a good life is measurable. It is attainable by experiencing less pain than pleasure throughout one's life. This form of hedonism is distinct in that the desirable pleasures that will lead to a good life are such that: they provide happiness in the long-term, ensure the tranquility of mind and are easily attainable within a simple life. By pleasure, Epicurus does not indicate purely sensual or luxurious enjoyments – though they can also contribute to pleasure as long as they will not turn out to be harmful in time – but more importantly “the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul”.<sup>74</sup> Death, on the other hand, as resulting in the privation of all sensation can produce neither pleasure nor pain to whom that will no longer be there to receive it. Accordingly, there is nothing good or evil about death. Yet, if the individual's approach towards death is by means of the emotion fear, this in return transforms death into something painful indeed. Postulating death as an object of fear becomes the very reason for its harmfulness. Therefore death, in itself, as a state of sensual deprivation or non-existence, is not

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<sup>73</sup> See Pitcher, George, “The Misfortunes of the Dead” in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21 (2), April 1984. An ancient formulation of this question belongs to Aristotle as raised in relation to happiness. Aristotle writes: “[T]hough a man has lived happily up to old age and has had a death worthy of his life, many reverses may befall his descendants (...) It would be odd, then, if the dead man were to share in these changes and become at one time happy, at another wretched; while it would also be odd if the fortunes of the descendants did not for some time have some effect on the happiness of their ancestors.” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, W. D. Ross, trans., Kitchener: Batoche Books, 1999, p. 15 [§10].)

<sup>74</sup> Laetius, *Ibid.*, p. 657 (X. 132). Therefore, Epicurus, contrary to the accusation of his critics, claims that the pleasurable life will necessarily coincide with a “life of prudence, honour, and justice”. (*Ibid.*)

what is harmful but the harm rather consists in the anxious and fearful attitude towards it.<sup>75</sup>

Epicurus denotes that the fear of death as along with the fear of gods become a major source of pain. The greatest harm, namely the loss of the tranquility of mind originates particularly from these two fears, which are closely related to each other since what underlies the fear of death most of the time is a fear of heavenly punishment in the afterlife. The following task then is to dismiss these fears once and for all and find tranquility in the conclusion that nothing follows the final annihilative moment of death. In order to prove that death corresponds to a true annihilation, Epicurus appeals to the doctrine of atomism. The soul is actually part of the body;<sup>76</sup> it is composed of atoms and these atoms simply decompose in the moment of death, whereby eliminating the possibility of an afterlife. This indicates that although Epicurus preserves the body soul distinction, these notions now carry a similarity within the substantial level – as being composed of atoms. “The soul is a corporeal thing, composed of fine particles, dispersed all over the frame”,<sup>77</sup> and “those who call soul incorporeal speak foolishly. For if it were so, it could neither act nor be acted upon”.<sup>78</sup> Epicurus, therefore, claims that it is likely to suppose that the corporeal soul-atoms, as dispersed within the body will decompose with the death of the body.

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<sup>75</sup> It is plausible to assume that, here Epicurus refers not to the process of dying itself, which may in some cases last long and cause severe pain. Rather his argument is of a more general kind as emphasizing what each and every individual undergoes: the final moment in which death results in non-existence. Frederik Kaufman also mentions this in a footnote: “It is clear that Epicurus is talking about being dead, not the process of dying, which can be awful and hence rationally feared”. (Kaufman, Frederik, “Death and Deprivation; Or, Why Lucretius’ Symmetry Argument Fails” in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74 [2], 1996, p. 305 fn.) For a more detailed analysis of this distinction see Rosenbaum, Stephen, “Epicurus and Annihilation” in *The Philosophical Quarterly* 39 (154), 1989, p.82f.

<sup>76</sup> As Christopher Gill denotes, “Epicurus replaces the traditional (at least Platonic and Aristotelian) contrast between psyche and body with that between the psyche (one part of the body) and the rest of the aggregate (the total bodily complex)”. See, Gill, Christopher, “Psychology” in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*, James Warren, ed., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2009, p.127. The soul is in a part-whole relation with the compound body, where the soul is exposed to the same effects, such as destructibility against death.

<sup>77</sup> Laertius, *Ibid.*, p. 593 (X. 63).

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 596-7 (X. 67).

However, even if one holds the belief that there is an afterlife, the possibility of divine punishment still seems refutable to Epicurus: for it is not plausible that Gods, as the heavenly beings that they are, “take an interest in our world”.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the belief in afterlife punishment should itself be considered as an impious thought, since a God that “enjoys perfect bliss along with immortality” could not be an angry one: This would not only stand as contradictory, but as an impious assumption for it assigns inferiority – an unsuitable attribution – to a heavenly being.<sup>80</sup> As it is quoted by Laertius, one of the maxims of the Epicurean doctrine is as follows:

A blessed and eternal being has no trouble himself and brings no trouble upon any other being; hence he is exempt from movements of anger and partiality, for every such movement implies weakness.<sup>81</sup>

From such a transcendent depiction of heavenly beings, it follows that even if one considers afterlife as a possibility, expecting that a heavenly being will cause pain would amount to undermining the greatness and bliss of it and result in a contradiction.

This shows that Epicurus tries to prove the insignificance of the fear of death in three steps: Firstly, death is not an experience that any living individual can undergo, for as long as the living individual is alive death does not occur and when it does the individual is no longer there to experience it. Secondly, death is the annihilation of both soul and body in the atomic level. And finally, even if this was not the case, the possibility of a fear-provoking God that will enable a painful afterlife is unreasonable.

Regardless of their soundness or truth, these Epicurean conclusions are highly significant for problematizing death within the borders of finitude. However,

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<sup>79</sup> Warren, James, “Removing Fear” in *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism*, James Warren, ed., Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2009, p. 239. According to Epicurus, the nature works independent of any godly interference. This can be verified by observing the atomic structure and natural causation that is self-sufficient: capable of working by its own internal mechanism. (Laertius, *Ibid.*, p. 611. [X. 82].)

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 607. (X. 76-77). For a discussion on impiety see also *Ibid.*, p. 649ff. (X. 123-124).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 663 (X. 139).

apart from this *prima facie* conclusion, the Epicurean analysis of death, in its attempt to render death meaningless, depends on a full externalization of this notion. He considers death as a spatiotemporal transient experience that turns out to be impossible to experience. Strodach criticizes Epicurus by claiming that in his account death signifies merely a “word” rather than a “possible experience”.<sup>82</sup> However, I maintain that this criticism of Strodach is unable to reflect the true nature of the problem. The problem is rather with the Epicurean assumption that the experience itself, which may truly be a meaningless moment, is itself defining the meaning of death. Reducing death to a moment of happening may allow Epicurus to show the unexperienceable character of it; yet it overlooks the extending meaning of this happening as exposing the finitude of human life. The grasp of this exposition, of course, can only be in advance before the actual occurrence. Epicurus himself rejects the idea of seeking meaning in the expectation of death. He writes that, “Whatsoever causes no annoyance when it is present, causes only a groundless pain in the expectation”.<sup>83</sup> Here Epicurus does not consider searching the meaning of death beyond its experience. Yet, this experience by itself does not have much to reveal with respect to the truth of this phenomenon. It seems that the meaning of death exceeds the meaning of the particular happening in which it takes place, and immediately extends to the domain of life, in the sense that death marks the end or no-longer-being of life. In other words, the Epicurean claim draws its strength out of a particular empirical meaning of death, which does not seem to touch upon the gist of the ontological problem.

The full development of this ontological position will necessitate an understanding that recognizes life and death within an interdependency and – as this interdependency will then allow – a redefinition of death in its full immanence, that is to say not as a particular moment but as a disclosure of finitude. I will attempt to build such an understanding throughout the following chapters of this dissertation. Yet it must be cleared out that the critique that I have just drawn is not

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<sup>82</sup> Strodach, George K., “Introduction” in *The Art of Happiness*, New York: Penguin Classics, 2012, p. 47.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 651 (X. 125).



pointing to an incoherency within the Epicurean line of thinking, rather it is only questioning whether his presuppositions with regard to the definition of death are accurate. Since Epicurus' project is of a moral nature, his reductive reading becomes practical for his own purposes, showing that death cannot be an object of fear.

Before closing up the discussion on the moral account of Epicurus, I will lastly mention the Symmetry Argument of Lucretius, which stands supplementary to the general picture of Epicurus and will be helpful to develop further on the critique that I have just drawn.

#### **2.1.2.2. Lucretius and the Symmetry Argument**

Lucretius, a devoted follower of Epicurus, adopts and develops the Epicurean approach on death within his poem, *De Rerum Natura*.<sup>84</sup> Lucretius claims that the human soul must be mortal for there is nothing more incompatible then to comprehend the union of the mortal and the immortal, joined under the same being, namely human: "to link the mortal with the everlasting, and to think that they can feel together and act one upon the other, is but foolishness".<sup>85</sup> Death, therefore, results in a complete annihilation in which the soul is as much affected as the body

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<sup>84</sup> Considering the assumed amount of Epicurus' entire collection of works, it is possible to say that the currently available parts, which have remained until today, are corresponding to a small portion of the original corpus. Consequently, the poem of Lucretius becomes a valuable source for filling in the missing parts of the Epicurean doctrine. Yet, this also makes it questionable whether Lucretius is plainly rephrasing Epicurus' arguments or rather developing some of his own that are in line with the Epicurean outlook; since there are some arguments, which are to be found only in Lucretius' writings, such as the Symmetry Argument that I will here present. Hence, it is difficult to be certain to whom such arguments originally belong, to Epicurus himself or to Lucretius. (For the possible roots of this argument see Rosenbaum, Stephen, "The Symmetry Argument: Lucretius Against the Fear of Death" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50 (2), Dec 1989, p. 353 fn.) In this section I will attribute the arguments that are encountered in his poem to Lucretius himself, but consider his general doctrine as supplementary to the Epicurean view. Lucretius' own words verify his commitment to Epicurus as a pupil: "thee [Epicurus] I follow, bright star of the Greek race, and in thy deepest prints firmly now I plant my footsteps, not in eager emulation, but rather because for love I long to copy thee (...) Thou art our father, thou discoverer of truth." (Lucretius, *Lucretius*, p. 106 [III 1-25].)

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 132 (III 776-806).

by the atomic decomposition. Once the atoms are separated the subject irreversibly loses its unity and can no longer exist as the subject that s/he had once been.<sup>86</sup>

The argument that is referred in contemporary terminology as the Symmetry Argument draws a parallel between the past and the future of an individual's lifespan regarding non-existence: Just as the infinite past, in which I did not exist, meant nothing to me at that time, similar will be the future in which I will again be non-existing. Or in Lucretius' own poetical wording, "See how the past ages of everlasting time, before we are born, have been as naught to us. These then nature holds up to us as a mirror of the time that is to come, when we are dead and gone".<sup>87</sup> The gist is that the nothingness of one's past non-being mirrors one's future state and becomes symmetrical to the nothingness after death. He concludes that it would be meaningless to fear the future state of non-existence while not being afraid of the past, in which one had already been non-existing.<sup>88</sup>

In one of his papers, Warren claims that the Symmetry Argument needs the following reformulation for it to be accurate: The non-existence of the past is nothing to us from *our present perspective*; hence the future should also be nothing for us *now*.<sup>89</sup> He claims that only by this modification the argument becomes sound, since otherwise the Symmetry Argument falls into the same impasse that the Epicurean formulization suffers: According to Warren, the fact that death will be nothing to us after we die does not necessarily imply anything about our present

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<sup>86</sup> Lucretius, just as Epicurus, examines the possibility of afterlife within the borders of an atomic explanation. The unity of the soul, once lost can never be obtained anew. In the continues of the argument he states that, even if we could suppose that time renders it possible that the atoms were re-gathered in the exact same composition, they could still not form the same subject due to the break in life that has already occurred within death. Lucretius identifies this break or gap with the loss of memory.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 138 (III 955-980).

<sup>88</sup> There are various contemporary attempts to refute the Symmetry Argument. An interesting one belongs to Sumner who claims that there is a fundamental difference that separates the two senses of non-existence from each other, which weakens the purported symmetry. The "not yet" of the past is not identical with the "no longer" of the future; since life has occurred in between: The life-time of the individual is what separates prenatal non-existence from the post-mortem one, hence renders such an identification impossible. (Sumner, L. W., "A Matter of Life and Death" in *Noûs* 10 (2), May 1976, p. 153.)

<sup>89</sup> Warren, James, "Lucretius, Symmetry Arguments, and Fearing Death" in *Phronesis* 46 (4), 2001, p. 469ff.

relation with it. Without including one's present attitude to the picture, both Lucretius and Epicurus are "entitled to conclude only that death *will be* nothing to us – precisely when we are dead" but not while we live.<sup>90</sup> However, as I have already discussed, the problem that Warren underlies seems dismissible in Epicurean terms: As long as death is taken to be an experience that is meaningless at the time of occurrence, our present attitude will also be directed towards the same 'meaningless' experience. Hence, Warren's argument by itself is not sufficient to weaken the argument. Nagel, on the other hand, attempts to refute the Epicurean argument by claiming that death is bad simply for being the deprivation of life, where life stands as the condition of the possibility of having any possibility whatsoever.<sup>91</sup> Nagel, likewise, is introducing an important point that is defensible only by stepping outside of the Epicurean definition of death. Or else it is possible to repeat Epicurus' answer that being deprived of life will not pose a problem for the subject who will no longer feel this loss after death.

In the end I would argue that the understanding of death within the Epicurean picture remains limited compared to the potential expansions that this subject matter can and should acquire within a philosophical search. It is true that in order for death to be a concern 'right now' it must initially be included in the field of meaning that life itself draws. The remaining question is whether there is another way of understanding death, in which death is placed not in opposition *vis-a-vis* life but as remaining in its borders through another framework, viz., a framework that can work with death within a threshold of absence and presence.

### **2.1.3 The Concluding Remarks on the Historical Background**

Until now we have examined a portion of the historical development of various ideas that contribute to the apprehension of death within Western Philosophy. Both

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 471.

<sup>91</sup> In accordance with the Deprivation Theory, Nagel claims that "any death entails the loss of some life that its victim would have led had he not died at that or any earlier point". (Nagel, Thomas, "Death" in *Noûs* 4 (1), 1970, p. 79.)

the metaphysical and moral understandings that are sketched so far share the common deficiency of not being able to address death as an internal phenomenon, in relation to human's own finite being. As I mentioned in the beginning this deficiency is partly the result of the difficulty of this notion itself. The Epicurean claim that death lacks meaning has strength in itself, which the binary framework further reinforces. Therefore, to search the meaning of death within the boundaries of life and to be able to conduct this search within the terminology of negativity and nothingness (due to the elusive nature of this notion) requires an initial step outside of this binary framework. In order to proceed with the task of recognizing the internal belongingness of such oppositions, the initial challenge is to open up a place for death within the gap between presence and absence, as well as being and nothing. This requires a proper reckoning with the metaphysical language of binary opposition. This language enforces a fixed and static natural order. As I will discuss presently, such a dual order stands in the center of the Hegelian criticism. As Hegel writes in the *Logic*,

This metaphysics became *dogmatism* because, given the nature of finite determinations, it had to assume that of *two opposed assertions* (of the kind that those positions were) one must be *true*, and the other *false*.<sup>92</sup>

Or as Houlgate writes,

Metaphysical philosophy is thus described by Hegel as 'either/or' thinking because it treats predicates or determinations of thought as mutually exclusive, "as if each of the two terms in an antithesis has an independent, isolated existence as something substantial and true by itself".<sup>93</sup>

In the framework that Hegel will present, the dialectic relation of life and death in no way refutes that death terminates life. Indeed, life and death constantly confront each other, they are engaged in a mutual relation in which they repetitively negate but at the same time enable each other. As Hegel's account of logic will assist us to conceptualize, in the dialectical understanding, the true notion of something is

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<sup>92</sup> See Hegel, *EL*, p. 69 §32.

<sup>93</sup> Houlgate, Stephen, *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 101.

attainable only in mediation of its negative whereas this negative, due to this relation, can no longer be taken as the sheer negative of the former but as a component of a higher notion that builds out of their unity, or essential togetherness. Hence, the meaning of death is not ascribable to an isolated domain, which begins where life ends. This is a common ground in which Hegel and Heidegger will meet. Death is not something external to life, to being or to the living individual. Rather death constantly acts upon life through its negative presence either as gaining its actuality as conceptually grasped in Hegel, or as an existential possibility that is already acting upon one's Being in Heidegger. The rest of my work will be an attempt to demonstrate in what ways an ontologico-existential approach towards death can get beyond this historical narrative. So that it becomes possible to study death within a wider scope of meaning and to offer a fuller representation of its nature and philosophical importance.

## CHAPTER 3

### HEGEL: DEATH AS THE SHEER NEGATIVITY

#### 3.1 The Ubiquity of the Absolute and the Role of the Negative

As the historical investigation chapter displayed so far, numerous metaphysical concerns caused the notion of death to remain fairly unfavorable as a philosophical problem. As mentioned above, perhaps the most challenging among them is to construct a study within the level of negativity. Building an analysis upon the centrality of the negative corresponds to evaluating death primarily in its relations to such notions as finitude, limit, nothingness or negativity. These notions, together with death, are not regarded among the proper objects of philosophical thinking due to their externality to the absolute-oriented substance metaphysics, which prioritizes the absolute as an unchanging pure present given. Under the twofold or polarized approach death becomes irreconcilable with this absolute and corresponds only to a sheer opposition of being. It transforms into an empty externality, which cannot properly belong to the truth of human essence that is measured by its proximity to the absolute.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> One of the good examples of such an external approach towards death is Spinoza's way of discussing it. In accordance with his *conatus* doctrine, Spinoza claims that everything craves to maintain in existence and there is nothing intrinsic within the thing or in its cause that can bring about annihilation. As he writes in *The Ethics*, whether something will continue to exist "cannot be determined at all through the very nature of the existing thing, nor even by the efficient cause, which necessarily posits the existence of the thing, and does not take it away." (Spinoza, Benedict, *The Ethics and Other Works*, Edwin Curley, trans., New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1994, p. 116 / II.Def.5.) Houlgate draws an opposition between Hegel and Spinoza with respect to this point: "to die, as it were, by its own hand—is one that clearly separates Hegel from Spinoza". (Houlgate, Stephen, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*, West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2006, p. 375.)

Before turning to the Hegelian dialectic for possible answers, the problem must be reformulated in greater detail, this time with respect to the (pre-Hegelian) metaphysical understanding of an absolute as the ultimate aim of philosophical knowledge. Such an analysis will explicate in what ways Hegel contributes to the study of death while he himself builds the absolute upon the centrality of the negative. As developing on the relation between the Hegelian absolute and negativity, I will argue that their compatibility will provide a solid ground for raising the question of death within philosophy. Beginning with Nietzsche and Sartre, the existentialist as well as the succeeding poststructuralist movement almost entirely follow a line that centralizes upon the negative. Indeed, philosophy after Hegel has been obsessed with this negative in such a degree that Hegel himself happened to be criticized often as stepping back from his own philosophical courage for defending that negativity will ultimately dissolve within the absolute. The relevant question is whether Hegel truly accomplishes to work with the negative or uses it as a mere tool that will be exhausted in the final unity. I will return to this question in the following pages for it relates also to the question whether death finds a true place within the Hegelian formulation of the absolute.

As will be shown presently, the Hegelian sense of absolute is highly distinct from any other usage of this term and in no way corresponds to an abstract transcendent origin. Correspondingly, death as the sheer negativity, does not remain external to such an absolute, but quite the contrary has an internal constructive role in making this absolute possible. The absolute – in becoming the absolute – embraces the power of the negative repeatedly in different forms, as constitutive moments of its own phenomenological development. Or as Hegel's well-known formulation within the *Phenomenology of Spirit (PS)* states, the path towards the absolute is through "looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it".<sup>95</sup> I argue that The Hegelian formulation of the absolute, as the true infinite, ultimately opens up a possibility; on the one hand to preserve death's essential

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<sup>95</sup> Hegel, G. W. Friedrich, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A. V. Miller, trans. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, p.19 / ¶32.

relation with the nothing, and on the other hand form an internal relation between death and the absolute. As it will be cleared out in the following pages, this is due to the inner-relatedness of the opposites within the Hegelian dialectic.

In the “Introduction” to this dissertation, I asserted that the Platonic attitude towards death, considers death in relation to the afterlife, the soul and the knowledge of pure Forms. From such an outlook, the question of death is subordinate to and conditioned by other questions, such as whether the soul is immortal or the possible effects of disembodiment. The reason why death comes into consideration only under such questions relates to what counts as the proper object of philosophical knowledge. The Platonic doctrine ascribes true knowledge to the domain of forms. This, in return, may stand as the reason why death has importance only as an instrument whereas remaining unimportant as a philosophical phenomenon as such. According to Plato the ultimate end, *telos*, of philosophy is attaining the knowledge of absolute universals, viz., the knowledge that belongs to the higher realm of immaterial unchanging pure forms. Plato does not use the notion absolute as a technical term, yet it properly signifies the essential characteristic of forms and their knowledge *qua* ultimate philosophical knowledge – as opposed to the contingency of everyday opinion or *doxa*. Here, I deliberately use and emphasize the notion absolute within Plato not only for comparative purposes – to contrast it with the Hegelian absolute – but for the simple fact that absolute, by definition, covers a wide scope of meaning including unconditioned, self-existing, unlimited, unchanging and infinite, which are all central to the Platonic account of being or the theory of forms. These defining qualities that participate in the idea of the absolute may not be signified all together in every usage or context, either in Plato or in any other philosopher. Hegel even raises a criticism with regard to the way metaphysics attributes such qualities to the absolute without offering a ground.

[T]his metaphysics presupposed that cognition of the Absolute could come about through the *attaching of predicates to it*; and it investigated neither the peculiar



content and validity of the determinations of the understanding, nor yet this form of determining the Absolute by attaching predicates to it.<sup>96</sup>

The Hegelian understanding of the absolute as a final result of a long dynamic dialectic process is almost in opposition with the static sense of it, which can be described as given, immediate or pure. Hegel, under a critical look, refers to this static sense of absolute as the “abstract absolute”.<sup>97</sup> It is the indefinite empty universal idea to which nothing can actually be ascribed; or as Hegel’s well-known analogy states “the night in which all cows are black”.<sup>98</sup> Hegel criticizes the pre-Kantian metaphysics for taking “the abstract determinations of thought immediately” and supposing that their truth lies in this pure immediacy.<sup>99</sup> He identifies this approach with an early stage within the development of the Spirit, where self-consciousness does not go “beyond the thinking of mere understanding”.<sup>100</sup> Self-consciousness, in understanding, cannot yet capture opposites in their inner unity; it cannot attain thought in the level of reason. Hegel then attributes dogmatism to such a metaphysical position: as “adhering to one-sided determinations of the understanding whilst excluding their opposites”.<sup>101</sup> As I will elucidate further, the Hegelian criticism of the abstract absolute is with respect to taking opposites within their purity, as abstract determinations of understanding, as in their immediacy. As Hegel writes in the *Science of Logic (SL)*, “The forms of *determinate being* find no place in the series of those determinations which can be regarded as definitions of the absolute”.<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, under the speculative investigation of Hegel, the purported purity of the absolute will manifest itself as containing a restricted and finite side – which in return can no longer be considered simply as finite. As Boer eloquently states, according to Hegel’s philosophy:

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<sup>96</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p.66 / §28.

<sup>97</sup> See, *Ibid.*, p.125ff / §79. See also Hegel, G. W. Friedrich, *Hegel's Science of Logic (SL)*, A. V. Miller, trans., NY: Humanity Books, 1969, p.70ff.

<sup>98</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p. 9 / ¶16.

<sup>99</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 66 / §28 Add. 1.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70 / §32 Add. 1

<sup>102</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 137.

[A] specific mode of thought will always turn out to imply a contradiction between the absolute principle of thought and a particular determination of this principle. Hegel, going along with each of these moments, each time pushes a certain mode of spirit to the point where it must acknowledge that it had all along mistaken a one-sided determination of this principle for this principle itself.<sup>103</sup>

Therefore, in Boer's terms, the abstract absolute appears as a result of mis-taking a one-sided determination of the principle (the abstract absolute) for the principle itself (the true absolute). In other words, what is taken to be the absolute will show itself as just being a moment within the way of Spirit. This will further reveal that the discrepancy between the absolute and the finite self-consciousness is not due to the impurity of the finite but rather due to mistakenly postulating the principle as something pure – which is not the truth of the principle but only a partial side of it. This further indicates that the truth does not rest in the opposite side as well, viz., in the multiplicity of finite determinations. Therefore, the truth is neither the pure principle nor the particular determinations of it but their supersession, which is the result of grasping their internal relation so that their unified version presents a new knowledge; and this movement of supersession will continue until all become absolutely unified at the end.

The difference between the Platonic and the Hegelian way of understanding the absolute by itself requires a great amount of comparative analysis. Here my aim is not to undertake such an extensive research but appeal to the notion of absolute within Plato as representing a general idealist metaphysical outlook: This outlook takes absolute as its departure point (either begins with or postulates it as a given *telos*) and establishes upon the idea of a truth that is absolute, transcendent, unconditioned, unlimited. As a brief side remark, it is worth to consider that the lexical comprehensiveness of the term absolute, specifically, the way it is substitutive with such words as unconditional, self-existing, unlimited, unchanging, infinite etc., hints to an ontological commitment with regard to the coherence or togetherness of such qualities. Their coexistence and connectedness

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<sup>103</sup> Boer de, Karin, *On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 17.

under the term absolute participates in forming a transcendent<sup>104</sup> domain or a higher reality that is empowered *via* this interconnection. And it is with reference to this unifying domain, in which these qualities participate, that their own meaning is fortified in return. So as much as they contribute to the absolute they in a circular way gain their meaning in reference to it. Hence, the term absolute opens up a substantial ground in which all these qualities can work as a unitary body and become constitutive for metaphysics itself – regardless of whether this absolute is identical with a higher realm, or a single being such as God.

Platonic idealism plays an important role in creating such a sound metaphysical ground *qua* postulating the absolute realm of forms as an independent level of reality.<sup>105</sup> In Plato, the centrality of the absolute is not only part of his theory of forms but appears as the necessary condition of rational thought in general. Schmidt expresses this as the “necessity of thought’s dialectic ascent to infinity”:

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<sup>104</sup> This transcendence is in a way implied via the negative prefixes that these words carry, e.g., unconditioned, in-finite, un-limited. Semantically speaking, such words seem to take their reality only through a negative reference to what is present. Or they are remaining outside the boundaries of what our everyday experience is composed of. Obviously, I am only trying to point out that our ordinary usage of these words is in support of such a view of opposition and transcendence, though this is far from being sufficient to attain any sort of conclusion. Hegel, in an opposite way points to the semantic relation between the words finite-infinite. In support of this own dialectic he draws attention to the fact that finitude is already included within the word infinity: “In saying what the infinite is, namely the negation of the finite, the latter is itself included in what is said (...) One only needs to be aware of what one is saying.” (Hegel, *SL*, p. 143.) From a different aspect, Heidegger calls attention to the negative or “privative expression” that stands for the Greek word for truth, namely *a-letheia* – literally translatable as un-concealment. (H222.) Heidegger by applying to this etymological gesture argues that the character of truth is a bringing out of disguise of something whose primordial truth is already covered up within the public order. This finds its support in the Greek language, for *aletheia* hints that truth is a dis-covering of what is already distorted and concealed. Yet Heidegger warns the reader not to overemphasize this etymological search in the extent of drawing a “word-mysticism” out of it. (H220.)

<sup>105</sup> Western tradition acknowledges Plato as the pioneer of philosophy due to his success in adopting an argumentative system of thought over a mythopoetic one. However, the disposition of seeking truth on a transcendent level is part of an ancient and well-established tradition that precedes Platonic idealism. The absolute-oriented search for philosophical (or at least sophisticated) knowledge reaches back as far as our historical information expands, to the ancient doctrines of East and Egypt. It can appear in the form of an epic, a myth or a mystic-religious text. Some Neo-Platonists hold the view that Plato’s works are indeed an extension of some archaic esoteric doctrine that may be taken over from Pythagoras or influenced by the Eleusinian Mysteries. (See Melzer, Arthur M., *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014, p. 71ff. Also see Hadot, p. 152-153.)

In the end there is a certain legitimacy to the view that the long and varied history of Western philosophy ultimately ‘consist in a series of footnotes to Plato’ for it is the record of thought’s love affair with all that is represented by the idea of the infinite and unconditioned as the character of the truth to which transcendence delivers us.<sup>106</sup>

The necessity of separating truth from the conditionality of experience or from what is changeable or corporeal is evident even in the practical or political level. Plato’s critique of the sophistry practice, as well as the Athenian democracy depends upon this identification of truth with the absolute. Plato strictly defends the reign of absolute against sophistic relativism and the fundamental assumption of their art of rhetoric. This assumption is that every opinion holds a truth claim under the right argumentative structure even in the absence of any firm knowledge. Athenian democracy adopts this relativist view as well, viz., every citizen has a right to defend his own opinion, and these opinions are measured as true or false only by the approval of the majority.<sup>107</sup> Athenians also hold the view that it is possible to know what justice is through the act of praxis, that each and every citizen who attends the council can learn it by being involved and talking to fellow citizens. According to Plato, it was due to such ill opinions that Socrates was sentenced to death: opinions that were not able to capture the universal character of knowledge – not able to grasp the formal reality of the Just or Good. Plato’s claim is that *episteme* cannot be the result of any accidental or preferential mean; but must rather be sought within the hard work of building logical arguments, pertaining to a greater dialectic system whose boundaries and certainty is assured through the realm of forms. The consideration of the absolute as the proper or ultimate object of thought influenced philosophy in such a way that after Plato it appeared as a general attitude to pursue a fixed and universal ground in order to securely place knowledge within.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Schmidt, Dennis J., *The Ubiquity of the Finite: Hegel, Heidegger, and the Entitlements of Philosophy*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1988, p. 4.

<sup>107</sup> Orman, Enver, *Hegel’in Mutlak İdealizmi*, İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2015, p. 28-29.

<sup>108</sup> Even the materialistic approaches cannot escape the idea of a universal absolute ground, though seeking it in the configuration of the matter – rather than the structure of reason or some other level of transcendence. Hegel indicates a similar point when he argues, “every philosophy is essentially an idealism or at least has idealism for its principle, and the question then is only how far this

The remaining question is in which ways this centrality of the absolute affects the understanding of death. It is now possible to reconsider the externalization of death in terms of the unchanging absolute, as untouched by the corporeal realm of becoming. We have already shown that, within the metaphysical tradition, death is effective on the corporeal body and not on the soul, hence it becomes alien to the truth of the subject. It likewise remains external to the eternal realm of forms, or the proper objects of reason and philosophy. Earlier I tried to display how death is rendered to be a problem of transcendence, yet it cannot also be placed properly within the higher levels of reality, viz., within the realm of unchanging atemporal forms. Although death is discussed with respect to the possibility for attaining pure knowledge, as shown in *Phaedo*, it only has a functional purpose whereas it remains ineffective in revealing anything about truth (either in the sense of self-knowledge or philosophical knowledge) which rather corresponds to what is absolute. Death remains in opposition with the full actuality of the absolute forms. This twofold analysis results in that, death is (1) of philosophical importance due to its possible function in freeing the soul to achieve the knowledge of pure forms, (2) yet it itself cannot enter the domain of philosophical knowledge or stand as a proper object of investigation with regard to its incompatibility with the absolute. These conclusions far from being contradictory are displaying why the absolute-oriented tendency of metaphysics discusses death only in mediation of certain set of posthumous assumptions with regard to the soul.<sup>109</sup>

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principle is carried out". (Hegel, *SL*, p. 155.) Also see the section on Empiricism in the *Encyclopaedia of Logic* in which Hegel writes: Materialism is "the view in which matter as such counts as what is genuinely objective. But matter is itself already something abstract" and "the sensible domain is and remains something given"; thus, Hegel concludes that the materialistic attitude repeats the metaphysical error of beginning with "fixed presuppositions." (Hegel, *EL*, p.79 / §38 Add. 1.)

<sup>109</sup> The reason why I have discussed the Epicurean understanding of death separately from this Platonic line is that Hellenistic period, especially the Epicurean philosophy interrupts this historical line. As mentioned earlier, Epicurus' moral philosophy problematizes death directly as a core notion of philosophy – even though his account has its own difficulties. Correspondingly, what is truly unique to this Hellenistic period is that philosophy concerns itself fully with practical life, ethics and transforms into a life philosophy. It passes over being a mere intellectual vocation and draws away from the dominance of the absolute. Yet (and maybe due to this practical character) the

As we move on to the absolute within the Hegelian idealism, there occurs a substantial change within the framework, which opens up the possibility for bringing death within the borders of absolute knowledge. Yet, Hegel himself does not aim to offer a comprehensive philosophy of death.<sup>110</sup> It is rather his dialectic method and the way he works with the concept of opposition that will be stimulating in the first place. Death, within this Hegelian system appears as the ultimate negativity. It is the phenomenological correspondence of the limit of the determinate finite being through which consciousness ceases-to-be. This sheer negativity – as it is in the case of every opposition within the Hegelian system – will constantly merge into its opposite and become the constructive power of the Spirit. In the final moment of Spirit's supersession of all alienation, the self-knowledge of the Spirit, as absolute knowledge, will include the truth of the finite being, viz., the sheer negativity or death, in a superseded form. In other words, once death is acknowledged as the truth of self-consciousness within the mediacy of the work (as the positive element of this negativity), this truth will then be superseded and will convert into a power of negating that enables the enduring formative activity within Spirit. We will elaborate on this transformation within the following pages, yet before proceeding with this doctrine the nature of the Hegelian absolute must be explicated more clearly.

The absolute is build out of contradictions yet it itself does not harbor any contradiction. Hegel, argues that what seems to be contradictory in the state of understanding – which holds on to the mutual-exclusiveness of binary oppositions – reveals its truth in Reason, as dialectic. As Hegel writes in the *Encyclopaedia of Logic*, “[Older] metaphysics was not a free and objective thinking, for it did not

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predominant view considers the Hellenistic period to be a period of deterioration within philosophy. It is assessed as “a phase of decadence in Greek civilization”. (Hadot, *Ibid.*, p. 92.) It is an interesting point that this period, in which death enters the domain of philosophy and in which absolute is subordinate to practical knowledge is considered to be a time of philosophical decay. It seems as if the metaphysical way of doing philosophy itself is absolutized.

<sup>110</sup> Kojève challenges such a view by asserting that Hegel's philosophy in *PS* is at its bottom a philosophy of death: a claim that I will later discuss in detail. See, Kojève, Alexandre, “The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel” in *Interpretation* 3, Winter 1973, p. 124ff.

allow the object to determine itself freely from within, but presupposed it as ready-made".<sup>111</sup> In the logical account, this allowing is made possible by acknowledging the principle that opposites are fundamentally related rather than diametrically opposed. This is how absolute can come into being in the first place. The necessary inter-relatedness reveals a complete and elevated conceptual set of knowledge within logic, as taking "*thoughts as thoughts*, in their complete abstraction"<sup>112</sup>. On the phenomenological sense, this truth is the absolute truth of the Spirit. It knows itself holistically, not just as a final product but as the whole historical process. Each new moment of this historical process is generated out of a confrontation of a particular shape of consciousness with its purported opposite through an act of negation. This confrontation is governed by the logic of passing one's own limits and entering within the domain of the Other just to negate the Other and return from otherness. Hence, what begins as relating to the Other eventually and necessarily turns into a self-relating act.

According to Hegel, a selfsame absolute beginning is an indeterminate empty assumption that has no truth in-itself. It acquires a truth – which is not yet a full but partial truth – only in mediation of its Other. Yet once this Other is confronted, the pure being in-itself can no longer know itself in its purity. It is still itself, for it returns to itself, but from an otherness. Step by step, this reveals the interconnectedness of the whole system. The relation of the pure in-itself and the Other turns out to be such an intertwined and layered back-and-forth movement that within this movement all oppositions dissolve until the system itself becomes a complete absolute unity. Through Hegel, the substantial pre-given character of the absolute transforms into a necessary product of process, or as Sprigge states, the absolute becomes "the self-differentiating unity of cosmic dialectical sequence".<sup>113</sup> Hegel himself emphasizes in one of his early essays (1801), that the purpose of philosophy is to connect what is manifold and finite to the absolute. This can only

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<sup>111</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p.69 / §31 Add. 1.

<sup>112</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 34.

<sup>113</sup> Sprigge, T. L. S., "Absolute" in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol.1, Routledge, 1998, p. 27.

be done by “posit[ing] this manifold as internally connected” within a system of science whereas “philosophizing that does not construct itself into a system is a constant flight from limitations”.<sup>114</sup> Here, the crucial point is to search for this system not within the unity, but to build the unity through working with and superseding each limitation.

In the very beginning of the “Preface” of *PS*, Hegel states that the “diversity of philosophical systems” is an indication of a “progressive unfolding of truth”.<sup>115</sup> In this historical unfolding, nothing is completely true, but again nothing is false; each diversity offers a more comprehensive self-return. “Every philosophy is complete in itself, and like an authentic work of art, carries the totality within itself”.<sup>116</sup> Just as an ancient work of art cannot be a prelude for a modern one, Reason too cannot take its shapes to be such preludes for itself. Only once Reason “lifts itself into speculation”, liberates itself from its finite limitations and arrives at universality it can then look back and “necessarily finds itself throughout all the particular forms”.<sup>117</sup> The metaphoric language makes it easier to capture the sort of unity that Hegel has in mind: The individual moments of the Spirit are not preliminary parts of a larger whole; rather their existence, as each complete within themselves, altogether constitute the articulated whole. The whole, in return, renders everything else as partial and untrue in the face of itself. As his well-known example of blossom shows:

The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges as the truth of it instead. These forms are not just distinguished from one another, they also supplant one another as mutually incompatible. Yet at the same time their fluid nature makes them moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which each is as necessary as the other; and this mutual necessity alone constitutes the life of the whole.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hegel, G. W. Friedrich, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf trans., Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977, p.113

<sup>115</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.2 / ¶2

<sup>116</sup> Hegel, *The Difference*, p. 89

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>118</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.2 / ¶2



The contradictory finite moments of Spirit occur together, each of them as real as its opposite, and their interaction is what makes it possible for the Spirit to move ahead, until it reaches the unity where all these contradictory moments reveal themselves as different manifestations of one and the same Spirit. This makes contradiction immanent to the system; and not just because the system develops out of these contradictions but because the attained unity is nothing but this total activity itself.<sup>119</sup>

In *PS* the consciousness takes on different shapes, which all have their own truth. The truth is actually one and the same, but it is not fixed. So, it is not the case that a previous shape of Spirit was in error and the subsequent one is true, rather the forms of consciousness or its ways to apprehend reality change, and along with it changes the reality or truth itself. Hence, as the shapes of the self-reflective act are altered (e.g., understanding, self-consciousness, reason, Spirit) the object of knowledge also becomes altered, for they are internally connected. That is why truth is not apart from the knowledge of that particular stage, rather they alter together and take a different elevated shape in each stage. The result is “a fresh Notion but higher and richer than its predecessor”.<sup>120</sup> As knowledge grows richer it supersedes (*Aufheben*) the former reality and transforms into a more comprehensive moment within the act of knowing. This self-negating and self-positing movement continues until Spirit is no longer differentiated but fully actual in its self-knowing.

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<sup>119</sup> The gist of the claim is that the Spirit, the final unity is not itself a substance, but is the activity itself as coming to know its truth as the activity. This understanding, namely the process metaphysics of Hegel is greatly influenced by Heraclitus’s understanding of becoming. Hegel writes on his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, “there is no proposition of Heraclitus which I have not adopted in my Logic”. (Hegel in Hartnack, Justus, *An Introduction to Hegel’s Logic*, Kenneth R. Westphal ed., Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1998, p. 17.) In *SL* Hegel writes, “the deep-thinking Heraclitus brought forward the higher, total concept of *becoming*”. (p. 83.) In both Heraclitus and Hegel, the process of becoming is presenting the flux or the activity as the self-same truth itself. Hence, what stands inspiring in Heraclitus (for Hegel) is not that he presents change as the ultimate truth, but rather that he finds a stable ground, a principle, *logos* within the change itself – just as the river is the river itself by not being the same. As Chitwood writes on the river fragment of Heraclitus, “The water changes (exchanges its water) yet retains its identity as the river”. Chitwood, Ava, *Death by Philosophy*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2004, p. 67.

<sup>120</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 54.

It returns from otherness to find itself in its complete self-same unity for “nothing extraneous is introduced”<sup>121</sup> throughout the development.

The fact that each stage is necessary as a stepping-stone on the way to fuller knowledge is important for showing that these stages are all necessary. Yet, this does not immediately entail their truth. It is rather the phenomenological nature of the study that shows each stage has its own truth, as the way it appears, in that moment of history whereas in comparison to the fully actual Spirit such truth will remain partial. Since we, as Hegel and his readers, are looking back to the expedition of Spirit from a later stage, where all conflicts are already resolved, the complete knowledge of our current stage makes it possible to show that each shape was deficient in capturing the unity as compared to the absolute knowledge that has been achieved. However, without those shapes absolute knowledge could not come to be and cannot remain what it is, due to its self-reflective character. What is to be deduced from all this is that absolute knowledge is not some particular, stable or given knowledge. It is rather the highest activity of self-knowledge; it is the entire self-positing process that has been elevated into a unified conceptual philosophical system.

Death has its own place and truth within this system. The absolute is formed in the mediacy of the negative; where the sheer form of this negativity is death itself. Yet as each pure concept loses its pure character within its development, death also acquires its true meaning within the mediacy of its opposite. As we will shortly present within the “Self-Consciousness” part of the *PS*, the finite consciousness finds its truth (negativity) within its negating power (negating the independency of an entity) as transforming the natural thing into an infinite enduring work. Therefore, the truth of consciousness, the ceasing-to-be or pure nothing confronts its opposite and elevates this partial truth into the truth of Spirit by both including and superseding it. This shows that the absolute or infinite is what it is only through embracing the finite as a part of its own. Yet, as I have tried to depict, within the final whole the meaning of the part also transforms for it is

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

now unified with this whole. This point will become clearer through the discussion of the true and bad infinite.

### **3.2 The Binary Opposition Problem and the Hegelian Dialectic**

Carrying death purely outside the territory of being, or existence creates the barren understanding of death that has been repeatedly criticized so far. Hegel challenges the alleged oppositeness of any pure immediacy and therefore opens up the possibility of rethinking death in light of the dialectical back-and-forth model: as partaking in both being and non-being, finitude and infinity, natural life and spirit, where they themselves are no longer mutually exclusive. We will later see how Heidegger successfully carries this point further through a replacement of the terminology of presence with absence and actuality with potentiality; but doing so in a way that does not just replace the opposites with each other but by reconstructing them in their togetherness within the horizon of temporality.

