

Human Finitude and History*
Prolegomena to the Possibility of a “Philosophy of History”¹
and Ontology of History

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Abstract: The study searches for, and breaks open, paths to the philosophical understanding of human historicity which may reveal both the ontological-historical identity and particularity of man, and the ontological origins of historiography, making them more comprehensible at the same time. The research reveals and articulates these divergent roots or origins in the finitude of human existence, or in the multiplicity of man’s all-time existential relation to it, in a critical dialogue with both tradition and contemporary philosophies of history. Within these, pre-eminently with the dialogues which scholarly research – albeit in a perhaps surprising way and horizon – undertakes nowadays with both Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, and Martin Heidegger’s pertaining thoughts. The summary of the meditations leads in fact to the recognition that: history exists because human death exists; or, more precisely, because there exists living being which relates to its death in its being, **in** and **by** its modes of being – explicitly or implicitly – **in a being-like way**. For which death, its own death is not a mere givenness but – by how it relates to it – a **possibility** in fact. And a possibility which, together with its all-time “substantive” occurrence, that is, dying – precisely by it yet always also above it! – originates as well as structures, articulates, permeates and colours **all (other) being modes and possibilities** of this living being’s **being**. That is, it **opens them up**, structures them open in reality, in, and precisely by, its finitude. By this, it also lends them an articulate gravity – open onto this finitude – constitutive of history. Thus, it articulates these modes of being truly as living history.

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¹ The **quotation marks** around the expression “philosophy of history” are to highlight the fundamental situation that the subject of what follows here is not the “philosophy of history” in any kind of disciplinary sense – that is, as a particularly outlined and defined “branch” of philosophy or philosophical research – but precisely the nature of **philosophical inquiry** about history – together with its thematic peculiarities, outlines, weight and motivations – as outstandingly a **mode of being**, which existentially and ontologically pertains to the **inquiring subject itself, to its being**, with particular regard to **the possibilities of this being**. This is why I added the term **ontology of history** as clarification, without quotation marks.

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Motto:

„...to seem to speak well of the gods to men
is far easier than to speak well of men to men.

Plato²

1. Exposition

For a start, some clarifying words must be said about the title of the study. First of all, about the word “and” which, as a conjunction, connects “death” and “history”. This “conjunction” here connects things which on the one hand are indeed and essentially interconnected – and as such, strive towards each other – but their interconnectedness, or the nature of their relationships, on the other hand, is for the time being very little known. Therefore the “and” in the title intends to be precisely the connecting and **thematizing** name of this **question**. The “and” is therefore a **question** which must first be explicitly and articulately: **asked**. And this means exactly that we must **explicitly take it on ourselves**, as **inquirers**, precisely in its **pertinence to ourselves**. In order for the “and” – in the thematic articulation and determinateness of death and history – to be able to reach its own nature as an element of connection, of bonding, to which then death and history pertain, and find each other through their pertinence to us.

However, “history” is allegedly primarily something which belongs to the **past** and which is dissected especially by **historiology** or the specialized branches of other disciplines. And indeed, when inquiring about something like “death and history”, the first obstacle to face would be precisely the historiological research of death and the results, data, problems revealed by it, as a relatively new development of historiology starting in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore the title could be understood in passing as if it were about some historiological “problematization” of death, and that it would be in fact (only) a summary of the data, theories, hypotheses, and difficulties formulated by it. However, such an inquiry would usually only remain at the superficial recognition that, similarly to all other “human things” – institutions, people, war, eating, clothing, art, sex, sciences, religion, technology, etc. – and also to all other things of “nature”, wildlife, universe, etc., death also “has” its history. As a result, it has, or must have, its historiology. Which will then hopefully reveal, sooner or later, and despite all difficulties, how we stand and have been standing with it.

Such a discipline of course meets all kinds of so-called epistemological problems all the time. That is to say, how something like “death” can be historically accessed, based on which sources or documents, or interpretation of these, etc.? Beyond this, the particularity of the historiological investigation of death is ultimately to figure out **why** we – **living humans!** – struggle with it? Why do we, living humans, strive to painstakingly answer the question, with laborious and

² Plato, *Critias*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/critias.html>, accessed 19. 01. 2012.

methodologically complicated “scholarly” work, of how people who are **no longer alive**, who are now **dead**, once, in their “all-time” “humanity”, thought of, acted, or made arrangements about death or in issues regarding death? And why we strive, also, to find out reliably how they once died?

Nonetheless, living humans are probably **concerned** also thematically with how the living once died because somehow **they** also know – or at least feel – **themselves** to be mortal. That is to say, death and dying is a “problem” or question **for them** which, although always pertaining to the future, is still very timely, being-in-action, and very much alive; in other words, one that is precisely and certainly **about to come**. Therefore, since living humans are threatened by death and their own deaths in and from their **own future** at all times, or always in the **present**, this is probably why they turn, while alive, toward the research and understanding of **past** events related to death. This is in fact the case with any kind of historical research. The living actuality of the **theme**, the “problem” – that is: its **question-like being-in-action** – is what forms, creates and sustains the historical or historiographic interest in it, at all times, and in the very depth of things. Even if this actuality belongs in fact to the “history of effect”...

In addition, it also becomes a question whether the **historical research of death** may have some kind of thematic as well as ontological and structural **privilege** over historicity, the essence of historicity itself? Which is only represented by the historiological research of death – or, more precisely, by the simple existence of such efforts – rather than thematized or articulated. It is clear now that our inquiry points to two directions. First, the direction of the historicity and historical problems of death, and second, the equally problematic direction of historicity itself.