In order to show how the Hegelian dialectic contributes to the account of death we will initially apply to the *Science of Logic* and discuss Hegel's account on the limit – in relation to the critique he builds against metaphysics – and continue with the dialectic relation between the categories of finitude and infinity and finally depict his account on death within *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. This will allow us to discuss what Hegel has to say against fixed oppositions in light of his own dialectic and show how this criticism make it necessary for death to be included in the absolute philosophical knowledge in order for it to be “truly” absolute. Once the dialectic transient schema will be laid out, Hegel's understanding of death and its place within the absolute knowledge can be more directly addressed.

In accord with his philosophical position, Hegel mostly operates with contradictory arguments and confuses the reader based on the discrepancy between what the truth seems to be and what it turns out to be. A particular reality of one stage is shown to be in the next stage a partial form of the truth whereas its opposite turns out to be equally true. For Hegel, this confusing character is not a

philosophical maneuver but the necessary way to represent how being unfolds itself to itself within different levels of phenomenal reality, to which contradiction is immanent. What this contradiction discloses is the need to move from a dual model to a triad one. Here, apart from the opposites there is a third side, an immanent unity that comes into being through their confrontation and internally breaks the dual structure apart. Hegel works upon this triad model in both *Science of Logic* as well as in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

### **3.2.1 The Logical Categories of the Determinate Being: Limit, Finitude and Infinity**

The *Science of Logic* offers the guidelines, the internal logic behind the relation between the contradictory conceptual determinations of thought as well as the reason why their confrontation will necessarily resolve in unification.

First of all, thought and being unites in Hegel's idealism by virtue of the immanent interplay of the subject and object, their melting within each other. Within the phenomenological consideration, the subject eventually grasps that in the experience both subject and object participate together in such a cooperative and relational way that they can no longer hold their separate positions; hence cannot remain pure, unconditioned or unaffected. Their mutual contribution to the constitution of experience is such that the conscious being, who undergoes the experience, cannot remain external to the in-itself process of the experience. Quite the contrary, the consciousness actively participates in the inner being of the object within experience, which eventually reveals the truth of the experience as in-and-for-itself. The works that German idealists have conducted up until Hegel, especially the transcendental idealism of Kant have already prepared the background for this Hegelian argument. However, what makes Hegel's account unique is the attempt to demonstrate that there is an intrinsic logical necessity behind the unity between subject and object, due to the nature of oppositeness. According to Hegel, the speculative philosophy makes it possible to grasp the

subject-object unity, as coming out of their own relation in which nothing can remain alien or unknowable to the subject. This relation, on the other hand, is also not something imposed in an epistemological manner. It is not about how one knows or experiences reality, but more fundamentally it is the only way that reality can be unfolded. As we will elucidate in greater detail, Hegel will build his argument on the logical assumption that all determination indicates an Other, which it limits and becomes limited by it. Hence, any determination necessarily brings a limiting relation with the Other. And once this relation occurs, the subject and object can no longer preserve their pure in-itself being for they are already moving in the mediation of each other. From this Hegel claims that it becomes possible to avoid the Kantian problem of the ineffability of the thing-in-itself, that is to say, the problem that the “in-itself” truth of the object is unknowable to the subject. In the face of the unity, the problem basically dissolves. The “in-itself” not only coincides with the “for-another” (for the consciousness) but it becomes apparent that the truth of the experience has always already been “in-and-for-itself” or belong to the superseded unity of the knower and the known. However, attaining this speculative philosophical insight is the constitutive task itself. The knowledge of the self-same unity basically cannot be an acknowledgment of an already given presupposition, but rather the gradual building of it by working upon each and every differentiation. This further shows that it is not only Kant but also the Fichtean system that is under attack. Fichte takes the act of self-positing as the ground of absolute – a claim that both Fichte and Hegel share. Yet Fichte posits the absolute immediately within this act itself and not as a gradual movement of self-return. This does not undermine that, for Fichte, the movement of self-return – or reducing the multiplicity into oneness – is the ultimate aim of philosophical knowledge.<sup>122</sup> Rather, what is criticized by Hegel is that Fichte grounds his philosophy upon an immediate “absolute oneness”, viz., which is not a substance but the activity of freely positing

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<sup>122</sup> Fichte, J. G., *The Science of Knowing*, Walter E. Wright, trans., Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 28.

the selfsameness of the I = I.<sup>123</sup> Yet, as Fichte writes, the pure thinking of the I is “completely objectless knowing, because otherwise it would not be knowing in itself but would require objectivity for its being.”<sup>124</sup> According to Hegel, the Fichtean formulation of an absolute “I” cannot truly extend beyond itself and return from this otherness, it cannot embrace what is external as truly its own; thus, it cannot demonstrate how subjectivity can truly conform to objectivity.

Fichte’s philosophy makes the Ego the starting point for the development of philosophical thinking; and the categories are supposed to result from its activity. But the Ego does not genuinely appear as free, spontaneous activity here, since it is regarded as having been aroused only by a shock from outside (...) On this view, the nature of the shock remains something outside of cognition, and the Ego is always something conditioned which is confronted by an other.<sup>125</sup>

Unless knowing the other as belonging to its own, the understanding places thoughts in between the subject and the object, where this medium “instead of connecting us with the object rather cuts us off from them”.<sup>126</sup> As not being able to overcome this discrepancy, understanding postulates something purportedly independent of itself, namely the thing-in-itself,<sup>127</sup> which supposedly corresponds to the pure independent thing, yet its truth turns out to be the opposite: The so-called independent thing-in-itself is the very “figment of subjective thought” or an abstract “thought-thing”.<sup>128</sup> As Hegel defines, “The thing-in-itself is the same as the absolute of which we know nothing except that in it all is one (...) nothing but truthless, empty abstractions”.<sup>129</sup> The truth is that, the in-itself, as being nothing but an empty abstract idea will belong to the subject more than any other kind of externality, for it is nothing but an idea. Hence, the alleged opposition between subject and object reveal a unity in a double-sense: They not only coincide within

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>125</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p.108 / §60 Add. 2.

<sup>126</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 34.

<sup>127</sup> Hegel writes that, “What Kant calls the ‘thing-in-itself’ is for Fichte the shock from outside,” which is again what remains external to cognition, immediately transcending it and rendering the Ego conditioned to a negative indeterminate non-Ego. (Hegel, *EL*, p.108 / §60 Add. 2.)

<sup>128</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 34.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

the concrete experience but the postulation of the thing-in-itself, as the hidden truth of the thing that is completely untouched by the subject, turns out to be empty and fictional; it indeed turns out to be what it avoids, namely, a mere abstract thought of the subject, hence it again slips within the realm of the subject.

It is plausible to claim that, within the intertwined schema of oppositions, perhaps the highest priority for Hegel is to show that this entire system is governed by necessity. The merge of logical categories with their opposite, as well as the dialectical movement of the Spirit are both governed by necessity. This is what posits universality to the philosophical system – without which everything remains at a subjective standpoint. Hegel criticizes Kant especially with respect to this aspect. He asserts that within the Kantian account, the categories (or pure concepts of the understanding) that are presumed to have *a priori* origin and objective validity cannot yet be inferred necessarily. Hegel acknowledges that Kant's insight in introducing objectivity within the domain of subjective thought *via* the use of categories is brilliant, yet it lacks verification. In Kant, categories are inferred from an analysis of the forms of judgments. Since categories are what make such judgments possible, they are attainable through a transcendental deduction, which will give a list of categories relevant to each form of judgment: from the types of judgment we infer the types of categories as being the condition of the possibility of that judgment.<sup>130</sup> However, Hegel claims that the universality here is merely presupposed and not demonstrated. Kant can only claim that categories must be present *a priori* in order to form judgments, viz., in order to have such a cognitive capacity in the first place. According to Hegel, the Kantian conclusion that it is the Ego, the knowing subject that is responsible for the “indifferent multiplicity” to be “consumed and reduced to unity” is true.<sup>131</sup> Yet, the objectivity is still not attained within Kant, for in his argument “it is not the subjective activity of self-consciousness that introduces absolute unity into the multiplicity in question; rather,

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<sup>130</sup> See Hegel, *EL*, p. 83-86 / §42. Also see Houlgate, *The Opening*, p. 16ff. For the relevant passage of the Kantian theory itself, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 105ff / B106 A80.

<sup>131</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 85 / §42 Add. 1.

this identity is the Absolute, genuineness itself”.<sup>132</sup> This is a very important distinction for it shows in what sense Hegel prioritizes the final product, the absolute as the governing essence or principle of the process itself. Unless the subjectivity of the self-consciousness turns into an objective Absolute at the end by passing through each and every otherness, and unless it finds itself carrying this truth all along, as led by logical necessity, the subject cannot serve as an objective ground. It cannot be shown as being responsible for the unity behind the multiplicity.

According to Hegel, logical categories validate their own necessity through moving in-between their essential powers and limits. The act of thinking, in its simplest form, initiates from conceiving “being” and “nothing” as distinguished moments. Hegel defines pure being as “being and nothing else, without any further specification and filling”.<sup>133</sup> The beginning must carry this indeterminateness, for any kind of determination, which can be attributed to being, presupposes something other than being itself and requires further proof on why this other is supposed to be at the very beginning. On the other hand, pure being and pure nothing are both immediate, empty, and undetermined, viz., merely categories of abstract thinking that lack any content. So, Hegel writes, “pure being and pure nothing are, therefore, the same”.<sup>134</sup> Yet, apart from this lack of content or determination that they share, still they are the extreme opposites, for one is being and the other is nothing. According to Hegel, this abstract formal opposition of pure being and nothing can have its truth only in becoming, which is the constant movement “vanishing in its opposite” of changing from being to nothing and *vice versa*.<sup>135</sup> As I will demonstrate shortly, the only way for something to become determined is by being delimited by its opposite whereas what is not determined or what is pure lacks meaning, it is empty. Only in becoming, these opposites can preserve their own distinguishing character while at the same time constantly overcoming this

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 69.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 83.



distinction (as one negates the other) as moving back and forth to being and nothing – vanishing within each other. Such a vanishing of the being in the nothing is not the sheer collapse of being to nothingness. It rather shows the ability of the being to endure within the negativity of the process and return to itself from this otherness – and this ability is actually due to the internal unity of them: “a movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has equally immediately resolved itself”.<sup>136</sup> The truth that results from this first movement of becoming is finite determinate being (*Dasein*).<sup>137</sup> Within this unity pure being and nothing are now in the shape of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be.<sup>138</sup> The former emptiness or indeterminateness of these categories will then show their truth in becoming. The finite determinate being can no longer remain within the duality of “is” or “is not” but alters to a dynamic state of constant motion as coming and ceasing to be. In the empirical level this corresponds to the act of living and dying of the individual. Although Hegel does not draw this inference, it seems plausible to claim that when the static understanding of being and nothing is superseded within becoming, in this dynamic understanding, death may correspond to ceasing-to-be, rather than no-longer-being. From such a logical understanding, death, within the process of becoming, reveals one side of the truth of becoming. It indicates the same movement as living, where life is the other side of this truth. In other words, if what determines the finite being is the reciprocal movement of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be, which is ultimately the same unified movement, then living and dying also indicates the same unified movement as a constant flux.

As mentioned above the unity of opposites within Hegel does not mean that each opposite loses its own distinguishing character and becomes the exact same of its other – e.g., pure nothing and being is the same in their indeterminacy but also

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Hegel especially draws attention to the point that what separates determinate being from being itself, at this stage, is not the particular vs. universal distinction. It is not the case that particularity makes the determinate being what it is, rather it is the sheer fact that the essence of the determinate being consists of both being and nothing. The rest of the determinations, including particularity, follow this essential supersession of being and nothing. (Ibid., p. 111.)

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

completely different in the sense that “being is” whereas “nothing is not”. In other words, opposites *qua* being opposites obviously do have something that distinguishes them from each other; yet since they are internally connected with each other they expose themselves to be different aspects of the same unity. Hence the finite being, as extended in a lifespan from birth to death, is living and at the same time dying (in each moment), and these are different aspects of the same movement. It then becomes plausible to claim, from a Hegelian perspective, that the difference between living and dying is that dying (or ceasing-to-be) is with reference to the nothing, but the movement itself is one and the same. It is the superseded movement of the determinate being within the same lifespan, who is both living and dying as coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be. Drawing such a conclusion does not seem farfetched within the Hegelian account, for Hegel himself writes, “The popular, especially oriental proverbs, that all that exists has the germ of death in its very birth, that death, on the other hand, is the entrance into new life, express at bottom the same union of being and nothing”.<sup>139</sup> Of course, the interplay of life and death and their unity within supersession is also a layered relation that exceeds the limited point of view of the individual being itself. Life and death becomes a unified cycle within the life of the Spirit.

### 3.2.1.1 Limit

The determinate being (*Dasein*) is a finite relational being whose content has a necessary “manifold” in relation to another content, viz., basically “to the whole world”.<sup>140</sup> Any sense of determination indicates a certain point of limit that separates some finite or determinate being from another determinate being, whose determination is basically not-being that former thing. As Hegel writes in the *EL*, coming across to a restriction indicates that “one is at the same time *beyond* it”.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>141</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 105 / §60.

This is the power or truth of the limit which, according to Hegel, is almost always unnoticed especially by dualist philosophers. As he writes,

In any dualistic system, but in the Kantian system particularly, its fundamental defect reveals itself through the inconsistency of *uniting* what, a moment earlier, was declared to be independent, and therefore *incompatible*.<sup>142</sup>

The inconsistency is not in uniting what stands as opposing to each other, but rather in taking them as incompatible due to this opposition. For each determinate being, coming across to its limit necessarily implies an Other as placed outside this limit. This Other may be something that is also determinate, another determinate being; or as we will discuss shortly, it can be a category as the infinite that is opposed to the finite. In any case, the Other does not just appear out of nowhere but occurs out of the nature of the referentiality of determinacy and limit. Whenever a limit separates something from its opposite, this becomes a further designation that this thing has its truth in virtue of what remains outside of itself, as reference to the other; in this separation it is both being in-itself and for-another.<sup>143</sup>

The finite being immanently relates itself to what lies across its own boundary, it passes this boundary and enters the domain of the other as not being that other. Therefore, the presence of a limit necessarily indicates the supersession of this limit. In simpler terms, something is that precise thing only in reference to what it is not, e.g., this red ball is not white, not square, not imaginary and not everything else but this red ball. Through this referential determination, the finite being extends to the infinite domain of what it is not and finds its meaning within the beyond and only through negating this beyond. With each determinacy a limit is posited, and as each limit points to a beyond, the determined being automatically finds itself in relation with this beyond. Hence, the external beyond is no longer purely contradictory or unattainable but indicates an internal relation. This whole structure reveals the logical and necessary unity of being and its other.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 121-22.

This further indicates that the limit functions not only as a separator but at the same time as a connector: It connects something with its other – it is just as the line of horizon that divides the sky and the sea which also is the line where they meet. However, one must be careful not to take the limit itself, the line of horizon, as a solid thing or a border that interferes in-between and by which they lose touch. As Houlgate points out, “the limit is not a third ‘thing’ in addition to something and its other. There are only two things in the relation we are considering, and the limit is simply the boundary that is common to both of them”.<sup>144</sup> The limit is immanent to each opposite and not something apart from their being – to emphasize this is important since this immanence is exactly what Hegel is trying to demonstrate.

Limit has a double, affirmative and negative function: (1) Each being gets determined through a limitation, since by definition a concrete thing is what is limited,<sup>145</sup> and, (2) each determination comes to an end in its limit. Any finite being by virtue of its various determinations e.g., to be white, good, an animal etc. gets limited and becomes the thing that it is: This is the affirmative effect of the limit. Each determination becomes meaningful only with reference to its other. Yet at the same by coming to its limit, the determinate being itself ceases to be. This end does not have to correspond to death in each case, but it is only the end of whatever determination that is in consideration. Until we come to the dialectic movement between finitude and infinity itself, where the category of finitude itself becomes the subject matter, coming to the limit may express an alteration within the being or a ceasing to be of a specific determination.

The determined being not only ceases to be within its limit, but at the same time equally becomes the limit and end of the other. “Limit is the mediation

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<sup>144</sup> Houlgate, *The Opening*, p. 365.

<sup>145</sup> This correspondence does not make the notion of limit the same with determination itself. With respect to this point, Houlgate warns the reader not to interpret the double identity as showing that being determined and being limited are one and the same. On the contrary they are still opposite to each other, since each determination comes to its end by arriving to its limit. (Houlgate, *Ibid.*, p. 368.) As I have mentioned, such confusion is internal to the Hegelian system, where Hegel basically uses the same reasoning: What stand in opposition (in this specific case the notions of determination and limit) immanently share a more comprehensive unified meaning by which they are related.

through which something and other each as well *is*, as *is not*".<sup>146</sup> As much as being seems to be indifferent to its other *qua* its immediate *in-itself* existence, it is always a negation or limit *for-another*. The twofold meaning is again effective in different levels. The Other is for the being what it (the being) is not; while at the same time the Other is what the being itself is not. For instance, as my Other, for me, you are both the person that is not me, and also the person that I am not. This movement is reciprocal, where the limiting act is shared, that is to say, imposed by both sides upon each other; as one limits its Other it also becomes limited by it. As Houlgate writes, "Presuppositionless logic thus leads to the conclusion that something must not only relate to and influence but also limit and be limited by its other".<sup>147</sup> This same limit that they share, which is immanent to each, as much as determining them also brings them to an end in mediation of each other. Since what is questioned here is the postulation of categories within a logical level, the end is not about the complete cessation of both parties but a return from otherness of the category to itself. The nature of this back and forth movement, as extending across the limit and returning from the Other must be developed further. I will elucidate this dialectical movement particularly through the categories of finitude and infinity.

### 3.2.1.2 Finitude and Infinity

Hegel writes that finitude is the most "stubborn category of the understanding" for it refuses "to let itself be brought affirmatively to its affirmative, to the infinite, and to let itself be united with it".<sup>148</sup> Although reconciling any other categorical opposition might be easier for the understanding, for it can have its correspondence in the everyday alteration, the relation between finitude and infinity is of a more different nature. The loss of purity with regard to any other category may not

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<sup>146</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 127.

<sup>147</sup> Houlgate, *Ibid.*, p. 357.

<sup>148</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 129-30.

directly contradict with the meaning of the category itself whereas in case of the infinite what is problematized is the purity of the pure. For instance, it is possible to think of some less pure form of being (as mixed up with nothing) whereas this is not the case with the infinite. The finitude, on the other hand, is to be distinguished from other categories for it has limitation itself as its determinative feature. The negative moment of the determination of finitude is not with respect to an externality, but what is limiting is its very own inner being.<sup>149</sup> Hence the limit of any finite being is with regard to its own limitedness or finitude, and not with respect to anything external that will bring this determination (=being finite) to an end. As Hegel writes,

Finite things are, but their relation to themselves is that they are negatively self-related and in this very self-relation send themselves away beyond themselves, beyond their being. They are, but the truth of this being is their end. The finite not only alters, like something in general, but it ceases to be; and its ceasing to be is not merely a possibility, so that it could be without ceasing to be, but the being as such of finite things is to have the germ of decease as their being-within-self: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death.<sup>150</sup>

This very dense paragraph includes various aspects that are truly of importance. The “negatively self-related” character of a finite being shows the immanency of coming to an end or death within the being that is determined by finitude. This being is related to itself through its own coming-to-an-end. Hegel defines finitude as a self-relation that is “inwardly self-contradictory”.<sup>151</sup> Coming to its end is what makes something finite; hence in being finite – in realizing its own nature – the being ceases to be entirely and loses its own being that made it finite. In fulfilling its truth, it loses itself. In death, the finite being simply becomes nothing. In the Hegelian understanding this actually corresponds to a self-return, since being nothing is at the same time the truth of the finite being. Being finite means coming-to-be nothing; therefore, “the finite in its ceasing-to-be, in this negation of itself has

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<sup>149</sup> In such a formulation one thing must be cleared out, any determination (and not just finitude) brings its own limit within itself. We have already covered the meaning of this: By the very nature of being determined, limitation is inherent. Yet the way that finitude sets up its own limit is different in the sense that its sheer meaning lies in being limited.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

attained its being-in-itself, is *united with itself*.<sup>152</sup> This simply shows that by dying and becoming nothing the finite being actually returns to its truth *qua* nothingness and becomes united and full with itself. And in this return a new finite is posited which will undergo this same process of returning from otherness or from self-negation. Hegel, in that sense, refers to the negative moment of finitude as having a dual nature: a negation of negation. It negates its own negativity and by that moves outside its own borders towards the domain of infinity.

Before proceeding with the explanation on how the concept of infinity is drawn necessarily out of finitude, it can be useful to comment a bit more on the double negation of the finite. At this point we are considering the act of the understanding in regard of how categories are attained by following their inner logical referential development. Understanding, which is not yet altered into Reason is eager to hold on to the sharp opposition between finite and infinite. Understanding assumes that these two categories are completely separate. So, the understanding approaches to the finite as remaining purely isolated or absolute on its own side. The finite, as being purely finite, makes the nothing its final end or its truth. However, this final end is realized in such purity that the finite is obliged to negate even its own nothingness, viz., its own essence as finite, as a gesture of double negation.<sup>153</sup> The result of the double negation is the return to itself, or finding itself, by negating (passing over) its own negative self. Through this return there occurs another finite being and another limit. This movement of negating the nothing and returning to being so to negate it once more becomes the infinite movement of the finite.

Yet, this analysis of finitude will not be sufficient by itself to demonstrate the reciprocal relation between the finite and infinite, as well as their reconciliation within this relation. For that purpose, the true nature of the infinite must be examined as well. As long as the infinite corresponds to the undetermined absolute being, the finite then remains as the abstract nothing. However, we have seen that

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

pure being and nothing had already been superseded within the level of becoming. Taking infinite in this absolute sense is not only problematic for remaining in the level of empty pure being, but when carried to its ultimate point this abstract character also reveals itself to be its opposite – just as it is with the pure finite. An unrestricted infinite cannot sustain this infinity, since in this pure maintenance the infinite distinguishes itself entirely from the finite and leaves it outside its borders. Yet, paradoxically, this corresponds to delimiting itself: “in their relationship the infinite is only the *limit* of the finite and is thus only a determinate infinite, an *infinite which is itself finite*.”<sup>154</sup> Hence, within the binary opposition model the pure infinite actually becomes a finitized infinite. This corresponds to what Hegel will refer as the bad infinity.<sup>155</sup> Yet, this “badness” is of a constructive kind; it becomes a step along the revelation of the true infinite.

At the beginning of this chapter I had mentioned that the deficient moments of the understanding always turn out to be constitutive moments of the truth in its entirety. The finite, which acquired an infinite process of self-negating, showed itself in its relation to the infinite by overcoming its limit. Yet we saw that any limit becomes a limit for both opposites and it affects bilaterally. So, the bad infinite also has its own side in the dialectical movement. The infinite also acts upon the finite initially by separating itself completely from it and appearing as a finite limited moment (bad infinite). Once it transforms into this finite moment, it repeats the process of coming to its own inner limit, in which a self-negation occurs. By this negation the infinite then negates itself within this otherness, viz., negates its finitude and becomes reunited with itself by turning back to its pure self, namely infinite. This process becomes repeated as well.<sup>156</sup>

Both of these infinite movements (of the finite and infinite) are the self-negating movement that results in a mediated self-return, namely the movement of self-positing. Neither finitude nor the bad infinity can by itself constitute the true meaning of infinity. Rather true infinity is this entire movement of their constant

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 139-40. See also Hegel, *EL*, 66f / §28.

<sup>156</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 138-142.



relation, which had actually been the same unified movement of negation that each one does to the other as well as to itself. “The self-sublation of the infinite and of the finite, as a *single* process – this is the *true* or *genuine infinite*”.<sup>157</sup> This once again demonstrates that what Hegel is constructing is not the metaphysics of substance, where truth is presupposed as a fixed substantial absolute, but rather a type of process metaphysic in regard of which the universal conceptual truth becomes the complete activity itself.

This interplay between the infinite and finite demonstrates the logic behind the essential movement of history: limitation, negation, self-return, supersession and finally unification. What carries this process to its absolute is the full acknowledgment and historical attestation that the conflict between opposites logically implies their internal relatedness. On the other hand, what generates this whole process is the internal limitedness of the finite, as well as the act of negation that essentially belongs to being limited. However, as we will later discuss there is also a circularity that is at work in the meta-level of this system, which will put the beginning and end of history also in relation, where the end will be underlying the beginning.

Hegel presents his logical account a few years later than the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as succeeding but at the same underlying the phenomenological project. As the fuller title of *PS* demonstrates (*System of Philosophy: The First Part: Science of the Phenomenology of Spirit*) the main project was to present a fuller system of philosophy to which *PS* would stand as the initial part. As Grondin states, Hegel “later acknowledged” that “the introduction of a science cannot be a part of the science itself” so it was rather only preparing for a “theory of thought”.<sup>158</sup> The *Science of Logic* was originally intended to constitute the second but “real first part” of a grand project to which *Phenomenology* could only offer a “didactic introduction”.<sup>159</sup> Throughout this section, I have abstained from forming a direct

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Grondin, Jean, *Introduction to Metaphysics: From Parmenides to Levinas*, Lukas Soderstrom, trans., New York: Columbia UP, 2012, p. 183.

link between death and finitude, only due to the reason that in the logical level, the proper task is considering “thoughts as thoughts in their complete abstraction.”<sup>160</sup> Yet it seems valuable to draw a connection between the logical and phenomenological account of Hegel, for they are simply completing each other. Within the phenomenological level, finitude has its concrete form in death. In the logical context Hegel problematizes finitude as a category of the understanding and as prior to what finitude means for the concrete determinate being as self-consciousness. Beginning with a theory of thought is important in order to grasp how this interplay between categories, the objects of thought, are developed out of their own necessity, as being applied to the concrete conscious being within his phenomenology. In that sense, the way *PS* precedes the *SL* may correspond to the general understanding of circularity within Hegel, where logic becomes both the final moment and underlying principle of the phenomenological search.

At this point of the study, we can finally claim that the Hegelian absolute, *qua* true infinite, is build out of the category of finitude. Only through the endless repetition of the finite, which is due to its own self-negating essence that negates even its own finitude, infinity comes into being as a category. But one must not deduce a hasty conclusion that finitude is prior to infinity based on the fact that Hegel begins his investigation through the finite determinate being. In order to begin from the beginning and to become free of any presupposition Hegel begins his logical analysis with finitude, or what we deal with in everyday experience. As Taylor writes, Hegel “wants to show from conceptual necessity what we know from experience and from a deep intuition only, viz., that all things not only can in principle but do effectively pass away”.<sup>161</sup> Taylor actually criticizes Hegel at this point for forming his arguments in logic in such a way that they become suitable with his ontology, and not *vice versa*. According to him, Hegel builds his logic as underlying his ontology and presents it as necessary whereas his ontological concerns are actually in lead. Taylor presents Hegel’s use of negation as an

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<sup>160</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 34.

<sup>161</sup> Taylor, Charles, Hegel, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, p. 237.

example and draws the following claim: Hegel attempts to demonstrate that finite things are contradictory only in order to legitimize his usage of negation in dialectic.<sup>162</sup>

The Hegelian method of beginning with the category of finitude and thinking infinity through the mediation of this finitude is actually aiming for an assumption-free initiation. This aim is in line with the general tendency of modernity: The Cartesian search for an epistemological ground to which certainty can be attributed. Hegel himself begins with the determinate finite being, as the way it is encountered within experience. As shown above, as soon as pure being is superseded within becoming, this being acquires determination and quality. This necessarily renders the determinate being as finite.

Through its quality, something is determined as opposed to an other, as *alterable* and *finite*; and as negatively determined not only against an other but also in its own self.<sup>163</sup>

Hegel afterwards attempts to track the necessary steps in how infinity grows out of finitude. Ultimately, in a reflective way, he claims that infinity then becomes the underlying principle of finitude. Whereas the endless movement of the finite brings about the infinite, the infinite reveals itself to be the true moment of unity. As superseding both the finite and the finite infinite, their unity within the infinite movement becomes both of their truth; and in the face of this truth, the former truth remains one-sided. Obviously, the finite does not disappear out of the picture but only becomes part of the infinite. The crucial point is that such an infinite does not represent some abstract absolute but includes each moment of the finite together with its self-negating act as a movement of constant relating and negating. Indeed, infinity not just contains these contradictory moments but is nothing but the entirety of these moments. Žižek summarizes this movement perfectly, in which he claims that Hegel's brilliance lies in not positing, "another, even 'deeper'

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

supra-Ground which would ground the ground itself; he simply grounds the ground in the totality of its relations to the grounded content”.<sup>164</sup>

From the perspective of the *PS* this infinite movement underlies the movement of the constant birth and death of each individual consciousness as partaking in the formation of Spirit. It is not possible to say either that the Spirit is the sheer accumulation of these succeeding moments or that it has an independent being apart from these moments. The Spirit is more than their sum total for it represents an elevated unity. This union is rather such that all the finite particulars reveal themselves as one with the totality. Each is by itself the Spirit, yet at the same time, the finite being that it is. Infinity, on the other hand, is always beyond the finite moments as originating out of their supersession. The manifestation of the Spirit within its finite moments does not mean that, on the level of particularity, a finite being maintains in existence forever. Rather the continued process of birth and death, in a unified form, generates the movement of the Spirit itself; although, as we will see it is not the movement (death and birth) but the self-reflexive act of the Spirit that actually makes the Spirit what it is. Once Spirit knows itself within its notion, its actuality becomes this essence itself and converts everything that remains prior to it into a mere passing shape.

The occurrence of the Spirit, therefore, is not only a historical process but also grounded in logic and governed by necessity. In other words, it is not just that the Spirit has already historically appeared within our present knowledge but that it had no other way than to appear as such because of the logical structure for finitude necessarily builds the infinite. Within experience, the finite being comes to an end due to its own finitude – It dies; but in this death, in this nothingness, it finds itself in its essentiality. This becomes its return: once more being identical with itself. The death of the finite being becomes the reappearance of finitude (its self-return) within another finite being *ad infinitum*. Here I want to make use of a passage from the *System of Ethical Life* where Hegel talks about the child being the supersession

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<sup>164</sup> Žižek, Slavoj, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 139.

of its parents while the parents hand over their knowledge through education and “die in” the child:

In his education the *unconscious unity* of the child is superseded, it articulates itself inwardly, it becomes *cultured consciousness*; the consciousness of the parents is its matter (...) they die in him; for what they give him is their own consciousness. Consciousness is here the coming-to-be of another consciousness in him, and the parents intuit in his evolution their own passing into supersession.<sup>165</sup>

Although, this can only remain as an analogy within our specific discussion on finitude and death, it stands important; for it gives a concrete example in showing the gist of the development of Spirit. It shows how cultured consciousness moves its way towards the Spirit through the practice of education, passing from parent to child. Yet the appearance of the Spirit cannot surely be reduced to this educational inheritance alone. The historical world Spirit is not only constituted by the death and life-span of individuals but spread within the ethical, cultural, religious and philosophical moments both in the individual and at the institutional level, as well as the self-knowing act of the Spirit itself. Yet, even if we would consider all these moments and add each of them together in their succession this would not still be the truth of the Spirit. For the absolute Spirit is something greater than that. This can only be apprehended in consideration of the threefold meaning behind the word *Aufhebung* (supersession), which Hegel uses as a body. Supersession is the cancelation, preservation and transcendence of each moment; carrying the moment to a higher unity as making use of its truth but at the same time canceling this truth by elevating it. Only then it becomes clear how the absolute moment of this process appears as a final unit.

According to Kojève the Spirit discovers itself “in and through that ‘rendering’ that is manifested in the many forms of errors in the course of the historical process. And this process is that of a series of generations that follow each other, that are born, therefore, and die, in time”.<sup>166</sup> Although I agree with

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<sup>165</sup> Hegel, G. W. Friedrich, *System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit*, H. S. Harris, T. M. Knox, eds., Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1979, p. 233-34 / ¶304.

<sup>166</sup> Kojève, “The Idea”, p. 133.

Kojève to the extent that Spirit has no reality apart from the succeeding individual human beings and their creation out of their power of negating, Kojève by omitting the point that I have demonstrated above, offers a more provocative reading that draws away from the true meaning of the Spirit as absolute and infinite. According to his view, in *PS*, Hegel is conducting nothing but an “anthropological” philosophy through which he is showing how man develops out of his natural being and moves towards a cultural one. According to his interpretation, Spirit is “Being revealed by speech, and the life of the Spirit is the existence of the philosopher or of the Wise Men (Sage), conscious of the World and of itself,” where this Wise Man stands surely for no one but Hegel himself.<sup>167</sup> Although this seems to be very controversial within the borders of the Hegelian language, the gist of his argument makes sense: The Spirit, as a condensed form of self-knowledge of the historical World process, at that point of history, talks and knows itself within and through Hegel. What I will rather object to is that due to this anthropological reading, Kojève does not hesitate to use the word human as substitutive for self-consciousness and eventually carry this understanding to the level of the Spirit as well. I believe that this results in a loss of meaning. Such a reading corresponds to reducing a comprehensive multilayered process, viz., the forms of action (negating, relating, separating, working, thinking, knowing etc.) as well as the institutional and intersubjective shapes that occur out of such action into a finite particular subject that is spatiotemporal. Quite the opposite, in the Hegelian vocabulary the process itself gets in front of the subject and rather comes closer to an Aristotelian definition of self-thinking thought.<sup>168</sup> If we lose the vocabulary of consciousness, and replace it with human instead, as Kojève often does, it becomes harder to preserve the richness of this grand work. Hegel writes that,

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>168</sup> One must also question whether thinking necessarily presupposes the individual subject as the thinker within the *PS* or whether self-thinking thought can have a separate ontological existence after the appearance of Spirit.

Spirit is thus self-supporting, absolute, real being. All previous shapes of consciousness are abstract forms of it. They result from Spirit analysing itself, distinguishing its moments, and dwelling for a while with each.<sup>169</sup>

Spirit is where all oppositions finally melt within the self-sameness of unity, where the knowing Spirit becomes its own object so that there is no longer an alienation between the knower and the known. It knows itself in its notion as “shapes of a world”, “instead of being shapes merely of consciousness”.<sup>170</sup>

Yet, from another perspective, Kojève manages to conduct a very valuable reading in terms of the study of death and finitude within Hegel. His emphasis on finitude makes it explicit that the Hegelian understanding of the infinite cannot be thought apart from its internal ties with the finite even while it corresponds to its supersession. I will turn back to this reading of Kojève after presenting the understanding of death within the *PS*. Here, I will limit my reading with the “Self-Consciousness” Chapter for the purpose of remaining within the limits of an existential understanding of death, led by the question of what death means for the individual self-consciousness, for whom the question makes its own existence to be issued in its entirety. Yet the death account in the *PS*, along with the element of negativity, has a similar function throughout the rest of the work in making the movement of supersession possible. The transformative power of death, which we will elucidate with respect to the master-slave dialectic, will reappear in the journey of the Spirit within both the shapes of ethical life and religion. I especially want to mention briefly how death appears within the level of ethical life, for I will not cover it further in the following pages due to the purpose that I have mentioned-above: It no longer considers death with respect to how the particular consciousness relates to its own death but in relation to the ethical life and its intersubjective relations. Yet, it is important to mention (even as briefly) how the account of death makes further appearance within the Spirit, in the sense that how the death of the individuals participate in the occurrence of the Spirit. Hegel, at a later point of the historical journey, presents this account from the perspective of

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<sup>169</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p. 264 / ¶440.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 265 / ¶441.

the Spirit rather than from the individual. In the “Spirit” Chapter Hegel applies to the notion of death with respect to the meaning it takes within the ethical life. What is considered in the ethical order is the actual ethical substance, which is no longer the particular individual but “the plurality of existent consciousnesses”.<sup>171</sup> Here, he refers to the division between divine law and the human law. This corresponds to the division between the family (the natural ethical community) and the state as well as woman and the man – representable by the tragedy of Antigone. The first ethical conflict within the Spirit, in its most basic form, is the conflict between the law of individuality and universality. The divine (inner) law, as guarded by the family, and ultimately by the women, opposes the ethical power of the state and its human (existent) law. The individual relates to the whole Family as its Substance, and in return gets recognized there by its pure individual being whereas the state is the ethical order that “shapes and maintains itself by working for the universal”.<sup>172</sup> Within the Family, the whole gets its truth in the individual as representing this whole, and the universality of the Family is only attainable through raising its Substance, the individual, to the level of universality within its death. “The family thereby makes him a member of a community”.<sup>173</sup> They fulfill the death rituals and rescue the dead member from being a mere existent that “belongs solely to Nature and remain something irrational”<sup>174</sup> since only then the Family can posit its own universality within the mediacy of the individual.

Death, on the other hand, “is the fulfillment and the supreme ‘work’ which the individual as such undertakes on its [the ethical community’s] behalf”.<sup>175</sup> Yet, this cannot be attained in the immediacy of the act of the Nature, within the natural negativity of death. Rather it requires a further mediacy of the work: In this case, the work is the last duty of the Family as honoring the dead through the burial rituals. The natural negativity, the sheer death of the individual (who does not yet

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 267 / ¶447.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 268 / ¶450.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 271 / ¶452.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 270 / ¶452.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 270 / ¶452.



know itself in its universality) is not sufficient for it to “return into itself”<sup>176</sup>, instead this return is made possible by the work of the Family, by following the divine law. As we will later elucidate, there is a reoccurring relation between work and death within the Hegelian account that will be of importance within the master-slave dialectic as well. This ultimately shows how the finite individual participates within the infinite Spirit as carried to its *universal* Notion through its *individuality*. The dialectic between the individual and universal turns out to be just another act of the Spirit as dividing itself: The human law finds its “force and element” in the divine law whereas the divine law finds its “actual existence” within the state.<sup>177</sup>

### **3.3. Death in Relation to the Self: The “Self-Consciousness” Chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit***

As Judith Butler states, the path towards Spirit cannot be traversed without “the paradoxical assistance of negativity”.<sup>178</sup> In the “Consciousness” Chapter of the *PS* the power of the negative will show itself in the form of desire – or more precisely consciousness will itself appear as desire. Once consciousness takes the appearance of self-consciousness, the negative power then converts into death and (at that moment within the Spirit) death reveals the truth of self-consciousness as sheer negativity. In the way Hegel presents it, throughout the historical journey of the Spirit in coming to know itself, the negation between opposites are constantly at work as corresponding to different shapes of the early understanding as well as the later knowledge. Each moment ends with a greater supersession: a unity that will then confront its own opposite. Until the appearance of the Spirit, in each moment, an alleged Other stands in an immediate opposition to the consciousness and appears as something in-itself, alien, and threatening to consciousness’ own unity.

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p. 278 / ¶463.

<sup>178</sup> Butler, Judith, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, NY: Columbia UP, 1999, p. 13.

Yet, this alien Other opens up the possibility of a mediated self-relation, and self-knowledge that will expand infinitely: What is actually at work is the self-othering of the Spirit, from its first moment as consciousness, in which the immature consciousness does not even know itself and for which everything is alien, to the last moment where Spirit knows itself absolutely as a full historical being, as having grasped its inner-relatedness with its Other, which by that reason is no longer an Other but only another particularized form of the greater unity. In that last moment “consciousness will arrive at a point at which it gets rid of its semblance of being burden with something alien” and comes to “a point where appearance becomes identical with essence.”<sup>179</sup> This is only possible because in the first place – which will appear as the last – this whole movement is the self-reflexive act of the Spirit as knowing nothing but itself, in-and-for-itself, within its historic differentiations. But until Spirit knows itself in its unity,<sup>180</sup> the Other corresponds basically to everything that the consciousness is not: the realm of objects, nature, another consciousness, historical eras, the universal, God, etc.

In confronting the Other within the experience, consciousness realizes that this external Other is not what it is just in-itself but it is also for-another, viz., for the consciousness itself. In this experience consciousness finds itself to be more than an external perceiver, to be actively relating to the object. Once the consciousness encounters another consciousness, it develops into self-consciousness through the mediacy of the self-reflexive act. While this self-consciousness continues to develop in relation to its negative, the Other also alters and returns in different forms. As Butler states, “The human subject must suffer its

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<sup>179</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p. 57 / ¶89.

<sup>180</sup> It is important to clarify at this early point that Hegel’s idea of unity that is central to his phenomenology is ultimately something that is achieved at the very end of the historical progress in which every notion attains its own unified truth, viz., as part of Spirit’s self-knowing act. However, as we have already discussed there is also the aspect of necessity that converts this linear historical movement to a more bilateral motion: For as soon as there is an opposition, by its very meaning, there occurs simultaneously a latent unity that governs this opposition. In terms of the Spirit, this shows that the movement itself brings the truth of the Spirit into being and gives its ultimate reality, but once the truth is manifested its roots can then be traced back and become apparent even in the initial undeveloped form of the notion itself. Hence once the unity is established in course of the knowing activity, it then belongs to the beginning as much as to the end, although it was never something given from the start.

own loss of identity again and again in order to realize its fullest sense of self”.<sup>181</sup> During the development towards the Spirit, consciousness in confronting and superseding all these alien moments renders them part of itself while losing its pure simple self on the way. The pure determinations of itself, of which it was once absolutely certain, disappear within a unity that renders it impossible to remain independent from the rest of the world itself.

The movement begins as a transition from the consciousness to self-consciousness, in which the consciousness is not merely replaced by the latter but gradually develops into it. This movement is governed by an internal logic, whose internal principles we have already explicated through categories. The phenomenological manifestation of this same structure is as follows: The consciousness in confronting its Other aims to return to its pure self, its immediate oneness. For that reason, it aims to annihilate this otherness, for negating the Other will restore its self-unity. In this act of negation, the consciousness can return to itself only through the mediation of the Other, where it simultaneously finds itself as postulating its independence through relatedness. This discovery, this new knowledge of itself at the same time becomes the supersession of its former self within a new shape which is less alien and less differentiated to itself.

Consciousness, in its initial experience with the external object, grasps that what it ascribed to be the in-itself essence of the object is actually the for-another, or for-consciousness being of the object. Thus, it becomes aware of its own role as the “I” that perceives the object’s fleeting moments, viz., a bunch of now’s and here’s, in a synthetic unity, through the principle of universal.<sup>182</sup> As soon as this “I” is grasped, in mediation of the object, the consciousness returns to itself from otherness. As a constitutive element of experience, this new “I” brings the search for another kind of certainty, namely the certainty of the “I”. The consciousness desires to be certain of its own pure being itself, as independent of everything else. In this moment self-consciousness appears as desire. In order to cancel each alien

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<sup>181</sup> Butler, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>182</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p. 66ff / ¶110.

otherness and enjoy its self-certainty, self-consciousness negates the object by destroying and consuming it. However, the object is also lost within this negating act, and the consciousness can only momentarily reflect back from the object to its own in-itself independence. With each consumed object there appears another, as alien as the preceding one, the desire becomes endless. As self-consciousness becomes stuck with this endless yearning, Hegel deduces his widely known assertion that “*Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*”.<sup>183</sup> And within this moment of history, by turning to another consciousness, whose being is both the same (a consciousness) and yet different (an Other) consciousness gets hold of an enduring and satisfying source, through which it can obtain self-relation and self-assurance. The negativity of the consciousness now appears in its sheer form, as death.

### 3.3.1 The Master-Slave Dialectic<sup>184</sup>

In order that the return from otherness or the mediated self-reflection should become lasting<sup>185</sup> the object of self-consciousness needs to take another self-consciousness as its object. A self-consciousness, as much as being *in-itself* and *for-another* is also *for-itself*, meaning that it can posit its own independence *for-itself*. In that respect, the other self-consciousness that is met in confrontation is also an “I” *for itself*, as much as being “an object” *for-another*. Once these different aspects

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 110 / ¶175.

<sup>184</sup> Although the Miller translation that I follow does use Lordship-Bondage instead of Master-Slave I will still use the latter vocabulary only due to the fact that it is more customary. Yet I agree that translating *Herrschaft* und *Knechtschaft* as lordship and bondage stands closer to the literal meaning. Especially the connotations of the word “bondage” makes it much more suitable than the word “slave” considering that a power relation of dependence and independence will be one of the leading discussions of this brief but important section, which actually has the full title of “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage” (Ibid., p. 111ff / ¶178.).

<sup>185</sup> Hegel up until this point has already asserted that truth, which is gained out of sense perception, cannot be sought in the vanishing moment, since once the moment is passed or if we “stand at a distance from it” this truth “would lose its significance entirely”. (Ibid., p. 63 / ¶105.) The truth of sense perception will rather be placed in what is lasting and universal, viz., will be in the conceptual activity of the subject. Similarly, the fleeting moment of satisfaction within the realm of the objects cannot provide a true self-return.

coincide within the same being, it becomes possible to enjoy a lasting reflection, since due to its for-itself character this Other can posit its own independent self over and over. Hegel writes, “A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much ‘I’ as ‘object.’ With this, we already have before us the Notion of Spirit”.<sup>186</sup> The identification of the I with the object become the precursor of the absolute identification of the knower and the known, which we will encounter as the meaning of the Spirit. The confrontation of two self-consciousnesses will necessarily lead to their relation in the ultimate form as mutual-recognition within the Spiritual level, however the self-consciousness who has not yet entered this domain, who is not knowing itself in its unity with its Other, will firstly confront this other self-consciousness as a mere external object whose otherness is only a threat to its own unity and independence. Up until then, the self-consciousness as desire has been relating to the object through negation; it had tried to negate the otherness of the object by consuming it, viz., making it a part of its own, so that it can again attain fullness with itself. When the object is replaced by another self-consciousness the same strive remains. The self-consciousness strives for self-certainty, to remain as an absolute self-identity, a pure being-for-self. In order to achieve this, self-consciousness again tries to negate the otherness of the Other. Since this negation corresponds to the complete termination of this otherness, the confrontation takes place as a struggle of life and death.

The self-consciousness that will become the master at the end, is the consciousness that can jeopardize everything in order to affirm its complete independence, including its own life. In thinking of its own pure in-itself being as unconditional and independent, the master consciousness tries to demonstrate that this independence is so essential that it is indifferent even to its own life, as “not attached to any specific existence”.<sup>187</sup> The master consciousness rather considers its truth only in the context of pure being-for-self, and its own essence as absolute negation. The slave consciousness, on the other hand, is the one that cannot take

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p.110 / ¶177.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, p.113 / ¶187.

this risk in the ultimate level and surrenders by recognizing its fundamental relatedness with life. Life is indispensable for its own being, for life is “the *natural* setting of consciousness” whereas death will correspond to “the *natural* negation of consciousness”.<sup>188</sup>

An important point is that in the master-slave dialectic, death remains at the level of threat without becoming actualized. Hegel clearly formulates the reason: If the struggle ends by one party getting killed, the dialectic movement of recognition comes to its end. The otherness disappears just as the consumed object did. This practical concern seems to demonstrate something greater regarding the way Hegel approaches death. Until the appearance of the intersubjective realm of Spirit, death partakes within the knowledge of the self-consciousness not through its realization but with regard to its meaning, as reflecting back self-consciousness its own truth as sheer negativity.<sup>189</sup> As we shall cover next, the truth of self-consciousness as finitude (which of course remains as a partial truth) will then meet with the component of infinity. Once self-consciousness recognizes its own finitude as sheer negativity, it will then be able to recognize this negativity within the work as well, in its enduring form. In the master-slave passage, what appears for the first time is not death itself, but the Notion (*Begriff*) of death as sheer negativity or nothingness. Yet, the appearance of something in its notion cannot be differentiated from its being or its actuality within the Hegelian idealism. Hence, it becomes plausible to claim that death and finitude are known or historically actualized prior to any discussion on its realization.

The two different shapes of self-consciousness, viz., the independent master and the dependent slave consciousness, indicate a dichotomy in the meaning and function of death as well. Hegel defines death as the “absolute master”,<sup>190</sup> the pure

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid, p.114 / ¶188.

<sup>189</sup> As I have mentioned at the end of the last section, after the appearance of Spirit death becomes the problem of the family as well as the state. It is not only analyzed as a potential threat of negation, but through the death of the other: a family member to whom the family has the duty to carry into universality via their own work, viz., performing the death rituals in accordance with the divine law. (Ibid, p. 271 / ¶452.)

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p.117 / ¶194.

negativity. The master, through risking his own life, acknowledges that its own essence or being-for-self is nothing but this pure negativity. The slave, as favoring life over death, in its experience does not yet grant this negativity to be its own, but only of master's. Yet for the slave death takes a complete different meaning in relation to the fear it arouses:

For this consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread (...) In that experience it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal movement, the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, *pure being-for-self*, which consequently is *implicit* in this consciousness.<sup>191</sup>

As this crucial passage indicates, in the fear of death the slave actually undergoes what it tries to avoid. Its dependence to the rest of the world, to which it tried to cling on, is shuttered in the face of this absolute nothingness. It momentarily faces its own negativity, its own finitude or nothingness; but runs away from it, from what is *implicitly* there without embracing it as its own yet. As Gadamer writes, "At this point, precisely because nothing else which one could hang onto withstands the fear of death, pure being-for-self is raised to the level of consciousness".<sup>192</sup> In the first confrontation with the master, slave already faces its own being *qua* negativity but to fully grasp it as its own, it requires the mediacy of servitude and work. These two moments appear as the slave works upon certain things in order to serve the master.

The self-consciousness in the form of the slave once again confronts the otherness of the external objects. It no longer relates to the things through sheer consumption and in the form of desire, but works on them (prepares) for the master: The slave negates the independence of the things but cannot enjoy them in their new dependent form, for the work is done to serve the master whereas the master

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 117/¶194.

<sup>192</sup> Gadamer, Hans-George, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, P. Christopher Smith, trans., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, p. 163.

purely enjoys the thing whose resistance (independence) no longer exists.<sup>193</sup> Negating the thing not in the purpose of consuming it but working on it, viz., forming it so that it acquires a permanent existence, will bring the slave consciousness back to its truth *qua* pure negativity. In the mediation of the formative activity, the slave captures its own reflection within its work. By negating the independency of the thing, the slave consciousness faces its own reflection as the pure negativity that it is – which it already had a glimpse of in the face of death. Furthermore, since slave's negation (as formation) is not a destructive one but contains an element of permanence, the consciousness also gets hold of the reflection of its own permanence in the mediation of the formed-object. In other words, the object that the slave forms, becomes a mediator for the slave to receive its own permanent negativity reflected back from the world. This elevated negativity, as a mediated form of the sheer negativity (death), becomes constitutive within the absolute. As Neuhouser puts it, the slave “inscribes his subjectivity into the world of things and finds therein an objective reflection of his sovereignty as a subject”.<sup>194</sup>

The slave consciousness discovers its own truth, viz., pure negativity that contains permanency, in the mediacy of the work. Hegel makes it clear that work, by itself, in the absence of the fear of death would not be sufficient for this revelation. Emphasizing this point becomes very significant for the following reason. Since Hegel has been mostly debated under the heavy influence of Marxism, the role of death within the transformation of the slave consciousness

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<sup>193</sup> The dependence-independence relation is discussed here from the perspective of both master and slave in relation to the object, as well as to each other. Since the master relates to the thing via the mediacy of the slave it becomes dependent to the slave, thus can no longer remain as the independent self-consciousness it claimed to be. This point often becomes slightly misinterpreted: taken to be a claim for showing that the master becomes the slave of the slave. In a sense this is true, but what Hegel rather demonstrates here is just a fraction of his general approach towards the function of mediation. Through mediation something cannot maintain its pure independence, its absolute unity. The act of mediation itself reveals the interconnectedness, which in return brings a more comprehensive truth than of what was immediately present. Hence through mediation, the truth of both the master and slave turn into “the opposite” of what it initially seemed to be. (Hegel, PS, p. 117 / ¶193.)

<sup>194</sup> Neuhouser, Frederick, “Desire, Recognition, and the Relation between Bondsman and Lord” in *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, Kenneth R. Westphal (ed.), Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 52.



often tends to be overlooked.<sup>195</sup> Hegel writes that both moments are necessary for the slave to understand itself in its independent being-for-self:

Without the formative activity, fear remains inward and mute, and consciousness does not become explicitly *for itself*. If consciousness fashions the thing without that initial absolute fear, it is only an empty self-centered attitude; for its form or negativity is not negativity *per se*, and therefore its formative activity cannot give it a consciousness of itself as essential being.<sup>196</sup>

The confrontation with death shows the slave its own negativity as such and renders it possible for this consciousness to later recognize itself in its own activity of negating. In other words, the initial and necessary step is to grasp the sheer negativity within the fear of death, without knowing it to be slave's own – initially it does not recognize this truth to be its own but rather attributes it to the in-itself being of the master consciousness alone. Only after this confrontation, self-consciousness will be able to gradually discover its own power to negate out of its own negativity.

It is now possible to perceive more clearly how the logical category of finitude is unfolding within a phenomenological perspective as the power of negativity, or death. The truth of self-consciousness as a finite determinate being is negativity and due to this negativity, it attains its truth in the act of negating. Self-consciousness attempts to negate the Other so that its alleged pure being can be restored. In the end, slave consciousness finds itself both as sheer negativity and this transformative power to negate. Although Hegel himself does not explicitly draw this conclusion, it is possible to read this passage as a reconciliation of the finite with the infinite. The final reflection of self-consciousness (as reflecting back from the work) carries both the truth of self-consciousness as finite, as sheer negativity or death; as well as the enduring and mediated shape of this negativity, as infinite.

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<sup>195</sup> It is as if this short passage of master-slave dialectic divaricated the succeeding history of philosophy in two directions: While the Marxist theory developed on the transformative power of work, Heidegger and the later Francophone philosophy focused on the power of death. This of course is an exaggeration, but it is truly interesting that this Hegelian thesis offers a breakpoint after which the notions of work and death both flourished in their separate ways.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 119 / ¶195.

### 3.3.2 Dependent Shapes of Self-Consciousness

Spirit will then move forward in and through the slave consciousness. I will roughly sketch the main principles of this movement in order to introduce the further development of the Hegelian story. The slave consciousness is now aware of its being-for-self and enters into a new shape where its own being becomes an issue for itself, namely the Stoic consciousness. In knowing itself in its sheer being, it rediscovers itself as a thinking being, capable of using Notions to grasp what is outside of itself. Yet, at the same time, since these Notions belong to itself, consciousness grasps itself as contributing in the experience. By discovering its constitutive role in conceptual thinking consciousness becomes, roughly speaking, free to think whatever it chooses to think: only what it holds to be true and important will be true and important. As still being under the bondage of the master, Stoic consciousness tries to gain its independence, which it now recognizes as its essence. It seeks freedom in the level of thought. “[W]hether on the throne or in chains,” writes Hegel, “its aim is to be free” in the pure universality of thought.<sup>197</sup>

Stoicism could only appear on the scene in a time of universal fear and bondage, but also a time of universal culture which had raised itself to the level of thought.<sup>198</sup>

It now moves in the domain of thought, in which it has an endless negation power, in which every moment appears as fleeting. In the face of this flux, consciousness again transforms and takes the shape of Sceptic consciousness. It negates what is external in its entirety. As Hegel writes, “the abstract thought becomes the concrete thinking which annihilates the being of the world”.<sup>199</sup> Everything appears for this Sceptic consciousness as unfixed, all determinations seem arbitrary, viz., why something is the way it is and not otherwise becomes vague. Furthermore, as knowing itself as actively participating in this experience, consciousness carries this

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 121 / ¶199.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 123 / ¶202.

external chaos inside: the nullity is not just in the external world but within the consciousness as well. Sceptic consciousness “itself is the absolute dialectical unrest”.<sup>200</sup> It is the “negativity of all singularity and all difference”.<sup>201</sup> Due to this essential negativity, consciousness cannot even remain in difference, and necessarily negates its difference hence finds itself to be the pure universal. Yet it cannot also remain in this singularity, for it knows itself, in its Sceptic moment to be the “negativity of all singularity” and again negates and returns to difference. It is lost in this back and forth movement, without being able to unite these opposites within itself. It is not yet able to mark them, their unity, as its own truth; namely the true infinity of the dialectic process itself. In this desperate movement it converts into Unhappy Consciousness.

This is an important phase of the consciousness with regard to the purposes of this study, for it demonstrates the attitude of how consciousness relates to the absolute or infinite in the face of its own finitude. When consciousness enters this new shape, what was once separated externally as master and slave now displays itself as an internal conflict, a split within, of the one and the same unhappy consciousness. In the level of the Spirit these distinct moments (which obviously will not remain as contradictory but stand as intrinsically related) will signify the comprehensiveness or multifaceted unfolding of the Spirit; but in the level of self-consciousness they remain completely alien to each other. This opposition is ultimately between the unchangeable Other and the changeable self. Here, consciousness takes the former to be essential and the latter to be unessential. Within its own empirical confusion unhappy consciousness cannot posit its own essential unity. It can only see itself through its differentiation, its contingency, its nothingness whereas accepting the unchangeable to be what lies beyond itself and superior to itself. However, unhappy consciousness is at the same time aware that the unchangeable is for-consciousness rather than in-itself; because everything takes place within its own act of thinking. Therefore, the inner essence of the

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 124 / ¶205.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 125 / ¶205.

unchangeable must remain a mystery for the consciousness. This reoccurring problem of in-itself vs. for-consciousness keeps coming up as a major obstacle throughout the path of Spirit. It reappears in different types of relations and cannot truly be superseded until the final moment of reconciliation, where Spirit internalizes everything within its fully mediated absolute being and therefore becomes nothing but its own object of knowledge. Only then it will know itself, in its own self-reflexive act, as being in-and-for-itself. But in terms of the unhappy consciousness the beyond of the unchangeable, the universal, the absolute or infinite is inaccessible as in-itself. This brings along the supposition that unhappy consciousness, by thinking this absolute otherness must be imposing its own individuality to the unchangeable. Yet, since its own finite self cannot correspond to such divine individuality, it necessarily appears in the form of God whereas its own relation to God takes the form of a religious attitude, namely devotion. What makes the consciousness unhappy at this level is this form of dependent relation. Consciousness, knowing that it cannot attain the in-itself knowledge of God, tries to relate to God through religious feelings rather than thought itself. In this unhappy shape, consciousness intrinsically senses the unity between God (the unchangeable) and itself yet it is unable to carry it into its Notion.

The extremely complex levels of this relation between unhappy consciousness and God are beyond the extent of this work. The reason why I went over this “Unhappy Consciousness” section of the *PS* is because it shows the phenomenological appearance of incorrectly taking the pure (bad) infinite to be the truth of this notion. It carries a further importance for demonstrating the criticism that I have attempted to draw with respect to the absolute-oriented Western attitude, whose dependence on an external form of absolute alienates the human from itself, from a self-recognition that must include its own finitude and mortality.

According to Hegel, determination can take place only in the mediation of something other whereas in the lack of any determination the absolute will always be self-same but yet devoid of content. And as long as absolute is placed on one edge of a mutually exclusive external opposition it can no longer be the absolute,

but rather becomes limited by what it leaves out. Its truth turns into its opposite. Unhappy consciousness takes this former meaning of absolute as the object of its knowledge. It attributes essentiality to this unchangeable and in the face of this essentiality takes its own changeable nature as the unessential.<sup>202</sup> The unhappy consciousness, as the determinate finite self-consciousness it is, is unable to relate with this immediate unchangeable that is unmoved by any finite determination. According to Hegel, such an absolute by definition renders itself impossible to relate; yet by holding on to the truth of such absolute, self-consciousness becomes alienated rather to itself.

In the Religion chapter of *PS* Hegel will claim that the embodiment of God within the son, the Christ, opens up the possibility to escape an understanding of such an absolute as immediate. As it is clear by now, the term immediacy almost always has a bad connotation in Hegel. It shows that something has been pulled apart from the dialectic process of Spirit, hence remains as an empty abstraction. Any pure self-identity lacks determination, as much as being full with itself it is an empty idea. Therefore, the embodiment of God within the body of Christ corresponds to a mediated true sense of infinite. Yet, a further negation is still required in order for this supersession to be complete. The infinite cannot be the infinite by remaining within the finite. Hence, it must supersede this finite limitedness to return to itself in its mediated and determined fullness. Only then can God become the truly infinite unified movement of the opposites finite and infinite – a movement that is then carried out by an internalized form of religion within the Spirit. Therefore, what the Unhappy consciousness was unable to fulfill, namely to bring God to its Notion, is enabled through the death of the Christ. In this movement, God as an immediate infinite brings itself to the finite, within the mediation of Christ, just to die in this finite moment and reunite with itself in infinity *qua* infinity. Only through mediation can infinite escape its empty self-identity, I=I, and gain content. To be born and die in Christ becomes the possibility of the manifestation of an absolute that is not abstract but the true essence of the

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., p. 127 / ¶208.

Spirit. In this movement God is no longer its empty self but appears in its full Notion within the universal order. Or as Žižek expressively depicts, “in the very lamentation over Christ's death performed by the community of believers, God is here as Spirit; reconciliation is realized in its ‘mediated’, true form”.<sup>203</sup>

### **3.4 Conclusion: Reanalyzing Death in Light of the Kojévian Reading**

Throughout this chapter, I have mostly worked upon the centrality of negativity and limit in Hegel's philosophy from the aspect of both logic and phenomenology. The reason why I have spared a great amount of place to the elucidation of the negative is that it contributes to the ontologico-existential understanding of death in many ways that the Hegelian account of death by itself cannot cover. Yet I now want to turn back to the notion of death itself and in relation to it, reanalyze what has been said so far. To this end, I will make use of the death-oriented Kojévian reading of the *PS*, in which Kojève explores the novel expansions that Hegelian philosophy may offer under an existential light. Of course, the challenge here is not to deviate too far away from the original account – In line with this purpose, I will also comment on the points where the Kojévian conclusion seems far-fetched.

In the *Phenomenology* death firstly appears within the discussion when one self-consciousness encounters another. Here Hegel refers to death as the absolute master. The absolute master is from which the master consciousness takes its power and uses it against the slave. Within the master-slave dialectic, death becomes an instrument for displaying a power, viz., the power of sheer negativity, the power to destroy as well as to transform. This sheer negativity is at the same time the simple truth of self-consciousness. Yet, the reason why Hegel refers to the self-consciousness as sheer negativity is not very explicit within the text. Hegel does not also draw the inference that self-consciousness possesses a negating power due to its own negativity. Let us attempt to present a sound reasoning for these claims, by applying to the account of logic. Hegel claims that finite being is “inwardly self-

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<sup>203</sup> Žižek, *Tarrying*, p. 93.

contradictory”.<sup>204</sup> A finite being will realize itself by no longer being that self. Its determinate quality is finitude, or coming to an end itself. Yet, at the same time, it becomes identical with itself by becoming nothing, viz., returns to itself. In accordance with this logical structure that we have earlier elucidated, it seems plausible to claim that self-consciousness necessarily becomes a sheer negativity or nothingness due to being finite or limited by death. As Kojève claims, “Negativity, therefore is no other thing than the *finitude* of Being (on the ontological level)”.<sup>205</sup>

This then brings us to the latter question; would it be possible to claim that the ground for the act of negating is finitude itself? If this is the case, death, as sheer negativity will not only be the truth of self-consciousness but also the conditions of the possibility of the Spirit to come into being by enabling the work of negating. Hegel does not explicitly state this: He does not claim that self-consciousness acquires a negating power for being a finite determinate being. However, this conclusion is inferable since negativity and negation seem to be the different manifestations of the same movement. This is the internal relation between determination and limit that is described in the logic. Each determination posits a limit which in return posits a negating movement – as canceling what lies beyond this limit. Therefore, self-consciousness by its determination as negativity will negate in order to fulfill itself as well as to return to itself.

Kojève’s reading brings this point to its extreme and claims that Hegel’s philosophy at the bottom is nothing but “a philosophy of death”.<sup>206</sup> In the 1933-34 lectures on death, Kojève tries to demonstrate that the phenomenological journey of Man opens up and is governed by death, as well as ending in the absolute knowledge of mortality. According to his reading, “‘spiritual’ or ‘dialectical’ being is necessarily finite”.<sup>207</sup> I have already mentioned earlier that in his anthropological reading Kojève identifies Spirit with the Wise man, the sage, to Hegel himself.

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<sup>204</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 136.

<sup>205</sup> Kojève, “The Idea”, p.131.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., p.124.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., p.122.

Spirit is Man-in-the-World: the mortal Man who lives in a World without God and who speaks of all that exists in it and of all that he creates in it, including himself.<sup>208</sup>

In the fulfillment of Spirit, the sage carries all the world to its understanding as the “sum-total” discourse that is historically or “temporally extended”.<sup>209</sup> It is the act of the human understanding that separates what is already inseparably connected by spatial and temporal interconnections. This indicates that this negative activity of the understanding, namely the “act-of-separating (*Scheiden*)”, indeed contains an absolute power. Whereas Kojève attributes absoluteness directly to the power of the act itself, he claims that Spirit attains its fullness and actuality only in the knowledge of its own finitude. As Kojève writes, “[O]nly by knowing himself to be irremediably *mortal* that the Wise Man can attain the fullness of satisfaction”.<sup>210</sup> According to him, absolute knowledge not only contains within itself finitude in a superseded manner but rather becomes the knowledge and recognition of finitude itself – which corresponds to both mortality and formative work.

The condition of “being a free historical individual” is being “*mortal* in the proper and strongest sense of the term”, which is not only being finite but recognizing this finitude as well.<sup>211</sup> Such knowledge corresponds to appropriating negativity as one’s own creative activity (work) – creating through negating– which becomes the definition of ultimate freedom for Kojève. He claims that in Hegel the absolute knowledge is the knowledge of finitude, or more precisely “human finitude conscious of itself”.<sup>212</sup> The examination of this claim will bring us back to one of the central questions of this thesis: Is it possible to discuss death as part of self-knowledge under an absolute-oriented view of the truth? Or in the Hegelian sense, does death have a true place within the absolute self-knowledge of Spirit? According to Kojève’s interpretation finitude and absolute knowledge is not only compatible but identical. I would claim that the way Kojève presents this

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p.126.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p.135.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p.122.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p.124.



identity offers a misreading of Hegel, for it tends to leave out the discussion on supersession. As I have already claimed, it is important to acknowledge that the self-knowledge of Spirit must include finitude within. However, to reduce absolute knowledge completely to the understanding of death – or also to the broader category of finitude itself – is a much stronger claim that needs further support. Apart from this problem, in Kojève's interpretation this identification is not in terms of the superseded sameness within the absolute. For Hegel, the self-positing act of the absolute not only requires a confrontation but also the power of tarrying within finitude. So, I would agree to the Kojévian claim that absolute-knowledge, in order to be the absolute, must know itself through death and finitude. This, moreover, is not in a static sense in which the final unity is no longer engaged with these moments, but rather the process of knowing continues to carry death and finitude within. Yet, this is in a superseded manner that is no longer blind to their dialectic truth. I will claim that this crucial point is what is missing within the Kojévian account, but before discussing the accuracy of this assertion I want to proceed a bit more with the Kojévian line of thinking.

One of the claims of Kojève's reading is that Man must knowingly adopt his own finitude, viz., make finitude his own work. This leads to a peculiar analysis: In the master-slave passage, Kojève claims that the master by voluntarily choosing to risk its own life accomplishes this task of owning its finitude. In freely choosing to die the master becomes for-itself; comprehends its mortality and thus supersedes the given nature (as animal) and "creates itself as human being".<sup>213</sup>

[I]t is by voluntarily accepting the danger of death in a Struggle for pure prestige that Man appears for the first time in the natural World; and it is by resigning himself to death, by revealing it through his discourse, that Man arrives finally at absolute Knowledge or Wisdom, in thus completing History.<sup>214</sup>

This passage of Kojève simply indicates that the master by risking its own life opens up history and the sage closes it by carrying death into its discourse or into its Notion. The first problem in this reading is that the importance Kojève attributes to

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., p.151.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

the master consciousness seems to be lacking in Hegel. Surely, the master as being for-itself recognizes itself in its truth as negativity and it remains full with itself. However, this self-recognition and fullness is a result of an immediate empty assertion of self-certainty, which does not allow a genuine self-knowledge. Such knowledge can only be constructed through reflecting back from otherness by recognizing its own reflection in this otherness, rather than completely destroying or negating the truth (independence) of this otherness in order to remain pure. Moreover, the master consciousness, in trivializing its dependency to life and showing an extreme courage in the face of death seems to be relating to life and death only in an extreme pride.<sup>215</sup> We have formerly mentioned how the metaphysical tradition demands courage in the face of death. For Hegel, the true moment of confrontation with death is in a state of pure dread. The slave firstly trembles with this experience, loses its relation with everything that is solid, cannot identify this negativity to be its own hence suffers from a great alienation, where it can relate to nothing including its own self for it seems to be nothingness, sheer negativity. Yet, only in this dreadful glimpse the slave can see its truth whereas carrying this truth into its knowledge will require mediation. This will be obtained from the object (through servitude) and from the persistency that the final work will offer. Only then the slave will know itself in its unified truth viz., being the sheer negativity as well as the power to negate and transform. Kojève's reading does not seem compatible with this structure for it ascribes another role to the master that

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<sup>215</sup> This attitude of the master within the journey of the Spirit carries almost a tragic character. The Ancient Greek usage of *hamartia* (meaning a fatal character flaw within the context of tragedy) shows that most of the tragic heroes suffer from hubris: an extreme pride that prevents the hero from acknowledging the existence of powers in life that are superior to himself. This lack of omnipotence, this suffering from one's own limited nature finds its expression within these tragedies in the form of a tragic destiny, where the hero eventually undergoes what he attempts to escape. The tragedy of King Oedipus stands as a perfect example, in which Oedipus' own attempt to flee from his destiny is what brings him closer to it. The tragic flaw of such hero's as Oedipus is to arrogantly assume that they can prevent their destiny, can defy the heavenly words of the oracles. At the end, this power that the hero is helpless against is nothing but the limitedness of human nature, as showing its extremity in finitude. And adopting the attitude of hubris in the face of one's limitedness seems to be the fatal flaw that the Greek tragedy mostly works with.

Hegel basically does not discuss.<sup>216</sup> Rather, the master represents a state of holding on to immediacy, of the rejection towards anything that is other than itself. The master is indifferent to the independency of both the slave and the object – instead it is the work of the slave to confront and negate the independency of the thing in the act of preparing it for the master. Therefore, in a sense, the master consciousness is an abstract moment in comparison to the slave that comes to know its negativity through a truly reflective process.

The second point that I find problematic in the Kojévian reading is related to the anthropological character of this reading. As mentioned earlier, Kojève tends to read *PS* as identifying the self-consciousness with the individual human being. However, sustaining this language within the level of Spirit confuses things. Identifying the sage with the Spirit itself, as well as claiming the Spirit to be finite, are both questionable conclusions. At the point where self-consciousness appears as Spirit the knowledge of finitude also alters in a way. The former logical analysis had shown that the dialectic of finitude and infinity is to be resolved within a true infinite that supersedes both the finite and the bad infinite. This true manifestation of the infinity is what Hegel has in mind when he refers to the absolute or to the Spirit. Once the Spirit appears within history, the infinite is no longer taken to be the abstract absolute but shows its truth in mediation of the finite and equipped with the power to linger in the negative. Yet, from such a superseded point of view, it does not seem possible to bring finitude back in the picture as in the strong sense that Kojève uses it. The challenge here is to make sense of what the nature of the Spirit as knowing itself in a complete unity corresponds to. In a more definite way, the task is to show how the threefold meaning of supersession could work in relating the unity to its constitutive moments. As Hegel constantly repeats, this movement cancels and at the same time preserves something within a novel form of unity, in which opposites can then stand together no longer as opposites. Although

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<sup>216</sup> The themes that Kojève follow, specifically, choosing death as a voluntary act and the way that this voluntary act negates the natural component of death as making it a free activity of consciousness, are actually closer to the story that Hegel builds within the Ethical Order section. See, Hegel, *PS*, p. 270f / ¶452.

we can surely understand this definition, it is still not easy to claim that we can grasp it in its truth, for it invites the reader to embrace the paradox of holding opposites together. Such a unity opens up a challenging task of leaving the dominant language of binary oppositions and following the Hegelian elevation up until its absolute point where thinking the opposites in an essential unity is already made possible in the way that leads there. As Hegel formulates in an early writing,

Speculation is the activity of the one universal Reason directed upon itself. Reason, therefore, does not view the philosophical systems of different epochs and different heads merely as different modes [of doing philosophy] and purely idiosyncratic views. Once it has liberated its own view from contingencies and limitations, Reason necessarily finds itself throughout all the particular forms – or else a mere manifold of the concepts and opinions of the intellect; and such a manifold is no philosophy.<sup>217</sup>

Only within such context it becomes possible to refer to the finitude of Spirit. It is not to be known as next to infinity, but as inseparable from it. In the transition from the Understanding to the universality of Reason, the truth of finitude is no longer what it is in opposition with infinity, but taking a novel meaning in which it is known through infinity.

Ordinary reflection can see nothing in this antinomy but contradiction; reason alone sees the truth in this absolute contradiction through which both are posited and both nullified.<sup>218</sup>

Hegel, nonetheless, has been criticized by many thinkers on this general aspect of dissolving the entire negative movement within a final unifying moment – a moment with respect to which this absolute then becomes the underlying essence or principle of the entire movement. Yet, this circularity must be read carefully. The claim that the truth of this final unity becomes the truth of the whole historical process does not collapse into essentialism in terms of the givenness of essence; but rather partakes in the same paradoxical outlook of Hegel. Here, I would argue that his circular verification of the essence is not a philosophical hoax on the side of Hegel just to convince the reader that nothing is postulated from the beginning.

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<sup>217</sup> Hegel, *The Difference*, p. 88.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

Although I will agree that Hegel is in no way conducting a philosophy that is free of presuppositions, this is not sufficient to show that the absolute essence is an already implicit postulation and not a productive negative process of self-positing. The circularity here makes it possible to show that the essence both precedes and follows the historical process. As I have explained in the context of logic, Hegel infers the essence from a self-positing act that follows a self-opposing act because this positing is actually relying on the internal meaning of the finite being as negating itself, viz., the double negation that follows as soon as such a being is. This is to claim that only by being actual, by carrying itself into actuality or by its immanent negativity, this process could have come into being in the first place. Yet only by being fully developed can this essential infinite principle will make itself actual in its entirety, and afterwards become the only truth, for the rest remains only transient in compared to this absolute unified knowledge. I believe that a true interpretation of this circularity is vital to understand Hegel. I will return to this problem in the final chapter, for Heidegger will also make use of circularity within his own philosophy, which will enable a comparative discussion that can offer a more comprehensive analysis.

As returning to the Kojévian account of finitude, he is in a sense right to claim that in the absence of these finite moments the Spirit is nothing; it is neither an actuality nor acquires any kind of truth as a transcendental or even immanent essence – for each immanency implies the confrontation with and mediacy of the finite moment. Yet in another sense, the Spirit is not the accumulation of these moments but their supersession, in the face of which they convert into a “shadowy outline”, a mere “trace”.<sup>219</sup> As Hegel states clearly in the “Preface”,

The single individual is incomplete Spirit, a concrete shape in whose whole existence one determinateness predominates, the others being present only in blurred outline. In a Spirit that is more advanced than another, the lower concrete existence has been reduced to an inconspicuous moment; what used to be the

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<sup>219</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.16 / ¶28. Even the apprehension of the Spirit as an end point is misleading for this would again reduce the notion of Spirit to a certain particularity whereas its notion as a particular only makes sense within its universality: It is a condensed particular self-knowledge in terms of the spiritual, superseded reasonable gathering of all of its previous moments together within their universal notion.

important thing is now but a trace; its pattern is shrouded to become a mere shadowy outline.<sup>220</sup>

This is not to refute the reality of these different shapes but to show that within a system of constant change and development no particular or finite phase can hold on to its earlier truth; each truth is transient until it finally alters into the final truth, viz., the absolute truth in its universality and actuality. What is crucial for Hegel is to argue for the fullness of the absolute as opposed to its emptiness. Yet Kojève's bold claim goes beyond this and rather claims that absolute knowledge is nothing but "the conscious acceptance of death understood as complete and definite annihilation".<sup>221</sup> Accordingly, he also writes, "acceptance of the fact of death, or of human finitude conscious of itself, is the ultimate source of Hegel's thought."<sup>222</sup> The claim that absolute knowledge is the grasp of mortality or the sheer negativity upon which everything else is build seems to be farfetched for the Hegelian picture.<sup>223</sup> Yet, this does not in any way undermine the important step taken here by Hegel in placing the negative within the core of his philosophy. Hegel's gesture of attacking the binary opposition, which underlies the Western metaphysics, is truly revolutionary where the working principles of metaphysics, its dual outlook as well as the principle of non-contradiction are themselves problematized. Hegel aims to attack the system internally and this attack itself opens up a terminology that connects Hegel to the existential domain of research in which the essence occurs in and through the self-forming process of Spiritual existence and only by being able to tarry within the negative. Yet the centrality of the negative is not the ultimate end of Hegel's philosophy but rather the true emphasis is with regard to its internalization within the absolute.

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Kojève, Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Such reasoning of Kojève is mostly attributed to the Heideggerian influence upon him, suggesting that he reinterprets Hegel under the light of Heidegger. As I will next turn to Heidegger's account, it will be clearer in what ways Kojève is influenced by him in stating that absolute knowledge is the ultimate knowledge of finitude.

Since the finite things are a manifold, the connection of the finite to the Absolute is a manifold. Hence, philosophizing must aim to posit this manifold as internally connected, and there necessarily arises the need to produce a totality of knowing, a system of science. As a result, the manifold of these connections finally frees itself from contingency: they get their places in the context of the objective totality of knowledge and their objective completeness is accomplished.<sup>224</sup>

The achievement of the Hegelian philosophy on the way towards a comprehensive study on death should be searched in this aspect of internalization as a return from alienation. The negative movement of reciprocally reflecting back from the opposite as well as reflecting the opposite back to itself can take its meaning only from a higher unified and universal aspect, viz., the “objective totality of knowledge” as Hegel formulates here, that understands their conceptual interconnectedness. From such a perspective the nothing or death cannot hold a meaning apart from the meaning of the being or life. This indicates that there is necessarily the becoming, the spiritual Life that is actually underlying these notions as well as denoting their immanent sameness under such higher unity. In less technical terms, Hegel is not only saying that in order to make sense of death we must refer to life; more importantly the claim is that once we refer to death, as having a meaning in its oppositeness with life we directly and latently speak from a point of view that gets beyond its independent meaning and capture it through a relation. This relatedness is prior to the separation of death and life since their opposition itself indicates a primordial underlying unity. This is because each opposition takes its point of reference from a higher relation, an underlying common ground based upon which these opposites become differentiated in the first place. Yet this does not imply that this ground is pre-given, rather the unity gets to be posited within the opposing act itself. The unity does not appear until the end, either phenomenologically or transcendentally, but it afterwards becomes traceable through the relation itself. Therefore, the constitutive character of the negative within Hegel’s process metaphysics presents a philosophical ground for giving death a constitutive character as well. It allows for building a relation between death and self-understanding so that infinity becomes the truth of the Spirit

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<sup>224</sup> Hegel, *The Difference*, p. 113.

not in spite of but owing to finitude. Let us conclude with Hegel's own words, as referring to the life of the Spirit in a highly existential manner:

But the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative, as when we say of something that it is nothing or is false, and then, having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.19 / ¶32.



## CHAPTER 4

### HEIDEGGER: DEATH AS THE ULTIMATE POSSIBILITY

As shown in the preceding chapter, Hegel has introduced the inner relatedness of finitude and infinity in such a way that in the end the priority of the infinite was conserved but only in the appearance of the necessary mediacy of the finite moments that are constitutive for the process itself. As Schmidt states, the Hegelian attack is towards “the metaphysical prejudice in favor of an infinite and ontologically primary principle that is separate from the finite”.<sup>226</sup> Coming to Heidegger, the infinite is removed out of the picture completely and death converts into a central element within his philosophy of finitude *qua* an existential state of Being. Through this gesture the alleged incompatibility between death and philosophical knowledge or truth completely shutters. In Heidegger, the meaning of death goes beyond having a merely constitutive role within Being (which is as far as the Hegelian conclusion extends) and becomes the testament of the ultimate finitude of Being itself.

In one of his late essays, namely “The Task of Thinking”, Heidegger discusses the possibility of a new way of thinking that will succeed metaphysics, regarding to which he writes, “As a completion, an end is the gathering into the uttermost possibilities”.<sup>227</sup> The possibilities or offerings of metaphysics are finally gathered and refined in a place: a place that has nothing new to offer.<sup>228</sup> So long as this will not correspond to the end of philosophy itself, the nature of what is to

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<sup>226</sup> Schmidt, *Ubiquity*, p.15.

<sup>227</sup> Heidegger, Martin, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking” in *Basic Writings*, D. Farrell Krell, ed. London: Routledge, 1993, p. 313.

<sup>228</sup> Before this passage Heidegger emphasizes that “the old meaning of the word ‘end’ means the same as ‘place’”. (Ibid., 312.)

follow cannot really point to some specific answer but it rather offers a preparatory structure.

But above all, the thinking in question remains unassuming, because its task is only of a preparatory, not of a founding character. It is content with awakening a readiness in man for a possibility whose contour remains obscure, whose coming remains uncertain.<sup>229</sup>

The task will be entering into an openness that enables one to raise the question of Being itself and wait for the possibilities that this question will in return bring. In the Heideggerian sense this openness is the condition of the possibility of anything to occur. It is the meaning of Being as such. The openness of Being is enclosed by darkness; it resembles a clearing (*Lichtung*)<sup>230</sup> within the forest. Heidegger, especially in this essay emphasizes that his usage of the word *Licht* is only with reference to its meaning as free, open, clear, and has nothing to do with the homonymic word *Licht* meaning light, bright. Here, he especially refrains from generating a reductive understanding of clearing, based on light alone, since the primary purpose behind the idea of clearing is to exceed such narrowing or levelling down regarding the possible ways of appearing. Although being in light would be one of the consequences of coming into a clearing, it is just one among many others; for instance, sound also echoes and travels in the openness of the forest or the wind blows, the sun warms up and such. The clearing creates a space for everything that is there to appear. Heidegger especially emphasizes that without such space, the light – especially the light of reason – means nothing. The light of reason could never have illuminated beings if it was not for the proper space, the proper ground for the potentiality of occurring.<sup>231</sup> For a new way of thinking Heidegger's preparatory philosophy, his fundamental ontology yields such an openness. The truth of Being in the sense of unconcealment (*aletheia*) is hidden in

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>230</sup> *Lichtung* that is translated as clearing is specifically used in German in the context of a forest; it refers to the clearing in the forest. Heidegger mentions its etymological relation to forest (*Waldung*) and field (*Feldung*). (Ibid., p. 319.)

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

this openness, and as Heidegger suggests, it is even preserved due to this hiddenness, remains intact, waiting to come into light among other truths, viz., among other possible ways of Being.

In the threshold of the closure of an era Heidegger considers the philosophy of Hegel as what has already exhausted its potentiality. The metaphysical understanding that begins with Plato comes to its completion in Hegel and Marx while our present age demands for a new clearing, a new way of doing philosophy. However, as opposed to Heidegger, an alternative thinking would be that Hegel might actually have created an opening, a new clearing where Being firstly comes forth as negativity. And even though the no-thingness of Being is not yet fully acknowledged, as Heidegger rightly claims, still it opens up the space where the unconcealment of the negative can take place, or the sheer possibility to think the negative opens up. Perhaps only by being among the possibilities of this opening that the Heideggerian philosophy can come forth. The Being as clearing, according to Heidegger, is itself not something that solidly and substantially lies underneath the appearing phenomena. Rather it resembles more of an empty space, an abyss (*Abgrund*); the ground itself is withdrawing, and due to this withdrawal, it is the openness where beings can show themselves in the way they are in. In case of the post-Hegelian era, it seems that the negative provides this ground, and enables everything to appear in the light of or in attunement with the Being *qua* negativity. I would argue that even the Heideggerian claim of thinking Being as no-thing itself appears in the potentiality of this openness regardless of whether he recognizes it or not.