As mentioned before, historiology has started to study the problem of death only relatively recently, during the 1960s–1970s. These researches are connected primarily to the names of – mostly French³ – historians such as Philippe Ariès, Louis Vovelle, Vincent-Louis Thomas or Pierre Chaunu. As a result of these investigations, an increasing appetite for further research has been triggered – including historical anthropological and inter- and transdisciplinary inquiries – leading to a great deal of decisive information on death and the ways and social functions of how people related to death in various ages. Additionally, it has led also to information about the more essential aspect that death and the awareness of death proved by burials has played in human’s becoming human, that is, in the actual creation or coming into being of human history. (Pierre Chaunu for instance clearly claims: man only became (“completed”) man when somehow becoming aware of death, that is, a “mortal”.)⁴

This way then the affair also gains – seemingly “by itself” – a dimension of **philosophy of history**. “Seemingly by itself” because in reality the historiographic

³ Yet not exclusively the French historians of primarily the *Annales* school, since e.g. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross also conducted her research in the United States at largely the same time as Philippe Ariès, and published her book *On Death and Dying* in 1969.

⁴ See Pierre Chaunu, *Trois millions d’années, quatre-vingts milliards de destins* (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1990), mainly the chapter “Religiosus et Moriturus”, 55–59.

problematization of death – unspeakably and unthinkably – represents the most profound and **radical** challenge possible, mediating it (also) towards the philosophy of history. In other words, it does not only – “simply” or “complicatedly” – become the problem of how these ever more important “past” or “present” dimensions and aspects of death can be undertaken and outlined from a historical philosophical point of view, but also one that goes down to the foundations and origins of the philosophy of history and historiology itself. Together with the fact – and also in spite of it – that this case also offers the possibility of a re-encounter with two very distinct traditions represented by Thomas Hobbes on the one hand, and Martin Heidegger on the other. In his main work, *Leviathan* – as we shall see later on – Hobbes understood and explained the fear of death inseparably connected to self-preservation as a fundamental “dynamizing” factor of human society and history, which had a very decisive role in the birth of events articulating historical processes (e.g. war and peace), institutions (the state, various corporations, the church, etc.), and of law and morality. As well as, also, in their actual, continuous, and continuously changing operation. Similarly, Heidegger writes it down without any further delay in *Being and Time* that: **Authentic Being-towards-death – that is to say, the finitude of temporality – is the hidden basis in Dasein’s historicity.**⁵

Of course, the historiological research of death also raises several essential problems both in subject and methodology. However, there are quite a few other questions that it raises or only “partly” answers. One of these half-raised questions is, as mentioned before, the following: **Why does in fact historiology spend so much effort, especially recently, precisely on the research of the “past things” of death?** That much is clear still, and it is also a subject of discussion, that death is an unavoidable “companion” of human life, and as such, it counts and proves as a “constant” of history.⁶ One that all humans who were ever born, all generations in history, or in fact making up history itself, have always had to face and continue to do so as **their own** death and dying. This implies, also necessarily, that the historical man – and what other kind of man is there? – faced and undertook, or avoided and denied, the various possibilities and problems of meeting death through highly varied and complex social, community and individual formations, constructions, notions, practices and experiences. In conclusion, the investigation of death means a particular challenge for historiology, as well as any other “discipline”. All the more so since such a historiological research is unavoidably articulated in the area of the fundamental awareness that **“...if there existed no death, then probably there would be no society, nor history, nor future or hope...”**⁷ It is clear then – and as

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishing, 1973), 438. (Emphasis added)

⁶ See Mihaela Grancea, *Introducere* (Introduction) In *Reprezentări ale morții în Transilvania secolelor XVI-XX* (Representations of death in Transylvania int he 16th-20th century), ed. Mihaela Grancea (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 2005), 7.

⁷ See Marius Rotar, “Istoriografia românească asupra morții: modele și contra-modele. O lume încă deschisă” (Romanian historiography on death: patterns and counter-patterns. A world still open) In Idem. *Reprezentări ale morții în Transilvania secolelor XVI-XX*, ed. Mihaela Grancea, 20. (Emphasis added)

we have seen, for historiology too! – that the **historical** importance of death points well beyond its “merely” historiographic importance. Since, on the one hand, it is possibly precisely the **historical** meaning and importance of death which, at a deeper insight, lies at the basis of the interest of other disciplines – like anthropology, psychology, medicine, demography, sociology, “thanatology”, social services, etc. – in the subject of death.⁸ On the other hand, however, this meaning and importance actually and **precisely** points also to the direction of the origins and essence of historicity. And these are, probably, somehow – that is, existentially and ontologically – also connected to philosophical matters and cases of history, of the philosophy of history. In such a way that it raises the question whether the matter and case of the philosophy of history is indeed only a surfacing and “problematizing” of circumstances and aspects which would only serve to make more comprehensible and fluent the subjects and methodologies and historiology, or rather that of ... “man” and being itself? In other words: is the philosophy of history not rather an **ontology**?

In spite of this, and with reference to historiology, all this applies “only” to a thematically sharply outlined way of dealing with, and facing, death “as such”, which has its particular, historically articulated practices, institutions and habits. Such as, for example, the customs, ceremonies and institutions connected to dying, burial, or mourning. These are also quite varied and change according to different ages, peoples, communities, cultures, or organizations. As a result, although primarily encouraged by psychologists and psychological anthropology, historians increasingly speak now about the “system of death”, meaning by this the social, cultural, anthropological, mental-imaginary, as well as institutional and symbolic power structures, mechanisms and networks organized in the course of time around the human matters and questions of dying. As a result or connection, as also mentioned before, death also has its relevance of the philosophy of history. Primarily also thematically, that is, as something which articulates historicity, and particularly its **thematically** determined aspects. Even more importantly though, there is another aspect worth tackling for the exploration of the relevance of death for the philosophy of history, one in the sense of which death utterly **lays the foundations** of human history and historicity itself. (That is to say: it lays the foundations not only of “historiology” ... although, at the depth of things, “human” historiology exists for the same reason as “human” history). For, if “laying the foundations” does not only mean for us some kind of a construct or operation – merely epistemological in nature or aspect –, but also the prerequisite of the logical principle of sufficient argumentation, then the foundation of history means none other in fact than saying **why** and whereby **is** there history at all?! And consequently or derivatively, historiology as well. It means therefore the exploration of that on the account of which, **because of** which, and for the **reason** (*ratio*) of which there exists at all such a thing as history.