Heidegger would of course reject such a Hegelian opening for the following reason: According to Heidegger, without initially raising the question of Being, viz., without replacing the understanding of “Being as presence” with “Being as potentiality for appearing”, there cannot be a true opening. And whatever arrives from such an alleged opening will be destined to repeat the same metaphysical understanding without being able to bring forth anything novel. As long as Western philosophy continues to avoid working on the question of Being, it cannot escape

from falling into some form of metaphysics of presence.<sup>232</sup> Even not raising this question, this gesture itself, verifies that the presence of Being is presupposed. Since metaphysics has arrived to its end, what becomes part of it will face a dead-end and not be able to offer anything new. Hence, the new way of thinking that Heidegger has in mind is to be able to consider Being before anything; a consideration that he does not find in Hegel.<sup>233</sup> Indeed, Heidegger is trying to defend the opposite in claiming that Hegel, rather than presenting any clearing, is completing the metaphysical tradition in the sense of carrying it in its highest stage.<sup>234</sup> Yet this only makes it more challenging since, as I have tried to demonstrate so far, when one moves on the slippery ground of a limit, what separates the beginning from the end becomes ambiguous under the transparency of the notion of limit itself. What is there to prevent Hegel's closure from being read as a new beginning? Then again, following Heidegger's metaphor, clearing is not described through the vocabulary of a limit but an openness encircled by a vast concealing darkness. In any case, leaving aside the figurative discourse, up until now I have repeatedly attempted to demonstrate the novelty in the Hegelian idea of tarrying or lingering within the negative; whether this novelty has a correspondence within the Heideggerian idea of an opening will not be relevant to the following discussion.

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<sup>232</sup> The term metaphysics of presence is used by Derrida for showing that metaphysics ascribes an immediate enduring presence to the subject, namely "perception of self in the presence". As influenced by Heidegger, Derrida claims that the metaphysical language, by directly beginning its inquiry with such questions as "what" or "who" results in effacing the primordial *différance*. This present-oriented thinking postulates that presence precedes and subordinates *différance*. Such an understanding, or the "ether of metaphysics" as Derrida refers, is the core of Heidegger's ontotheological criticism in which the metaphysical formulation of Being (that is criticized) is determined *via* presence as well as within the temporality of the present. (Derrida, Jacques, *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass, trans., Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982, p. 16. See also H25.)

<sup>233</sup> Heidegger in a correspondence with Jaspers writes that Hegel was not able to grasp that logical categories are not sufficient for deriving truth and that the fundamental question is not about "becoming and motion, happening and history – but about being." (*The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence* [1920-1963], Walter Biemel and Hans Saner, eds., Gary E. Aylesworth, trans., NY: Humanity Books, 2003, p. 62.)

<sup>234</sup> Heidegger refers to Hegel's system as "The highest stage of synthesis"; and making use of the Hegelian terminology he argues as follows: The thesis is brought forth by the Greeks as the idea of an object, the antithesis becomes the Cartesian subject whereas the synthesis is Hegel's unifying Spirit. (Heidegger, "Hegel and the Greeks" in *Pathmarks*, William McNeill, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, 327.)

Before proceeding with the account of death within *Being and Time*, I lastly wish to present a claim that I find to be common to both Hegel and Heidegger, which is related to what has been said so far in Hegel and will become important in Heidegger, as well as for the general aim of this dissertation. The commonality, in its simplest form, can be stated as follows: Philosophical truth either in the form of absolute knowledge in Hegel or the genuine study of Being in Heidegger is derivable through a self-understanding that is complete, that is, in and through an understanding of the self in its entirety that includes death and finitude within. As it will be discussed in the final chapter, the nature of this understanding as well as the substantial difference on how to interpret the completeness of self-understanding will draw Hegel and Heidegger apart from each other. As it will be discussed, Hegel grounds the completeness of the self-understanding upon actuality or in the actual Spirit that has already attained the conceptual truth of finitude and superseded it within this act of knowing. The Heideggerian emphasis, on the other hand, will be on potentiality; meaning that in Heidegger the always pending, possible ways of one's own Being can only come to a completion through a proper analysis on death within the context of possibility and potentiality. As one would recall, the gist of the "Historical Background" Chapter showed that both the Platonic and Epicurean understandings, in opposite ways, have generated an alienated understanding towards one's own death in light of death's opposition to life and being. In that sense it becomes essential to show how Hegel and Heidegger manage to work with death as revealing the finitude of self-consciousness or Dasein. As I will argue, this further enables to move from self-understanding towards a general understanding of Being within the centrality of finitude and death. The substantial claim here is that in both philosophers being is articulated by means of the constitutive character of the nothing. While Hegel makes use of the logical self-contradictory nature of the nothing as necessarily entailing being, Heidegger will claim that Being identifies with nothing in the sense of a null potential ground. I will return back to this comparison once the Heideggerian side of the depiction is covered as well.

#### 4.1 From Dasein to the Question of Being in *Being and Time*

The ontological question of Being is prior to and constitutive for each and every other question that is to be asserted. To be able to raise and answer this question is the purpose of not only *Being and Time* but the entire philosophy of Heidegger. Philosophy since Plato, from the very beginning to the end, has considered the truth of Being as an underlying property common to all beings that is already known and plainly available. The forgetfulness towards Being concealed its truth; it covered up the meaning of Being and build an entire history of philosophy that does not work on its foundational question but substitutes it with what is subordinate. Yet how to realize such an investigation is another question. Heidegger explicates that Being cannot be analyzed through entities, or inferred from them as their common denominator, as a genus. This is rather a question of origin and cannot be approached “as if Being had the character of some possible entity”.<sup>235</sup> So how is it possible to ask this question in the first place; or upon what can this question be constituted?

Thus to work out the question of being adequately, we must make an entity –the inquirer– transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity’s mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about–namely, Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term “*Dasein*”.<sup>236</sup>

Being is accessible to the human being as *Dasein* in terms of its own existence or its own Being. The appeal to the term ‘Dasein’ is an attempt to take human being in the sense of its very own distinct way of existing as Being-in-the-world – whereas accounting for this distinct way will require a substantial amount of work throughout *BT*. In using the term ‘Dasein’, Heidegger tries to rebuild an analysis based on humans’ existential difference from the rest of the beings. As Heidegger’s well-known formulation states, Dasein is for whom “in its very Being, that Being is

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<sup>235</sup> H6.

<sup>236</sup> H7.

an *issue*".<sup>237</sup> Here the issuing, should be understood in a very broad sense as taking a stand towards itself, its ownmost Being: Issuing is the unique way that Dasein exists. In the Heideggerian sense, just as one should not mistake Dasein (Being-there) for a subject, existence is in no way to be considered as a property of Dasein;<sup>238</sup> rather Dasein as Being-in-the-world is what it is through and within existing. Such existence can neither be separated from Dasein's Being as a whole, nor be worked out as a conceptual abstraction within the domain of speculative thinking. "The meaning of Dasein's Being is not something free-floating which is other than and 'outside of' itself, but is the self-understanding Dasein itself".<sup>239</sup> The sheer Being or existence of Dasein is constituted by Dasein's belongingness to the world and the way that Dasein constantly relates to this world as simply Being. The existential understanding of Dasein relates equiprimordially to the understanding of the world and all the entities within, but yet does not depend on any of these relations within their particular ontic sense but only as a way of Being.<sup>240</sup>

The question of Being initiates from an investigation of Dasein's ownmost Being, for it is Dasein's own existential constitution itself that allows and even builds upon Dasein's making an issue out of itself. Hence, understanding the meaning of Dasein itself, in a reflexive way turns to an inquiry on the understanding of Being, since "what is asked about has an essential pertinence to the inquiry itself".<sup>241</sup> However, the question whether the existential analysis of

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<sup>237</sup> H12.

<sup>238</sup> The Heideggerian rejection of attributing a property character to existence is not simply to take a side on the discussion on whether existence is a property. Rather Heidegger is completely against this kind of subject-predicate understanding; and this is not only in consideration of existence but any kind of ontic or ontological belongingness to Dasein must be freed from such traditional understanding. The existential ontology of Heidegger holds the general aim of displaying that these distinctions cover up the gist of Dasein's existence as Being-in-the-world, which should not be approached as a substantial ground but as an ecstatic temporal unity. Ecstatic temporality indicates Dasein's existential constitution as extending outside of itself within a temporal horizon.

<sup>239</sup> H325.

<sup>240</sup> Referring to Dasein's existence through a particular content such as a specific event, relation or equipment is labelled as an *existentiell* understanding rather than existential. Accordingly, the central difference that Heidegger draws between ontic and ontological is to be grasped within a similar line. The ontic is with regard to the general factual characteristics of entities or beings whereas ontology denotes the general study of Being itself.

<sup>241</sup> H8.

Dasein will be sufficient to develop a complete understanding of Being is more ambiguous. The later works of Heidegger will show that a study of the historical unfolding of Being is also required for such a task. In his later writings, Heidegger will abandon the great task of drawing a structural analysis of Dasein and will reformulate his ontology by means of the historical sending of Being alone, in which Being itself is the leading force as making its appearance through the historical and cultural practices. Yet, even within the framework of *BT* Heidegger argues that the existential analytic of Dasein aims to prepare the reader for a fundamental ontology. In light of the understanding of Dasein's Being one becomes ready to raise the question of Being. However, Being itself is what withdraws and may never be captured in its completeness due to its own truth as always concealing some possibility whenever it is unconcealed. This is not a failing on its part. Quite the opposite by withdrawing and concealing, Being opens up the freedom for us to find a way of relating to entities. As Polt writes, "the thankfulness of thinking" is "grateful not for the gift, but for the giving, which gives itself in its self-concealment".<sup>242</sup> Hence, the truth of Being cannot be fully captured and for that very reason remains open and continues to offer the freedom of what is possible, instead of the complete truth.<sup>243</sup>

However, the grand promise in *Being and Time* of moving from Dasein to the fundamental ontology of Being is actually unfulfilled. This attempt of taking Dasein as a point of departure is discarded by the later writings of Heidegger, which becomes definitive for what is labelled as the turn, *Kehre*, within his philosophical perspective. The envisaged third division, namely "Time and Being" as well as the entire second part that supposed to display a temporality oriented historical

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<sup>242</sup> Polt, Richard, *The Emergence of Being: On Heidegger's Contributions to Philosophy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006, p. 141.

<sup>243</sup> I believe it is important to mention from early on that I will occasionally tend to appeal to the later language of Heidegger after the *Kehre*, especially the language of openness and withdrawal in terms of *Being and Time* as well. I would argue that such central ideas, rather than indicating a rupture in Heidegger's early and late thinking, are most of the time clearly traceable within his early work. Indeed, most of the time they stand as illuminating and enriching; and connect *BT* to his more general project of inquiring the meaning of Being. Yet, I will leave the historical unfolding of Being out of the discussion for keeping to the point.



evaluation remained unpublished, and mostly unwritten. Yet, especially in their absence the conventional conclusion was that Heidegger is offering an account of individualism in *BT*, as centered around the existential constitution of a human in its particularity. It seems that, under the light of such criticism, Heidegger drops out this methodological gesture of beginning from Dasein's own Being, for it becomes misleading by overshadowing his greater project. For most interpreters this is the gist of the Heideggerian turn, the *Kehre*: Disclaiming the attempt to arrive at the meaning of Being through Dasein. It is important to clarify the nature of this turn a bit further, since it will be related to the point that I have briefly mentioned in the beginning, regarding the connection between self-knowledge and philosophical knowledge. As I will try to show in the following pages, in the context of *BT*, Heidegger holds that the possibility of raising the question of Being can appear after attaining an authentic or genuine self-understanding of Dasein, which implies nothing but an acquired freedom for comprehending one's ownmost Being as what it is. Once Dasein manages to pull away from the always already effective public interpretations of itself, and to discover the concealment over itself, it will then be possible to gain the freedom to have an authentic understanding of its own Being; and from there to move towards a genuine understanding of Being *per se*. In case of late Heidegger, I would argue that this movement is in no way denied but simply left out in order to avoid the above-mentioned accusation of individualism. In Heidegger's own understanding *Kehre* is "not a change of standpoint", but rather an arrival to the fundamental issue to which *Being and Time* was only preparatory, that is "the fundamental experience of the oblivion of Being".<sup>244</sup>

What enables for the understanding of Dasein's ownmost Being to stand as preparatory for a fundamental ontology is in the first place nothing but the circularity of meaning – or what is referable as the hermeneutic circle. It is possible to move from the meaning of Dasein to Being or *vice versa*, since both are circularly referential to each other within Dasein's understanding. This circularity is

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<sup>244</sup> Heidegger, M., "Letter on Humanism" in *Basic Writings*, D. Farrell Krell, ed., London: Routledge, 1993, p. 157.

not a vicious one, in which meaning falls into a loop and remains analytically empty or unattainable; rather this circularity belongs to the essence of significance as world-opening. Significance is “the referential totality” that “makes up the structure of the world” so that each and every entity or relation within-the-world has its referential place in this world.<sup>245</sup> The crucial point here is not to interpret this referential understanding as indicating a foundational dependency of Being to Dasein. Heidegger emphasizes that the referential character of significance does not show that Being is to be “dissolved into ‘pure thinking’” as entities lacking an independent meaning of their own. Rather it shows that these entities are firstly be disclosed “as they are ‘substantially’ ‘in themselves’” as referential; for the ready-to-hand understanding of entities is actually prior to and constitutive for the present-at-hand.<sup>246</sup>

In the “Letter on Humanism” Heidegger explicitly states that in *BT* he does not defend that “Being is the product of man”.<sup>247</sup> Dasein is able to understand Being *via* its own meaning only because the existence of Dasein is composed of a constant projection of itself, where Being is constantly issued even without notice. Within the “Letter”, this is ascribed to Dasein’s historical ecstatic existence (*ek-sistence*), which by transcending itself can stand in the openness of the destiny of Being.<sup>248</sup> This notion of transcendence implies that Dasein’s way of existing does not correspond to a physical or substantial presence, rather this existence is to be grasped within a temporal character. Dasein’s temporal Being is extending, reaching both the past and future. Dasein, by simply Being, constantly issues this Being; it is able to reach outside of itself and step in the realm of Being within understanding so that it becomes possible to receive the historical offerings of Being. Here, Heidegger retrospectively maintains that *BT* had never prompted a view of Being that is under the dominion of man. Indeed, this claim has its correspondence within *BT* especially in the context of Dasein’s nullity and Being-

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<sup>245</sup> H87.

<sup>246</sup> H88.

<sup>247</sup> Heidegger, “Letter”, p. 163.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

thrown. Meaning that, as fallen within its world Dasein receives the historical sending of the Being of its own time. Even the way towards authenticity is delimited by the destiny of choosing to take over Being-a-basis rather than causing it to be; or entering into a freedom to choose what to receive rather than becoming the ultimate source of one's own possibilities.

Heidegger, throughout his philosophical writings, maintains to establish the necessary openness of raising the question of Being, while the way towards it is already blocked in the public understanding. As I will try to demonstrate in the following pages, Dasein's knowing itself in its authenticity will reveal a proper insight for the meaning of Being in general in its unconcealment or truth. The meaning of Dasein's Being as nullity, together with its own potentiality-for-Being and Being-towards-death, in their entirety, display an authentic self-understanding, which can then address to the truth of Being as nothing. Based on such an authentic self-understanding Dasein can be in attunement with an understanding of Being as clearing, that is to say, a withdrawing ground that enables beings to appear in their particular way of appearing. The gist is that the authentic self-understanding prepares the reader for an understanding of Being as clearing. This implies understanding Being as nothing, which enables the freedom for something to appear and at the same time conceal within the boundaries of its own limits. In his essay "On the Essence of Truth", Heidegger writes that, "Freedom for what is opened up in an open region lets beings be the beings they are. Freedom now reveals itself as letting be".<sup>249</sup> As Heidegger continues, such "letting be" does not point to indifference, but quite the opposite, it is a way of "engagement" that "withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are".<sup>250</sup> In consideration of such an ontological relation between being, nothing and freedom it becomes arguable that Dasein's existential understanding of its own Being as finite potentiality-for-Being becomes the phenomenological attestation for the truth of Being. Dasein's own openness to

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<sup>249</sup> Heidegger, M., "On the Essence of Truth" in *Basic Writings*, D. Farrell Krell, ed., London: Routledge, 1993, p. 72.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

Being-its-Self, as we will later discuss, is to be attained through an authentic understanding of its ownmost ultimate possibility, namely death.

I would then argue that, despite the change within *Kehre*, starting the investigation from Dasein's own Being is not an arbitrary choice but rather necessitated by one of the central claims of *BT*, namely that Dasein is always already fallen away from itself and must firstly come back to itself in order to grasp itself in its truth. As I will try to show subsequently, due to its thrown and fallen Being, Dasein begins from a point of understanding that is already cast away from what shows itself in its primordially. Thus, before any kind of philosophical investigation Dasein must first make an effort just to be itself – a return to an understanding of Being-in-the-world from which Dasein has not knowingly departed but nonetheless must deliberately arrive. Only then it becomes possible to raise the question of Being: a question that both underlies the understanding of Dasein and, in a circular way, becomes its end.

Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of *existence*, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it *arises* and to which it *returns*.<sup>251</sup>

## 4.2. The Existential Understanding of Death

The first division of *Being and Time* reveals a phenomenological analysis of Dasein in its average everydayness, and through its deficient mode of Being, where this mode turns out to be “the mode of *fleeing* in the face of it and *forgetfulness* thereof”.<sup>252</sup> The understanding of death is also concealed within this deficient mode of everydayness and it has been interpreted as external and unrelated to Dasein's own Being. Yet, once it becomes possible to surpass the inauthentic everyday interpretation, what is alienated to Dasein within the fallen type of

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<sup>251</sup> H38.

<sup>252</sup> H44.

understanding will reveal itself in its primordial meaning as an existentiale,<sup>253</sup> namely Being-towards-death.

The particular vocabulary that Heidegger uses throughout *BT* contributes to the attempt of building up Dasein's existential structure anew: This is not only in the sense of leaving out the metaphysical baggage, viz., a subject-oriented view or the metaphysics of presence, but more importantly to restore the meaning of Dasein in which temporality overlaps with existence. This novel vocabulary indicates a fully ontological project of clearing rather than a semantic gesture.<sup>254</sup> In case of death, the meaning of Dasein as ahead-of-itself potentiality-for-Being will disclose the primordial meaning of death *qua* Being-towards-death. As I will try to demonstrate throughout this chapter, by means of working within the interrelation of the existentialia of Dasein we will arrive at the existential ontological meaning of death. By this meaning, death is no longer an impossible experience that fits nowhere but a worldly phenomenon that belongs to Dasein in its existential structure and futural (*zukünftig*) temporality from the very beginning. In other words, Dasein has been and will maintain to be thrown Being-in-the-world as Being-towards-death.

Dasein as Being-in-the-world is not referring to some corporeal presence or to some body. Dasein indeed is in the world thru its body, however Being-in-the-world as an existentiale has something more primordial to offer. It is the totality of our dwelling in the world as containing our relatedness to the surrounding entities, our ability to know and approach them in a state of concern (*Besorgen*), and other Daseins in the form of solicitude (*Fürsorge*). The world belongs to Dasein – viz., Dasein understandingly opens this world of significance – as much as Dasein in its fallenness belongs to the world. Proper philosophy, therefore, aims at the

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<sup>253</sup> Existentialia (plural of existentiale) are the “characters of Being” belonging to Dasein's existential structure. (H44f.)

<sup>254</sup> Although Heidegger himself is not pursuing a philosophy of language, his influence over post-structuralism, and to some extent over the analytic tradition following Wittgenstein is undeniable. The structural linguistic tendency of ascribing the roots of philosophical problems to the language system or linguistic form and seek solutions within this context is prefigured in *BT*, especially through a criticism of the concealing idle talk that is ascribed to “the they”.

existential understanding of Dasein not as a secluded existence but exactly at it *is*: in its situatedness within a world. Similarly, it is very important to acknowledge that the Heideggerian usage of the term “understanding” has nothing to do with a theoretical abstract meditation. It refers neither to a factual capacity nor to reason or logic. Understanding, basically, is taking a stand on Being as appropriating one’s possibilities within projection. It corresponds to a transcending of oneself – which, as we will see is a temporal extending of Dasein – towards the horizon of possibilities that this understanding lay out. Therefore, understanding is not something apart from the way Dasein encounters with its world. Dasein takes concern in the world by “knowing how”, and in understanding itself in what it comports to, simultaneously takes a stand on its own Being. Dasein understands itself not by introspection but by existing in this very understanding, viz., as existing in accordance or as attuned to what and how it understands.

The first division of *BT* concerns itself with an ontic fallen interpretation of Dasein, in the everyday manner that it relates to its world. What may stand confusing is that, in this division Heidegger is still conducting an ontological analytic of Dasein, an attestation of Dasein’s own structure, but only with regard to its fallen way of Being. In other words, it ontologically understands the ontic understanding of Dasein. It considers Dasein in its fallen everydayness and familiarity and with regard to the interpretation that this everyday Dasein generates as a “they-Self”. What makes things even more complicated is that Dasein at the same time has a pre-ontological grasp of itself by Being the Being that it is. Yet it flees itself and constantly covers and erases the primordial meaning of its Being, and this gesture of fleeing is also a mode of Dasein’s Being-fallen, namely a way that Dasein’s Being-fallen phenomenologically appears. Hence, there is also a play between the pre-ontological grasp of the primordial understanding and the ontic interpretation that covers and distorts it. Here, the reader constantly confronts a challenge for properly sorting out what is ontic, ontological, derivative, primordial, inauthentic and authentic.

Dasein in its everyday fallenness is concealed to itself in its authentic potentiality-for-Being. This is not only in a manner of handing down itself to the publicity of Being-with-one-another but also as a fleeing away from itself to the world – where this world again belongs to Dasein as Being-in-the-world. Hence, Dasein turns away from its own Being to the world only to find itself “there” within. What makes Dasein flee from itself and at the same time brought back to itself occurs in a particular state-of-mind (*Befindlichkeit*),<sup>255</sup> namely anxiety (*Angst*).

#### 4.2.1 Anxiety: Falling Away and Summoning Back

Anxiety is the state-of-mind to which Dasein is always already thrown in, due to the sheer fact that its Being is an issue for itself. “Dasein is anxious in the very depths of its Being”.<sup>256</sup> It is anxious in the face of and about its own Being-in-the-world: Firstly, as fallen Dasein, it is actually a stranger to its authentic Being-in-the-world due to Being absorbed in this world itself. In its everyday fallenness (and to be fallen belongs to Dasein existentially) it surely understands itself the way it is, namely through its relations with entities, others and to itself. Dasein’s fallen inauthentic way of Being itself (for in inauthenticity Dasein is still a possible kind of Being itself)<sup>257</sup> is by making sense of everything within their given relevance within the world. This web of meaning is ordered by the public domain. As being part of this domain, Dasein hands itself down to the anonymous they (*das Man*).<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> The translation of *Befindlichkeit* as state-of-mind is not very accurate. It is often criticized for misleading the reader to apprehend it as a faculty of mind. Although I agree with this view, I will yet adhere to the translation (M-R) to avoid any confusion. The important thing is to recognize that state-of-mind is an existentiale. It basically means that Dasein as Being-in-the-world always finds itself in a particular state, a mood, in the setting of which it relates to its world, within which it projects itself to its possibilities.

<sup>256</sup> H190.

<sup>257</sup> H178.

<sup>258</sup> While translating *Das Man* as “the they” there appears a significant problem of using the second-person plural, which distorts one of Heidegger’s main points: *Das Man* does not exclude the person that is referring to it in the way that the English word, the they, does. By referring to “the they” it seems as if I am always referring to a domain that I am not part of. In that sense the German meaning is rather closer to a “we-Self”. However, what makes this translation very hard is its

Rather than representing a communal voice, “the they” is the indefinite nobody to whom the everyday fallen Self of Dasein has been surrendered to. In everyday life, most of the time, “the they” decide on the proper way in which Dasein should comport itself towards its possibilities.

Dasein has always already been fallen in this familiar world of significance where entities and relations, tasks and possibilities are relevant; they have a meaning in the referential totality, which Dasein itself has not established. Rather than creating this web of relations, Dasein has delivered it over from the beginning. In fallenness Dasein hands itself over to the tranquilizing power of the “they-Self”. “The they” encourages Dasein to constantly flee from its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. In this mode of fleeing Dasein’s own Being-in-the-world, the way it merely *is* in this world as potentiality-for-Being becomes concealed.

It seems useful to mark a possible point of confusion from early on: Dasein’s concealment to itself in fallenness does not imply that Being-in-the-world is an ontological “framework” to which fallen Dasein is alien. The structure of Dasein’s existence in the world is not as a transcendental structure to which Dasein is unfamiliar in notion. Rather, “in comporting itself towards its world” Dasein is already “touching the framework”.<sup>259</sup> So this everyday unfamiliarity with Being-in-the-world is not with regard to the absence of a pure ontological self-examination that is distinguishable from Dasein’s practical doings. It is crucial to always keep in mind that there is no rupture between the comporting side and the understanding side of Dasein. What rather becomes unfamiliar or concealed is that the possible ways of Dasein’s understanding itself (in the sense of projecting itself towards its possibilities) becomes framed within the public order; and the authentic way of self-understanding is levelled down to the degree of understanding oneself as merely they-Self. What is at stake here is more than a lack in understanding. It is

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double usage. As much as it does not exclude me, it still strongly signifies anonymity, and in that sense a phrase such as “the we” would also not work in being too inclusive. To understand its meaning, one can think of it in terms of “man” in English in the sense that we use it as “man does such things” or “man is full of lies”; thus in common sense, it is always not me but the other man in the manner of throwing off the blame or responsibility.

<sup>259</sup> H176.



not the case that Dasein, as they-Self, holds only a partial understanding of itself, viz., only in terms of Being-with Others. Rather the entire understanding is distorted. This is as such because in the absence of the primordial understanding of Dasein something crucial gets covered up: Dasein's free potentiality to understand itself. Once this understanding is given by others it no longer becomes free; its own meaning turns against itself. As Heidegger writes, Dasein's "understanding itself is a potentiality-for-Being that must be made free in one's ownmost Dasein alone".<sup>260</sup> Thus, when "the they" covers up this meaning, such covering also takes Dasein's free potentiality-for-Being away from it, and eventually distorts the entire meaning of its sheer Being.

As much negative as it all sounds, this existential way of Being-fallen from oneself to the world and the levelling down of possibilities is at the same time constitutive for Being-in-the-world. If we may borrow the Heideggerian description of how the ready-to-hand equipment dissolves within the work, it carries a similarity in how Dasein itself melts within the publicity of its world: Just as an equipment turns out to be transparent when working properly, Dasein's own anxious Being remains hidden in order for it to keep doing what it is doing in everyday practices.<sup>261</sup> As Heidegger writes: "Not-Being-its-self functions as a

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<sup>260</sup> H178.

<sup>261</sup> The simile that I draw here should not be mistaken as attributing a ready-to-hand character to Dasein. The analogy is only for clarificatory purposes, for I believe both cases display a parallel reasoning. Heidegger writes that "The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically". (H69) In understanding the object within a relation of readiness-to-hand the entity is understood at work as an object of use. It is graspable within a practical, functional and relational way of being. Through such an understanding the working equipment becomes transparent for it is actually used for a particular purpose, specifically, in-order-to achieve some work. The work, on the other hand, is in-order-to achieve some other purpose. This line of reference ultimately reaches back to Dasein itself, or as Heidegger writes, it is ultimately "for the sake of a possibility of Dasein's Being". (H84) The equipment is in-order-for the work to be done and ultimately for-the-sake-of a possible way of Being of Dasein. Hence, in properly working, the ready-to-hand object is withdrawn whereas the totality of the practice comes forth. This withdrawal is similar to the way Dasein's authentic Being becomes withdrawn within its social practices. Dasein's everyday situatedness and thrownness within the world takes place in the form of an absorption in "the they". In this factual level the "in-order-to" or "for-the-sake-of-which" is operative. Dasein as Being-in-the-world is dispersed in the publicity of "the they" within its ontic dealings in-order-to make sense of its world and relations. This ultimately comes down to a mode of Being of Dasein, namely for-the-sake-of its own Being as Being-with Others and Being-in. This comparison, again, should not be confused

positive possibility of that entity which, in its essential concern, is absorbed in a world”.<sup>262</sup> The concealment successfully functions for Dasein in order to be the fallen-Being that it is. Yet, by just Being what it is, viz., by always already projecting into future possibilities, Dasein at the same time pre-ontologically grasps its own potentiality-for-Being and it becomes anxious in the face of it. In this anxiety Dasein flees towards the tranquilizing public world in which the soothing promise is that “all the possibilities of Dasein” will be “secured, genuine, and full”.<sup>263</sup>

Dasein cannot authentically understand its Being-in-the-world the way that it circumspectly (*umsichtig*) knows something present-at-hand or even ready-to-hand; the object of such an observation is literally *nothing* when it comes to Dasein. Terminologically speaking as the way Heidegger uses it, Being-in-the-world is not *a* being that is in the world. Rather Heidegger’s vocabulary is putting us in a direct confrontation with an exact way of Being referred as Dasein, which should be understood as a particular *existence* that constantly projects itself towards its world.<sup>264</sup> Being-in-the-world, alongside with its given or more precisely taken-over character, is yet not a property of some being but the projective doing itself. The nothingness of Being-in-the-world, in one sense, is a reminder of the lack of a substantial ground. But more precisely Dasein as thrown Being-in-the-world, as potentiality-for-Being, as Being-possible is itself an openness for Being, a nullity, which must nonetheless take over its own Being-a-

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with attributing a ready-to-hand structure to the “they-Self”, since Heidegger would completely reject such an understanding. It rather aims to illuminate the positive character behind Dasein’s fallen-Being, its downward plunge (*Absturz*). Being absorbed in “the they” basically becomes constitutive for Dasein’s average everyday Being that is in concern with its environment (*Umwelt*) just as a properly working tool does.

<sup>262</sup> H176.

<sup>263</sup> H177.

<sup>264</sup> As I will work upon on the following pages, in line with the futural Being of Dasein that is always already ahead-of-itself, projecting characterizes Dasein’s existential relation with its possibilities as a potentiality-for-Being. It is not to plan something ahead but understand oneself in terms of its possibilities as preserving their character of possibility: meaning that without thematically carrying them in the frame of an already “given content” (H145). This same point will become central in the following sections of this chapter, for the discussion of death and its understanding as sheer possibility.

basis. The meaning of this needs further clarification, yet this will become possible only after showing how all that is mentioned so far reveals itself through the state-of-mind of anxiety.

Turning back to the initial explanation of anxiety, the relevant questions are why Dasein is anxious in the face of its own Being-in-the-world or why it flees itself, and how it summons itself back to itself. Anxiety is not just an ontic mood that Dasein temporally gets in or out, but an existential state of Being-in-the-world. It always already attunes Dasein in each specific way it projects itself towards the world, although in the everydayness it is mostly covered up within the safety of socially constructed meaning. Falling in its pre-established world alienates Dasein to its ownmost state-of-mind, namely anxiety. Yet the uncanniness does not leave Dasein alone: Anxiety “is only sleeping”<sup>265</sup> and comes to surface even “in the most innocuous Situations”<sup>266</sup>. As Heidegger writes in “What is Metaphysics?”,

Original anxiety can awaken in existence at any moment. It needs no unusual event to rouse it. Its sway is as thoroughgoing as its possible occasionings are trivial. It is always ready, though it only seldom springs, and we are snatched away and left hanging.<sup>267</sup>

Under the uncanny mood of anxiety, the world that normally shows itself as holding a totality of involvements now shows itself within a lack of significance, rendering it impossible to understand what initiates anxiety. Dasein is not anxious due to a definite factual state, or object, nor to any practical doing such as projects, plans. Rather they all seem irrelevant.<sup>268</sup> Anxious Dasein is not only unable to detect an object as the source of this anxiety but more importantly everything suddenly stands irrelevant, as rendering Dasein “incapable of having an

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<sup>265</sup> Heidegger, Martin, “What is Metaphysics?” in *Basic Writings*, D. Farrell Krell, ed., London: Routledge, 1993, p. 54.

<sup>266</sup> H189

<sup>267</sup> Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?”, Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Heidegger presents anxiety in its opposition with fear (*Furcht*). Fear has a concrete object. This, of course is referring not to an object in its strong sense: As much as a worldly entity it can be a particular possibility, a relation or another Dasein; and it can be something either remote or close. In each case it is able to point towards something in the world as the source. Fear brings forward Dasein’s relatedness with the rest of its world whereas anxiety withdraws it.

involvement”.<sup>269</sup> The object of anxiety is nothing. Or as we might rather say in anxiety the nothing shows up.<sup>270</sup>

What oppresses us is neither this or that, nor the summation of everything present-at-hand; it is rather the *possibility* of the ready-to-hand in general; that is to say, it is the world itself.<sup>271</sup>

The nothing is the world as such. Here, world is neither a totality of all beings nor a world concept that transcends these beings. Rather, in the lack of all relevance, the being-possible<sup>272</sup> character of beings itself finally shows up or shines through. What Heidegger refers as “world as such” is the ground for things to appear as in no other way but being-possible. This does not mean that the world suddenly gets content free, but rather in anxiety it becomes obvious that the things within this world “are of so little importance in themselves” that the world itself “can offer nothing more” but its worldhood; its sheer potentiality for letting everything appear as significant and relational.<sup>273</sup>

Once the world shows itself in its irrelevancy and nothingness (in the sense of openness) Dasein’s anxiousness *about* its own Being cannot again point to anything particular or definite. For instance, it cannot be anxious about itself in the sense of losing its health, job, well-being and such. Anxiety, in that sense individualizes Dasein: There no longer appears a distinct set of references or totality of involvements by which it can understand itself. Dasein loses its familiar

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<sup>269</sup> H187

<sup>270</sup> In “What is Metaphysics?” Heidegger emphasizes on the nothing that anxiety is directed towards. The object of anxiety is not only nothing in the sense of “nothing particular” but also as nothingness as such. (50ff.) This claim is also present in *BT*, as we shall refer soon after: anxiety belongs to the nullity of Dasein in its thrown Being-towards-death.

<sup>271</sup> H187.

<sup>272</sup> In the Heideggerian terminology Being-possible (*Möglichsein*) is an existentials of Dasein. It refers to Dasein especially with respect to its not-yet nullity as Being always possible, always open to be what it can be. As I will later work upon, Being-possible shows that Dasein’s potentiality-for-Being is always with respect to some not-yet possibility. This is in the sense that, whatever way Dasein is, there always will be another way that it can be. Here, similarly I am using being-possible, with a lower-case letter, as considering some ready-to-hand entity particularly in reference to its possibility to be. As giving a concrete example we may think of a hammer, which Heidegger often uses in other contexts: To nail is among the possibilities of a hammer, so is to break something apart, etc. As being-possible, the hammer will always contain some other possible way to appear as far as its scope of possibilities extend.

<sup>273</sup> H187.

ties with its surrounding. It no longer feels at home; its Being-in-the-world appears as Being not-at-home in the world.<sup>274</sup> This is the uncanniness (*unheimlichkeit* – where *un-heimlich* literally means not-at-home) that is felt within anxiety. Yet, in this loss of significance Dasein’s potentiality-for-Being as such becomes attested. Surely everyday Dasein has always been choosing among possibilities in its daily life, and it has always been potentiality-for-Being. So, what difference does it make that this potentiality becomes attested? In the lack of such attestation, or an authentic self-understanding, Dasein is not truly choosing but rather hands down its possibilities to the indefinite Others of daily life, namely, “the they”. Since Dasein’s projecting and understanding are one and the same, without understanding itself in terms of potentiality-for-Being, Dasein cannot fully take the responsibility of or become free for its ownmost Being as this potentiality.

In the “they-Self”, possibilities are leveled down (*Einebnen*) and the possibilities get concrete in such a degree that their being-possible nature also gets concealed. In contrast to this, within the irrelevancy that is felt in the face of anxiety the worldhood of the world, viz., “the possibility of the ready-to-hand”<sup>275</sup> appears. As the world shows itself as such, Dasein’s Being-in-the-world in return can appear clearly in its ownmost structure as projecting itself to its possibilities. As arriving to such an understanding Dasein’s facticity is in no way undermined. Its Being-in-the-world as “bound up in its ‘destiny’” with the Being of the rest of the entities is still fully acknowledged in the collapse of everyday meaning.<sup>276</sup> Being thrown into a world of significance is not something that can be undone, but yet something to be taken over. Dasein does not put aside what is factically handed down to it within a moment of *epoche*: Indeed, through anxiety Dasein’s *thrownness* into facticity becomes apparent more than ever. In the individualizing effect of anxiety, the truth of facticity appears as thrown potentiality-for-Being. This means that, in the anxious state-of-mind Dasein can see its own thrownness to a situated world, where all meaning is already established within the public realm;

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<sup>274</sup> H189.

<sup>275</sup> H187.

<sup>276</sup> H56.

but more importantly Dasein understands that this thrownness is not something alien to itself but belongs to its own Being. Dasein is thrown not once and for all to the world but it gets constantly “sucked into the turbulence of the ‘they’s’ inauthenticity”.<sup>277</sup> Dasein is not itself the source of the possibilities of its world which it fallen into and can never be. Its authentic way of Being will be just as thrown as the inauthentic way of Being, for thrownness existentially belongs to Being-in-the-world. Dasein cannot escape to project itself to a horizon of definite possibilities of what is historically given. What anxiety and thrownness can reveal in Dasein’s understanding is rather a freedom to choose its authentic potentiality-for-Being-its-Self; which means authentically choosing out of the heritage that one takes over.<sup>278</sup> This will become the existential double fold meaning of Dasein’s nullity: Firstly, Dasein’s Being as Being-in-the-world is *not* based on itself; and secondly as the sheer potentiality that it is, it takes over this Being in a way that leaves out or nullifies the rest of the possibilities.

What appears nakedly within the state of anxiety, that is the exposure of thrownness and nullity within the loss of significance is what summons Dasein back to itself. As recognizing itself both in its thrownness and potentiality, Dasein recognizes that it is Being-free for choosing authenticity. Hence the always already concealed possibility of bringing itself back to itself opens up – where this authenticity is in no way some higher stage of Being that is remote to the world of Dasein. Quite the opposite, it is just a choice to be itself.

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<sup>277</sup> H179.

<sup>278</sup> H383f The historicity of Dasein shows that this heritage is handed over to Dasein prior to any historical knowledge – on the contrary any kind of historiology, including the one that Heidegger as inspired from Nietzsche presents as authentic historiology depends on Dasein’s primordial historicity. Through understanding itself as historical Dasein carries the past within its ahead-of-itself present by resolutely projecting itself upon its heritage. This carrying is such that Dasein hermeneutically interprets today in terms of the no-longer possibilities of the past as “repetitive in a futural manner”. (H397.) In other words, a set of historical possibilities is resolutely chosen and disclosed in the today through what it can open within the future. In such repetition the possible and the factual meet or as Heidegger writes, “the ‘force’ of the possible gets struck home into one’s factual existence”. (H395.) This shows that these possibilities are inherited not in terms of their once actualized form but with respect to what they can possibly enable within the future. From such a hermeneutic understanding of history and heritage, as authentic historiology, not only the past but also “‘today’ gets deprived of its character as present”. (H397.)

This individualization brings Dasein back from its falling, and makes manifest to it that authenticity and inauthenticity are possibilities of its Being. These basic possibilities of Dasein (and Dasein is in each case mine) show themselves in anxiety as they are in – undisguised by entities with-the-world, to which, proximally and for the most part, Dasein clings.<sup>279</sup>

Therefore, in anxiety, Dasein understands itself in Being thrown into a pre-established world of significance, where the worldhood of the world itself is not based on any absolute significance but rather tantamount to a state of possibility of having any significance whatsoever. At the same time Dasein understands itself in Being the temporal openness for projecting upon its possibilities within-the-world. So, to be free for authentic potentiality-for-Being is itself the authentic choice of Dasein. In contrast to the fleeing mode of inauthenticity, this anxious understanding is rather an approach to itself – which, as we will soon cover, gains its full meaning in death, or in the understanding of death as anticipatory resoluteness.

What anxiety enables in Dasein, that is the possibility of knowing oneself in its very own Being, and the way anxiety affects Dasein, namely, the collapse of all the familiar relations, seems to be quite Hegelian from a general perspective. In both accounts anxiety has an important role in disclosing self-knowledge. The self-knowledge attained is indeed very distinct, yet the similarity regarding the role of anxiety is undeniable: Anxiety has this unsettling, individualizing effect by which both the slave-consciousness and Dasein confront their own truth through a loss of familiarity in their over-all relations. As we have seen, in the master-slave dialectic Hegel discusses the dread felt in the face of death in a similar manner<sup>280</sup> and he likewise attributes a transformative power to this strong feeling, viz., the slave consciousness' recognition of its own negating power. In case of Heidegger anxiety calls Dasein back from its fleeing mode of Being, so that Dasein understands itself as nullity; as both thrown and potentiality-for-Being, that is, born

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<sup>279</sup> H191.

<sup>280</sup> To remind the passage ones more: "For this [slave] consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread ... the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple essential nature of self- consciousness, absolute negativity..." (Hegel, *PS*, p. 117/ ¶194.)

in an already constructed totality of significance while Being a sheer potentiality. From that the possibility of authenticity ascends. Heidegger also refers to anxiety in the context of death. Dasein's pre-ontological grasp of itself is always attuned by anxiety. It anxiously understands itself "as thrown Being *towards* its end" or towards the uttermost possibility of the impossibility of Being-in-the-world.<sup>281</sup> Anxiety discloses the primordial meaning of death as always already belonging to Dasein's Being-in-the-world as Being-towards-death. Heidegger's conclusions, just as it is in Hegel, attribute anxiety a power to transform one's nothingness into something (authentic potentiality-for-Being). In both accounts, anxiety exposes to self-understanding what is already there. The slave consciousness reflects its own negativity to the formation of the work whereas Dasein in the recognition of its nullity resolutely discloses its potentiality-for-Being-its-Self. Yet in Hegel such a transformation within the self-understanding is led by the conceptual grasp of oneself as a sheer negativity – a negativity that allows for the power to negate, to transform and to build. In Heidegger this transformative power takes a very different form. Dasein, in facing the primordial nullity through anxiety, accomplishes to understand itself within its fundamental structural nothingness. This precedes any kind of conceptual knowledge and indicates a pre-theoretical way of understanding which corresponds to nothing less than Dasein's way of existing. Understanding here is a practical existential matter indicating the ways in which Dasein is in the world and relates to this world. Dasein constitutes its own Being out of its very understanding.

The anxiety discussion up to this point paves the way for the existential ontological meaning of death by introducing some of the crucial ideas of *BT* that will be constitutive within the rest of this chapter. Since Heidegger's phenomenological project aims to show the existential understanding of Dasein in the way it appears and at the same time in its entirety, the potentiality-for-Being itself stands as a huge obstacle in the way. It seems as if in regard of the not-yet character of this potentiality, Dasein can never be complete until it comes to its end

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<sup>281</sup> H251.



and become no longer potential. Heidegger opens up the discussion of death from this wholeness issue and show how it turns out to be a pseudo-problem under the light of an existential understanding, according to which Dasein is already a whole by being always ahead-of-itself. Now we can turn to the second division and proceed with the discussion on death.

#### **4.2.2 The Meaning of Death as Possibility**

The second division of *BT* turns its attention away from the everydayness and embarks upon the challenge of analyzing Dasein in its entirety in a primordial existential interpretation. As the section on anxiety revealed, Being-in-the-world is basically potentiality-for-Being. Here, Dasein's primordial relation with its possibilities precedes any framework of action. This relation is not reducible to the simple act of choosing something over another, but rather it is the entire way of existing or Being of Dasein. While Dasein is sheer potentiality-for-Being, its possibilities are towards which this potentiality can stream itself. What Heidegger is aiming for is to understand this relation in its primordially and at the same time phenomenologically, as the way it appears. Projecting oneself to the future possibilities, in that sense, is tantamount to nothing but existing. As long as Dasein *is*, it is this futural temporality of self-projecting. Dasein's Being-in-the-world is ahead-of-itself.

##### **4.2.2.1 Not-yet and Wholeness**

Heidegger refers to Dasein's ontological structural whole as care. The care structure is not something that gathers all the existentialia together, but rather indicates the fundamental unity of Dasein's Being. Regarding to this care structure Dasein is: "ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in (the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)".<sup>282</sup> As complicated as it may sound it

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<sup>282</sup> H192.

basically repeats what has been discussed so far. Care is Dasein's way of taking a stand towards its own Being by caringly comporting itself towards its possibilities within the world. This shows that Dasein takes a stand over its own Being prior to what is actual, what has already taken place. Dasein's Being-in-the-world is always one step ahead of itself because it relates to its world and continuously constitutes its own Being by concerning with its possibilities. This structural wholeness of Dasein, rather than displaying a formal categorical structure is existential-ontological, for it grounds this wholeness not upon some pre-given substance (and its predicates) but in sheer existence. Moreover, this existence is not simply with regard to existing here and now, but as ahead-of-itself. Dasein by caring becomes what it is. It is in the manner of existing in the world that Dasein manifests itself to be this particular Being. Hence, Heidegger's project is not based on presupposing a firmly established transcendental structure of Dasein. Rather, he aims to draw the structure out of the phenomenological attestation of what emerges or discloses as such.

Dasein's ahead-of-itself thrown Being-in-the-world further reveals the ecstatic unity of temporality.<sup>283</sup> In the end, the ontological meaning of care structure will appear as temporality. The ecstatic finite temporality becomes the existential or primordial meaning of Dasein. Dasein always already in its existential structure of its Being projects itself towards its future Being, which extends finitely in a horizon that is delimited with the final possibility, namely death. The primordial meaning of temporality is this ecstatic unity of taking over the past and projecting back from the future. Dasein is not only capable but also

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<sup>283</sup> Heidegger's elaboration of the ecstatic primordial temporality opposes the traditional infinite-oriented way of understanding time as a linear series of nows. Instead, the finite temporality offered by Heidegger, prioritizes the future as it unfolds the primordial Being of Dasein as ahead-of-itself, as Self-projecting, as Being-towards-death. Dasein in the scope of the future horizon that is delimited and determined by the certainty of the possibility of death makes sense out of its having-been thrownness and projects itself back from its future possibilities to the present: Dasein by its very meaning as this unified temporality ecstatically temporalizes itself finitely outside of itself. For a wider discussion on the meaning and roots of ecstatic temporality see White, Carol J., *Time and Death: Heidegger's Analysis of Finitude*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005, 96-102. See also Krell, David Farrell, *Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being*, London: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1986, 49ff.

destined to outspread to the future and (beforehand) become its possibilities in projection. In understanding itself in these possibilities it already appropriates them in its ecstatic Being. This appropriation as Polt writes, is not possession but “ways of belonging that precede theoretical abstraction”.<sup>284</sup> To remind once more, Dasein’s relating to its possibilities is not a particular way of Being in which Dasein contemplates over its future, but it is inherited in every act as much as in the state of inaction, it is a structure that covers each and every way of Being-in-the-world. In other words, Dasein is ahead-of-itself not with regard to its ability to think about its future but more primordially because it exists in a way that is always determines its Being in reference to its future. Even referring to this as the future (as something that Dasein will attend soon after) will be misleading for Dasein not just reflects itself back from its future but is already in reach of it.

In a similar line of thought, in the Heideggerian understanding possibilities are not used with reference to actuality. This dichotomy itself loses its meaning, for Dasein’s relation with its possibilities is not by carrying them into actuality. In the “Letter on Humanism” Heidegger writes as follows,

[O]ur words *möglich* (possible) and *Möglichkeit* (possibility), under the dominance of “logic” and “metaphysics”, are thought solely in contrast to “actuality”, that is, they are called on the basis of a definite - the metaphysical - interpretation of Being ... rather ... to enable something here means to preserve it in its essence to maintain it in its element.<sup>285</sup>

I will argue that once possibilities are present-at-hand there is nothing “possible” left in them, and they can no longer hold any understanding on Dasein’s primordial Being as potentiality-for-Being. Therefore, Dasein’s primordial understanding of itself always takes place within the factual world in Dasein’s coping with the rest of the beings, but at the same time in the borders of possibility. Mark Sinclair, in the Heidegger section of its book *The Actual and the Possible*, presents a very similar reading. He writes that,

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<sup>284</sup> Polt, *The Emergency*, p. 139.

<sup>285</sup> Heidegger, “Letter”, p. 150.

In existing, Dasein certainly moves from particular possibilities to their realization, but the being of Dasein—as a being that is always in ‘movement’, as a being that is not, for as long as it is alive, a ‘finished product’—consists in the peculiar stretched-out being or activity of the possible that is its movement.<sup>286</sup>

Accordingly, this kind of a primordial pre-theoretical understanding that constructs the Being of Dasein in the level of possibilities cannot depend on the primacy of the present but of the future: the future to which Dasein is already extending in its temporal transcendence. As we will examine further, this will be the same reason why death, as a sheer possibility, does not leave Dasein as something outstanding but rather always already belongs to it due to this ecstatic ahead-of-itself Being of Dasein.

As mentioned above, in the search of Dasein’s possibility of Being-a-whole, Dasein’s ecstatic transcendence, its ahead-of-itself potentiality-for-Being seems to create an obstacle. Dasein as Being-possible is always not-yet, and until it comes to the end of its potentiality it will always remain so. Heidegger firstly attempts to show how this not-yet existentials of Dasein is not substitutive for any other sense of lacking or outstanding. Firstly, Dasein’s wholeness is not something that can be attained with the addition of some missing part, e.g., such as adding the outstanding amount of money within a debt to make it complete. Secondly, the not-yet of Dasein cannot be due to a lack in our own grasp or the result of a misperception, e.g., such as seeing the moon as half when it is actually always complete. Heidegger then evaluates a more akin example: the ripening of a fruit, where the fruit’s not-yet is with respect to its inner potential. The fruit becomes ripened and complete hence fulfills itself by its own self. However, the ripening of the fruit again is not the same with Dasein’s completion, since Dasein’s completeness is irrelevant to fulfillment; it is not about exhausting its possibilities or being old enough to die. Quite the opposite most of the time Dasein comes to its end without achieving such fulfillment. Hence, Dasein’s not-yet is not compatible with an inner teleological explanation also.

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<sup>286</sup> Sinclair, Mark, “Heidegger on ‘Possibility’” in *The Actual and the Possible: Modality and Metaphysics in Modern Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 198.

Grasping Dasein “in its entirety” and at the same time as not-yet is problematic for, as Heidegger states, “[a]s long as Dasein is, there is in every case something still outstanding, which Dasein can be and will be”.<sup>287</sup> The possible ways of Being that are laid open for Dasein are obstacles in the way of understanding Dasein’s Being-a-whole. As potentiality-for Being Dasein always already understands itself as extended within the horizon of possibilities that opens up; it is futural, ahead-of-itself, hence not-yet. So, the completeness seems to be achievable only when this potentiality comes to an end. The problem becomes rather about the limit of this horizon, what gives it its finitude, namely death. Dasein’s potentiality-for-Being will reach its limit in a final and certain possibility after which it can no longer be this potentiality or after which all the possibilities become impossible. Consequently, it seems as if Dasein can be a whole only in the end, when it exhausts its potentiality-for-Being. However, this does not solve anything, for as coming to its end Dasein no longer is. The possibility of understanding itself as Being-a-whole is again lost. Being-in-the-world in the sense of *Da-sein* (Being-there) converts into no-longer-being-there. The wholeness that succeeds the end, such a “gain becomes the utter loss of Being-in-the-world”;<sup>288</sup> nothing remains from Dasein, nothing left to interpret its own loss-of-Being. As Heidegger writes, what is at stake here is: “the ontological meaning of the dying of the person who dies, as a possibility-of-Being which belongs to *his* Being”.<sup>289</sup> What is in concern is always my ownmost end whereas in case of another Dasein’s loss the remaining corpse is for me only something corporeal, to which I relate as a present-at-hand entity or mostly with concern, but definitely not as a loss that pertains to my own Being. The demise of the Other offers nothing for understanding Dasein’s Being-a-whole. Hence, for truly interpreting Dasein in its completeness what matters is its possibility of Being-a-whole before coming to its end.

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<sup>287</sup> H233.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., H236.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., H239.

Up until this point I deliberately abstained from using the word “dying”, for dying or death is not the word that Heidegger uses as substitutive for coming to an end. Rather, death is Dasein’s ownmost unsurpassable non-relational certain possibility that always already belongs to its ahead-of-itself Being as Being-towards-death. Before starting to work on this profound meaning we must initially understand what death is not.

#### 4.2.2.2 Coming to an End: Perishing and Demise

Heidegger separates three different usages: to perish (*Verenden*), to demise (*Ableben*) and to die (*Sterben*). He uses the word “perish” to indicate the end of any living thing, namely, animals, plants. From this sort of ending he separates “demise”, a word that he attributes particularly to the end of Dasein. Demise is the end of Dasein’s Being “as codetermined by its primordial kind of Being”.<sup>290</sup> Dasein, as the very Being that it is, does not just cease to be; but it factually comes to the end of its potentiality-for-Being or Being-in-the-world. The German word *Ableben* literally means break off or departure from life (*leben*) which is verbally fitting to the Heideggerian usage. Demise is the termination of the Being-in-the-world that pertains to a particular Dasein to which this Being and life is always an issue. Dasein not just ceases to be but loses its life; its Being-in-the-world or its potentiality-for-Being. Through separating perishing from demise, the distinction of Dasein from any other living thing is once again emphasized by Heidegger.<sup>291</sup> Even

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid., H247.

<sup>291</sup> As an alternative reading, Carol White claims that perishing, just as demise, pertains solely to humans. According to her, this is because life is used in the relevant passage in the context of living in a world whereas non-human animals and plants are described as worldless by Heidegger. However, the passage in its entirety does not seem to lead to such a conclusion. It writes that Dasein too has its end, “of the kind appropriate to anything that lives” “though on the other hand, *qua* Dasein, it does not simply perish”. (H247) I would even suggest reading it as implying the opposite of what Carol argues. The phrase Dasein “does not simply perish” is in the sense of: cannot just perish but its end always implies something more. Hence its coming to an end is always special, just by Being the Being that it is *qua* Dasein it cannot perish but will always demise. Otherwise, White’s interpretation seems to obscure this distinction between perishing and demise. According to her explanation, Dasein’s perishing is tantamount to referring just to an end without including Dasein’s Being within the picture. (White, p. 70.) It is possible to question whether in such cases

before coming to the main problem of how to interpret death, there appears to be an ambiguity on what differentiates demise from perishing: The question comes down to this: In what respect Dasein's coming to its end is different from other beings? Most interpreters claim that this differentiation hints to the cultural customary death rituals that are specific to Dasein as Being-with others and fallen to a world of practices. However, I tend to read this in a more existential manner and argue that even though demise is a factual coming-to-an-end, namely the event through which Dasein loses its life, and is a completely separate phenomenon than of death, yet it itself issues Dasein ontologically. In demise Dasein ends *qua* Dasein, and not just as any other perishable entity. By differentiating demise from perishing, Heidegger is indicating, primarily, the structural uniqueness of Dasein's very Being with respect to all the existentialia that has been discussed so far. "*Dasein's* going-out-of-the-world in the sense of dying must be distinguished from the going-out-of-the-world of that which merely has life".<sup>292</sup> Therefore, prior to and regardless of any sort of customary ritual or social practice, the demise of Dasein is different from the perishing of any other living thing simply with reference to Dasein's very Being. Dasein comes to its end as something potential, temporal, as always already been fallen into a world as Being-towards-death; and the end of such a Being is also the end of all these existentialia, its care structure. This is the reason why Heidegger refers to demise as the "intermediate phenomenon" in-between mere perishing and death.<sup>293</sup> This factual end of Dasein, as demise is not itself an inauthentic or derivative understanding, and Heidegger in no way undermines that Dasein factually ends. Rather, what would render it inauthentic is to use this understanding

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where Dasein's end is taken to be purely biological or statistical (as would be in a massacre) would be considered as perishing. However, I would still claim that Dasein's demise is not something that can be converted into perishing just with respect to a switch within the ontic interpretation or depending on how it factually takes place; rather it refers to Dasein's no-longer-Being-in-the-world, as something always distinct in meaning.

<sup>292</sup> H240.

<sup>293</sup> H247.

as substitutive for death.<sup>294</sup> For as we will cover next, death is not equivalent to demise in any way.

In the simplest formulation: Demise implies the factual realization of the end of Dasein whereas death is always in the context of Being-towards. However, this distinction remains quite inadequate in addressing the central issue. Being-towards-death is an existentiale of Dasein. Ending or finitude always already belongs to Dasein fundamentally as a certain or ineludible possibility of its Being. In other words, the character of Dasein's Being is such that no-longer-Being is a definite possibility of it. One can read this, basically, as claiming that the Being of Dasein is finite. Even though this will not be wrong, it will definitely overlook the profound reading that Heidegger is actually presenting here. The important question to be raised is why to refer death as a possibility? In the peculiar sense that Heidegger uses it, death as a possibility is not indicating something that may or may not happen; this possibility is not in reference to a futural occurrence, a factual presence, an experience. All these are still with respect to some present-at-hand moment, are already determined versions of a possibility, rather what Heidegger has in mind here must be understood in the ultimate sense of this word: as preservation of a possibility as possibility. Only within the projection towards this ultimate possibility (that will always remain as a possibility) Dasein's potentiality-for-Being can disclose its true meaning as Being-possible, as sheer potentiality. This will show how Dasein's freedom for an authentic understanding of its own Being opens up through an existential understanding of death within anticipatory resoluteness. I will try to develop on this claim within the following pages. By presenting death as a possibility Heidegger is able to show how death is truly internalized or appropriated within Dasein's ahead-of-itself Being. The main claim is that, even though death is the very possibility that will render Dasein no-longer-Being, once taken as a possibility (in the Heideggerian sense of the term) it can in

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<sup>294</sup> It is always useful to keep in mind that whenever Heidegger discusses the ontic-existential interpretation of some phenomenon or existentiale the primordial meaning itself does not alter. Heidegger's own language can be confusing simply because while he is addressing the everyday ontic interpretation it is still with reference to the existential constitution of Dasein.



advance constitute the understanding of Dasein's Being; since projecting itself towards a possibility is Dasein's way of Being that possibility. Here, projectively understanding itself must again be thought as a way of Being that takes place prior to presence. In other words, the primordial meaning of Being futural indicates that Dasein is already ahead-of-itself, where future is not in terms of a soon-to-be present moment but something that Dasein is already extended into. Hence death, as a possibility to which Dasein projects itself, is always already belonging to Dasein's very Being due to its ecstatic character.

#### 4.2.2.3 Death and the Possibility of Being-a-Whole

Heidegger writes that the demise of Dasein is possible "only as long as it is dying".<sup>295</sup> This basically indicates that death is prior to and constitutive for demise. Dasein's coming to its end in demise is possible only due to the fact that death belongs to Dasein existentially, as Being-towards-death or Being-towards-the-end. Dying is the "*way of Being* in which Dasein is *towards* its death," one that it "takes over as soon as it is".<sup>296</sup> Dasein's potentiality-for-Being has its end. The potentiality is finite and as long as Dasein is, the ending of this potentiality will remain as a possibility. Therefore, death is the ultimate possibility to which the ahead-of-itself Dasein have been comporting itself always already.<sup>297</sup> It is not the case that in Being-towards-death Dasein gets closer day by day to its end. Rather it is projecting itself *towards* itself: its ownmost finitude which stands as a sheer possibility of no longer Being potential.

One can arrive at an easy formulation by stating that Dasein's coming to its end is its demise whereas the constant approach towards its end is death. However, what is referred as "the end" is not the same thing in both contexts – the difference is with regard to the ontic ontological distinction that illuminates the entire project of *Being and Time*. As Heidegger writes, "The end *towards* which Dasein *is* as

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<sup>295</sup> H247.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> H250.

existing, remains inappropriately defined by the notion of a ‘Being-at-an-end’.”<sup>298</sup> With respect to demise, the end is the factual event itself. Being-at-an-end (as opposed to Being-towards-the-end) refers to this happening or event that Heidegger is referring above. Yet the object of Being-towards-the-end is not to be mistaken with such a particular ontic occurrence. In context of death, the end does not have a factual content as a life ending event, which can possibly happen one way or another, rather it is the possibility to be or not to be. This is the ontological sense of the end. The end towards which Dasein is is not subject to any actualization but is related to the existentials of Being-possible. Heidegger expresses it clearly as follows:

[Being-towards-death] must be understood *as a possibility*, it must be cultivated *as a possibility*, and we must *put up with it as a possibility*, in the way we comport ourselves towards it.<sup>299</sup>

This further indicates something very crucial: Death is an ownmost possibility that by never being actualized remains the possibility *par excellence*.<sup>300</sup> Meaning that, the being-possible of the possibility emerges through the understanding of death. In Being-towards-the-end “Dasein’s character as possibility lets itself be revealed most precisely”.<sup>301</sup> In other words, death as always remaining a possibility lets the meaning of possibility appear in its truth, which in return reveals Dasein’s way of Being as Being-possible. It seems that, Heidegger mostly develops on this term, namely Being-possible (*Möglichsein*), within his earlier writings and then turns his attention instead on the potentiality-for-Being (*Seinkönnen*). As he writes in *BT*, Dasein as Being-possible “*is existentially that which, in its potentiality-for-Being, it is not yet*”.<sup>302</sup> Although this is not clearly stated by Heidegger, I would claim that

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<sup>298</sup> H246.

<sup>299</sup> Heidegger, *BT*, H261.

<sup>300</sup> “Possibility *par excellence*” is Derrida’s phrase: He uses excellence in the sense of “Death exemplarily guides the existential analysis”. (Derrida, *Aporias*, p.63) As he writes, “With death, *Dasein* is indeed *in front of itself, before itself (bevor)*, both as before a mirror and as before the future”. (Ibid. p, 66.) The way I use it here, further implies that it becomes an ultimate (both in the sense of final and great) possibility for letting the being-possible of the possibility emerge.

<sup>301</sup> H249.

<sup>302</sup> H145.

this term becomes constitutive for potentiality-for-Being in emphasizing on the futural ahead-of-itself side of its meaning and in showing that not-yet is already part of Dasein's factual Being within the present. Dasein as long as it is, is Being-possible. In one of his earlier lectures (1925) Heidegger writes that: "Dasein not only has possibilities for something which it could take up on occasion and cast aside again, so that it could also be without them. Dasein itself, insofar as it is, is nothing but Being-possible".<sup>303</sup> Hence the authentic meaning of Being-in-the-world of Dasein, as distinct from what Heidegger calls present-at-hand, is always in the sense of revealing the possibleness of the possible. This is because, in its primordiality, Dasein exists as projection. Let us recall what this means, in projection Dasein takes up its possibilities as appropriating them beforehand in their state of possibility. We have already covered that as opposed to this primordial understanding, the way that "the they" interprets Dasein, conceals its ownmost way of Being as potentiality-for-Being. "The they" takes away Dasein's Being-possible by handing it down an everyday set of possibilities, in which the openness of the possibilities, viz., the various ways that they can appear, are levelled down. Accordingly, Dasein's potentiality gets levelled down to a degree where it no longer freely chooses; hence Dasein becomes alienated to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. In order to show how death becomes revealing for the fallen Dasein, the existential meaning of death as a possibility needs to be worked out in a broader sense. Yet, before that, I want to refer to a contemporary debate that is related to what has been mentioned above, or as I would argue related to overlooking it. The central problem that leads the following discussion seems to generate out of being unable to approach death in the form of a sheer possibility.

There is a prevalent confusion in trying to sort out how to interpret death as being-towards-the-end, without applying to an ontic sense of the end, namely, understanding end as the physical event. The problem is that, within the Heideggerian understanding of death, any reference to an end should not be

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<sup>303</sup> Heidegger, M., *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, Theodore Kisiel, trans., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, p. 298.

identified with a factual moment or event; or else we cannot escape to fall in the everyday understanding. On the other hand, any attempt to defocus on the idea of the end greatly distorts the meaning of death. Sartre's "existentialized"<sup>304</sup> reading of *Being and Time* exemplifies this former view in which a factual end is still preserved as a reference point. Although Sartre opened up a whole new interpretation, he often gets criticized for placing later existentialist themes into Heidegger's own doctrine. Roughly speaking, his reading takes Being-towards-death as signifying Dasein's ability for recognizing and thus taking an early attitude towards its approaching end, which will then have an influence over "the entire life by a reverse flow".<sup>305</sup> Here, Sartre reads Heidegger as arguing on the importance of recognizing death through its approaching status, beforehand, before it arrives, so that one can be free for authenticity. Actually Sartre himself opposes Heidegger on this view and claims that such acknowledgment of death can only pave wave for absurdity, and not authenticity. According to his own view death must be kept "outside" of one's possibilities as something annihilating them all.<sup>306</sup> Such readings, although working within the terminology of possibility cannot yet escape to fall to the ontic understanding due to misinterpreting the meaning of the end. In such interpretation death takes demise as its point of reference; it seems as if there is a final moment to which Dasein constantly comes closer in Being-towards-death. As I will demonstrate in the following pages, understanding death in terms of moving closer to or *expecting* the actualization of a particular possibility (expecting, *Erwarten* is used by Heidegger as opposed to anticipation, in the sense of waiting for it to happen) is not only incompatible with the Heideggerian definition itself but also effaces the relation between death, anticipation and the authentic understanding of temporality, in which future does in no way correspond to a not-yet-arrived present.

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<sup>304</sup> Guignon, Charles B, "Authenticity, Moral Values and Psychotherapy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1993, 214f.

<sup>305</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, Hazel E. Barnes, trans., New York: Pocket Books, 1966, 532.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 537.

The opposite way of this reading is to dismiss the idea of an end completely from Heidegger's account and change the meaning of death in such a way that it finally seems to get distorted.<sup>307</sup> Elkholy, Dreyfus, Blattner as well as White present such readings from time to time. For instance, Dreyfus reads death as indicating nothing more than the nullity and baselessness of Dasein; while White's broader reading is an attempt to understand death as the finitude of historical Being rather than the individual Dasein.<sup>308</sup> Blattner interprets death to be Dasein's limit-situation: the limit of its ability or "the inability to project oneself forth into some way to be Dasein".<sup>309</sup> This account of Blattner is rather more of an in-between account in both preserving the understanding of the end as limit, but still trying to make it completely irrelevant to Dasein's factual existence in the world. I would claim that Blattner's account results in conceptualizing death (something that Heidegger would not agree with) as a state of inability, or a negation, or the limit of the ability-to-be. In the way he presents it, death seems to carry almost a metaphorical sense by being the end of Dasein from a certain aspect alone. I will return to this argument of Blattner in the following pages, after developing more on Heidegger himself.

Dreyfus writes that, "It's true that in my *Commentary* I avoid all reference to demise by claiming that death means that Dasein's identity can never be definitively settled".<sup>310</sup> Especially due to Heidegger's constant references to "an end" within the context of death, Dreyfus finds a "deep confusion" in the relevant

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<sup>307</sup> Let us recall that the everyday meaning is generally a derivative version of the primordial meaning and not something widely separate. This is because there is a founding proximity – a relation of covering up – between the everyday and primordial understanding. Such a proximity, in return, enables the phenomenological possibility of moving from the everydayness of Dasein to an authentic understanding. As Heidegger writes, "whenever we see something wrongly, some injunction as to the primordial 'idea' of the phenomenon is revealed along with it". (H281.) What I am trying to maintain is that, in the Heideggerian understanding the primordial understanding is not actually something distinctly apart than the way we understand it in our daily usage.

<sup>308</sup> White argues that reading the death account in *BT* in light of late Heidegger can be clarificatory since, as she writes, Heidegger himself declared that throughout his writings (before or after the *Kehre*) he "continued to say 'the same'". (Carol, *Ibid.*, p.72)

<sup>309</sup> Blattner, William D., "The Concept of Death in *Being and Time*" in *Man and World* 27 (49), 1994, 66ff.

<sup>310</sup> Dreyfus's "Forward" in White, *Time and Death*, p. 16.

passages of *Being and Time*.<sup>311</sup> In a similar vein, Elkholy states that, “Heidegger simply asserts the finitude of Da-sein by sliding into the inauthentic understanding of death as an objectively present event that signals the end of life for Da-sein”.<sup>312</sup>

It is true that without emphasizing on the possibility aspect, the understanding of end becomes problematic; and if one abstains from reading death in reference to the end of Dasein, the meaning of death becomes something different and the account of finitude can no longer make sense. When the ontological meaning of death is comprehended as being purely independent from Dasein’s coming-to-an-end, Heidegger’s philosophy of death seems to be cut off from its phenomenological roots; as if death does not reveal the destiny, the finite potentiality, the Being-towards-the-end existentials of Dasein. This of course would stand completely opposite to his philosophy of finitude.

So, what is the right way to read it? When Heidegger attempts to show that the end is irrelevant to the understanding of death he basically argues against the tradition, which equates death with a present-at-hand moment that has nothing to reveal about Dasein’s structural Being. The problem generates from considering the end as if it is either something-present-at-hand or absent. However, this is not the case. The end is the already included destiny itself, the completion of a finite potentiality-for-Being which is having-been from the start. Blattner is in the right track when addressing the end as a limit-situation, although he likewise misses the point by over conceptualizing it. I would agree that the end is the limit of the potentiality-for-Being. However, this limit is not a conceptual limit of a certain potentiality but should rather be understood in terms of the factual way of Being-in-the-world and through possibility and projection: In the projective self-understanding, Dasein’s Being is always already extended to its “ahead”, already “there” in its future, and already at its limit by including this limit as the ultimate possibility of its Being.

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>312</sup> Elkholy, Sharin N., *Heidegger and a Metaphysics of Feeling: Angst and the Finitude of Being*, NY: Continuum International Publishing, 2008, p. 63.

The full meaning of potentiality-for-Being is unfolded only through Dasein's projecting itself from its death. Dasein as potentiality-for-Being, as projecting itself towards the future, by this very Being lays the limit of no-longer-Being-potential as its ownmost possibility, and possibility alone. As Mulhall writes,

[W]e must shift our analytical focus from death understood as an actuality to death understood as a possibility; only then can we intelligibly talk of death as something toward which any existing Dasein can stand in any kind of substantial, comprehending relationship.<sup>313</sup>

Since death must always maintain as a possibility (while the issue is the continuation or end of the potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world *per se*) the being-possible character of the possibility becomes ultimately disclosed within death. In a hermeneutically circular way this ultimate possibility then attests to the primordial potentiality-for-Being of Dasein. In simpler terms, taking death ultimately as possibility shapes the self-understanding of Dasein in displaying Dasein as being able to ground what can come up as a possibility – not as a given ground but as resolutely taking it over. On the other hand, as long as Being-towards-death turns into an expectation (*Erwarten*), as “Being out for” a possibility, this annihilates its character as possibility: “In concernfully Being out for something possible, there is a tendency to *annihilate possibility* of the possible my making it available to us”.<sup>314</sup> This shows that the facticity of Dasein cannot offer any content to death (for this would annihilate it as a possibility), rather what must follow is an ontological investigation of the structure of this possibility as possibility.<sup>315</sup> Hence its ontological meaning is to be worked out to fully

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<sup>313</sup> Mulhall, S., “Human Mortality: Heidegger on How to Portray the Impossible Possibility of Dasein” in *The Blackwell Companion to Heidegger*, H. Dreyfus and M. Wrathall, eds., Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, p. 303.

<sup>314</sup> H261.

<sup>315</sup> Throughout reading Heidegger, one must keep in mind that most of the problems that he is ontologically working with have ontic correspondence within daily life. Indeed, as beginning from the average everydayness of Dasein, Heidegger tries to show that we are actually working on the exact same factual phenomena that we confront within our lives but only trying to unfold their primordial meaning. So, when we say that death has nothing to do with Dasein's losing its life, this is not an issue of refuting that Dasein actually loses its life; rather the claim is that death

understand what this possibility stands for and how it brings forth Dasein's very Being as potentiality-for-Being. As Heidegger writes:

Taken ontically, the results of the analysis show the peculiar formality and emptiness of any ontological characterization. However, that must not blind us to the rich and complicated structure of the phenomenon [of death].<sup>316</sup>

Working up in the existential-ontological meaning of death will attest Dasein's authenticity and bring up a freedom to take over this authentic Self by understanding its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-its-Self. What is gained, again, will not and cannot offer a content for authenticity, but only a freedom to be oneself by attentively understanding itself as itself. Or else, the search would once again throw us back to an already build frame-work of the familiar world and once again bring us under the language of presence. This would correspond to nothing but a concealment of the worldliness of the world and would directly delimit the ground of what can possibly emerge.

#### **4.2.2.3.1 The Ontologico-existential Meaning of Death**

Death is an existential possibility of Dasein's finite way of Being or dwelling within the world. What makes it an existential possibility is its belongingness to Dasein's fundamental structure and it generates out of Dasein's finite Being as a possibility of no-longer-Being. Dasein is always already towards its final possibility of not Being or its nothingness. This nothing, again, is not with respect to a future state of non-Being that Dasein will eventually transform into but rather it always already belongs to Dasein's Being, for this Being consists of a fundamental nullity. The structure of Dasein as Being-in-the-world is such that Dasein is grounded upon nothing and its finite potentiality-for-Being attests to this nothingness. Dasein holds the finitude of this potentiality as a certain possibility.

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ontologically relates to Dasein and signifies the inherent end within the level of potentiality-for-Being.

<sup>316</sup> H248.



Therefore, Dasein is always already null Being-towards-death. Death must be understood precisely within the context of such Being-towards.

As we have shown Dasein's Being, as Being that makes an issue of itself, has a unique meaning that needs to be regarded from a hermeneutic and temporal aspect. Correspondingly, the ontological meaning of the end of such Being is a hermeneutic matter of issuing one's own Being and it also requires a unique temporal analysis. In that sense, for Dasein, death does not signify an end in the classical sense as something that happens in some particular time and place. Dasein's existence is constituted by its issuing itself. In other words, Dasein's Being is the concerned practice of understanding and issuing itself. Hence, such Being constantly issues its own no-longer-Being (either authentically or inauthentically) as part of this care structure. This relates to the futurity of Dasein in which Dasein's way of understanding itself through various possibilities is determining the meaning of Dasein's Being in advance. Dasein issues and understands itself through the possibilities of its Being. In case of death, Being or not Being both belong to Dasein as its ownmost possibilities. "And indeed death signifies a peculiar possibility-of-Being in which the very Being of one's own Dasein is an issue".<sup>317</sup> This does not correspond to a matter of contemplation over one's forthcoming death but rather to a constant issuing of one's own Being and no-longer-Being. Death is a definite possibility of Dasein – and it is not just a possibility among others but the most certain possibility of Being that generates out of the finitude of Being. The certainty lies in that Dasein's potentiality-for-Being will come to its limit after which Dasein can no longer be. Dasein is towards this possibility, it approaches this possibility but not in the sense of becoming closer to it or not in the sense of having lesser time. The approach is rather in terms of understanding and projecting itself towards it, and reflecting back from this possibility as moving within an ecstatic horizon of the meaning of Dasein's Being. Dasein is what it is with regard to this projective and temporal structure of Being-towards. It is Being-ahead of its own Being by understanding its own future

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<sup>317</sup> H 240.

possibilities, including the final possibility, namely death, and its own Being consists in nothing but this understanding.

As Heidegger writes, “death, as the end of Dasein, is Dasein’s ownmost possibility – non-relational, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped”<sup>318</sup>. Let us investigate each of these characteristics separately. An ownmost (*eigenst*) possibility is what belongs existentially to Dasein – whereas the rest of the possibilities of Dasein are just its own (*eigen*).<sup>319</sup> In each case, death “lays claim”<sup>320</sup> on Dasein as its own. The issue is always one’s own death, thus one’s own Dasein – nothing more and nothing less. This ownmost possibility issues my own Dasein, threatens my Being as a whole, and brings forth my own Being-in-the-world as potentiality-for-Being. Not only does death belong to me existentially but also issues my own Being; and in both senses it is the ownmost possibility of Dasein. Furthermore, as Carel points out, the existential usage of ownmost includes an “owning up to or taking responsibility for something”.<sup>321</sup> The ownmost character tacitly reveals that Dasein itself must appropriate its own death. The words ownmost (*eigenst*) and authentic (*Eigentlichkeit*) have an apparent verbal proximity in German that is lost in the translation. As it will be worked out later on, owning up my ownmost possibility will be projecting myself towards death in anticipatory resoluteness, which will in return open up Being-free for authentic potentiality-for-Being-oneself.

This ownmost character is covered up within the everyday interpretation of death. In the publicity of “the they” death becomes something representable through the death of another. In idle talk the certainty of death is allegedly postulated in the phrase “one dies”, where this “one” stands for “nobody” in particular. This tranquilizing saying does not deny death but converts it into a public occurrence. For this reason, Heidegger, in some point, discusses the

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<sup>318</sup> H258-9.

<sup>319</sup> H250.

<sup>320</sup> H263.

<sup>321</sup> Carel, Havi, “Temporal Finitude and Finitude of Possibility: The Double Meaning of Death in Being and Time” in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 15 (4), 2007, p. 551.

ownmost character of death with regard to the claim that “no one can be my representative”<sup>322</sup> in death; this is rather because in the idle talk of everydayness death tries to be levelled off in such a way that another’s death is to be offered as an example to understand my own. Sartre, as misled by this explanation, objects to Heidegger, and claims that nobody can love on my behalf, or laugh my own laugh likewise, and that this is not unique to death.<sup>323</sup> This objection is not in the right direction for the term “ownmost” is used by Heidegger in a special sense. Although any factual possibility towards which I comport myself would again be my own, what Heidegger means by the “ownmost” must be distinguished as further implying an existential belongingness. Death is not as any possibility that is existentially irrelevant to my Being,<sup>324</sup> but a possibility through which my whole finite Being becomes an issue for me.

Coming to the second characteristic, death is the *non-relational* possibility. In the previous section, we have already seen in what manner anxiety rendered each and every possibility irrelevant to Dasein as Being-in-the-world. Under such a loss of significance the world does not disappear but on the contrary opens up in its worldliness. Likewise, in the face of the ownmost possibility each factual involvement dissolves and leaves Dasein as a *non-relational* Being facing its own Being. In the face of death Dasein opens up as Dasein, as a mere potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world. As Heidegger writes:

It makes manifest that all Being-alongside the things with which we concern ourselves, and all Being-with Others, will fail us when our ownmost potentiality-for-Being is the issue.<sup>325</sup>

This non-relationality of death is again open to misunderstanding. Leslie MacAvoy as well as many other interpreters severely criticize Heidegger at this point.

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<sup>322</sup> H253.

<sup>323</sup> Sartre, *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>324</sup> As already discussed above, the analysis of anxiety showed the nature of this irrelevancy as implying not an isolation but Dasein’s thrown-basis: Although I understand myself through my factual possibilities my Being does not depend on any of them in their particularity, as I could have been easily otherwise by having other possibilities.

<sup>325</sup> H263.

MacAvoy states that the individuating character of death “fuels an interpretation of authenticity which is highly individualistic, even solipsistic, and exclusive of Being-with-Others”.<sup>326</sup> She recognizes that this cannot be Heidegger’s aim since Being-with-Others is an existential that cannot be eliminated, or else this would necessarily imply that Being-towards-death falls short of disclosing Dasein in its entirety.<sup>327</sup> Hence, she suggests that what might make a significant contribution would be conducting “a phenomenology of birth”, which would then properly embrace Being-with-others within the search.<sup>328</sup> However, Heidegger, in the very same passage that he refers to this non-relationality gives a direct answer to such criticism beforehand. As he writes,

But if concern and solicitude fail us, this does not signify at all that these ways of Dasein have been cut off from its authentically Being-its-Self. As structures essential to Dasein’s constitution, these have a share in conditioning the possibility of any existence whatsoever.<sup>329</sup>

Heidegger’s point is that relations belonging to the world, in their particularity and concreteness, e.g., one’s relation to this person or that occupation, fail us when the issue is our very existence. Death in no way exposes that Dasein can make sense of its own Being in isolation, quite contrary sense and significance is grounded on Being-thrown; what is rather revealed in death is the readiness or openness for meaning in sheer potentiality-for-Being: When everything fails, Dasein opens up for Being “*authentically itself*” within a world that is still not built by Dasein itself.<sup>330</sup> Again, Heidegger is very clear on that even authentic possibilities are not Dasein’s own creation but inherited. In the loss of significance, Dasein rather

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<sup>326</sup> MacAvoy, Leslie, “The Heideggerian Bias toward Death: A Critique of the Role of Being-towards-death in the Disclosure of Human Finitude” in *Metaphilosophy*, 27 (1-2), January/ April 1986, p. 64.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>328</sup> According to her argument, a phenomenology of birth or of beginning will include the facticity within the picture: It will be able to show more adequately the thrownness of being born in a constructed world and include the Being-with of Dasein for “I was born of someone and subsequently raised.” (*Ibid.*, p. 74.) From all this, MacAvoy concludes that focusing on the analysis of birth would complete what is missing in the analysis of death, namely Dasein’s existentialia of Being-with-others and thrownness.

<sup>329</sup> H263.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

grasps itself as potential Being-with or Being-alongside that is always already thrown into all these relations, but still free-for Being the potentiality that it is by authentically projecting itself to them. In that sense the objection of MacAvoy misses the point. There is nothing contradictory in rendering Dasein's relations as irrelevant in the face of death while holding that Dasein is essentially in relation with its world. From a more general perspective, Heidegger in nowhere claims that we become free as we discover that the totality of significance is something given or already constructed. Such discovery is just the first, and unoriginal part; what rather brings freedom is that this construction hides the constructability of the world; or in Heidegger's terms the worldliness of the world appears. The world appears in its nothingness *qua* a potential that enables beings come into appearance in whatever ways they are possible as well as in whatever ways they are related.

As moving along with the definition, death is the only possibility that cannot be escaped or bypassed, hence, it is *certain*. The certainty of death must be interpreted in a primordial sense, and not as Dasein's being certain of something in its everydayness. In daily utterance we talk about death's certainty as if it is "an undeniable 'fact of experience'".<sup>331</sup> We build the certainty upon the experience of seeing the demise of others. Yet, in the primordial sense certainty is a kind of Being-certain that existentially belongs to Dasein, which is rooted in the phenomenon that Dasein is essentially "in truth", disclosed to itself.<sup>332</sup> The interpretation of anxiety had revealed that Dasein pre-ontologically is certain of itself by just Being itself. This shows that it already grasps the primordial meaning of its Being-towards-death – even though this truth is constantly covered up within Dasein's flee from itself. "The they" preaches to Dasein to have courage in the face of death and constantly covers up its primordial anxiety about Being-towards-death. As interpreted by "the they", anxiety is "a cowardly fear, a sign of insecurity", hence "a sombre way of fleeing from the world".<sup>333</sup> Heidegger claims that this is indeed the exact opposite of what anxious Dasein is doing. Anxiety actually

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<sup>331</sup> H257.

<sup>332</sup> H256.

<sup>333</sup> H254.

summons Dasein back to its truth, to its disclosedness in authentic potentiality-for-Being-its-Self. Just because Dasein is actually open to itself as Being-certain it can open up itself through anxiety to its Being-towards-death.

Dasein's certainty also has an *indefinite* character by which the fallen they-Self is able to constantly procrastinate this certainty, as something that will happen sooner or later, "but not right away".<sup>334</sup> Here, the indefiniteness turns to its opposite and becomes a definite escape within the present moment whereas the primordial sense, or truth of this indefiniteness lies in that "*it is possible at any moment*".<sup>335</sup> One must be careful not to read this phrase as "it can happen at any moment", for that will again mislead one to a search for the occurring moment whereas death's indefiniteness basically shows that it has been, and it will be possible in each and every moment as long as Dasein is.

To formulate once more, the full existential meaning of death becomes the ownmost, non-relational, certain but also indefinite possibility that cannot be *outripped*. Nothing follows this possibility. It is the cancelation of all the possibilities and of the potentiality-for-Being of Dasein itself. Dasein becomes no-longer-potentiality-for-Being, which is basically the loss of its own Being, viz., no-longer-Dasein. Therefore, Heidegger refers to death as "the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein".<sup>336</sup> It is a certain possibility so it cannot be bypassed; but at the same time, it is unsurpassable thus it cannot be passed. This, at first sight, seems quite paradoxical.

#### 4.2.2.3.2 The Possibility of Impossibility

The way in which Heidegger refers to death as a "possibility of impossibility" has stirred a discussion among scholars. The gist of the problem consists in the

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<sup>334</sup> H255.

<sup>335</sup> H258.

<sup>336</sup> H250.

intelligibility of not-being as a possibility in the sense of a possible way of Being. Whether this phrase collapses within a contradiction or remains defensible within the Heideggerian terminology is the leading question, and the way I will work upon it will bring us back to the previous debate on the possibility-character of death and the ahead-of-itself understanding of Dasein's temporality. I would argue that the paradox once again stems from a neglect to understand death in its primordial sense as sheer possibility.

According to Edwards a possibility of impossibility is nothing but "an outrageous and altogether perverse play on words".<sup>337</sup> Edwards claims that one must separate in Heidegger the distinct usage of the term possibility. Possibility of death is merely its non-actuality; it does not really indicate any true possibility instead death is just annihilation *per se*.

Derrida's profound reading is also relying too much on the *aporia* of the possibility of impossibility. According to him death is an impossible border to be passed: It is not just unpassable for Dasein, viz., not-step (*non-pas*) but is the deprivation of passing (*a-pas*) altogether.<sup>338</sup> For Derrida, the kind of impossibility that is emphasized by the term *aporia*, i.e., the impossibility to pass the border, is that which actually stands as constitutive for the step (*pas*).<sup>339</sup> For Derrida working on *aporia* is not about solving a paradox but to be able to problematize the impossible border, the ultimate threshold *per se*.