⁸ This is of course not only valid for the “scholarly” “problematization” of death – that is, one undertaken by sciences – but also for art, religion, folklore, mythology, social and economic life, and of course also philosophy.

However, it is only one side and aspect of this that death – especially historically – pertains to life, to human life. And in such a way that it in fact illuminates life. As such, the historical “research” of death can also be counted as a promising “auxiliary subject” or “auxiliary instrument” of the historical “research” of life. As something that outlines historical life, and its truly – that is, mortally – living actuality. Moreover, in another respect, it should also be discussed that death does not only illuminate the historically articulated human life, so-to-say, “externally” – or more precisely, from its end, from an indefinite and aleatory “retrospective” point of view, as a foreign and external element – but it continuously interweaves and, what is more, grounds it in its most essential aspects. To such an extent that probably history exists precisely because there is mortal human life, that is to say, mortal human being who relates by his life to death, to his **being-like death** and mortality also in a **being-like** and **mode-of-being-like** way. In other words, because there is such a life to which death, its own death lends indeed, in all respects, weight, challenge, pressure – **grip!** – over itself and for itself, and by this a continuous and unavoidable possibility to undertake. So, the – non-human, non-*Dasein*-like – life which is “finite”, and as such, it is always born, disappears, passes away, comes into being, extinguishes, changes and evolves... well, this life actually **does not**, and cannot **have** a history. Just as the “inorganic” regions of being has no history in fact, only in a metaphoric sense. Which of course does not mean that it is not in motion, in change, that it is unrelated with time, or it does not “possess” time, with all the processes and “events”, necessary or incidental, in the sense of their happening and references. These of course are also in touch with human history as challenges, meanings and possibilities, that is, when and if there is a **questionable meaning** or a **question referring to meaning**. So they have a **story**, but **do not have a history**. To such an extent that this story of beings devoid of history only becomes – or can only become! – a **history of being** by history.

In accordance with this reasoning, history exists in fact because there is human death, because there are beings who relate – explicitly or implicitly – to death in and with their being, in and with their mode of being, in a **being-like** way. For whom death, their own death is not a mere givenness, but – by the way they relate to it – is in fact a **possibility**. Moreover, a possibility which, by its own “substantive” happening which is dying – precisely by it but always beyond it – derives and constitutes, as well as also structures, articulates, permeates and colours **all of their other modes and possibilities of being**. In other words, it **opens them up** truly and really, structures them open in, and precisely because of, its finitude. And by this, it also lends to these a well-defined importance, open towards, and from, this finitude, which also leads in fact to the articulation of these modes of being. If the various modes and regions of human existence as well as their birth and changes in time can prove that their very existence, meaning and change is utterly unthinkable and “absurd” without death, or that death plays a direct or indirect role in their coming into being or changes, then it is also proved that death grounds, originates and constitutes history in the above – that is: essential, ontological – sense.

Relating to death (in a human, *Dasein*-like way) is always conditioned (and at the same time constituted) by **freedom**. Any being “devoid” of freedom – namely,

one that does not **relate** to its own death –, although finite, does not die, “only” ceases to exist or gets extinct. So not only is it not free in its termination, neither is it in the “course” of its being. It is not at all so that “there is” freedom but it is “limited”, restricted – and ultimately restricted precisely “by death” –, but on the contrary, precisely because there is human death – that is, there is a being who in the course of his being necessarily relates to death, to his own death – there is also (at the same time) freedom, by it and with it. Therefore the – seemingly controversial – question must be whether death, understood and prevailing as a possibility, has a freedom-structure. Or, the other way round: is it not so that the existential-ontological structure of death is actually and explicitly formed by the structure of freedom understood and prevailing as questioning, or rather as having an actual and explicit existential and ontological **structure of question and questioning**, and **happening** as such? At any rate, death as possibility, and being itself, relating to its death and meaningfully constituted and carried by it “contains” and at the same time constitutes freedom, and conversely, human freedom is made indeed human – that is, serious, delightful and dangerous, all at once – by death, mortality, the mortal nature of being. Just as, also conversely, it is also freedom which turns and shapes death into possibility, that is to say, makes it human! With the clarification that naturally neither death nor freedom are mere “concepts” but much rather “problems”, more precisely questions of being to be explicitly **thematized**. That is to say, factual questions opening onto one another, mobilizing and unfolding in a being-like way. Questions which, of course, have a fundamental importance for the philosophy of history as defined above.

It is now quite clear in fact how restrictive it is to understand the expression “philosophy of history” as covering only “two different kinds of investigations” – “substantive” and analytical –, as done by Arthur C. Danto and his followers of the variably fashionable school of analytical philosophy.⁹ Danto stresses that the substantive philosophy of history is connected in fact to ordinary historical researches, trying to present something that happened in the past... The analytical philosophy of history is an “applied philosophy” for the particular conceptual problems raised partly by the practice of historical research, and partly by the substantive philosophy of history.¹⁰ However, at a deeper insight, it can be noticed at once that in both interpretations the “philosophy of history” unproblematically presupposes that, on the one hand, “there is” history, and on the other hand, “there is” also historiology. And also that the understanding of the relationship of the two lies in the clarification of some – basically and “merely” – “technical” problems of epistemological and conceptual nature. But first of all it presupposes that neither the **being** of history or historiology, nor their **origins** or **roots** form any kind of actual “problem”.

In a strange, even astounding way, the situation is very similar with the approaches of the philosophy or philosophies of history which one might consider quite different from an analytical way of discussion. Karl Löwith in his rather

⁹ See: Arthur C Danto, “Substantive and Analytical Philosophy of History,” In Idem, *Narration and Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Ibid.

lightless book, after stating that the expression “philosophy of history” has become so diluted that slowly any kind of concept of history may unproblematically present or pretend itself to be a “philosophy of history”, gives a historical “definition” of the term according to which the “philosophy of history” expression signifies a **systematic** interpretation of **history** the **principle** of which makes a connection between historical **events** and their **consequences** and refers them to an **ultimate meaning**.¹¹ Clearly, this purportedly very essential and therefore radical approach also starts from the assumption that, firstly, **there is, there exists** a history, secondly, that it consists of events and their consequences, thirdly, that it does so in a way that enables systematic interpretation, and fourthly, one that allows, or perhaps even requires that we **refer** the events and their consequences to some kind of **ultimate** meaning. An ultimate meaning which, in addition, is most times not even a part of “this” history, or rather it is beyond and leads beyond “this” history, even by the idea of “progress”. In this approach, utterly and inevitably, the philosophy of history is always struggling, captured by the patterns of the tradition of, primarily, (Christian or Jewish) theology (salvation history) and, secondly, albeit with few exceptions such as Nietzsche or Greek philosophy (the eternal return of the same). Therefore, irrespective of the fact that Löwith in his above mentioned investigations tries to prove precisely the untenability of such interpretations – namely, that there can be no sort of transcendent insight in history, that is, one leading beyond it, if starting from within history itself – he treats these patterns with a resigned acceptance of the inevitability, or so-to-say “absurdity” of things. As if there is or there can be no other possibility. Or, as if there is, or there can be no other possibility or condition for the philosophy of history to think about which, on the one hand, could go beyond these patterns, and on the other hand could thus also anticipate these. One which, moreover, focuses on and reveals aspects which, although hidden, are also functional or concealed in the patterns discussed above.

Nonetheless, we can still rightfully ask – and do so indeed –, with respect to our intellectual roots, and their direct or twisted filiations towards the history of effect or otherwise: where does any kind of philosophy of history or any investigation, attitude and position about history come from and **why is it the way it is...**? Afterwards, depending on the origins and sources revealed and “identified” this way, we could perhaps also claim that no other kind of approach, different from those discussed above, is “truly” “possible”... Meanwhile, we have to keep in mind still that in the course of all this we are always and ever thinking about, or limit ourselves to, a kind of “beginning” and “end” of history. Even if we think about it in the cosmic dimensions of the Ancient Greeks, as an (eternal) return of one and the same thing.¹² But meanwhile we have not thought at all about Why? – namely,

¹¹ See Karl Löwith, *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen: Die theologischen Voraussetzungen der Geschichtsphilosophie* (Weimar: Metzlersche J.B. Verlagsb, 2004).

¹² Plato’s *Timaeus* most unequivocally illustrates this by the myth, the tale of the “creation” of man by the gods, man’s errand on various regions of Earth (e.g., Atlantis), and his perdition, etc. The return is thus “eternal”, but that what returns – that very same – must start over and over, eternally over and over... And must also come to an end! Or else it (the same) could not return again... So, in order to be able to say that the same piece of pottery may

where and how does history come from?! For it could be the case – as it has been posed before – that history exists precisely because of, or as a result of, something that neither the ancient Greeks nor the theology of the Old Testament or Christianity has given any thought to... Either in an explicit, or in an actual way.

2. Heidegger's phenomenological interpretations of Aristotle

Heidegger's phenomenological interpretations of Aristotle have an outstanding importance from the point of view of the subject discussed in this study. For, although implicitly, these "interpretations" tackle and outline the very possibilities and conditions of thinking and existence – and they do so with a radical philosophical regard to their ontological and hermeneutical-historical situatedness – they are necessary in order to be able to avoid the previously presented patterns of the (philosophical) approach of history, proven to be insufficient, or what is more, a dead end.

In this case, philosophy is not a kind of "theory" which would then grasp something that is outside theory and entangle it in a conceptual-terminological net... nor is it something that differentiates in its origins from other "characteristics", achievements or behaviours of man – let's say, science or "practice" – but, to continue with a quotation, "philosophical research in its very actualization co-temporalizes and thus brings to fruition the temporally particular concrete being of life in itself, and not first by way of some subsequent 'application'"¹³ Of course, in the "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle" – which expose for the first time the basic ideas of *Being and Time* – Heidegger speaks of the *Dasein* as "human", but with the specification that "Factic *Dasein* always is what it is only as its own *Dasein* and never as the general *Dasein* of some universal humanity, whose cultivation would only be an exercise in futility. Critique of history is always only critique of the present."¹⁴ In other words: this is also not about man as "human nature" in a "general sense", a humanity abstract and invariable throughout history, but one which becomes temporal above all as *Dasein*, and being-here, and, moreover, as factic. **As a historical critique of the present!** However, Heidegger's subsequent words must also be added to this: critique cannot naively think that it can hold history responsible for what it should have done if... And this again does probably not mean the triviality which is usually formulated like this: "there is no "If?!" in history, for the past is something that has already happened, was already decided and ended."... Indeed, on the basis of such a public opinion no kind of

break again sometime in the future, that piece of pottery must be made again, it must be created again in the same way... And the breaking of the pot will always mean its end in the same way. But since such a beginning and such an end can never coincide in the eternal – or actually not eternal, only permanent – return of the same thing, this return cannot possibly ignore, nor eliminate these.

¹³ Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation," In *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings 1910–1927*, ed. Theodore J. Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 158.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

historical critique is possible. All this is about the fact that critique “... must focus on the **present** and see to it that it asks questions in a manner which is in accord with the originality within its own reach.”¹⁵ That is to say, historical orientation itself, actually and primarily, derives from an orientation to the **present** – that is, a living one! – but without its being exhausted in the present. On the contrary: in a more fundamental aspect and sense, in the present history is always “present”, it is **here** – firstly as past and tradition, but also as future – as something problematic and questionable. “Here” as well as “there”. As something, that is, which we cannot just simply accept and take over, nor just continue... and therefore we must always, “inevitably”, also negate it! But: “History is negated not because it is ‘false’ but because it still remains effective in the present and nevertheless can never become a properly appropriated present.”¹⁶ To put it differently: on the one hand, history as past always articulates the present and interferes with it, while, on the other hand, this always happens in such a way that it can never offer sufficient, readymade and thematic answers to questions comprising problems, restrictions and anxieties that we (living) humans face in a determined and particular way in the constraints and possibilities of our all-time present. History and tradition appearing as the past is on the one hand inevitable, and on the other hand it is always an “object” of – appropriated – critique. However, this is not some kind of methodological rule or etiquette of general validity but: “The fixing of the basic historical bearing of interpretation grows out of the explication of the sense of philosophical research.”¹⁷ The “sense” of philosophical research and the focussed horizon of this sense means, outlines and inquires primarily whether its “object” is the factic human *Dasein* as such, or whether philosophical research itself is a definite mode of factic life, and as such, by its own occurrence it renders simultaneous within itself, and not merely a subsequent “application”, the all-time concrete being of life.