Finally, Blattner claims that, Heidegger is falling into an "apparent contradiction" in presenting death as a possibility of the impossibility of Dasein, since this is tantamount to saying: "Death is a possible way to be Dasein, one in which Dasein is not able to be!".<sup>340</sup> I have mentioned earlier that Blattner considers death as to hold a conceptual, and even metaphorical meaning in *BT*. I will now present his account in more details for in the end it will stand as helpful to show

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<sup>337</sup> Edwards, Paul, "Heidegger and Death as 'Possibility'" in *Mind* 84 (336), p. 549.

<sup>338</sup> Derrida, *Aporias*, p. 23.

<sup>339</sup> See also, Thomson, Iain, "Can I Die? Derrida on Heidegger on Death" in *Philosophy Today* 43 (1), Spring 1999, 29-42.

<sup>340</sup> Blattner, "The Concept", p. 50.

what death means as an ultimate possibility, as possibility *per se*. Blattner, in the aim of working out the above-mentioned contradiction tries to demonstrate that Dasein's death corresponds to a loss of Dasein's ability-to-be (or potentiality-for-Being),<sup>341</sup> which is separable from its loss as Being-there. According to his interpretation death must be understood as the internal limit of Dasein's ability-to-be.<sup>342</sup> Death is the inability-to-be: "it is the inability to project oneself forth into some way to be Dasein".<sup>343</sup> Blattner then transforms death almost into a metaphor: This inability to project, in a way, becomes separable from Dasein's worldly existence itself.<sup>344</sup> Blattner presents this in such a way that in the end it becomes possible to say: "Dasein is, but is unable-to-be," hence solve the paradox.<sup>345</sup> As far as I can tell the simple version of his line of reasoning is as the following: Death is Dasein's inability to project itself towards its Being. Dasein understands itself as this inability in anxiety, for anxiety renders Dasein unable to be involved within the world. Hence, death is this anxious existential condition in which Dasein loses its ability-to-be, "rather than the ending of a human life".<sup>346</sup> This solves the contradiction problem, for Dasein can be both unable-to-be – unable to understandingly project itself – and at the same time maintain in existence. He himself summarizes his argument in the conclusion paragraph as follows:

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<sup>341</sup> Blattner translates *Seinkönnen* as ability-to-be: Until now it has been translated as potentiality-for-Being, in line with the Macquarrie-Robinson (M-R) translation. Hence, the reader should be aware that they are the same word.

<sup>342</sup> His account seems to be closer to Hegel in that sense. To understand death as an inner limit, which is posited by the very nature of the ability seems problematic in case of Heidegger, for inducing a very conceptual reading. If one takes death just as a limit of an ability then we encounter the same problem of how to include this limit within Dasein's Being whereas the account of possibility, together with Dasein's ahead-of-itself temporal meaning, generates a solution to this problem.

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>344</sup> The difference he draws is not directly between Dasein's ability-to-be and its existence although he implies it more than once and his conclusion seems to depend on it. Yet, to be more precise, he claims that Heidegger refers to Dasein's Being in two separable senses, namely, thin and thick. The thin sense corresponds to Being: as making an issue of its own Being or basically existing as the Dasein that it is (which is the subject matter of demise). The thick sense of Being is Dasein's ability-to-understand itself responsively through possibilities, or towards what it projects itself (which is the subject matter of death). Hence, he claims that Dasein dies in the thick sense while still maintaining to be in the thin sense. (Ibid., p. 62ff.)

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., p. 68



The term “death” (...) is the name for a certain condition in which Dasein can find itself, viz., the condition of not. This condition besets Dasein when it finds itself suffering anxiety, which is a global indifference to all the possibilities that present themselves to Dasein. Since “death” picks out this existential condition, rather than the ending of a human life, Heidegger can refer to death as a possible way to be Dasein.<sup>347</sup>

The first and foremost problem is that Blattner is turning Heidegger’s project upside down by breaking Dasein into pieces. What initiates the entire search, namely understanding Dasein in Being-a-whole is destroyed. I would argue that this is not only misrepresenting Heidegger’s account of death but distorting his entire philosophy. It overlooks the constant emphasis on displaying that Dasein’s Being-in-the-world is not separable from its factual existence, potentiality-for-Being, projecting itself and understanding itself in this projection, as well as making an issue of its own Being by doing all these. Blattner’s conclusion, apart from distorting the meaning of death is not even plausible; for it cannot be that Dasein, in this metaphorical sense of death, suddenly stops understanding itself in what it projects, merely due to a loss of involvement. Potentiality-for-Being or ability-to-be is so fundamental to Dasein that it cannot be lost while still Being-in-the-world. So, Blattner is mistaken in arguing that in the ontological level of the Heideggerian analysis Dasein’s ability to project itself will be separable from its existence in any sense, so that Dasein dies in one sense and maintains in existence in another. Rather, inability-to-be or (in our translation) no-longer-potentiality-for-Being, will necessarily render Dasein as no-longer-Dasein.

Apart from this general criticism what is actually noteworthy for the purposes of this work is to grasp why this paradox seems to be so “apparent” for Blattner. Throughout his paper he directly assumes that unable-to-be (death) is “a way to be” and tries to work out this supposed paradox. He gets rid of the “possible” component of the “possible way to be” and tries to show how death is already belonging to Dasein: not in the sense of a future possibility to which Dasein ecstatically arrives but as an always already present limit of an ability. It is defensible that an inner limit would always already belong to Dasein as an

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

ownmost limit, however projecting back from a limit is not the same as projecting back from a possibility. The limit (even in the sense of an inner limit) does not seem to cover what is unique in Dasein's appropriation of a possibility. In projecting itself towards its possibility Dasein as already ahead-of-itself becomes this possibility whereas this account does not seem to hold as successfully in case of a limit, and Heidegger's entire claim in showing that Dasein is already including its outmost possibility through its ahead-of-itself Being becomes weakened when we drop the account of possibility. The reason why Blattner hastily dismisses this account is not because he is careless, but he claims that possibility is used in Heidegger in a rather technical sense, "not as something that could happen", but always as a "possible way to be" in which Dasein understands itself.<sup>348</sup> He rightly points to the relevant passages where Heidegger writes that the existential meaning of possibility is not in the level of "what is *not yet* actual" or "what is *not at any time* necessary" but "on a lower level than actuality and necessity".<sup>349</sup> Here, possibility is not implying that death can or cannot happen or that it is soon to be actualized; rather according to Blattner it is used in the sense of a particular way to be that is for-the-sake of Dasein's Being. We have already worked out that Heidegger does not use not-yet in the sense of a not yet actualized moment. Blattner is correct in dismissing these meanings of possibility and rather placing this notion in the context of a for-the-sake-of-which (*Worumwillen*): Possibilities are for the sake of Dasein's way of Being in projecting itself towards them. As Heidegger writes,

The way Dasein comports itself towards its possibilities as possibilities is "not by the theoretico-thematical consideration of the possible as possible, and by having regard for its possibilities such, but rather looking *circumspectively away* from the possible and looking at that for which it is possible."<sup>350</sup>

Yet I would argue that his meaning, by itself, represents only one aspect of what Heidegger understands from possibility. As long as we leave it at this point, it

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>349</sup> H143.

<sup>350</sup> H261.

seems as if possibilities are already present and available ways of relating, acting, taking care of, which constantly structures the self-understanding of Dasein in some particular way. In Blattner's account "the possible" transforms into something like "some particular way that Dasein understands itself", and death transforms into "a way to be" that is always already *present* within Dasein. This indeed seems to result in the above-mentioned paradox that Blattner is eagerly trying to solve. However, there is a temporal side of the issue that is left out by Blattner. When we lose the futural and not-yet character of the possibility, the connection between possibility and Dasein's Being as potentiality, as ahead-of-itself, as Being-towards-death as well as its freedom for Being itself is lost. Death as a possibility belongs to Dasein, not in terms of now but in terms of anticipation or as an outcome of Dasein's ecstatic temporality that is future-oriented. Almost a decade after *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes within the treatise *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936-38) that in the absence of understanding death in the context of the truth of Being and in relation with "the originary futurity of Dasein", "the worst and most absurd misinterpretations creep in and spread - and, naturally, a 'philosophy of death is made up'".<sup>351</sup>

#### 4.2.2.3.3 Dasein's Potentiality-for-Being-its-Self in Anticipatory Resoluteness

A possibility is what carries the freedom to emerge as what it is. What is possible is not yet delimited by the actuality of framing, it contains the power to be itself which is definitely not equal to saying that it enjoys an unreserved infinite freedom to be, quite the opposite in being itself it fully embraces its own limitations as well. Heidegger's dense passage on the meaning of projection explains it most clearly:

As long as it is, Dasein always has understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of possibilities. Furthermore, the character of understanding as projection is such that the understanding does not grasp thematically that upon which it projects—that is to say, possibilities. Grasping it in such a manner would take away from what is projected its very character as a possibility, and would

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<sup>351</sup> Heidegger, M., *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, trans., Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999, p. 199.

reduce it to the given contents which we have in mind; whereas projection, in throwing, throws before itself the possibility as possibility, and lets it *be* as such. As projecting, understanding is the kind of Being of Dasein in which it is its possibilities as possibilities.<sup>352</sup>

The reason why Dasein's understanding of itself, in the primordial level, is through possibilities is because Dasein is itself a potentiality-for-Being. The truth of Dasein can only emerge in this open area of freedom that is not-yet reduced, as Heidegger writes above, "to the given contents which we have in mind", which is rather based on their presence and actuality. Henceforth, an authentic self-understanding cannot be an understanding or self-projection that is filled with factual content. It is not as if one can understand its Being authentically through a particular situation or relation. Rather what this authentic Self offers is what is most uncanny and unfamiliar. Yet due to this lack in factual content it actually becomes the most positive thing. Knowing itself as Being-possible acquires the fullness of opening the worldliness of the world. The totality of significance and any sort of content that belongs to the world is already established in the practices of the public domain whereas what lacks content remains to be free to be itself in its own way. And as soon as it becomes actual, it again falls in the realm of what is established. Therefore, Dasein due to its ahead-of-itself Being has a possibility of Being-free for one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being; to understand itself in Being-possible. Only Dasein as fallen into projection, can itself extend to the future in such a way that it still moves in the free but at the same time limited openness of what possibility offers. Death, as the "collision of necessity and possibility" is where this gets revealed most apparently.<sup>353</sup>

The true meaning of a possibility can then illuminate on what death as the ultimate possibility as possibility *par excellence* stands for. Since death is not to be outstripped it lets the being-possible of the possibility arise. Any possibility is ultimately for-the-sake-of Dasein's own Being. In that sense, death can also be taken as for-the-sake-of Dasein's revealing itself to itself. Death exposes Dasein

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<sup>352</sup> H145.

<sup>353</sup> Heidegger, *Contributions*, p.199.

plainly in its existential structure. As Heidegger writes, the ahead-of-itself “item in the structure of care has its most primordial concretion in Being-towards-death”.<sup>354</sup> Dasein’s finite temporality and its ability to extend to what is ahead of itself becomes graspable through an existential understanding of death. In other words, through death, Dasein understands itself through its finite potential way of Being as potentiality-for-Being-its-Self in whatever finite way it is possible. The revelation of the potentiality-for Being in its finitude makes Dasein free for authenticity. Therefore, death makes an authentic self-understanding possible. In order to grasp all this in its entirety, we will finally turn to anticipatory resoluteness, viz., the way Dasein resolutely comports itself towards its death.

“To comport ourselves towards-death” so that “death reveals itself *as a possibility*” is what the term anticipation stands for.<sup>355</sup> In anticipation, Dasein does not move towards its death in distance but “comes closer understandingly” and the possibility becomes “greater”.<sup>356</sup> In anticipation Dasein takes over its always already Being-towards death in understanding. Heidegger again warns the reader that anticipation is never a “pondering over when and how” the possibility gets actualized, which can only further conceal the possibility. Rather one must not “weaken it by calculating how we are to have it at our disposal. As something possible, it is to show as little as possible of its possibility.”<sup>357</sup> The German word for anticipation is *Vorlaufen*, which literally means running in front. The English word forerunning is very similar to the original meaning so I will use it as substitutive for anticipation, especially when I need to emphasize on the running-ahead part of the meaning. Heidegger makes a distinction between anticipation and expectation. Expectation (*Erwarten*) is an actual-oriented way of approaching something; it places the emphasis on the arrival of what is expected; “leaps away from the possible and gets a foothold in the actual.”<sup>358</sup> In anticipation or

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<sup>354</sup> H251.

<sup>355</sup> H262.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> H261.

<sup>358</sup> H262.

forerunning, one gets closer to a possibility by becoming ahead-of-oneself. Running in front towards death is not an attempt to quicken the process or wait eagerly for it to happen.<sup>359</sup> It infers to a type of getting closer that is not spatial, but rather has a sense of intimacy; in the sense of coming closer to an understanding of its true nature by taking a stand towards it. Heidegger, in the section of fear, mentions upon the relation between closeness and potentiality, which is in a different context but in a similar nature. When the fearful object comes closer – in the case of fear it is literally a spatial closeness – the state of fear reaches its highest degree since in this closeness potentiality is exposed in its full power. It is an in-between moment in which the object of fear “can reach us, and yet it may not”.<sup>360</sup> “*In fearing as such*, what we have thus characterized as threatening is freed an allowed to matter to us”.<sup>361</sup> The reasoning is quite similar. In case of anticipation, in getting closer to the possibility as possibility death becomes apparent in its highest degree; it is fully revealed in this anxious forerun towards it.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Regardless of Heidegger’s attempt in showing that anticipation is not in the sense of running into one’s demise or having courage or even contemplating on any possible happening, his account is still highly criticized by many in that respect. The anticipation towards death is tend to be read by interpreters such as Faye or Fritsche as in line with the political stand of Heidegger; the language of anticipation is accused for holding a latent purpose: a call for war, an encouragement to the German soldiers for running towards their death. Fritsche, writes that: “when reading ‘*Vorlaufen in den Tod*’ German readers of *Being and Time* in the 1920s could not but think of the so-called ‘heroes of Langemarck’; and that one could take these heroes as the methodological ideal type to interpret Heidegger’s concept of resoluteness”. (Fritsche, Johannes, “Heidegger’s *Being and Time* and National Socialism” in *Philosophy Today* Fall 2012, p. 272.) Marcuse, in his well-known interview with Olafson likewise states that Being-towards-death is “a highly oppressive notion, which somehow serves well to justify the emphasis of fascism and Nazism on sacrifice, sacrifice *per se*, as an end-in-itself”. (Marcuse, *The Essential Marcuse: Selected Writings of Philosopher and Social Critic Herbert Marcuse*, Andrew Feenberg and William Leiss, eds. Boston: Beacon Press, 2007, 124.) See also Faye, Emmanuel, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*, Yale University Press, 2009.

<sup>360</sup> H140.

<sup>361</sup> H141.

<sup>362</sup> It is possible that the ontic-ontological relatedness may be in work here as well, for anxiety is mostly compared with the derivative mood of fear. Hence the two cases may be foundationally related: The spatial closeness of the fearful object puts forwards the character of possibility, and the primordial anxiety as the state-of-mind also manifest the possibility as possibility in the anticipation towards death.

*The closest closeness which one may have in Being towards death as a possibility, is as far as possible from anything actual. The more unveiledly this possibility gets understood, the more purely does the understanding penetrate into it as the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all.*<sup>363</sup>

Throughout *BT* Heidegger aims to demonstrate that understanding is Dasein's way of Being-in-the-world as taking a stand of its own Being. In understanding death, Dasein projects itself from its ownmost possibility of the impossibility of existence. Yet it must be cleared out why Dasein needs to understand this certain and ownmost possibility further in anticipation. In other words, why cannot Dasein just be towards its death but must also move towards it in order to understand. This becomes answered through what we have already stated as Dasein's gesture of fleeing itself within fallenness. What makes an anticipatory kind of understanding necessary is that Dasein in order to truly understand itself as Being-towards-death, initially needs to want to understand, or else it cannot simply disclose itself within the given everyday understanding – for it is already closed to itself from the start. The understanding of truth as *aletheia* stands central for the analytic of Dasein's self-understanding. In such an understanding of truth, to which the interplay between covering and uncovering is central, what should have been closest to Dasein, its primordial truth is present as already covered up and requires to be uncovered in order to be reached. This shows the connection between anticipation and resoluteness. Without resolutely anticipating towards death, without showing such a full demand to understand this possibility, Dasein's fallen understanding of itself cannot be sufficient for offering such freedom to understand. Dasein, as the fallen they-Self that it has always been, does not even consider that it has not been choosing itself. The choice has been concealed to Dasein as well as its own inauthenticity. "The they" not only takes away Dasein's authenticity but also makes Dasein forget that it is always already fallen away from itself. Only by hearing its own anxious call Dasein can come back to itself as Being-the-basis of a nullity and through this understanding take over its authentic Being as the null and

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

thrown way that it is. By already Being-thrown the effort of Dasein is not for fleeing itself, but rather the true effort lies in coming back.

This fundamental nullity of Dasein is also discussed under the terminology of guilt. “[Dasein] has been brought into its ‘there’, but *not* of its own accord” and for that it is primordially Being-guilty.<sup>364</sup> This guilt should not be confused with Dasein’s fleeing itself. The state of not making a truly deliberate choice is already handed down, inherited. Dasein is not guilty because it embraces this inheritance. In other words, not Being-a-basis of its own Being-in-the-world is the reason of this guilt, yet this is not an issue of responsibility. It is not about a choice that Dasein makes but more primordial than that. Guilt, plainly indicates the fundamental nothingness within Dasein. Fleeing itself comes afterwards, as a resistance to hear its own conscience, which is exposing this guilt. In that sense Being-guilty has nothing negative or moral about it. It is what Dasein is as Being-in-the-world: always already thrown, null and fallen.

The anticipatory resolute choice will rather be towards this guilt; Dasein needs to make an effort to hear its own silent voice – for “the they” have already been concealing it in keeping Dasein away from itself. The anxiety and the guilt in the form of a silent voice of conscience are summoning Dasein back to its truth, which is in the primordial sense not a stranger to Dasein but in the everydayness it remains greatly uncanny. In anticipatory resolution Dasein has to “make up for not choosing” itself.<sup>365</sup> In anticipation towards death Dasein becomes ready to hear its own silent voice or lets itself be brought back to itself and once Dasein understands itself as itself, it resolutely wants to be itself. “‘*Understanding the appeal*’ means ‘*wanting to have a conscience*’”.<sup>366</sup>

In the resolute anticipation Dasein projects itself towards its ownmost possibility of the impossibility of existing. Taking a stand on this impossibility of Being, its ownmost finitude does not result in Dasein’s preparing itself to its end or creating its own meaning in life or contrariwise falling into nihilism. We have

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<sup>364</sup> H284.

<sup>365</sup> H268.

<sup>366</sup> H288.



previously discussed in what sense death is the ownmost possibility of Dasein. For repeating once more, death is the ownmost possibility firstly because it primordially belongs to Dasein as an existentiale, but also because it makes an issue of Dasein's whole Being. In other words, this ownmost possibility reveals the truth of Dasein in its ownmost Being, for it is directly about this Being, or no-longer-Being. What is attested in the possibility of impossibility is nothing but Dasein's authentic understanding of itself that does not leave out but rather is constituted by the nullity of Dasein.

In anticipatory resoluteness Dasein discovers its own nullity. In one sense the nullity is the groundlessness of Dasein, but there is also another meaning to this nullity that is fundamental to the very nature of projection. In projecting itself in a possibility Dasein must always leave the rest of the possibilities outside. Apart from *not* being the source of its ownmost potentiality, Dasein is also null in its freedom to choose, for each choice means "one's not having chosen the others and one's not being able to choose them".<sup>367</sup> This means that the way of Being of Dasein is finite as delimited with its chosen possibilities. By every choice it cancels other ways of Being. What such a finitude will eventually disclose is that Dasein, for wholly owning its own authentic Being, must take over the responsibility of its ownmost Being before coming to its end. Thus, only in authentic Being-towards-death Dasein truly understands itself as the potentiality that it is, as along with its limits and finitude. When Dasein decisively takes over itself, it at the same time takes over itself in its temporal care structure as fallen potentiality-for-Being that is ahead-of-itself. By means of understanding its limited potentiality, Dasein then discovers the need to take over what is given to it. This simply shows that, the impossibility of Being, holds the power to reveal what Being is in its truth. In a passage from *Contributions*, Heidegger writes as the following:

But what is at stake is not to dissolve humanness into death and to declare it for sheer nothingness but the opposite: to draw death into Dasein, in order to master

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<sup>367</sup> H285.

Dasein in its breadth as abground and thus fully to appraise the ground of the possibility of the truth of be-ing.<sup>368</sup>

Here, Heidegger clearly state that his project is aiming to infer the truth of Dasein and Being as well as the fundamental nothingness through an understanding of death, in which the truth of the nothingness will offer something more than being sheer nothingness, in terms of potentiality, possibility and freedom. In case of Dasein's self-understanding, death opens up the freedom to be one's authentic Self. As mentioned above, any factual content regarding Dasein's way of Being will weaken this potentiality and freedom itself, the freedom comes from its openness. Yet Heidegger, in the end, offers a more concrete explanation on how this freedom will factually appear.

When, by anticipation, one becomes free *for* one's own death, one is liberated from one's lostness in those possibilities which may accidentally thrust themselves upon one; and one is liberated in such a way that for the first time one can authentically understand and choose among the factual possibilities lying ahead of that possibility which is not to be outstripped.<sup>369</sup>

This indicates that anticipation makes Dasein free for choosing *as itself*. While handing its choices over to "the they" Dasein has always been making these choices as a they-Self. Yet, this cannot even be considered as choosing, for Dasein is not aware of its Being-possible. As long as Dasein does not understand the power that comes from the not-yet character of possibilities they will always carry an already actual factual meaning which is accidental to Dasein. "Only by anticipation of death is every accidental and 'provisional' possibility driven out".<sup>370</sup> Death by enabling Dasein to understand the meaning of its sheer potentiality as finite temporality frees Dasein to truly choose its own Being. Yet, what it will factually choose among, its horizon of possibilities, will always remain determined by the historical sending. In that sense Dasein will always remain as fallen and null. Here Heidegger is not offering a boundless freedom

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<sup>368</sup> Heidegger, *Contributions*, p. 200.

<sup>369</sup> H264.

<sup>370</sup> H384.

within authenticity; what will follow is rather a limited choice of choosing what to deliver out of the historical possibilities that lie before.

What Dasein will eventually encounter within its future will be a repetition of the past. However, since possibilities are taken up as possibilities within this understanding, such a repetition will not imply the actuality of what has already happened; hence it is not a sheer replica of what has already appeared in history. Rather the possibilities of the past always carry the inexhaustible potential to offer something new due to their being-possible. As Sinclair writes,

The past in this sense is what it is by means of *Wiederholung* [SZ 375], which is not merely a reiteration of the same, but repetition with a difference, a productive repetition that takes up what has been as a source of possibility for the future. Dasein's having-been is not a realm of dead necessity, and yet the possibilities it bequeaths are what they are only in their repetition through the openness of the future.<sup>371</sup>

In the temporal unfolding of Dasein the future is neither an impending moment that is not-yet actual, nor something that Dasein will encounter as for the first time; but rather the future governs the ecstatic unity: the unity of the past present and future. Therefore, the possibilities of the past will be newly reinvented in the future to which Dasein already extends in its now.

*Temporality gets experienced in a phenomenally primordial way in Dasein's authentic Being-a-whole, in the phenomenon of anticipatory resoluteness.*<sup>372</sup>

Heidegger's profound reading ultimately shows how death, as the ultimate possibility, discloses Dasein's care structure as finite temporality. It reveals a self-understanding of Dasein in which its wholeness is attested in the internalization of death; where Dasein finds itself to be thrown as well as potential, historical as well as futural.

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<sup>371</sup> Sinclair, *ibid.*, p.200-1.

<sup>372</sup> H304. Italics belongs to the original text.

#### 4.2.2.3.4 Dasein's Being-a-Whole

As the existential ontological meaning of death is finally laid out, let us turn back and recall the difficulty on the attestation of Dasein's Being-a-whole. It was due to the not-yet existentials of Dasein as potentiality-for-Being. As long as Dasein is, it understands itself through its possibilities; meaning that in its ahead-of-itself Being these future possibilities are constitutive for Dasein. Yet, if something always remains outstanding in Dasein, does this imply that Dasein can never attain a complete self-understanding? We can now answer this question more fully. Completeness in the face of not-yet is possible because the ontological meaning of Dasein's Being as care reveals itself as temporality that is finite and that carries an ecstatic unity. As long as Dasein cannot understand its death as the ownmost and unsurpassable possibility, which belongs to its Being-ahead-of-itself as a sheer possibility, it cannot also understand itself as a whole. "[J]ust as Dasein is already its 'not-yet' and is its 'not-yet' constantly as long as it is, it is already its end too".<sup>373</sup> Only by understanding the authentic meaning of death, will Dasein be a whole in its finite horizon of Being not-yet.

#### 4.3. Conclusion

What that has been presented so far demonstrates that in *Being and Time* Heidegger places death at the very heart of the truth of Dasein as primordially belonging to its Being *qua* Being-towards-death. Death plays a fundamental role in pushing the individual towards arriving at an understanding of itself. It creates a possibility for Dasein to understand its own Being and from there to reach beyond inauthentic interpretations and arrive at an authentic potentiality-for-Being.

Heidegger instigates his phenomenological study on death through the possibility of understanding the Being of Dasein within its completeness. "Dasein is already a potentiality-for-Being-its-Self, but it needs to have this potentiality

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<sup>373</sup> H245.

attested”<sup>374</sup> Dasein, as potentiality-for-Being is thrown into finitude and it seems as if unless coming to the end, something always remains outstanding. As we have already covered, this jeopardizes Dasein’s Being-a-whole. Once the meaning of death has shown to be an existentiale, belonging to Dasein as Being-towards-death, the problem of how to attest Dasein’s Being-a-whole (before coming to the end) itself dissolves. In accordance with Dasein’s ecstatic temporal unity Dasein’s Being as ahead-of-itself is already projecting towards its possibilities. Hence death always already belongs to Dasein as the ownmost possibility of its Being. What the authentic understanding of death further reveals is the potentiality-for-Being of Dasein. Firstly, because death directly issues this Being, and secondly, because death attests to the futural character of Dasein and its openness to possibilities as possibilities within a limited horizon. In this latter sense death opens up and delimits a finite domain of freedom, in which Dasein as an already thrown Being is allowed and at the same time destined to move within. Although death as a theme is mostly dropped after *Being and Time* I find the following account to remain as central to Heidegger: Taking a possibility as possibility (which shows its ultimate truth in Being-towards-death) provides the only empty undetermined ground in which Dasein can acquire freedom – as much as the sheer potentiality of its Being allows. In *Being and Time* this ground is projection or comportment towards possibilities or understanding (which are all the same act of Being), by which Dasein issues its own Being. Such an understanding of freedom or the nothingness in the sense of potential openness is not only important within the extend of *BT* but also makes the *Kehre* fairly questionable for creating a deep continuity from the meaning of Dasein to Being itself.

In late Heidegger this idea appears in the understanding of historical Being as open region, the no-thing ground as abyss (*Abgrund*) which in its emptiness lets the truth appear as it is. In the 1930s Heidegger then works on this core idea through the world opening ability of the artwork. The bringing forth that belongs to the art work as *poiesis* is world opening in the sense that it brings forth the

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<sup>374</sup> H268.

thingness of the thing (the earth). The world and the earth are brought together in their “strife” where this does not result in “destruction”, but “the opponents raise each other into the self-assertion of their essential natures”.<sup>375</sup> Heidegger discusses this in contrast to the bringing forth of a ready-to-hand equipment as *techne* through mastering or working upon it – in which thingness of the thing is given a concrete determination and the possibility is used up within revealing.<sup>376</sup> An example to the artwork is the Greek temple which sets up the world of divinity and mortals and places all within the framework of the meaning that this world offers. It imposes its possibilities upon us and it always hides more than what we can perceive. The humans are not creators but only preserves of such a world, as “standing within the openness of beings that happens in the artwork”; where this stand corresponds to “knowing that remains a willing and willing that remains a knowing”.<sup>377</sup> After 1940s Heidegger refers to this central idea as letting be (*Gelassenheit*). The gist of what Heidegger introduces within this notion is again very similar to what we have discussed so far, viz., willingly letting something be what it is.<sup>378</sup> He presents a remarkable account on technology in “The Question Concerning Technology” (1953). His account is not a naive criticism for it begins by acknowledging that modern technology is a certain unfolding of Being within history, he afterwards displays that such understanding of Being, namely enframing (*Gestell*) excessively conceals the potentiality that the thing actually carries. Within the framework that the modern technology offers, beings can only show themselves in a very limited way as stored energy, as standing reserve (*Bestand*). Becoming an energy source is indeed among the abilities of a being, however technology lets the thing come forth only in this way and conceals or enframes the rest of the possibilities, hides the richness, the freedom. This enframing leads human beings to the delusion that humans are the master, “the

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<sup>375</sup> Heidegger, M., “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Basic Writings*, D. Farrell Krell, ed., London: Routledge, 1993, p. 111.

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118f.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>378</sup> See, Heidegger, M., *Country Path Conversations*, Bret W. Davis, trans., Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 70ff.

orderer of the standing reserve” whereas in truth they likewise lose themselves on the way as transformed into the same standing reserve.<sup>379</sup> If we may borrow the terminology of *BT*, Heidegger raises this criticism towards technology by claiming that once the entities are possible only in terms of energy, Dasein’s projecting itself towards its possibilities will become likewise limited; in relation to these entities Dasein will hold a concealing understanding of its own Being as well. Therefore, Heidegger writes that, “*In truth, however, precisely nowhere does men today any longer encounter himself, i.e. his essence*”.<sup>380</sup>

Up until this point we tried to cover in which ways a complete self-understanding that can include the not-yet of death, as the ownmost ultimate possibility, is made philosophically intelligible by Heidegger. Throughout this work, the overall discussion, which started with the historical problem that Epicurus laid out, namely the impossibility of experiencing death, firstly met the Hegelian gesture of lingering in the negative. Hegel placed death within the borders of life as the constitutive act of negating, as a finite moment within the wholeness of Spirit. In the early shape of the Spirit, in the form of the master and slave consciousnesses, the slave firstly recognizes itself in its truth as the sheer negating power which is the first glimpse of recognizing the nature of the dialectic constructive act as negation. The importance of this lies in that the slave knows this negative act to be a negative act of itself, as the same thing that it itself is, viz., the sheer negativity. This will become a path towards the self-knowing Spirit, in which all that is known in separation will have as its object the knower itself in its unity. In Heidegger the impossibility of understanding the experience is considered to be a problem only within the context of the metaphysics of presence whereas the primordial meaning of death, as the ownmost ultimate possibility is always already included within the pre-theoretic projective self-understanding of Dasein. Death finds itself a place within Dasein’s understanding through its Being-ahead-of-itself.

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<sup>379</sup> Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology” in *Basic Writings*, D. Farrell Krell, ed., London: Routledge, 1993, 231.

<sup>380</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

This not only posits death as a validly discussable philosophical problem, but moreover discloses its equiprimordial relatedness with truth and freedom.

As already mentioned, Heidegger and Hegel both share the tendency to begin their search for Being or truth from a search for self-knowledge. Within this search death not only has a part to play, but a more substantial significance. Death becomes an ontological condition for the possibility of self-knowledge in the first place. For Hegel this corresponds to the function of death, appearing as the power of negativity and limitation, in bringing determinacy to life and rescuing it from its empty immediacy whereas for Heidegger death opens up the possibility to draw the self back to itself, to the nothingness or nullity as well as the potentiality-for-Being that it primordially grounds upon. This is the almost paradoxical power of the nothingness in which confrontation with death reveals self-knowledge and the possibility of transformation either as a self-positing act of the absolute knowledge or as disclosing authenticity as among Dasein's possibilities. For both philosophers this indicates a self-return from alienation; a self to which both the consciousness and Dasein remain a stranger from the beginning. The great difference is that for Hegel this transformation ends in the return to an infinite Spirit whereas for Heidegger Dasein will ultimately find itself to be finite – even within the later writings of Heidegger when the investigation of Dasein's Being alters into an investigation of historical Being (for Dasein is what ecstatically transcends itself within the understanding of Being), this historical Being is still in terms of finite epochs of historical unfolding. William Desmond refers to the Heideggerian account as “postulatory finitism” in which finitude “is postulated as the ultimate context of all human significance”.<sup>381</sup>

As arriving at the end of the Heideggerian account, the ontologico-existential understanding of death is now fully formulated within the Heideggerian terminology. The following task is to comparatively reanalyze the work of Hegel and Heidegger in order to show how death, as understood within the boundaries of

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<sup>381</sup> Desmond, William, “Between Finitude and Infinity: On Hegel's Sublatory Infinality” in *Hegel and the Infinite: Religion, Politics, and Dialectic*, Žižek, Slavoj, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis, eds., New York: Columbia UP, 2011, p. 131.



negativity and possibility is enabled to enter within the domain of philosophy. I will claim that once it becomes possible to acknowledge death as a proper philosophical problem, this will further indicate that philosophy not only needs to internalize death but it has no other way to be in order to present a complete system: Any philosophical account that claims to offer some sort of transcendental or absolute knowledge, or at least posit itself as a comprehensive system cannot be recognized as fully developed as long as taking the nothing and death as the empty sheer opposition of being.

Until now, I have analyzed death within the accounts of Hegel and Heidegger separately in order to present their contribution to the possibility of generating a philosophical account on death that is neither metaphysically-oriented nor determined alone by its unexperienceable character. Now I will work on deepening this common contribution as well as working on the differences of both accounts. The central cleavage between these two philosophers will be with regard to their general philosophical outlook, their opposition with regard to finitude and infinity where the extension of this differentiation will indicate a separation between the infinite life in Hegel and the finite world in Heidegger.

## CHAPTER 5

### DEATH AND NOTHING: IN THE WAY TOWARDS HEGEL'S INFINITE ABSOLUTE AND HEIDEGGER'S FINITE BEING

In “What is Metaphysics?” Heidegger quotes and affirms Hegel’s following proposition: “Pure Being and pure Nothing are therefore the same”.<sup>382</sup> For Heidegger, they indeed “do belong together”.<sup>383</sup> Yet this is due to his understanding of Being as the withdrawn ground or a free space of clearing that is actually an un-ground or abyss (*Abgrund*). Being is the clearing that is opened in the mid of nothingness, where “Brightness play in the open and strives there with darkness”.<sup>384</sup> The strife does not separate but shows the belongingness of Being and Nothing. As Heidegger writes elsewhere, the strife is a rift [*Riss*] but not in the sense of a true gap but “an intimacy” in which opponents are brought together under a common “outline” or “design”.<sup>385</sup> Although the idea that the opponents meet under a commonality seems to draw Heidegger closer to Hegel, the important difference here is that Heidegger is willing to keep the element of difference, the strife as a source that brings up this intimacy in the first place and holds them together within this strife. In Hegel’s account, pure being and nothing carry an emptiness due to their purity, and are condemned to dissolve within the journey of Spirit as their internal relatedness manifests itself on the way as becoming. Heidegger correctly states that the Hegelian usage is of a different nature than his own. As he states, Hegel’s way of identifying pure Being and Nothing is for

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<sup>382</sup> Heidegger, “What is Metaphysics?”, p. 56.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy”, p. 319.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., “The Origin of the Work of Art”, p. 121.

emphasizing merely the shared “indeterminateness and immediacy”<sup>386</sup> of these two notions. Yet, I would argue that the shared emptiness of these pure notions is only one aspect of this identification. From a wider perspective this identification is immanent to the Hegelian system, as recurring within each step of the supersession of the consciousness, where the unity between being and nothing takes a more concrete meaning with each moment of the process. In other words, the identification that Hegel is trying to emphasize in this pure state also becomes articulated as these notions both acquire content. It leaves the shared indeterminacy and the empty formal commonness of pure being and nothing and builds towards an actual unity within the absolute. In other words, the unity of being and nothing gets articulated within each step and grows out of its empty formal sense and gradually develops into the absolute yet determined sameness within Spirit. Yet it seems that Heidegger’s point is still valid, for this structure is governed, throughout the movement by a logical mechanism. Along the process of becoming each (finite) being perishes within its immanent nothingness, its truth is in the nothing and this nothing is the self-return of the finite being to its own being. The historical correspondence of this interplay shows that the self-return of the individual self-consciousness (that will later know itself as Spirit) is an achievement through the negativity of the work, which grows out of self-consciousness’ confrontation with its own immanent negativity and appropriating (recognizing) this negativity as its own. The achievement of the Spirit in transforming the natural negativity (death) into work is both discussed within slave’s formative act as well as the last duty (burial rituals) of the Family to elevate the individual to its universality. From the point of view of the Spirit the sheer negativity, in the mediation of the work, is no longer pure cancelation, viz., vanishing within nothingness, but the driving force of the process that builds the Spirit itself. Therefore, the identification of being and nothing is initially with regard to their pure state, yet it is not limited to this first form of appearance but takes a more solid or actual meaning as their unity unfolds within Hegel’s holism.

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., “What is Metaphysics?”, p. 56.

Being and nothing become the truth of each other in a bilateral and reflective way. Here, the conclusion itself requires a careful elucidation. The centrality of the nothingness dissolves within Hegel's final infinite unity, which becomes the actual absolute truth as soon as it is accomplished within the end of the process. The perplexing yet crucial point is that once the Spirit accomplishes absolute unity within its self-knowledge, this unity then in a circular way becomes underlying for the whole process and becomes the truth of the consciousness as well. This is because the whole movement of self-positing and unification is governed by an immanent principle of logic, viz., the interplay between determination and limit, which we have depicted more than once. So, is Heidegger right in undermining the Hegelian identification between being and nothing, due to its formal nature? A broader question is whether the reflexive self-knowing act of Spirit firmly accounts for a genuine self-positing; or whether this circular way of arriving at the essence is condemned to pose a difficulty for the Hegelian system – for Hegel himself discards the idea of a pre-given essence. All these questions, which are similar in nature, seem to be highly important and are related with the nature of the circularity of Hegel's system. The answer to these questions also determines whether the dissolution of all negativity within unity destroys the centrality of the negative. If this is the case, then the Hegelian appeal to negativity, finitude or death can be interpreted as presenting a purely practical gesture, where they become mere instruments on the way of deriving the essential absolute.

Considering the way Hegel presents absolute as an infinite spiritual historical product that is the truth of the entire process itself, it becomes possible to inquire whether he succeeds in holding finitude and death within the system, or eventually renounces them on the way. As we have formerly quoted, Hegel writes that the Spirit is the power that does not “close its eyes to the negative”, or as “having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else” but is able to “tarry with it”.<sup>387</sup> This, at least indicates that Hegel's own aim is for a genuine confrontation with the negative, and not just for taking it up as an instrument on

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<sup>387</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.19 / ¶32.

the way. Yet from another perspective, Hegel emphasizes that in the face of Spirit each moment becomes transient and “what used to be the important thing is now but a trace” a “shadowy outline”.<sup>388</sup> The conflict between these claims may at the end cast doubt on the argument that I have tried to demonstrate up until now, that is to say, the Spirit not just passes through but grounds upon the negative. The difficulty is to bring both claims together consistently. From a meta-level, Hegel’s own philosophy itself allows and builds such an openness for bringing together what seems contradictory by focusing on the true relation of an opposition, as referential and interdependent. I have repeatedly commented on this tension between finitude and infinity and tried to show how Hegel accomplishes to include death within his system that finalizes in the absolute. One of the main claims that I have appealed to is the difference between abstract absolute and the true infinite, where the latter cannot be formed without the mediation of the finite. The essence of the relation between finite and infinite shows a more complicated character where infinite is not reducible to the successiveness of finite moments – this is what Hegel refers as the bad infinite. As we have shown through the *Science of Logic*, the infinite is not only constituted by the infinite movement of the finite, but also the mutual and infinite movement between the finite and infinite itself. In this movement both reflects itself to its other and becomes reciprocally reflected back from the other, where the other is also reflecting itself back to itself. Infinity, in its true meaning is this total and infinite schema of mutual reflection and self-return between the finite and infinite rather than signifying only the consecutiveness of the finite moments. This same irreducibility appears within the infinite Spirit as emphasized within the terminology of supersession. The infinite Spirit as much as being inseparable from its finite moments is more than their totality. The holism behind supersession indicates the cancelation of finite moments as well as their preservation. This then shows that the infinite tarries within the finite but in a way that this finitude is no longer the sheer negative for it loses its purity within merging with the infinite itself. Yet this only brings us back to the general question

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid., p.16 / ¶28.

and criticism of whether this is tantamount to an abandonment of the finite or in other words, the dissolution of the finite within the infinite.

Heidegger criticizes Hegel with respect to this point. According to Heidegger, the Hegelian usage of the negative indicates a conceptual negation in which the absolute is already present in its entire Notion whereas the not-absolute is the self-differentiated other of this fully conceptualized understanding. Derrida, in a similar fashion, criticizes Hegel by arguing that negativity gets lost within the supersession:

[Supersession] reappropriates all negativity for itself, as it works the ‘putting at stake’ into an *investment* (...) and as it gives meaning to death, thereby simultaneously blinding itself to the baselessness of the nonmeaning from which the basis of meaning is drawn, and in which this basis of meaning is exhausted.<sup>389</sup>

Here Derrida, in line with Heidegger, claims that negativity is not properly addressed in Hegel. The nothing is not truly worked out from the side of the nothing but immediately turned into an “investment” within the dialectic schema, as an opposition. In a passage from *BT*, Heidegger, without directly addressing Hegel, comments on the predominant usage of the “not”. As he claims, the traditional considerations of the “not” are always in terms of an absence of presence; meaning that the notness (*Nichtheit*) corresponds only to the lack of what has been present already where the latter maintains its ontological centrality.

Ontology and logic, to be sure, have exacted a great deal from the “not”, and have thus made its possibilities visible in a piecemeal fashion; but it itself has not been unveiled ontologically. Ontology came across the “not” and made use of it. But is it so obvious that every “not” signifies something negative in the sense of a lack? Is its positivity exhausted by the fact that it constitutes ‘passing over’ something?<sup>390</sup>

In his *Phenomenology of Spirit* lecture notes, Heidegger repeatedly indicates that “*Phenomenology of Spirit begins absolutely with the absolute*”<sup>391</sup> whereas “the

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<sup>389</sup> Derrida, J., “From Restricted to General Economy A Hegelianism without Reserve” in *Writing and Difference*, Alan Bass, trans., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 257.