Now: the expression “factic human *Dasein*” signifies first of all a kind of liveliness, or even **liveliness** itself. That is why, in connection with the “factic human *Dasein*” Heidegger speaks directly about “factic human **life**”. Because, no matter how manifold the meaning of the term “life”, it refers first of all to **liveliness**. However, from the point of view of the understanding of life and the liveliness of life the issue of **death** has an outstanding importance. In the first place, because death “threatens” precisely life and its liveliness as such, and, what is more, in an **unavoidable** way. Death is thus not simply or “formally” “beyond” life, but it is directly the **how** of life: the factic human *Dasein*, the factic human life exists factically **always** and **ever** in such a way that it (will) die, that is, it is mortal. This way, for a factic human life death is never merely a simple event or “process” of the termination of human life, but – although undeniably together with it – death is much rather something *towards* which life factically approaches, and *before* which life stands as *before* something inevitable. For this reason life cannot actually be grasped without the explicit thematization of death, saying that since death is the “opposite” of life, it does not belong to life, resulting that the grasping of life “in

¹⁵ Ibid. (Emphasis added)

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 158.

itself” could be done without death. In contrast, Heidegger emphasizes that the problem of the possession of death must be treated by the investigation of the objectual and existential character of factic life as having a **problem-guiding** importance. Therefore the theme of death has indeed an outstanding ontological, phenomenological and hermeneutical – and consequently: **historical** – importance for the thematization of life, of factic human *Dasein*. This importance however is not built upon externally understood considerations or expectations – usually called “methodological” or “theoretical” – but it has itself an altogether ontological and existential-historical nature. In which, however, it is primarily the “inevitable”, “certain” character of death which must be set down, interpreted and undertaken. For the fear of thinking, of undertaking the matters (*Sache*) of thinking, their avoidance and escape is nothing else in fact than “life’s avoidance of itself”.

“Inevitable” and “certain” death stands therefore before life, before the living, that is, **before ourselves!** This also means that factic life, factically too, always **approaches death** in some way. So, **death exists in the same way as life does, with death standing in front of it as something that it approaches with certainty and stubborn inevitability!** Evidently, this way death becomes the how of life, if in no other way than as some kind of “how” of the possession of death. Therefore death, without losing anything of its certainty and inevitability, does not mean in fact any kind of loss of perspective, a mere passage or a simple or formal termination of life, but, on the contrary, it can directly “give vision to life”. And in such a way that, as something that stands before or is at hand, only death can lead life to its most actual and particular present and past. For the factic human *Dasein* and its understanding or interpretation the “approach to death” is not merely a kind of “natural process”, with its time-direction “characterized” by the unstoppable growth of the past at the expense of the future, but on the contrary, it is rather the unavoidable and certain – constitutive – futurity of death which, as the “how” of life, constitutes the temporality – that is: historicity – of factic life. For, with its future standing-before, death makes visible for factic human *Dasein* both its present and past.

Heidegger offers and outlines thus an equally ontological, existential, phenomenological and hermeneutical – and therefore essentially historical – analysis of death. And what is more, precisely as something that is fixed and outlined as an aspect which **guides problem management**. So the issue here is not merely how people “processed” in time their own mortality and death as “conscious knowledge” or “ideas”, and this is also not **relevant** in fact; the issue is that the mere understanding of these historical-anthropological aspects, knowledge and ideas is only possible by the historical and actual, but nevertheless essentially ontological exhibition and explicitation of the existential phenomenon of death. For people most times “consciously” avoid the actual possession of death... But of course they are still not able to avoid or escape, nor transgress death, and thus it remains, in spite of all, an existential-historical constituent that ontologically articulates their factic *Dasein*. For this reason Heidegger has to unambiguously settle the matter that: “The purely constitutive ontological problematic of the character of the being of death which is described here has nothing to do with a **metaphysics of immortality and a**

metaphysics of the 'What next?' or 'What comes after death?'¹⁸ For both of these – the metaphysics of immortality and the metaphysical inquiry about the “events” after death – are nothing else in fact than attempts for “escape”. What is more, the idea of immortality and the metaphysics of the inquiry about the “something” after death makes nothing less in fact than being an **unredeemable failure**¹⁹ regarding the actual object or matter of philosophical research! Additionally, Heidegger also says: “The basic sense of *historical* is defined in terms of this *temporality*...”²⁰ This means that the fundamental meaning of the historical is defined on the basis of none other than that what stands before us – namely, precisely death! –, moreover, from its factic **possession**, that is, rendered **simultaneous** by its present problematic character... and not on the basis of some kind of “historical past” grasped and recorded by “historiographical notions”. Simply, man is not “historical” because it has a “historical past”, which is then revealed by a very much historical “historiology”, but because he his temporal in such a way that in his being and through his being, and in a constitutive way, he always renders his future, present and past factically as **temporally simultaneous** as **here**, always actually and “spatially” articulated. That is, first of all, in fact by the having/possession of death. So the basic human ambition for the **persistence** of human endeavours and actions, as well as the desires and thoughts of immortality are born precisely from the nature of the awareness of death, and the problematic character of immortality. Whoever does not think that he will die – that is, whoever has **indeed** no doubts that despite his “death” he will somehow not die still – would not and could not in fact build pyramids, mausoleums, scientific truths, works of art, technical innovations or institutions for endurance. Therefore the philosophy which explicitly and decidedly concentrates on this issue cannot remain some kind of fine yet indifferent “theory”, but only a dedicated research happening in the form of questioning search which, unambiguously and clearly, “has decided radically and clearly on its own (without distractions of any busywork with worldviews) to make factic life speak for itself on the basis of its very own factic possibilities; i.e. if philosophy is fundamentally atheistic and understands this about itself – then it has decisively chosen factic life in its facticity and has made this facticity into its very own comprehensive object and subject matter.”²¹

Nevertheless, Heidegger marks the entanglement of the decisive forces with effect on the existential character of the “present” situation as “in short the **Greek-Christian interpretation of life**”.²² The most important thing about it is not to

¹⁸ Ibid., 163 (Emphasis added)

¹⁹ Ibid. (Emphasis added)

²⁰ Ibid. (Emphasis added)

²¹ Ibid., 165. It is no secret of course that such formulations of Heidegger made many enemies of his thinking. Perhaps for this reason even the so-called followers of Heidegger think that somehow the radicality of such formulations should be attenuated. This is probably the explanation for the fact that, when H-G. Gadamer published the discovered texts of the *Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle*, he added the explanation, as if a subtitle, “Heidegger’s early ‘theological’ writing”, although there are hardly any analyzed or explained theological references in the text, and the few that there are, are rather critical.

²² Ibid., 168.

reveal the various currents and their interdependence either in the sense of literary affiliations or as “images”, but to emphasize the central ontological, logical and historical structures by an authentic treatment of the sources. However, this is only possible from the direction of the “facticity problem”, which primarily means again that we must proceed “**from the present going back** to the past”. But Heidegger marked this “Greek-Christian interpretation of life” in such a basic sense as a constitutive force having effect on the existential character of the **present** situation with the inclusion of anti-Greek and anti-Christian tendencies as well. For, as he says, **this** is what defines them also... Clearly, we cannot deal here with aspects such as those of the history of philosophy, theology or especially anthropology. It must be noted nonetheless that Heidegger calls for this historical retrospection and “search for origin” from the “central foundation of facticity”. Whereas the radical range of this foundation is best illustrated by the fact that – at a deeper thought – this Greek-Christian interpretation and tradition of life, and the history that it outlines, **lacks** precisely the certainty of the possession of death, and particularly its constitutive-factic-historical projection on existence! Both in the Greek-Christian teaching of the immortality of the soul and the early Christian awaiting of the Apocalypse affecting “humanity” as such, etc. However, this is indeed an essential and fundamental aspect for Heidegger...

As a kind of closure for the commentaries and notes on the *Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle*, it should also be mentioned that, although Heidegger pointed out that the present, the current age is determined by “standing in the Greek-Christian interpretation of being”, these interpretations – from the perspective of the facticity problem – do not deal at all with the Christian interpretation of being... A few lines in the mostly only enumerative discussion – and also one that leads back to Aristotelian origins on the paths of destruction – of the major crossing points of historical theological-philosophical affiliations are the only hints to the fact that these multiplied connections and transfers would go back to the early Christian religious life experience. However, the hermeneutical and phenomenological tackling of the latter, with special regard – as I have said – to the facticity problem, as well as to its historical critique previously stated as compulsory, is in fact completely absent and only signalled as a task. And, what is more, without raising, for instance, the problem of the particular historical difficulties of this task. It is understandable therefore that Heidegger himself – in contrast with many of his commentators – ventures into no detailed speculations on this field...²³ However, it is clear still that

²³ As regards the question – historically and existentially highly problematic and diversified – of the “unique” “authenticity” of the time-experience characteristic for early Christianity, it should be taken into account that although it had indeed formed in the spirit of the “future” of the awaiting of the Apocalypse at hand... it does not mean still – for the same reason! – anything else or more than the removal from time (itself) – expected then to happen in the near future – to an eternal, death-less life. The “time-experience” of early Christianity is therefore nothing else in essence than precisely the “time-experience” of the awaiting of **removal from time**, and as such, it has little to do with the existential, factic and actual “possession of death” as well. Of which, by the way, Heidegger speaks very unambiguously.

Christian theology described as moving away from the religious life experience of early Christianity and the philosophy influenced by this Christian theology speak about their particular domains and experiences of being in a language of categories which are not only “borrowed” but completely different – not to say alien – from these domains and experiences precisely because they employ the conceptual instruments of the Greek, and primarily Aristotelian experiences regarded as summarizing for tackling their own experiences. No matter how much this language became widespread and dominant in the course of time and transfers – interpretations, selections and misinterpretations. At any rate, the radical interpretation and preservation of the factually authentic experiential possibilities of present generation(s) presupposes the radical re-thinking of language, the language of categories, with regard their **original** meaning. However, its source and orientation as well must be again the problematic and tensed intimacy of facticity in order for philosophy to be able to recognize itself anew and its present possibilities, as well as its own history, as a particular way of factic life. For factic life is from the beginning a life in the world, which is historical and therefore understands itself in a historical way. So philosophy must also “go together with life” (*Mittgehen mit dem Leben*). Philosophy is of course primarily a “historical” cognition in the sense of its destructively confronting its own history.

However, such a “confrontation” must sooner or later also reveal that – as pointed out before – this (“private”) history utterly **lacks** precisely the **certainty of the possession of death, decisive and dominant with regard to the handling of the problem itself!** In parallel with the insight into this problem, it is inevitable to admit that this way, in this facticity, such a history is **constituted and happens in fact** in a way in which (at least one of) the basic “functions” of the so-called culture, “with respect to the ‘handling’ of the problem of death”, **has always been and continues to be** exactly the **avoidance and negation** of death as actual **dying**. Heidegger might be right (also) about this to emphasize as a decisive aspect with respect to the existential character of the **present** situation that it “stands” in the **history of being** outlined and articulated in and by the “Greek-Christian” interpretation of being. In such a history of being that negates and takes pains – or struggles – to deny and relegate the acceptance of precisely that something which it should thank for its very existence, the particularities of its existence and its most characteristic modes of being – science, art, technology, religion, morals, law and institutions, communities, individuals etc. – as well as the multicoloured formations of their historical unfolding! However, the denial of death as dying, and this kind of escape and turning away from death does not “eliminate” history... as neither does it eliminate the fact that, in spite of this, it essentially derives from human death. On the contrary, it gives a particular articulation for this history as well as the history of being unfolding by it. With respect to its possibilities and the limits of these.