<sup>390</sup> H286.

<sup>391</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, trans., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 37. Italics belongs to the original text.

‘not’ in ‘not-absolute’ does not express something which exists in itself and lies *next* to the absolute, but expresses a mode of the absolute”<sup>392</sup>. In drawing this criticism, Heidegger is obviously not overlooking Hegel’s grand project of tracing the self-positing act of the Spirit. He rather emphasizes on the fact that Hegel is writing *PS* from a point where Spirit is already present, where actuality and absolute has already taken precedence. Yet, does the fact that Hegel is retrospectively tracing back the movement of an already present absolute indicate that the absolute was implicitly present from the start? This argument may find support in the Hegelian claim that the whole historical process is guided by an inner necessity since the absolute, once appeared, reveals itself to be the complete and only truth of the history. However, in *SL* Hegel clearly argues that infinity is deduced from the finite due to the negative nature of the finite itself where a double negation happens once the finite realizes itself, hence brings out the infinite as its affirmative. In simpler terms, the negativity or nothingness of the finite by accomplishing its nature (becoming nothing) becomes the not of itself, hence infinite (not-finite). Regardless of the soundness of the logic behind it, this inference shows that the Hegelian infinite depends, actually, on the absolute nothingness of the finite.

It is not in the sublating of finitude in general that infinity in general comes to be; the truth is rather that the finite is only this, through its own nature to become itself the infinite. The infinite is its *affirmative determination*, that which is truly is in itself.<sup>393</sup>

As opposed to the Heideggerian criticism of postulating the finite directly as the not-infinite (or not-absolute) Hegel rather claims that the finite harbors the infinite within its finitude. The finite has a self-negating power that is immanent in its own nothingness and this power posits the infinite as its affirmation. Heidegger nonetheless questions whether the usage of the finite within Hegel’s philosophy is reflecting a true ontological concern:

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>393</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 138.

The question arises as to whether being in its essence is finite [in Hegel] and whether and how this finitude is to be placed fundamentally within the problematic of philosophy, without finitude's becoming a property which, as it were, hangs around beings and is taken up only occasionally.<sup>394</sup>

The answer for Heidegger is that working with the absolute or infinite does not stand problematic within Hegel's idealism while Hegel opens up this search already from the level of the World-Spirit (*Weltgeist*). The Spirit only needs to *come to itself*, which takes place as *becoming other to itself* whereas from the perspective of the World-Spirit, we can only stand as "small satellites".<sup>395</sup>

It is true that, in the Hegelian framework coming-to-itself turns out to be the same movement as becoming-other-to-itself. Yet, if we take this to be an indication of a self-same Spirit that has been underlying the whole process prior to the process itself, as waiting to become differentiate in order to be known, such an understanding ends up taking away what stands unique within the Hegelian system. Even if we assume that Hegel is building his entire system under the motivation of verifying an absolute – and this can be supported based on the necessary and already completed character of the journey – it still comes down to what the nature of this final truth is. Unless taking absolute to be what has already faced the nothing, worked upon it and drawn its own actuality out of its relation with this nothing, the Hegelian philosophy will alter into a static system. The question that Heidegger addresses in the above-mentioned quote, that is to say, whether finitude remains as a property that is "taken up occasionally" or whether it is fundamentally issued becomes the gist of the problem. In his own depiction, Hegel seems to argue the latter,

But the *length* of this path has to be endured, because, for one thing, each moment is necessary; and further, each moment has to be *lingered* over, because each is itself a complete individual shape, and one is only viewed in absolute perspective when its determinateness is regarded as a concrete whole, or the whole is regarded as uniquely qualified by that determination.<sup>396</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, p. 75.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>396</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.17 / ¶29.



This, again, shows how Hegel reflects on the part-whole relation from a holistic perspective. The dialectical relation between Spirit and its finite moments shows that the movement in-between is itself not dispensable even from the final perspective of the Spirit. The final absolute unity indeed abolishes the partial truth of its earlier stages yet in order for that unity to acquire a determination the particular moments cannot be overlooked, since they are offering the particular content out of which the Notion will occur. So, these finite moments are not mere functional tools. Or to put it differently, their role is not simply to reflect the Spirit back to itself. They rather offer within self-differentiation the necessary determination that will carry the Spirit within knowledge or within actuality. In the final shape of the Spirit it will become possible to build a conceptual self-knowledge that is drawn out of the particular but no longer knows itself in its particularity.

Although this remains very abstract within the language of logic, once we turn to *PS* and turn back to the account of death, it becomes easier to show that the supersession of finitude will not correspond to its ultimate loss within the Spirit. As we have shown, what separated the master consciousness from the slave was that the master had known itself immediately as for-itself, meaning that it could posit its own independency. The master consciousness can immediately take the sheer negativity as its truth and realize this truth by negating the rest of the world. At this moment, this negativity is the truth of the self-consciousness. The slave, on the other hand, comes to recognize this truth as its own only through the mediation of the work, hence supersede its own sheer negativity and transform it into its own formative activity. Here Hegel indicates an inner connection between the negativity of death and the negativity of work, which may not be explicit at first sight. In its simplest formulation, only because self-consciousness catches sight of its own negativity within confronting death, it can afterwards recognize its own reflection as negativity within its work. Or, to put it differently, the work can reflect the slave consciousness back to itself because it reflects the sheer truth of the slave as a negativity that can negate. In logical terms this leads to infinity for

the double negation of finitude will cancel itself. In phenomenological terms the slave's return from its own negative work (this double negation) will posit the endurance that will lead to the infinite Spirit. This becomes a crucial moment within the journey of Spirit since negativity or what appeared to be the truth of self-consciousness now appears in its superseded form, viz., in a constructive and enduring form of negativity. It is possible to claim that only by knowing itself to be finite and holding this finitude to be its truth, self-consciousness can find a more articulated truth in itself within mediation which will open up the possibility to extend towards the infinite. The truth of self-consciousness (which once happened to be sheer negativity) now lies in the formative and enduring work that leads to the development of inter-subjective Spiritual life.

The superseded self-knowledge shows that the negative and finite being of consciousness is no longer reflecting the whole truth of this consciousness, but only a partial truth of it. The superseded truth necessarily moves towards the absolute. I have formerly criticized Kojève with respect to this point and argued that the finite, as the way we tend to understand it, namely in its opposition with the infinite, can no longer be determining within the level of Spirit. Likewise, the true infinite also has a different meaning than of what we take infinite to be in its purity. It does not exclude the finite. The true infinite supersedes the finite, yet it also supersedes the pure (bad) form of infinite and generates a unity out of their relation. Therefore, it would also be mistaken to claim that this dissolution is only with regard to the finite. Rather, the final absolute is placed on a higher level which cancels both the pure finite and the pure infinite. The unity consists of the interplay between the finite and infinite hence becomes what is fully and truly absolute.

The way I read it, Hegel's approach of introducing a story that is already complete, and in any case led by a necessity that inevitably infers to an absolute truth, in no way converts this philosophy into a static one. Yet if one reads Hegel's argument as focusing to the conclusion that the negative is superseded within the unity, this undermines the whole understanding behind Hegel's philosophical gesture as self-return, in which the *Bildung*, the developmental process itself

provides actuality to the self-knowing Spirit – as compared to the already given tautology of self-identity as “I am I”. The entire attempt is to rescue the absolute Subject from its undetermined undifferentiated sameness that can only be unknowable, empty, abstract or lacking content. Any content will impair this purported absoluteness by giving it a kind of determination and limit. Hegel’s claim is that such an abstract absolute will either be left as unknowable and empty or necessarily meet with its other and show itself to be finite. The abstract absolute can develop and attain its true meaning only within the necessary movement of confronting with its opposite. Only by returning to the sameness through difference can the true absolute posit itself. This will not be a finalized form of the absolute that is at rest within itself, but the infinite movement of self-reflection from the other – that is now known to be the same. Therefore, the Hegelian absolute turns out to be infinitely comprehensive; it is the process of bringing the entire opposing content into self-knowledge. In this way, it knows itself in a superseded form of conceptual unity. Only then it will be possible for knowledge to reflect itself to itself in its entirety as Spirit. As Hegel writes:

The idealism that does not demonstrate that path but starts off with this assertion [viz. that it is all reality] is therefore, too, a pure *assertion* which does not comprehend its own self, nor can it make itself comprehensible to others. It proclaims an *immediate certainty* which is confronted by other immediate certainties, which have, however, been lost on the same path.<sup>397</sup>

Yet the circularity of the system, in which the end brings about the truth, which will then be underlying and essential, detains us to infer clear-cut conclusions. As quoted-above, Heidegger emphasizes that the movement of the Spirit, as much as being a gradual unification is at the same time a self-differentiation. The unity is not externally imposed upon a pair of opposites but rather they are necessarily united only for they are actually internally related. Then, is it simply the case that in order to carry something in our knowledge we firstly separate it and then unify it once again; and that this is done because self-knowing consciousness can only know itself in its appearing differentiation and that it differentiates (what is already

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<sup>397</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.141 / ¶234.

same) in order to know? As long as we leave the story at this point, it seems as if the absolute unity is already present prior to our knowing it and that the differentiation is only at work within an epistemological level, that is to say with regard to the ways of knowing something. Yet Hegel's idealism prevents such a reading from the start. It is not the case that this journey is about knowing something that is already there, for this would assume an objective outer reality that is independent of the knowing subject itself. In accordance with the Hegelian idealism there cannot be any external reality apart from the act of knowing of the self-knowing Spirit. Hegel writes that, "What is universally valid is also universally effective; what *ought* to be, in fact also *is*, and what only ought to be without (actually) being, has no truth".<sup>398</sup> The phenomenological or historical reality, which is the only reality, does not have an independent in-itself existence. Hegel attempts to demonstrate this through resolving the conflict between in-itself and for-another, as showing that they are one and the same. There is nothing universally valid as prior to this differentiation or particularization of the Spirit, for what initially appears in its particularity takes place only in this differentiation. The universal can become conceptual only through the particular but also only by already being contained in this particular – or else the particular could not appear as a meaningful whole in the first place. As we repeatedly encounter within Hegel, although sameness is the essential truth of difference, the difference is what carries the essential sameness into actuality.

Yet, we can also add another layer to this already complex scheme. One must distinguish two different movements here: On the one hand the self-positing and self-knowing act of the Spirit and on the other hand the way that the reader traces this movement backwards. Even these movements cannot be clearly separated from each other. In the former movement the activity of positing and knowing are one and the same. The Spirit posits itself within its conceptual grasp. The confusion arises because of the second movement. In the guidance of Hegel, we trace this activity once more in its attained absoluteness where the essence has

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<sup>398</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.151 / ¶249.

already appeared in history. It now appears as the truth of each instance, for at this point of its history it is now fully knowable in its absolute form. Yet the act of the Spirit does not just stop (for if it stops there will no longer be a self-knowing Spirit). It now knows itself in its entirety within each shape. Hence, what we have discussed so far under the issue of circularity, viz., that the attained essence appears in the beginning, becomes less controversial from such an aspect.

At the end, it seems as if Hegel wants the reader not to hesitate to enter this circularity for what he is trying to present under the understanding of Spirit is an infinite form of self-reflection. The circularity of Hegel is due to this self-positing and self-knowing act of the Spirit. As Hegel writes, “the movement returns as into its ground” within the “result”.<sup>399</sup>

Through this progress, then, the beginning loses the one-sidedness which attaches to it as something simply immediate and abstract; it becomes something mediated, and hence the line of the scientific advance become a circle.<sup>400</sup>

This can be referred as what Heidegger states as a non-vicious form of circularity, where the circularity is internal to the system. It inevitably grows out of the referential structure of reflexive thinking. The circularity is not some vicious thing that needs to be avoided but rather it requires one to enter and move within. In Hegel circularity is what introduces objectivity to the system. Spirit carries itself into actuality through its own self-positing act, which is necessarily generated from the inner logical principles of dialectics. The knowing self-consciousness knows itself and only itself through its difference within sameness. In order for this knowledge to be objective it must reflect back from the Other, whereas within this reflection, the Other will turn out to be nothing but a moment of self-differentiation or self-alienation. This conceptual grasp itself stands for the supersession of otherness. The circularity here entails that the superseded unity of the opposites is actually a reunification since the opposites show themselves to be fundamentally related. This circular act arrives at its essence or unity only within the end of its

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<sup>399</sup> Hegel, *SL*, p. 71.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

movement, and in this final gesture objectivity appears within the final supersession. The necessary and absolute character of this structure appears within the end, but it nevertheless belongs to the whole. As soon as the absolute Spirit appears as a whole it becomes the whole movement itself, and it cannot be separable from this unified movement. The manifestation of the absolute coincides with the very act of positing itself. This, again, shows the circularity within the attainment of the absolute. As we will discuss shortly, the great difference between Hegel and Heidegger is due to the nature of this circle, its way of being complete either as presenting a full actuality as in Hegel, or as an ecstatic way of including an inexhaustible yet finite potentiality as in Heidegger. For Hegel the circle is fulfilled and closed as the Spirit comes to know itself in its actuality. The historical appearance of the Spirit has a logical structure in which the Spirit comes to know itself fully. Each self-determining moment of the Spirit is carried into its Notion is truly known in its mediation, and becomes potentially exhausted. The self-determining or self-positing act of the Spirit comes to its completion by knowing itself in each and every finite possibility. Yet in the end, these finite moments show themselves as exhaustible for the historical movement that had already been guided by its own inner and necessary principles.

The way Heidegger considers his own philosophy as circular is also from an anti-foundationalist stand where meaning emerges with regard to a non-linear referential whole and in a circular structure. As Heidegger writes, “What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it in the right way”.<sup>401</sup> Similar to Hegel’s holism, Heidegger argues for a referential part-whole relationship, yet this relation is with respect to the hermeneutic circularity of meaning rather than a reflexive act. The part draws its meaning out of the referential totality while the meaning of the whole depends on the meaning of its parts, and this creates a circular movement within the context of interpretation. Unlike Hegel, Heidegger does not address to a circuit development that eventually comes to a completion. Rather this circle reveals the ontological relation between

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<sup>401</sup> H153.

Being and Dasein without giving Dasein a constitutive character within this relation. In Heidegger's framework the meaning of Dasein itself carries a circularity that underlies its relation with Being. Dasein always already issues its own Being by solely Being itself. Or as Heidegger puts it: "An entity for which, as Being-in-the-world, its Being is itself an issue, has, ontologically a circular structure".<sup>402</sup> In understanding itself within the projection of its own Being, Dasein transcends towards the openness of Being. Its existential care structure has the character of an "ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being".<sup>403</sup> Dasein is able to project itself towards its own ahead-of-itself Being and reach towards the truth of Being, its historical unfolding, its destiny, its sending as well as the possibility of a new opening. Here, the role of self-understanding is such that it will enable Dasein to understand the withdrawing openness of Being, its null or abyssal grounding *via* understanding its own null potentiality-for-Being. This is the reason why the fundamental analytic of Dasein is preparatory for a fundamental ontology. Yet, contrary to the Hegelian conclusion, this does not imply a founding relation in which Dasein's comportment towards Being has a constitutive character with regard to Being itself. Dasein due to its ecstatic existence, namely *ek-sistence* is already beyond its own Being and in the truth of Being in general, which it can only receive as a sending and caringly protect. The similar path of these two accounts also stresses the great difference with respect to their conclusions. Whereas the Spirit acquires absolute truth through its own power of positing all reality, Dasein finds itself in the truth of Being through knowing itself in its limited and finite yet potential Being. Therefore, the contrast here is between Spirit's active role in positing the truth and Dasein's receptivity in the face of a withdrawing truth. In Hegel, the infinite movement of the Spirit articulates itself out of its finite shapes constitutes its actuality and truth, that is, its absolute self-knowledge. In Heidegger, the withdrawing truth always leaves out something impending that resists coming into appearance. This is the meaning behind the

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Heidegger, "Letter", p. 229.

phrase that Dasein is both in truth and untruth. Or, in Heidegger's own terms, "‘Dasein is in the truth’ states equiprimordially that ‘Dasein is in untruth’".<sup>404</sup> The truth as *aletheia* or as uncovering is always at the same time a covering in another sense. Being always withdraws itself so that it becomes the freedom and openness to let the possibility present itself as possibility. As we have already covered in great detail, the possibility that is not yet brought into presence or that does not draw its meaning out of an already present and available form is the central idea behind Heidegger's understanding of freedom. Hegel, on the other hand, establishes freedom upon actuality. The act of self-determination itself is the freedom for the self-consciousness to know itself in its Notion. What both philosophers share is that their understanding of freedom does not indicate an unrestricted or unbounded independence, rather it moves within its constitutive limits. Although for both Hegel and Heidegger, freedom is always already constituted in and through its limits, for Hegel, the limits of freedom are nothing but the self-determining acts of the absolute Spirit in and through which it comes to actuality and grasps itself in its Notion. However, Heidegger builds his claim upon the finitude of Being and the limitations that this finitude brings both within the aspects of its nullity as well as its temporality. The possibilities of Dasein's Being are limited firstly because Dasein is fallen and situated within a world that is already determined, and secondly Dasein, in comporting itself to its possibilities, necessarily gives up other possible ways of Being. From a wider aspect this also addresses the difference between infinity and finitude as grounding the systems of Hegel and Heidegger respectively. Hegel's closed circularity as well as his understanding of freedom as the accomplishment of the self-determination of Spirit (where its actuality and its Notion coincide) shall require the notion of infinity as the eventual truth of finitude. Since the notion of infinity is nothing but the notion that comprehends the self-superseding, self-negating character of the finite, it implies the self-determining whole in which the finite particular shapes are nothing but the determinate moments of the self-expression of the whole. This implies that

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<sup>404</sup> H222.



we can understand our freedom always in terms of the concrete universal that accomplishes its actuality in the collective historical acts of the infinite Spirit. In Hegel, philosophy is the retrospective comprehension of the true nature of our finitude and freedom in the infinite life of the Spirit, that is, in its self-accomplishing acts. Heidegger, on the other hand, poses the question of Dasein's Being-a-whole as an ontological problem, and works with it through an existential analysis of death. The temporal structure in which Dasein is ahead of itself, as always not-yet, renders this completion as questionable; yet under the same temporal understanding, Dasein does project its own Being in advance, so that it also understands itself already with respect to its final possibility. This final possibility, namely death, while to remain always as a possibility, will show Dasein both its finitude as well as its openness for possibilities, and its freedom as potentiality-for-Being.

In the Hegelian schema, truth supersedes any particular individual knowledge of the self, it becomes the total conceptual activity of the universal Self as knowing itself in its actuality. This necessarily involves the knowledge of each finite moment in its contrast and separateness from another moment; not as knowledge concerned with their particular transient appearance but with respect to what is achieved out of it, namely, the accomplished truth. This truth within each stage repeats the same dialectic encountering with its Other, where this Other slowly moves from an individual to a universal level. It finally transforms into a purely conceptual knowledge in which all externality is finally internalized within the Notion where the unified content of the final truth is “*Self's* own act”.<sup>405</sup> In the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel writes,

[Dialectic] is the *immanent* transcending, in which the one-sidedness and restrictedness of the determinations of the understanding displays itself as what it is, i.e., as their negation. That is what everything finite is: its own sublation. Hence, the dialectic constitutes the moving soul of scientific progression, and it is the principle through which alone *immanent coherence and necessity* enter into

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<sup>405</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p.485 / ¶797.

the content of science, just as all genuine, nonexternal elevation above the finite is to be found in this principle.<sup>406</sup>

Formerly, I have claimed that in *PS*, the slave consciousness accomplishes to know its own nothingness as transformed into something formative and persistent, through the confrontation with death, and in the mediacy of servitude and work. As reflecting back from such an enduring and constructive negativity, the finitude of the self-consciousness meets with its Other, the infinite. The logical category of finitude as well as infinity appears within the phenomenological analysis *via* death. We have already mentioned that the Hegelian philosophy does not aim for presenting an independent analysis of death. Rather, I have tried to argue that as considering death in relation to negativity, Hegel is showing how the negative formative power necessarily arises out of the sheer immanent negativity (death) of the finite self-consciousness. The way that Hegel presents it, finitude and death become constitutive for self-knowledge in the context of a logical and conceptual framework whereas this self-knowledge that is now in the form of Notion or Science (*Wissenschaft*) supersedes all individuality. Subjectivity and objectivity merge in the world historical movement. The knower and the known shall then meet within the Spirit, and render it “in-and-for-itself”.

As it is clear by now, this entire structure is completely different from how truth and self-understanding relate to finitude and death within the Heideggerian approach. Yet, before moving any further, it must be stated that Heidegger mostly refers to the word “understanding” rather than “knowledge”. In *BT*, he deliberately refrains from using the word knowledge, and rather applies to such words as understanding, grasp, interpretation, and attestation. This is mostly because of the connotations of the word “knowledge”, as implying a reason-oriented philosophical outlook. In the traditional sense, knowledge mostly becomes linked with such notions as observation, abstraction, categorization, theorizing and similarly implies the correspondence theory of truth. These are all modes of relating to an entity as present-at-hand, that is, as in its objective presence. In the

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<sup>406</sup> Hegel, *EL*, p. 128 / §81.

preceding chapter on Heidegger, we have covered in what ways this understanding cannot stand as the primordial way of relating to the world. Apart from all these negative associations, the prevalent notion of knowledge also clings on to the subject-object dualism in terms of the knower and the known. This seems to be a fundamental gesture that makes the term knowledge incompatible with the entire philosophical approach that Heidegger has to offer. Therefore, Dasein's self-understanding should be read neither as an indication of a self-knowing subject whose act of knowing constitutes an essence (the Cartesian *cogito* or the Aristotelian *animal rationale*), nor as a conceptual act of theoretical introspection. Rather, the meaning of self-understanding is Dasein's "care", and the ways in which it grasps of its own Being either as the authentic way it appears (in its unconcealment or truth) or the inauthentic fallen way that is publicly delivered. The self-understanding of Dasein is not in the form of a theoretical knowing. Dasein is the factual yet ecstatic "thereness" of its Being-in-the-world. Its existence, or its temporal Being, is what accounts for this thereness rather than presence. As its existential structure unfolds, Dasein's way of Being is by understanding itself in advance, i.e., in projection and as a whole, and not just by introspectively staring to itself. This is tantamount to grasping itself within its involvements, within its worldly potentiality-for-Being or its openness to possibilities. Dasein is what makes an issue of its own Being. The way Heidegger refers to self-understanding should be taken in terms of this Heideggerian framework and in light of the general discussions of the previous chapter.

As coming to the relation between Dasein's self-understanding and the truth of Being, the latter is attainable through the former due to the ontological proximity between Dasein and Being.<sup>407</sup> What this proximity signifies is the unique Being of Dasein as making an issue of its very Being. This sense of issuing is more fundamental than any preferential way of self-contemplation or

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<sup>407</sup> This of course holds true for the early Heidegger of *Being and Time*. It is already mentioned that in his later writings, after what is labeled as the turn, the *Kehre*, his emphasis turns towards how the historical understanding of Being is to be unconcealed through art and language, where the existential interpretation of Dasein is not to be elaborated further whereas what made it precursory for the fundamental ontology remains unexpressed.

introspection; and it likewise does not refer to an underlying ability to conduct such theoretical work. It rather indicates that Dasein constantly makes an issue of its own Being by solely existing, in its pre-theoretical and unique way of relating to its world and to itself, which has been explicated in the care structure. As opposed to Hegel, for whom Being and self-consciousness eventually turns out to be the same, how the transition from an understanding of Dasein to an understanding of Being takes place requires attestation, since this is after all what Heidegger presents as being the ultimate aim of *BT*. As he writes, “the analytic of Dasein” is to prepare “*the question of the meaning of Being in general*”.<sup>408</sup> It seems as if he argues that the attestation of this transition will be implicit in the search itself. Both the care structure and its temporal meaning will reveal Dasein in its own Being as already ecstatically arrived to the truth of Being in general. So, through tracing the existential structure, Heidegger will show that issuing Dasein in its entirety will be issuing Being itself. The question then leads to an inquiry on how to attain a complete self-understanding of Dasein under the light of its always potential not-yet Being. The answer, on the other hand, again is concealed within its own authentic Being. Dasein as much as being not-yet and potential is at the same time ahead-of-itself and finite. As the way it firstly appears in fallenness Dasein is unable to understand itself in its entirety – since as long as Dasein is, there will always be some possible way to be that it is not-yet – and Dasein can be complete only in death. However, once the primordial meaning of Dasein is discovered in its ahead-of-itself yet finite temporal unfolding, Dasein can be taken in its structural entirety within life. Death becomes successfully included within Dasein’s Being-in-the-world as a possibility. The understanding of death as a possibility requires an understanding that is both anticipatory and resolute, in which Dasein knowingly chooses to project itself towards its own death. Dasein understands the authentic meaning of death and dis-covers what Dasein itself has always already been doing without notice: Projecting itself towards a finite horizon of possibilities of its

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<sup>408</sup> H183.

Being including the unsurpassable possibility, namely death. This becomes an attestation that death is always already determining Dasein's own Being as an existentiale as Being-towards-death. Yet, as long as Dasein does not willingly embrace this authentic understanding of death it cannot also issue its Being authentically but rather exists in accordance with what has made publicly available at that time. As mentioned above such self-understanding signifies more than an intellectual wisdom, for in the Heideggerian terminology one cannot hold understanding separate from Dasein's way of Being. What Dasein comes to grasp through a primordial understanding of death is the freedom and potentiality to take itself over and be its own limited authentic self. In one sense this is related to the freedom to choose oneself. Death as the uttermost and final possibility determines a finite scope in which all other possibilities are opened up. Dasein, in the face of death, becomes able to reinterpret these possibilities anew within the light of the particular possibility that cannot be outstripped. As Heidegger writes,

Free for its ownmost possibilities, that are determined by the *end*, and so understood as *finite*, Da-sein prevents the danger that it may, by its own finite understanding of existence, fail to recognize that it is getting overtaken by the existence-possibilities of others.<sup>409</sup>

Yet this is only the individual and somewhat factual aspect of the freedom that death offers. I would claim that, from an ontological perspective, the authentic way of issuing death reveals Dasein a true understanding of Being in general. The resolute anticipation towards death (taking this possibility in its sheer being-possible character) discloses Dasein what its own potentiality-for-Being means in the sense of Being-possible. Such understanding reveals a limited yet free openness in which the possibilities of Dasein's Being can escape an actual-oriented way of appearing and remain as possible. The way I tend to read it, this is the reasoning behind why the analytic of Dasein becomes preparatory for a proper way of understanding Being itself as openness, as a withdrawing nothing or *Abgrund*. Only by working with its own null finite potential Being can Dasein be ready to

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<sup>409</sup> H264.

understand the true meaning of Being to which it ecstatically already reaches out or already pre-theoretically has reached just by Being.

To make this last point a bit more concrete, we can turn to one of Heidegger's later writings, namely the *Work of Art* where Heidegger refers to the strife between world and earth as the harbor of the truth. The world attempts to draw all into a meaningful appearance whereas it encounters the earthly resistance of the thing in revealing its meaning. "Truth essentially occurs only as the strife between clearing and concealing in the opposition of world and earth".<sup>410</sup> I have previously mentioned that this strife has both a gathering and parting nature. The strife is not there to be resolved but it is in which the truth dwells. Without letting the opponents break apart, it keeps them together within a nearness that is bringing forth the apartness. For instance, color only wants to shine within the artwork, and not just appear in its various meanings; viz., not to appear by any technical or rational explanation regarding its nature, but only shine in its "self-secluding" way of "presencing".<sup>411</sup> Such emphasis on the bare presencing does not deprive the color out of its meaning, but quite the opposite within the opened world of the artwork its meaning outshines within the unity, as distinct and apart from the rest, not as "blurring of their outlines".<sup>412</sup> In the strife within the artwork, the truth of the thing is exactly as what it appears to be; meaning that the color is the way it is in what it shows and covers up. Such examples that Heidegger appeals to within his later writings make it more explicit why he is so insistent on embracing the language of possibility and futurity within *Being and Time*, and in what sense this terminology stands as preparatory for his general understanding of Being. The world and truth that is opened in the artwork shows that how the interplay of Being and nothing corresponds to the interplay of covering and uncovering, namely truth as *aletheia*.

Finally, we can reformulate the distinction between Hegel and Heidegger by means of this terminology. In Heidegger, death and finitude reveal the temporal

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<sup>410</sup> Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", p. 121.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

horizon of Dasein both in the face of what it inherits and what it is free for. Thus, death and finitude disclose time as the horizon of Being, and henceforth the finite freedom of Dasein. Yet the finite freedom of Dasein consists in its openness to receive what is truly offered. To receive this offering one must first move towards its authentic Self. It becomes open to hear its own anxious voice as thrown yet responsible to inherit its own limited potentiality-for-Being. The finite freedom that Dasein can acquire is within the horizon of possibilities where what is possible (what will constitute its own Being) can escape the already appeared form of the actual. This domain of possibilities is, again, a limited one; and it is limited not only by the final possibility of death but because the horizon itself is to be delivered each time from history.

As opposed to this general disposition of the Heideggerian doctrine, the way that Hegel works with the finite nature of self-consciousness is motivated by quite opposite ends. The self-knowledge of finitude becomes constitutive for the Spirit because it necessarily posits infinite through its own determination. Through this confrontation finitude no longer remains in its purity, but rather becomes part of a novel unified knowledge of the mediated true infinite. This, of course, opens up the criticism whether the finite remains truly constitutive for the absolute, to which I have tried to answer in this chapter. According to Derrida, *différance*, in Hegel, “has been derived, has happened, is to be mastered and governed on the basis of the point of a present being”. As Derrida continues, a being that is “present to itself”, such as consciousness, surely differs from itself at some point, yet this is not sufficient to show that “such a present being be ‘constituted’ by this *différance*”.<sup>413</sup> This constitution problem, as addressed by Derrida, is surely open to further debate. Yet, as a last remark, I would argue that the way Hegelian philosophy posits the final result as the ground and essence, does not aim to erase the entire journey of the Spirit but allows Hegel to introduce an objectivity to his system whereas he tends to take the system truly as an inseparable unity from the beginning to the end. It is true that the way Hegel places each and every moment

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<sup>413</sup> Derrida, *Margins*, p. 15.

into an opposition can be criticized based on the reason that such a view reduces the negative to a mere instrument. However, as I have tried to demonstrate, this criticism loses its strength once we properly analyze the account of death, which is actually presenting a valid claim in showing how infinity grows out of finitude within the basis of negativity or nothingness. Yet in the final unity the Spirit only finds itself in its actuality and absoluteness; its finite moments, the sensuous contingent particulars turn into shapes of consciousness as opposed to the “shapes of a world”,<sup>414</sup> where Spirit fully appears in the ethical life. It completes the cycle as arriving at a selfsame point. Yet what makes this complete circle stimulating for an ontological approach on death is the Hegelian claim that the final absolute will not leave out anything as unworked including finitude itself. The final unity is build out of the self-knowledge of finitude. Hegel shows how everything begins and ends within the Spirit, how all gains a spiritual conceptual life by partaking in, constituting, and finally unifying with the Spirit itself. As Hegel attempts to present an objective knowable truth that belongs to the Subject, he lets the system develop out of itself without hesitating to include each and every moment and opposition within. Indeed, in Hegel, this is as such out of necessity; it is the only way to derive a unified system, a pure conceptual realm in which philosophy can freely move.

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<sup>414</sup> Hegel, *PS*, p. 265 / ¶441.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

Let us recall the difficulty of placing death within the study area of Western philosophy. At the beginning of this dissertation, we had applied to two approaches that were discussing death in opposite ways, yet both were based on the common point of its externality. I have claimed that some of the central assumptions of Western Philosophy, which I have tried to present partially and briefly through the Platonic and Epicurean doctrines, are participating in an understanding of death that is alienated to the truth or essence of the human being. For the metaphysical Platonic line this external approach showed this notion only in relation with its worth in transcendence. Yet the transcending realm of the absolute is in opposition with the transient contingency of the perishing phenomenal realm and to death itself as representing finitude and decay. Death as considered to be the truth of the inferior body is snapped off from the realm of the unchanging truth of the soul. On the other hand, at the opposite end of this approach stands the moral account of Epicureanism. This account considers death as sheer annihilation. Yet it makes use of the same binary framework and strengthens the alienation towards death by emphasizing the impossibility of its experience. Once this experience is to be taken in its independent transience, death stands as exclusive to life and meaningless for the living individual. Epicurus concludes that such an empty experience can acquire meaning neither in the moment of death nor in its contemplation.

Both Hegel and Heidegger, in their own separate ways attack this metaphysical tendency of working with binary opposites. Especially overcoming the gap between being and nothing is a central philosophical concern for both philosophers. The traditional way of presenting death in relation to the nothing is

with respect to a groundlessness that is non-workable with, where the philosophical outcome is unappealing, for nothing is the loss of all meaning. In a framework of diametrical or binary opposition there appears a further hierarchical ordering where the nothing remains not only contrary but also subordinate to being. I have argued that the philosophical challenge here is not to place death out of its primordial relation with nothingness and the groundlessness of the finite but rather show how this relation can be reintroduced within the area of meaning. Throughout this work I have tried to demonstrate the possibility of this achievement within Hegel and Heidegger, initially through a shift towards a negative-oriented outlook and secondly searching for the ways of lingering within this negative. Both philosophers work within and upon this groundlessness, not by canceling the nothing but rather as making a foundation out of it. Death as what corresponds to the nothing in the individual level becomes constructive for an understanding of Being within the ontological level – either as remaining finite in Heidegger or as deriving infinity in Hegel within a logical structure.

In order to show how being can develop out of nothing, we instigated our search from a point where this transience stands, firstly, as problematic within the metaphysical outlook. We then proceeded with the Hegelian criticism towards the dualistic character of metaphysics. Hegel's dialectic method and his general argument on the interrelatedness of opposites stand as a significant improvement as to hold being and nothing together through an internal relatedness within the conceptual level. This further allows one to raise a meaningful question on death, which conventionally was shown to be problematic due to the phenomenological difficulty of bringing death into presence, for it paradoxically cancels its own presence. In other words, the notion of death has nowhere else but its opposite to dwell within and yet this dwelling cannot be achieved within a confrontation that cancels this opposite. Since this opposite is nothing but life, in its totality, its cancelation takes away the subject, the potentiality for Being-there (*Da-sein*) and the knower as the harbor of the meaning of the known. The dialectic approach makes it possible to address death, holding it in the constitutive negativity of the

moment. At this point we encounter another concern, namely the concern of the moral account. The Epicurean question, namely how it is possible to hold death within the life of the living individual itself, requires a more powerful answer, which the Hegelian philosophy is not directly dealing with. This answer requires a confrontation with the notion of death, the nothing, purely from an individual point of view, as a worldly and personal threat that jeopardizes the individual's whole existential being in its entirety. In Hegel the unity of being and nothing or life and death shows its fullest form in the Spiritual life, yet this life no longer belongs to the individual but it is from the point of view of an ethical inter-subjective order in which a single individual is not the final concern but a constitutive element. In that sense, for Hegel, death, as it is depicted in the *Phenomenology*, appears also in other forms within the ethical order as well as in religion, where it supersedes beyond consciousness' struggle for its entire being. Death embraces a more conceptual form while the particularity of the subject itself transforms into inter-subjectivity (e.g., death of a family member, God's embodiment and death within the Christ). For this purpose, we then turn to the Heideggerian account and reformulate our question as how death can be a true concern for the living individual when it cancels the entire being of this individual.

As I have tried to show throughout this dissertation, under the avoidance or absence of finitude, gaining a comprehensive insight with regard to one's complete self-understanding does not seem as an achievable task. For Hegel this self-understanding becomes an achievement within the level of actuality, and participates in forming a complete conceptual historical knowledge. Here completeness is attained through the supersession of each finite moment, in giving them a determined universality that will in return posit the absolute. Heidegger, on the other hand, will work on the authentic definition of death as considering it within the level of potentiality and always in the context of Being-towards-death. This will enable the possibility of Being-a-whole for Dasein. As we have covered, what Heidegger finds to be problematic within Being-a-whole is the not-yet present possibilities of Being, to which he offers his temporal account as a

solution. Due to this same gesture, it becomes possible to claim that death always already belongs to Dasein's Being and shapes this Being in advance, through revealing its finitude and existential limitedness. As both the metaphysical and Epicurean accounts have formerly introduced, placing death within a dual terminology and considering it through the primacy of presence propounds this notion only as an impossible experience, where its implications on one's own finite being is lost. The Heideggerian answer on how it is possible to recognize death as a worldly concern is closely connected with the way Heidegger argues against a present-oriented metaphysics that "questions what is present only with regard to its presence".<sup>415</sup> Heidegger questions the idea of present both in the ontological and temporal level. The identification of Being with presence blocks the way through the understanding of Being as nothing whereas the temporal understanding of Dasein cannot be present-oriented but must rather build upon the ecstatic unity of the future, past and present. In such a framework, death will be placed in the core of the futural constitution of Dasein. This shows that Dasein, in its worldly existence is always already structurally ahead-of-itself. Or, it understands itself in advance through its not-yet possibilities and with respect to its futural Being. The brilliance of this account lies in that these possibilities (including death) are not present within the now – at least not present with regard to their actuality – but yet they already partake in shaping the Being of Dasein as ahead. In taking death as the ultimate possibility, the opposition between death and Dasein's Being-in-the-world dissolves. Death no longer is with reference to a factual event but has its true meaning in Being-towards-death, which is part of the existential structure of Dasein's very own Being. Therefore, in Heidegger death becomes an existential part of the care structure and for that reason understanding the meaning of one's own death opens up an authentic and complete self-understanding. Especially in the context of *Being and Time*, Heidegger seems to argue, in the end, that working with Dasein's Being in terms of nothingness, finitude and temporality prepares for

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<sup>415</sup> Heidegger, "The End of Philosophy", p. 322.

a fundamental ontology of Being that can capture in what sense Being identifies with the nothing, viz., the abyssal ground in which all beings can appear due to this free openness of the nothing.

It seems likely to read the Hegelian account in a similar developmental schema where the negative act of self-determination builds the movement of supersession from the finite towards the absolute. The self-positing act moves within the negative, where it does not basically consume this negativity. Let us recall the early act of the desiring consciousness where the consciousness tries to consume its Other infinitely. In case of the Spirit the appearance of this negative act itself gets articulated. Within the Spirit each cancelation of the finite moment is at the same time a unitary act of preservation and supersession. The infinite Spirit truly makes the finite its own by reflecting back from it reciprocally so that finitude no longer stands as the sheer opposite of this infinite but enters into relation. This shows the necessary and constitutive role that death and negativity have for the absoluteness of Spirit.

Throughout this study I have depicted two distinct philosophical positions that I find to be both successful in presenting an understanding of death that does not let this notion to be completely drawn and dissolve within the sheer nothing. I tried to show that the philosophically fruitful way to think about death is neither by denying its embeddedness within this nothing nor by turning one's back to it by casting it out of the domain of life and being. The task is rather to be able to capture the interrelations between such opposites and create an alternative understanding as holding them together in a state of relatedness of being and nothing. For Hegel this is possible by the dialectic movement whereas for Heidegger it is through a novel understanding of temporality. In both cases death reveals something more than a particular or factual life-event, namely a deeper fundamental truth with regard to human nature *via* finitude and the nothingness that is embedded within this finitude. For Hegel this finitude, by the inner-relatedness of opposites, will necessary bring about the truth as the absolute Spirit whereas for Heidegger the truth will be the finite unfolding of Being, in which

truth will always withdraw or hide what it can potentially bring about. The point where Hegel and Heidegger diverge, namely whether this truth finally arrives within an understanding of being as absolute or finite, actually stands as an important point as showing that the essentiality of this study does not depend on whether truth is to be grounded within the terms of finitude or absolute. In both cases the genuine understanding of death becomes a necessary moment within self-understanding. Arriving at this conclusion within a philosophical position as Hegel's, which is ultimately an absolute-oriented position, shows the substantiality of this claim even further. It demonstrates that the absolute, if it is ever actual, itself requires the assistance of the negative in order to be full with itself. Without initially studying the finite being under the determination of being finite, the ontological foundation of being cannot be grasped within its completeness.

Similarly, philosophy cannot be sure of its own understanding of being, without properly reckoning with "the nothing" as a possible ontological source. In the absence of "the nothing" truth remains partial. Seeking the essence immediately within transcendence, within the beyond, alienates human beings to their own appearing truth, to what unfolds itself phenomenologically as finite. The phenomenological concern, as taking what appears in the way it appears becomes important for leading such a task. As the Hegelian part of the work explicates further, the speculative end, the transcendence, must firstly embrace this phenomenological finitude as the way it appears and build itself out of it. This can only be tantamount to an accomplishment that is enabled through a long developmental process which offers to solve its own conflicts on the way. The Heideggerian counterpart of such an accomplishment is Dasein's return to an authentic understanding of its own Being. In accord with Dasein's existential structure as Being-fallen, in order to find itself in truth Dasein must initially make a return by listening to itself – to what it already anxiously grasps within a pre-ontological state of understanding. Dasein, without properly knowing its limits cannot also know what it is free for.

Only in the assistance of this initial step of studying death in its ontological and existential meaning as in relation to finitude and nothingness, can one approach to a comprehensive and meaningful understanding. This leaves us with the enduring need of discussing this notion not merely as an existential and phenomenological representative of finitude but as the point where one's ownmost being and nothing opens up as a philosophical problem within the finite structure of existence. The point that Heidegger and Hegel develop an account of finitude out of the study of death becomes a crucial step in the way, but what becomes worthwhile is reconsidering this finitude once more in its ultimate phenomenological manifestation, for this manifestation is not only a factual unfolding of finitude but allows us to stand in the midst of being and nothing, as truly involved with them both as belonging to our ownmost finite being.