On the contrary! On this account the Christian church only defined the nature of the relations that the living had to maintain with the dead in the 4th-5th century, namely in Saint Augustine’s treatise entitled *De cura pro mortuis gerenda*, written around 421–422, see Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l’Occident Médiéval* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

Undoubtedly again, the *Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle* firstly reveal and validate the aspect that “historical” orientation derives in fact from an (always questionable and “problematic”) orientation to the present; secondly, they grasp and outline it as a thematic, present-day – but always temporally simultaneous – explicitation; and thirdly, they place all this in the historical horizons of a Greek-Christian – or more correctly originally Greek and then gradually, yet not unproblematically Christian – life interpretation effective until today. By these three aspects, the *Phenomenological Interpretations* – in their own words – also “over-enlighten” these, and thus they, even if not directly acquire, make possible nonetheless such a fundamental and radical insight and acceptance regarding history with the help of which then the seemingly inevitable stereotypes of the “philosophy of history” that K. Löwith spoke about may become transcendable indeed, existentially and ontologically alike. For Heidegger’s actual – temporally simultaneous – focal point²⁴ targeting the present is, on the one hand, the unfolding of the facticity problem, and on the other hand, the explicit thematization of death. From the point of view of their interdependence however, all these actually always prove to be the different faces of one and the same circle of questions and inquiry. This way thus it is indeed the constitutive **future** of death (related to the **present**) which shifts the present in the horizons of its own possibilities in the – also temporally simultaneous – directions of the critique of a history understood as **past**.

It can be repeated therefore, now on the basis of different insights and considerations, that history “simply” and actually exists because there are, there exist living mortal beings who relate to their own mortality in a factic, being-like way. Whose entire “characteristic” and particular modes of being are not only “surrounded”, pervaded, impregnated and intertwined, but also directly constituted and – albeit mostly covertly – structured and articulated by this explicitly thematic, although often non-thematic relation. Now, the ancient Greek, Jewish and Christian culture hardly thematizes explicitly, and, what is more, directly negates and denies death **as dying**.²⁵ While, “of course”, this “creates”, produces, “operates”, and

²⁴ This of course has nothing to do with any kind of “presentism”, that is, **one** of the “regimes” of historicity in which the present, or rather the aspects of the currently “actual” things historically reign over other dimensions or ecstasies of time, and in relation to which other types of “regimes” of temporality or historicity can also be imagined to develop or operate. On the contrary, the case is precisely that **any** “regime” of historicity is only possible on the basis of a constitutive temporal simultaneity with temporality as such, and only as different modes of it.

²⁵ For a direct and objective orientation, some aspects are worth being repeated. Psychologists, anthropologists etc. experience and understand the **denial** of death as a kind of “basic human necessity”, as a defence against the oppressiveness of – especially the salience of – death and the anxiety it causes, as something by which people try to handle, “manage” the terror of the threat of death. That is to say, the terror of that which they face by their experiences, and not just in a “general” sense, but with precise reference to themselves. This may then trigger and keep up several – immediately or distantly effective – defence

makes always actually “possible” precisely such a kind of history, constituted and organized by a turning-away and denying type of “possession of death” and relation to death. One which, ever since these beginnings, increasingly becomes its own “fate”, gazing at its end, and decisively outlined by its concern with its end. This is what determines in fact the relation of “death” and “history”, as well as how all this has a relevance for the philosophy of history, of course not only in a thematic respect. Since this results in a different kind of insight, in addition to, and beyond the currently fashionable problematic and problem management, into what the primary or actual interest of the philosophy of history is and how it is shaped. For it ever more clearly outlines that the posing of the explicit question of death with regard to the present, as well as the historical research and meditation deriving from it while bringing the future into play does not, and cannot mean only to discover or observe current methods or ideas about death and then, in contrast with investigations of the *ubi sunt?* type, we complete the so-called “critique” of the past starting from, and on the basis of, these. On the contrary, it can only mean that we explicitly bring into action those questions which, albeit related to the experiences of the present and cannot be imagined without these, are nevertheless **not asked** by the present throughout its experiences! Still, these are precisely the kinds of questions which can ensure actual historical orientation only if they are explicitly asked.

However, this “historical orientation” only partly means the discussion of past aspects about the subject. Rather, it is something by which the present may also gain its real historical dimension. For it is revealed that human death is probably primarily about the constitution of history and historicity, and not about the things we might find out from evidence and interpretations on how people used to die or

mechanisms. One of the most important such defence mechanisms denying death is the primordial faith and thought, or rather idea of **immortality**, which, in the meantime, always faces actual, factic death, dying... This is how death becomes something which, while being a loss of life, is not dying... and dying becomes something which now terrorizes and horrifies indeed as something impossible to be understood, “handled” or “managed”. Therefore it must be denied over and over, again and again, as a cultural etc. heritage from generation to generation! Except that it is not only death which loses its weight in a denied death, but life itself as well. For life becomes something the loss of which – with Kierkegaard’s unambiguous words – is not deadly! Or, as Nietzsche said in a different respect: man has lost in his life much more important things than his life... Of course, the indeed much more “uncomfortable” question must also be occasionally inevitably asked whether **facing** death is not just as an existential-ontological-historical “basic necessity” and basic interest of man than its denial? A basic necessity which is always – historically! – oppressed and overwhelmed by the historical denial of death which specifically articulates even history itself?! This eminently philosophical problem must be raised and maintained despite the fact that, so it seems, the “denial of death” has already triggered dynamic and extensive – anthropological, psychological, sociological, historical, etc. – research also thematically, initiated and fertilized ever since by Ernest Becker’s – suspiciously successful – book from 1973, *The Denial of Death*. See also: Daniel Liechty, “Reaction to mortality: an interdisciplinary organizing principle for the human sciences,” *Zygon* 1 (1998): 45–58; Camilla Zimmermann and Gary Rodin, “The denial of death thesis: sociological critique and implications for palliative care,” *Palliative Medicine* 18 (2004): 121–128; Joseph Bottum, “Death & Politics,” *First Things* June/July (2007): 17–29.