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## APPENDIX A. CURRICULUM VITAE

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Mandalinci, Maya  
Nationality: Turkish (TC)  
Date and Place of Birth: 4 October 1989, İstanbul  
Phone: +90 533 660 09 28  
email: maya\_man@hotmail.com

### EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
MS	Boğaziçi University Philosophy	2013
BS	Boğaziçi University Philosophy	2011
High School	Üsküdar American Academy	2007

### WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2011- 2012	Yapı Kredi Yayınları <i>Cogito</i> Dergisi	Editorial Work (Intern)

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Intermediate German

### PUBLICATIONS

1. Mandalinci M. “Hegel’in *Tinin Fenomenolojisi*’nde Ölüm ile Olumsuzlama İlişkisi: Kojève’in Okuması Işığında Ölümün Merkeziliği Sorusu”, *Özne Dergisi*, 27, (Güz 2017)

## APPENDIX B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Batı felsefe tarihinin dnsel izgisi zerinde lme dair bir aratırmaya yneldiimizde, insanın varlıını mesele eden, bu varlıın sonlu tezahr evresinde ekillenen bir lm tartımasına rastlamayı bekleriz. Bu beklentinin tam anlamıyla karılanmıyor oluu en geni anlamıyla lmn mevcudiyete gelmeyi reddeden zorlu bir kavram olmasıyla ilikilendirilebilir. Elbette ki lm kavramı bakımından incelemeye dair ortaya ıkacak glkler eitlendirilebilir. lmn deneyim alanında neye tekabl ettii veya lm takip eden ruhani ya da tinsel bir varoluun imkanı lme dair cevaplandırılması g ve belki de imkansız sorulardır. Fakat lmn anlamını belirlemekteki asıl zorluk, tm bunların tesinde, ontolojik olarak daha asli bir meseleden kaynaklanır. Bu, lm ve varlık ilikisinin kurulması sırasında karımıza ıkan bir engele iaret. Bu engelin mahiyeti tezin giri kısımlarında aırlıklı olarak savunduum zere Batı dncesinin felsefe yapma biiminde ya da geleneinde aranmalıdır. Bu gelenek ierisinde lmn felsefi anlamına dair kapsamlı bir deerlendirmeye tabi tutulmasının imkan koulları henz hala hakkıyla sorgulanmı deildir. Dolayısıyla lmn anlamına dair bir sorgu potansiyel aılımlarını gerekletirmemi ve eksik bırakılmıtır. Batı felsefesinde bu eksiklii ekillendiren iki ana unsurdan bahsetmek mmkn grnyor; bunlardan ilki metafiziin kurucu dili olan ikilik veya karıtlık dilidir, tekisi de bu dilin beraberinde getirdii karıtlıklar arasındaki hiyerarik ilikidir. Bu iliki dorultusunda belli bir karıtlıın bir ucu felsefi anlamda yceltilirken teki u ise felsefeye ve bununla beraber kendini bilmeye ve hakikate dısal ve yabancı addedilir. Bu engellerin tesine geen bir lm yorumunun nasıl mmkn olacaını grmek adına bu geleneksel anlayıı irdelemek son derece elzemdir. Batı geleneinin karıtların uzlamazlıı syleminin lm balamında ne anlama geldiini net bir ekilde ortaya koymak bu bakımdan faydalı olacaktır. Bu dorultuda ilerlersek geleneksel lm anlayıı iki

ana hat üzerinden incelenebilir; bunlardan ilki Platoncu geleneğe atfettiğim metafizik ölüm anlayışı öteki ise ahlaki anlayış olarak adlandırmayı uygun bulduğum Epikürcü yaklaşımdır. Ölüme dair birbirinden oldukça farklı yaklaşımlar öne süren bu iki geleneğin üzerinde ortaklaştığı nokta bu karşıtlık ve ikilik dilidir.

Bu dilin yapısı altında ölüm ve yaşam, varlık ve hiçlik, sonlu ve sonsuz birbirlerini bütünüyle dışlayan, uzlaşamaz karşıtlıklar olarak ele alınırlar. Bunun sonucu olarak ölüm fenomenolojik anlamda tezahür edeceği bir zeminden mahrum kalır çünkü zıtların keskin karşıtlığında iki ayrı uca itilir; oysa ki bu uçlar tek başlarına ölümün anlamını kurmakta yetersiz kalırlar. Ölümün anlamı ya doğrudan aşkınsal bir alana itilir ya da yaşamın saf olumsuzluğu olarak yaşama dokunamaz ve böylece varlık alanında kendi içeriğini kurmaktan yoksun hale getirilir. Bunun doğuracağı sonuç ölümün insan yaşamına dahil edilememesi, ona dışsal kılınmasıdır. Platoncu metafizik anlayış içerisinde böylesi bir sonuca varmamızı sağlayan temel unsur, ruh ve beden karşıtlığı açısından, insanın özüne ve hakikatine yalnızca ruhun tekabül ediyor olmasıdır. Beden ise araçsallaştırılarak bu özün dışında tutulur. Burada maddi olanın form karşısında hakikati değil bu hakikatin bozulmuş bir yansımasını temsil ediyor olması da benzer bir biçimde ruh beden karşıtlığını kuvvetlendirir. Öte yandan ölüme ilişkin temel savlardan biri de ölümün sadece bedene etki edebileceği ve ruhun bundan zarar görmeyeceğidir. Platon'un iddia edeceği ve sonrasında Neo Platoncu gelenek tarafından geliştirilecek bu anlayışta ölüm, ruhu ancak bedensel olandan özgürleşme imkanı sunması bakımından ve dolayısıyla aşkın bir çerçeveden etkiler; ruhu hakikate taşıyacak bir araca dönüşür. Bu noktada Platon, maddesel olandan uzaklaşmış, salt düşünsel olana yönelen ve sadece formlarla meşgul olmayı becerebilen bir ruhun en nihai özgürlüğünü ölümde bulur. Ölüm ruhun bedenden ve maddi olandan tam olarak kopuşu ve dolayısıyla formların mutlak hakikatine erişebilme imkanıdır. Platon buradan yola çıkarak spekülatif felsefi edimin temelde ölüme yönelik bir pratik olduğunu iddia eder. Felsefi ya da tümel düşüncenin gerekliliklerine yönelen ruh kendini maddi ve tikel olanın bağlarından kurtarmayı başarıp mutlak ve değişmez, yani hakikatin ya da tümel formaların bilgisine varmayı hedefler. Bu

yönelimin tamamen özgür kılınması ise ölümden, yani maddenin geçiciliği ve değişkenliğinden azade bir aşkınlık imkanında gerçekleşebilir. Bunun Platon tarafından bir imkan olarak sunulmasındaki temel sebep, Phaidon diyalogunda da belirtildiği üzere, ölümün gerçek doğasının ancak tanrılar tarafından bilinebilir oluşudur. Bu nedenle Platon, ruhun ölümden sonra devam edeceği yönünde öne sürdüğü savların yanı sıra bu konuda iyimser olduğunu vurgulama gereği de duyar. Bu metafizik çerçevede eleştiriye tabi olan temel nokta, ölümün ruhsal bir yolculukla arınmak ve mutlak saf bilgiye erişmek adına araçsallığı bakımından ele alınması ve insanın varlığı ve hakikati ile ilişkilendirilmemesidir. Bunun sebebi az evvel belirtildiği gibi Platon'un öğretisinde insanın özü ve hakikati ile kast edilenin yok oluşa ve ölüme tabi olmayan ruh oluşudur. Beden ise bu ruh için edimsel dünyada bir araç olduğu kadar onu her daim bedensel arzularla oyalayan bir engeldir. Tıpkı değişime bozulmaya ve duyusal yanılgılara tabi olan beden gibi onun geçiciliğine ışık tutan ölüm de insana dışsal ve yabancı kılınır. Öte yandan Epikürcü ölüm anlayışı bu metafizik görüşün tam karşısında konumlanır. Ölüm Platoncu anlamının aksine beden ve ruhun nihai yok oluşu (atomlarına ayrılışı) olarak ele alınır. Fakat bir kez daha bu yok oluş varlık ile beraber düşünülemez. Epiküros'a göre ölümün mutlak bir yokluğu imlemek dışında bir anlamı yoktur. Ölümün imlediği bu yokluk, birey henüz varlığını sürdürüyorken ona temas edemez, dolayısıyla ölüm içi boş ve anlamsız bir kavrama dönüşür. Diğer bir deyişle ölüm bireyin varlığına, bu varlık varlığını korudukça, etki edemez. Burada Epiküros'un söylemine yön veren öncülün aynı ikilik dilinden beslendiğini iddia etmek yanlış olmayacaktır. Ölüm ve yaşamın bireyin kendi deneyimi açısından bir araya getirilemez oluşu Epikürcü felsefe açısından ahlaki ve pratik bir sonuç doğurur. Ölüm anlamdan yoksun oluşu bakımından kötü veya korkulacak bir şey addedilemez.

Epiküros'un çerçevesini çizdiği bu problem, ölümü kendi deneyimden hareketle anlamlandıramayan öznenin ölüm ile ilişkisini ne bağlamda kuracağı, ya da daha temel olarak böyle bir ilişkinin mümkün olup olmadığı soruları ile de ilintilidir. Ölüm, etki ettiği öznenin varlığını ortadan kaldırması ve kendi ortaya

çıkma zeminini yok etmesi bakımından mevcudiyete taşınamayan bir fenomendir. Bunu en başta ölümün anlamına dair bir zorluk olarak belirtmiştik. Fakat burada vurgulanmak istenen şey, bu zorluğu ölümün kendisine içkin bir zorluk olarak kabul etmeden önce Batı felsefe geleneğinin bu sorunu şekillendirmedeki payını sorgulamak. Şu ana dek savunduğumuz üzere hem metafizik hem de ahlaki söylem içerisinde ölümün yaşamla ve varlıkla doğrudan bir karşıtlık ilişkisi içerisine oturtulması ölüm çalışmasının önünde bir engel teşkil eder niteliktedir. Bu noktada amaçlanan, karşıtlık ilişkisini yok saymaktan ziyade bu karşıtlığın daha asli bir beraberlik ilişkisi içerisinden kurulabileceğini göstermektir. Bu noktada Hegel'in diyalektiğine başvurmak, ölümün yaşamın sınırları içerisine dahil edilmesine ve hatta mutlak varlığa dair kurucu bir rol üstlenmesine olanak sunar. Buradan açılacak tartışmanın bize sunacağı ölüm anlayışı, Hegelci açıdan tinsel varlığın öz-belirleniminin sonluluk ve ölümü içermeyen kendi tinselliğine erişemeyeceği savı ile şekillenir. Daha basit terimlerle ifade etmek gerekirse ölüm ve sonluluk sonsuz tine katılmakla kalmaz aynı zamanda onun kurucu momentleri olarak açığa çıkar. Bu aşamada, ölüm ve sonluluğu irdelerken *Tinin Fenomenolojisi* ve *Mantık Bilimi*'ni beraberce ele almanın tartışmayı daha verimli hale getireceği görüşünü savunmaktayım. Mantığın zorunlu ve kurucu ilkeleri ile hareket eden tarihsel tin kendi gelişimini ancak diyalektik mantığın fenomenolojide açığa çıkması ile keşfeder ve bu keşfediş esnasında kendini kurar. Benzer bir biçimde sonluluk kategorisini tarih sahnesine taşıyan da olumsuzluğun en mutlak haline bürünmesi ve ölüm biçiminde tezahür etmesidir. Hegel'in mantıksal düzlemde sonluluk ve sonsuzluk üzerinden kurduğu ilişkinin izdüşümü ölüm ve sonsuz tin arasındaki ilişkide açığa çıkar. *Tinin Fenomenolojisi*'nin “Özbilinç” Bölümü'nde, “Köle-Efendi” pasajında değinilen bu anlatı, köle bilincin kendi sonluluğu ve hiçliği ile efendi bilincinin dolayımında karşılaşması ile başlar. Karşı karşıya gelen iki öz-bilinç temelde şu şekilde ayrışır: Köle bilinç yaşama ve varlığa bağımlı olduğunu kabul eden bilinçtir, efendi bilinç ise kendi olumsuzlama ve yok etme gücünü her şeyden (kendi yaşamından bile) üstün tutar ve kendi saf bağımsızlığını kendi hakikati sayar. Hegelci diyalektiğin genel yapısını göz önünde



bulundurursak köle ve efendi bilincin temsil ettiği bu iki hakikat anlayışı kendi içlerinde hem doğru hem de henüz eksik olmaları bakımından yanlıştır. Köle kendi bağımlı ve sonlu hakikatinin aslında efendinin kendine atfettiği hakikatten farklı olmadığını keşfettiğinde aşkın bir hakikat anlayışına doğru yol alır. Bununla ifade edilmek istenen kölenin kendi sonluluğunu, saf olumsuzluk biçiminde önce ölümle karşılaşmasında sonra da efendinin dolayımında tanınması ve akabinde bu sonluluğu kendi olumsuzlama gücü (başta efendiye atfettiği olumsuzlama gücü) olarak işlediği nesnelerde tümüyle keşfetmesidir. Bu yargıyı biraz daha açmak gerekirse, köle efendi ile girdiği ölüm kalım savaşında yaşamıyla olan zorunlu bağımlı kabul eder ve ölüme, dolayısıyla onu ölümle tehdit eden efendi bilince boyun eğer. Fakat bu boyun eğiş sırasında kendi varlığının efendinin varlığından farklı olmadığını, olumsuzlama gücünün ve kendisi-için olabilmenin kendisinde de mevcut olduğunu unutarak kendi bağımsızlığını efendiye teslim eder. Köle için kendi olumsuzlama gücünü görünür kılacak olan, efendiye servis etme amacıyla olumsuzladığı nesnenin bu olumsuzlama hareketi içerisinde yitip gitmeyecek (kendisi tarafından tüketilmeyecek) oluşudur. Böylece köle kendi sonluluğunu ve olumsuzluğunu, olumsuzladığı nesneden geri yansıyan bir sonsuzluk olarak kavrar ve aşar. Hegel'in diyalektiğinde merkezi bir öneme sahip olan bu içererek aşma (*Aufhebung*) hareketi öz-bilincin kendi sonluluğunu kavramsal düzeyde içermesi ve sonsuzluğunu kurmaya doğru ilerlemesi anlamına gelir. Bu izleği ölüm açısından bir kez daha değerlendirmek gerekirse köle bilinç öncelikle efendi ile girdiği savaşta kendi ölümü ya da saf olumsuzluğu ile karşılaşır ve onu henüz dolaysız biçiminde kendi hakikati olarak tanır. Bu tanıma daha sonra gerçekleşecek olan kendi olumsuzlama gücünü tanımak adına bir basamak teşkil eder. Nesneyle girdiği tüketimsiz dönüştürme ilişkisinde, yani emeğin aracılığında, köle kendi hakikatini bu sefer de dolaylı bir olumsuzlama gücü olarak tanır. Köle emeği ile dönüştürdüğü ve yarattığı nesnesinin kalıcılığından kendine geri yansır. Böylece ölüm tinsel bir yaratımda içerilir ve aşılar hale gelir. Burada kölenin kendi olumsuzluğu ile olumsuzlama gücü arasındaki bağlantı irdelenmeye değer niteliktedir. Hegel'in tarihin hareket ettiricisi olarak kabul ettiği olumsuzluk

kavramı nasıl ve niçin olumsuzlama eylemine, yani bir hareket ettirici güce dönüşebilmektedir? Bu sorunun cevabı ölüm tartışması adına da önemli bir anlam teşkil eder çünkü varlık ve hiçlik tartışması üzerine temellenir. Bu aşamada Hegel'in *Mantık Bilimi*'ne başvurduğumuzda bu ilişki daha açık hale gelecektir. Mantıksal düzlemde saf varlık ve saf hiçlik ilişkisi kendi hakikatini oluş kavramında bulur. Oluş içerisinde karşımıza çıkan varlık artık (saf değil) belirlenmiş bir varlıktır ve bu belirli varlık kendi belirlenimini bir sınır olarak kendisine zorunlu olarak dayatır. Bu sınır aynı zamanda sona gelme haline yani sonluluğa gönderme yapar. Sonlu ve belirli varlık kendi sonuna gelerek kendini gerçekleştirecek olan varlıktır. Bu olumsuzluğun hareket ettirici gücünün içkin mantığını gözler önüne serer. Olumsuzluk, olumsuzluk olması bakımından, kendini dahi olumsuzlayacak olandır. Tüm bunlardan elde edilecek sonuç tinin öz-belirlenim hareketinin olumsuzluk ve sonluluk olmaksızın bir harekete dönüşemeyeceği ve dolayısıyla kendini kuramayacağıdır. Her ne kadar sonsuz tin, tarih sahnesinde belirdikten sonra tek hakikat olarak anlaşılacak olsa da bunun sonluluk dolayından geçmeksizin yapılamayacağını Hegel birçok defa farklı biçimlerde belirtir. Burada tinin anlaşılması bakımından karşımıza çıkan hareket dairesel niteliktedir. Bu daire edimsel bir hakikatin kendini hareket içerisinde tanımasına ve eşzamanlı olarak kendini kurmasına denk gelir. Böylesi bir sonsuz anlayışı sonlu olanın tümüyle açığa çıktığı, kavramına eriştiği ve sonsuzda kavramsal anlamıyla içerildiği bir anlatıyı bizlere aktarır. Dolayısıyla ölüm kavramsallığı içerisinde tanınır hale gelir ve öz-bilinci kendi mutlak olumsuzluğu ve sonluluğu içerisinde çıkararak tinselliğe doğru taşır. Ölüm burada emeğin ve hizmetin beraberinde getirdiği olumlayıcı ögenin dolayımında olumsuzluğun kalıcı bir olumsuzlama gücüne dönüşmesi yönünde aracıdır. Ancak ölümün dolaysız hiçliği ile yüzleştik sonra öz-bilinç kendini bu hiçliğin taşıyıcısı ve dönüştürücüsü olarak keşfeder.

Hegel'in felsefesi karşıtların içsel birliği fikrinde temellenir. Bu birlik kendini hemen açığa çıkarmaktan ziyade bir karşılaşma sonucunda ve farklılaşmanın içerisinde zorunlu olarak kurulur hale gelir. Bu zorunluluk temeli

dairesel hareketi var eder, çünkü en sonda ortaya çıkan hakikat, kendi kendisini zorunlu olarak kurmasından ötürü başlangıca temel teşkil eder niteliktedir. Ölüm bu sistemin içerisine dahil olmakla kalmayıp sonlu-sonsuz varlık-hiçlik ilişkileri içerisinde sonsuz tinsel yaşamın kuruculuğunu üstlenir. Hegelci ölüm anlayışı metafizik geleneğe yönelttiğimiz eleştiriye bir cevap sunabilir. Sonlunun sonsuzla ve varlığın hiçlikle girdiği ilişkide ölüm de kavranabilir hale gelir ve kavramına erişen her şeyde olduğu gibi aşılmış olur. Hegel, her ne kadar ölümün ontolojik anlamıyla sonluluk ve hiçlik üzerinden irdelenmesine olanak sağlasa da burada eksik kalan ölüm sorusunun insanın kendi varlığına, o varlığın bütününe dair bir mesele oluşudur. Oysa Hegel için asli olan en nihayetinde erişilmiş olan tinsel bakıştır. Bu bakımdan ölümün son derece şahsi ve kişinin kendi varlığına ait, tam da o varlığın kendisini meseleleştirmekle belirgin hale gelen anlamı Hegel tarafından ele alınmaz. Başka bir deyişle, Epikür'e başvurarak aktardığımız, ölümün insanın kendi deneyimi açısından kavranabilir olmayışı Hegel'in tini adına anlamlı bir eleştiri olmaktan çıkar. Mutlak bilgiye erişmiş tin, tamamlanmış kavramsal bilginin kendini bilme ediminin kendisidir zaten. Bu aşamada ölümün varoluşsal anlamını ontolojik eksen çerçevesinde bir kez daha değerlendirmek adına Heidegger'e başvurmak ölüm meselesini tam anlamıyla felsefenin merkezi bir problemi olarak tartışmamıza olanak sağlayacaktır. Hegel'in olumsuzluğu varlık ve hiçliğin ilişkisi üzerinden ele alması ve olumsuz ile kalabilmenin kuruculuğunu ve zorunluluğunu vurgulaması felsefe tarihinde belli başlı bir değişimin habercisidir. Hegel'de mutlak ve edimsel varlık ancak olumsuzluk hareketi üzerinden kurulur. Hegel sonrasında metafizik yapma biçimi bir değişikliğe uğrayarak tanrısal ve mutlak bir arayıştan koparak hakikat sorusunu hiçlik, fark, parçalanma, olumsuzlama gibi kavramlar eşliğinde tekrar ele alır.

Hegel'in açtığı bu yolda Heidegger sonsuz kavramına dayanmaksızın hiçlik üzerine temellenen sonlu bir ontolojiden bahsetme imkanı bulur. Burada Heidegger Batı metafiziğinin sonuna Hegel ile ulaşıldığını iddia edecektir. Heidegger'in iddiası, mevcudiyet üzerinden ilerleyen bir varlık anlayışının Hegel ile nihayetine taşındığı ve kavramsal bir çözümlemede tüketildiği yönündedir. Bu nedenle artık

yeni bir düşünme biçimine hazırlık yapma vaktinin gelmiş olduğunu savunur. Heidegger'in temel (fundamental) ontoloji olarak adlandırdığı felsefesi, varlık sorusunu varlığı ön kabul olarak var saymaksızın ilk defa yöneltiyor olma iddiasındadır. Heidegger varlığın bizatihi kendisini bir mevcut olan olarak almaksızın yokluk üzerinden anlayabilmenin felsefi sınırlarını sorgular. Bu noktada işe Dasein ontolojisi ile başlamak, varlığın halihazırda içerisinde ikamet eden, dünya-içinde-varolma halinde ve pratik yapıp etmelerinde her daim kendini konu edinen Dasein için kendini sahih varoluşunda anlamaya dair bir çağrıya dönüşür. Dasein'in temel konstitüsyonu zamansallık üzerinden açmlandığında varlığın anlamı da hiçlik ve geri çekilme üzerinden irdelenebilir hale gelecektir. Kısaca Dasein'in kendisini müstesna varoluşu bakımından anlaması varlığın da hiçlik üzerinden anlaşılabilir hale gelmesini sağlayacaktır. Varlık mevcut olmaktan ziyade kendini geri çekerek bir özgürlük alanını mümkün kılandır. Burada "kılandır" fiili ile imlenen "vardır" yargısı bile yanıltıcıdır. Varlık yoktur, hiçliktir. Fakat bu hiçlik varlığı içinde tüketen sonsuz bir karanlığa tekabüle etmez; aksine buradaki hiçlik veya açıklık var olanların özgürce belirmesine olanak sağlamak anlamına gelir.

Heidegger'in ölüm anlayışı yukarıda anlatılan ontolojik çerçevede değerlendirildiğinde varlığın anlamı bakımından kurucu hale gelir. Bu kuruculuk Hegel'de karşımıza çıkan kurucu işlevden farklı olarak bir öz-belirlenim hareketi değil varlığın her daim bir yönüyle kendini geri çeken ve bu sayede tüketilemeyen hakikatini anlamaya ilişkin bir çabadır. Dasein kendi ölümünün sahih manasını anlayarak kendi varlığını sonlu bir potansiyel olması bakımından anlamaya hazır hale gelir. Burada ölümün eksistensiya-ontolojik yorumu, ölümü Dasein'in varlığının yapısına (ihtimam-göstermek olarak tanımlanabilecek bu yapıya) aitliği bakımından, bir eksistensiya olarak değerlendirir. Ölüm Dasein'a her daim ölüme-yönelik-varlık oluşu bakımında aittir. Dasein'in sona yönelik varlığı ileride gerçekleşmesi beklenen bir yitim anını mesele etmekten son derece uzaktır. Aksine Heidegger'in iddiası böylesi bir yitim anını tasavvur etmeye çalışmanın Dasein'in kendi ölümünü anlamasının önünde bir engel teşkil edeceği yönündedir. Ölüme-

yönelik-varlık bir yere doğru ilerliyor değildir. Bu yönelik olmanın asli anlamı Dasein'ın kendi varlığını hep bir tasarım üzerinden ve varlığının olanakları açısından, her daim bu olanaklardan kendine geri yansıyarak bilmesi demektir. Bu durumda ölüme yönelik olmak, artık Dasein olmama olanağının sınırlandırdığı bir tasarım içerisinden, ya da Dasein'ı imkansız kılacak olan son olanağın ufkundan hareketle varlığı kendini öndeleyen bir biçimde tasarlayabilme haline işaret eder. Ölüm başa gelen bir hadise değildir; olması beklenen ya da zamansal olarak yaklaşan bir şey de değildir. Aksine Dasein'ın sonlu varlığının en kesin olanağıdır. Burada ölümü ontik anlamlardan arındırıp ontolojik bir kavram olarak tartışmaya sunmak ölümün Dasein'ın varlığının sona gelmesinden ayrı bir anlamı olduğunu elbette ki göstermez. Bu sonun kendisi Dasein olduğu sürece gerçekleşmeyecek fakat her daim Dasein'ın kendini anlama ve tasarlama haline bir olanak olarak katılacaktır. Heidegger'in, ölümü, varlığın kesin ve atlatılamaz bir olanağı olarak sunuşu ölümün Dasein tarafından her daim halihazırda içeriliyor oluşuna delalet eder. Dasein ancak bu yolla kendi varlığını henüz tamama ermediği haliyle, bir bütün olarak anlama imkanına erişir. Ölümün sınırlandırıcılığını hesaba katmaksızın Dasein var olduğu sürece onda her daim (mevcut olmak bakımından) noksan olan bir şeyler kalmak durumundadır. Bu tamlığın Dasein tarafından fenomenolojik olarak tasdik edilmesi sadece ölümün sahih anlamının kavranması ile mümkün olur.

Basitçe ortaya koymak gerekirse, ölümü bir olanak olarak kavramak, Dasein'ın sonluluğunun kavramsal boyutu aşan bir biçimde, somut bir olma ya da olmama haline taşınarak içerilmesi demektir. Ölüm burada bir olanak olarak alındığında henüz daha gerçekleşmeksizin içerilmiş olur, çünkü bu olanak her daim Dasein'ın bir olanağıdır. Burada Dasein'ı zamansallığın kendisi olması bakımından anlamak gerekir. Dasein'ın zamansal oluşu aynı zamanda onun kendi varlığını her daim varlığının gelecek olanakları üzerinden tasarlamasına işaret eder. Kısaca Dasein henüz varlık olanaklarını gerçekleştirmeden çoktan o olanaklar ile varlığını anlamakta ve dolayısıyla bu anlamın içerisinde var olmaktadır. Ölümün bir olanak olarak anlaşılması, varlığın olanakları ile ilişkisini, bu ilişkinin bizatihi kendisini

mesele eder. Dasein var olduđu sürece mevcudiyete taşınmayacak olan bu son olanak, olanağı tamamıyla olanak olması bakımından ortaya çıkarır. Dasein'ın varlık olanaklarının gerçek anlamı iki yönüyle açığa çıkar. Öncelikle bu olanaklar sonlu olmaları bakımından yeniden değerlendirilirler. Dasein kendi varlığını sonsuz olanaklar üzerinden anlayamayacağını ölüm ışında keşfeder ve kendini sahih bir biçimde anlamamanın, sahih olmak adına gösterilecek kararlılığın yolu açılmış olur. Bir diğer açıdan olanağın olanak olması bakımından ortaya çıkması ontolojik bir sonucu da beraberinde getirir. Dasein kendini olanaklara yönelmiş sonlu bir potansiyel olarak anlar. Bu potansiyel hem sonluluk hem de kurulu bir dünyaya fırlatılmışlık ile kısıtlanan bir potansiyeldir fakat aynı zamanda bir özgürlük alanını beraberinde getirir. Alman geleneği ile sıkı bağlarını koruyan Heidegger için var olmanın özgürlüğü her daim sonluluk ve sınırlılık çatısı altında okunmalıdır. Yukarıda, varlığın hiçlik oluşuyla bir açıklık yarattığını ve ancak bu açıklıkta varlıkların kendi olmaklıkları bakımından belireceğinden söz etmiştik. Aynı şekilde Dasein da kendi hiçliğinin asli anlamı sayesinde kendi var-olabilirliği ile karşılaşır. Bu da her daim bir tür olanakları gerçekleştirmesi bakımından kendini varoluşa taşıma gücünü anlaması demektir. Bu hakikat gündelik hayatın içerisinde örtük durumundadır, çünkü “herkes” ile beraber hareket eden Dasein kendi varoluşunun olanaklar arasında seçim yapmaya dayalı yapısına halihazırda hep yabancı kılınmıştır; bu seçimi “herkes”in ellerine teslim etmiştir.

Bu noktaya kadar aktarıldığı üzere Heidegger'in ölüm anlayışı olanak ve imkan anlayışı ile beraber şekillenir. Zamansallık olarak var olan Dasein ekstatik olarak her daim kendini öndeler. Yani Dasein'ın varlığı olgusal bir mevcudiyete indirgenemez. Aksine o hep kendisinin önünden gitmekte ve tam da bu şekilde yokluğun (henüz olmayışın) alanında kendini konumlandırmaktadır. Yani Dasein kendini öndelerken zaten önde olanın ta kendisidir çünkü bu varoluş biçimi dışında onu tanımlayan herhangi bir şey yoktur. Bu noktada mevcudiyet anlayışı kendi içerisinde problemlili hale gelir, bu nedenle Dasein hiçbir zaman şimdi ve burada mevcut olan bir özne anlayışına tekabül etmez. Heidegger'in felsefesi sadece özne ve mevcudiyet metafiziğini sorunsallaştırmakla kalmaz aynı zamanda varlık ve

hiçliđi de varlıđın tahakkümünde olmayan, aksine hiçlik üzerinden temellenen bir ilişki içerisine sokar.

Bu noktada Hegel ve Heidegger ortaklaştıkları noktalardaki ayrımları açısından bir diyaloga girerler. Hatırlanacağı üzere metafizik ve ahlaki ölüm anlayışlarını ölümü insan varlığına dışsal kılmaları bakımından eleştirmiştik. Uzlaştırılmaz karşıtlıklar arasında hareket eden Batı geleneđi hiçliđi varlığa karşıt olarak konumlandırarak ölümü ya aşkınlık düzeyine taşımış ya da yaşamla beraber mevcut olması imkansız bir deneyim olarak anlamsız kılmıştı. Burada Hegel ve Heidegger'in bu çerçevenin dışına çıkmayı başardığını ve ölümü yaşamın içerisinde düşünebilmeye dair önemli bir kazanım sağladıklarını iddia etmek yanlış olmaz. Bunu bir amaçtan ziyade felsefelerinden süzülen bir sonuç olarak ele almak elbette ki daha yerinde olacaktır. Ölümün Hegel'de öz-bilinç Heidegger'de ise Dasein tarafından anlaşılması en genel anlamıyla varlığın merkezinde duran hiçlikle bir hesaplaşmayı beraberinde getirir. Hegel için bu hiçlik kavramın kendi olumsuzluğundan kaynaklanan bir hareket gücünü imler. Belirli ve sonlu varlık, çifte olumsuzlama diye nitelendirebileceğimiz bir biçimde kendini kendi içsel hareketinde olumsuzlamak zorundadır. Burada hiçlik ya da mutlak anlamda olumsuzluk her şey gibi kendi olumsuzluğunu da yok etmek durumundadır ve kavramsal anlamıyla varlığı kuran da bu saf olumsuzluktur. Fakat Hegel'de özel olan başlangıçta yer alan deđil bir artikülasyon sonucu elde edilendir. Yani varlık hiçlik birbirleri için kurucu olsalar da en nihayetinde asli olan sonda varılan kavramsal ve edimsel birliktir. Heidegger'e dönersek, hiçlikle girilen hesaplaşma benzer bir şekilde hiçlikle temellenen varlık anlayışını beraberinde getirir. Fakat buradaki ilişki diyalektik bir zeminden hareketle kurulmaz, varlık ve hiçliğin birliđi daha çok ontolojik bir tespit niteliğindedir. Var olanların olanaklı oluş ve özgürlük ile biçimlenmesinin ön koşulu olarak varlık geri çekilen ve hakikate yer açandır. Burada hakikat *aletheia* anlamında çok yönlü bir açıklama ve örtme ilişkisine gönderme yapmaktadır; varlık şeyleri bir yönüyle açarken öteki yönüyle gizleyendir. Bu noktada Hegel ve Heidegger'in edimsel olan ve imkanlı olana dair vurgularındaki farka da değinmek yerinde olacaktır. Hegel tinsel varlığı edimsel

olan üzerine inşa eder. Tarihin sonunda tin kendini öz-belirleniminde tümüyle tanımış ve gerçekleştirmiş durumdadır. Kurucu momentlerin hepsi artık tin yolunda bir uğrak olarak düşünülmelidir. Hakiki ve edimsel olan tin kendi tikel hakikat anlayışlarını aşmış ve tamamlanmıştır. Burada Hegel'in felsefesindeki dairesel anlatım da kapalı bir daire olarak açığa çıkar. Ölüm de kendi kavramına erişmiş ve bu sayede tinsellikte aşılarak içerilmiştir. Bu aşılmanın beraberinde getirdiği ortadan kaldırma aynı zamanda bir muhafazadır. Sonlu, değişken ve geçici olanın mutlağın alanına dahil edilemediği soyut bir mutlak anlayışından farklı olarak Hegel'in mutlaklık anlayışı her şeyi kapsayarak, kavramsallığa taşıyarak ve tüm farklılıkları kendi içinde eriterek gelişir. Verili olması bakımından değil mutlaklığa erişmiş olması bakımından mutlaktır. Kendini kendi içinden kurmanın öz-belirlenim hareketi aynı zamanda bir özgürlük hareketidir. Kendini kendinden farklılaşarak dışsallıkta bulan tin bu dolayımında kendini belirleyerek kendine döner. Bu farktan geri dönüş tinin nihai olarak kendinde ve kendi için varlık olarak özgürlüğe erişmesidir.

Bu tamamlanmışlığın karşısında Heidegger'in felsefesi açıklıktan beslenir. Burada Heidegger'in hermeneutik daire diye tabir edilen ve anlamın göndergesel bütünlüğüne işaret eden bir daire anlayışından söz edilebilir. Bunun ontolojik anlamı Dasein'ın varlık anlayışına kendi varlığından hareketle erişebilmesi ve ancak bu varlığın ışığında kendine anlam verebilmesidir. Bu döngüsel gönderme hareketi anlamı bir yönüyle açarken öteki yönüyle örter. Buradaki bütün, anlamı tümüyle ele geçirecek bir bütün değil aksine anlamın kendisine yer açacak onu mümkün kılacak bir referanslar bütünüdür. Şu ana dek birçok defa tekrar edildiği üzere burada imkanın kuruculuğu ve özgürleştirici gücü gene ön plana çıkar. İmkan olarak bırakılan, edimselliğe henüz taşınmamış olan, ya da anlamını edimsel olandan almayan bir olanak fikri özgürlüğün temelinde yer alır. Olanağın kendini salt bir olanak olarak tutması onun kendi özgürlük alanında tezahür edebileceğini gösterir. Bu Hegel'de de olduğu gibi sınırlı bir özgürlüktür. Fakat Hegel'in aksine Heidegger için bu özgürlük belirli bir özgürlük olması bakımından sınırlı değildir. Buradaki sınır imkanın sonluluk ile temellendirilmesinden kaynaklanır. Yani bir



mevcudiyetin veya belirlenimin kalıplarına girmekten ziyade kendi potansiyelinin sonluluğu ile sınırlandırılmıştır.

Son olarak Hegel ve Heidegger'in ölüm anlayışlarının farklılaştığı temel zemini vurgulamak anlamlı olacaktır. Bu zemin aynı zamanda felsefelerinin de farklılaştığı ana nokta olarak addedilebilir. Heidegger felsefesini baştan sona sonluluk temelinde kurarken Hegel ise felsefesini nihai olarak sonsuza erişme niyetiyle şekillendirir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında ölüme dair bu iki yorum tamamen farklı zeminlerden beslenmektedir. Heidegger ölümü eksistensiyal-ontolojik bir mesele olarak ele alır ve *Varlık ve Zaman*'ın merkezine yerleştirir. Bunun sonucunda ortaya çıkan varlığın hiçlikte temellenmesinin Dasein üzerinden okunması ve varlığa dair sonlu bir anlayışın imkanının ortaya çıkarılmasıdır. Heidegger için Dasein analitiğinin yöneldiği nihai amaç varlığın sonlu oluşunun tartışmaya açılmasıdır.

Hegel'de ise sonluluk ve sonsuzluk kendi diyalektik hareketinde bir araya gelir. Sonsuz tin kötü sonsuz diye adlandırılabilen verili bir sonsuz anlayışından farklıdır; daha doğrusu onun aşılması anlamına gelir. Nasıl ki sonlu olan kendi sonluluğunu olumsuzlayarak sonsuzun alanına taşar, yani sonsuzca bir kendini olumsuzlama ve tekrardan konumlandırma hareketine başlar; aynı şekilde sonsuz da sonsuz olarak belirlenmek adına kendini kısıtlayarak (sonluyu dışarıda bırakma ediminin kendisi zaten bir kısıtlamaya işaret eder) kendini sonlunun alanında bulur. Böylece sonsuz sonluya dönüşür ve sonlu sonsuz ya da kötü sonsuz haline gelir. Böylesi bir sonsuz sonluluktan kendine tekrar tekrar geri yansıdığı için başka bir sonsuz hareket başlatır. Burada bizi hakiki sonsuza ulaştıracak olan, sonlu ve kötü sonsuzun aslında tek bir ortak hareketin iki ayrı yönünü imlediğini kavramak olacaktır. Farklılığın altındaki birlik bizi hakiki sonsuza ulaştırır. *Tinin Fenomenolojisi* bakımından sonsuz tinin meydana çıkmasının altında yer alan mantıksal prensip budur. Tin tarihsel olarak sonlu belirlenimlerin art arda dizilmesinden oluşmaz. Bunun bir gelişim hikayesine evirildiği nokta bu sonlu belirlenimlerin bir bütüne katıldıkları noktadır. Benzer bir biçimde bu katılma da ardışık olarak yan yana gelmekten fazlasına işaret eder. Burada söz konusu olan

birlik ayrımların sonsuz bir yansıma ve yansıtma ilişkisi sonucunda her yönden ilişkilienmeleri ve en sonunda bir olmaları anlamına gelir. Buradan Hegel için belki de en mühim olan nokta bu ilişkilienme halinin dışarıdan dayatılan bir şey olmaması ve karşıtlık haline içkin bir prensip olarak yürümesidir. En basit haliyle bir şey karşıtına olumsuz bir gönderme ile bağlıdır. Bunun da ötesinde karşıtlığı kuran aslında daha üst bir seviyede, daha geniş bir kavramın çatısı altında meydana gelen ayrışmadır. Tüm bunlardan çıkartılabilecek sonuç, Hegel açısından ana mesele tinin izlediği yolu takip etmek ve sonluluk kategorisinin ve onun tarihsel tezahürü olan ölüm anlayışının sonsuzu var etmek bakımından katkısını göstermektir. Bu yolu takip etmenin kendisi tinin tekrar tekrar kendini bilme hareketine katkı sağlar ve okuyucu da bu hareketin içerisinde kendine bir yer edinir.

Sonuçta hedeflenen ister sonsuzu konumlandırmak ister sonlu varlık anlayışını savunmak olsun bunun ölümle girilen bir ilişki içerisinde kuruluyor olması bu tezin hedeflediği varoluşsal ve ontolojik ölüm anlayışının varlık hiçlik ekseninde kurulmasına ilişkin bir giriş niteliği taşır. Burada Hegel ve Heidegger'in benzer bir şekilde ölüm kavramından yola çıkarak meseleyi bir sonluluk tartışması haline getirmeleri ölümün insanın sonlu varlığı hakkında bir şeyler söylüyor oluşunu ortaya çıkarması bakımından son derece elzemdir. Sonluluk ile varsayılan şey şudur: İnsan varlığı bitimlidir ve bu bitim varlığın kendisine aittir – herhangi bir olgudan, deneyimden veya dış etkiden bağımsız olarak. Bu bakımından ölümün anlamını oluşturmak hususunda sonluluk kurucu bir rol oynar. Diğer bir deyişle sonluluk, ölümün anlamını insan varlığının bitimine ve hiçliğine dair varoluşçu bir açıdan mesele eder ve böylece ölüm anlık deneyimine dayalı çelişkili bir olgu olmanın ötesine geçer. Bunun yanı sıra ölümü sadece sonluluğun tezahürü haline getirmenin de aksi yönde bir sonuç doğuracağına değinmek istiyorum. Ölümden sonluluğa uzanan tek yönlü bir felsefi çizgi ölümün önemini bir kez daha yadsımış olacaktır. Hegel'de bunun yarattığı sonuç sonlu ve sonsuzun kavramsal döngüsü içerisinde ölümün varoluşsal anlamından vazgeçmek durumunda kalmamızdır. Ölüm, artık benim kendi varlığımın tamamını imleyen bir yok oluş değil kavrama

taşınmış bir soyutlama halini alır. Öte yandan Heidegger'in felsefesi bu varoluşsal anlamı derinlemesine tartıştığı ölçüde varlığın sonlu yapısına dönerek bu tartışmayı ontolojik bir düzleme taşıyarak sonlandırır. Halbuki burada ölümün sonluluk kategorisine indirgenemeyeceği bir nokta mevcuttur. İnsanın kendi sona erişi ile ilişkisi sonluluktan ziyade yaşamın içerisindeki canlı bir ölüm fikri üzerinden tartışılmalıdır. Sonluluk birçok şeyin sonuna gelmeyi imleyebileceği gibi tartışmayı daha kavramsal ve döngüsel bir zeminden açarak yaşamdaki başlangıç ve son ilişkisine gönderme yapar. Fakat ölümle kast edilen sona erme sonluluğun hiçlikle kesiştiği alandır. Ölüm insanın bu kesişmeyi kendi üzerinden şiddetle idrak ettiği bir zeminden seslenir. O halde ölümü sonluluğun tezahürü olarak düşünmekten ziyade ölümde sonluluğun hiçlikle beraber nihai olarak ortaya çıktığını söylemek daha doğru olacaktır. Bu çalışmada ana eksene ölümü yerleştirmedeki başlıca motivasyonum ölümün imlediği anlamdaki bir nihai sona erişin ve sonluluğun tüm varoluşu dair bir meseleye dönüşmesidir. Ölüm kendi varoluşumun, bizzat kendi sonlu yapısından ötürü tüm varoluşla kesiştiği noktadır. Başka bir deyişle, ölümde tüm varoluş benim için kendi varoluşum ile beraber temsil edilir hale gelir çünkü benim, dışında var olabileceğim başka bir varlık olanağı yoktur. Dolayısıyla eş zamanlı olarak tüm varoluş benim için erişilebilir hale gelir ve aynı zamanda sınırlanır. Ölüm varlığım üzerinden bunun mesele edebilmeye dair güçlü ve yoğun bir felsefi olanaktır.

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Soyadı / Surname : MANDALINCI

Adı / Name : MAYA

Bölümü / Department : FELSEFE

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English) :

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