think, relate or behave about death – perhaps even in a way not uninteresting for the future. Nevertheless, and seemingly above all this, “historicality” marks first how man exists in time, and second, how he treats time meanwhile. This has lately been expressed by the formulation of François Hartog, the “regimes of historicality”, which was originally understood in two ways only. In a somewhat restrictive sense it asked how society treats its past and what it “says” about it. In a wider sense however the term was meant to designate the “modes of the consciousness of human community”.²⁶ Later, it was also associated with the difficult task for the term to describe the various modes of being in time.²⁷ Therefore the “regime of historicality” is clarified on the one hand by the expression “time regime”, which is very important, on the other hand, because historians as a rule do **not** think about time. Because they tend to consider it “unambiguous/implicit”. And amidst this “lack of ambiguity” outlines also the possibility and probability that this omnipresent present may begin at once to look most unambiguous. This is primarily what Hartog calls “presentism”. However, Hartog also rather only assumes that time **exists!** and also that history **exists!** and urges to examine – no, not how they are possible, but – how they are articulated or interconnected “meanwhile”. Moreover, it urges to explore how, also “meanwhile”, these connections – coloured at the beginning and end by the “crises of time” – outline the older regimes of historicality, or the ever newer ones just separating from these.

These issues have to be raised here in order to clarify that the problematic of “death and history” also inquires wherefrom and how time comes – namely that which, as admitted by Hartog, historians do not usually think about –, and (also) wherefrom and how history **comes to being** through this at the same time. For it could well be that time and history actually come to being and step into being “from the same place”... This of course does by far not mean that historicality and the related “temporality” has no, or could have no “regimes”. However, the question is whether a **different kind** of historical research, “historical orientation” – as we have called it above in relation to Heidegger – regarding so-called “presentism” is possible and meaningful at all? And if it is, then in what way? Is it not perhaps the case that – although in an implicit, unexpressed and unacknowledged way, but – with regard to its original or actual intentionality, all such kind of historical investigation derives in fact from the **present questionableness** and problematicness of the subject of this research? Even if the thematic ramifications of actual historical research – like in most of the “concrete” cases – always direct, in relation with their own needs, also on a disciplinary level, by their particular transmission (as well), the continuously redefined intentions unfolding towards the past of the present research. We are not speaking therefore about any kind of “stance” of the present, from where we humbly or complacently, yet decidedly investigate our past, burdened with all kinds of methodological problems and at the expense of various ordeals and efforts. Much rather, it is the **question-points** of the present (pertaining and supporting, as well as deriving from the future) which direct

²⁶ See François Hartog, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expérience du temps* <http://osp.revues.org/index752.html>, accessed 24. 01.2012.

²⁷ Ibid.

such investigations, as well as the questions which move them, to the landscape of an always historically articulated past, actually – that is: in *actus* – corresponding to these.

In spite of, or together with this, there is still general consent about the fact that historiology investigates and researches nothing else but the Past. In addition, there is also general consent about the fact that “historicality” is not merely a “particularity” or “characteristic” of the past, but of the present and future as well. Notwithstanding all this, the terms “present” and “future” from the perspective of historiological research should not be understood as “dimensions of time” which characterize, accompany, and constitute “all” events, processes, changes, etc., but much rather as entities which are **not** “subjects” and themes of historiology. But which are nevertheless somehow entitled to the attribute of “historicality”. But how, on what grounds can the present and future be entitled to the attribute of “historicality” when the science of history – and every kind of historical interest of its inspiration (histories of philosophy, literature, science, etc.) – “only” and exclusively research the **past**?

It is clear therefore that this question dwells in fact on the privilege that historiology enjoyed in exhibiting and articulating historicality. Not meaning, however, that this questioning could only be listed as a kind of “epistemological” problem of historiology. Since, indeed, in the cognition of historicality itself, the past somehow still seems to be a **privileged** dimension (of time). Because “within that”, at least in theory, we may see the events in their – actual, alleged or apparent – finiteness. That is, precisely in that privileged – or seemingly privileged – sense in which these events perhaps no longer happen... for they have “passed”! In the dimension, the ecstasy of the past, therefore – at least seemingly – the events or happenings can be seen and analyzed together with their preliminaries, their course, and above all this, also with most of their consequences. In contrast, for instance, with the problems of the present which have their “preliminaries” as well, and they are happening just now, and will also probably have their consequences, but these – especially the latter ones – cannot or can hardly be seen as explicit or articulated. Because they **do not exist as yet**.²⁸ Well, it is surely this actual, or “real” situatedness which creates the circumstance or the appearance that the privileged place and dimension of the insight in, and tracing of historicality is indeed the past and the science which investigates it – namely, historiology.

Nevertheless, led by these appearances, we tend to forget that all the dimensions or ecstasies of historicality that offer us insights into the past during its (historiological) investigation are actually and essentially nothing else but only and exclusively **appearances**. Since everything that we come across this way in relation with temporality and the adjoining historicality is actually only HAD-BEEN-NESS. That is to say, the past is in the past, the present is in the past, and the future is also actually only in the past... So, in a strict sense, all these cannot be actual either,

²⁸ More details about this “not-yet-being” and the temporal and historical fabric of its ontology in: István Király V., “The Future, Or Questioningly Dwells the Mortal Man – Question-Points to Time,” *Philobiblon – Journal of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library Cluj XV* (2010): 92–118.

since they cannot be presents which are actually present and here, nor futures which are actually about to come. So there can be no PAST either! In addition to this, the particular situation about the past always is that it – when it was present – never was **our** present, but as a past it nevertheless and necessarily somehow “turns into” our past. This means of course that in order to indeed gain insight into, or read something like “historicality” or its articulation from the research of past things... well, for this we should also **previously** possess an essential insight referring to, and at the same time also questioning temporality and, in connection with it, historicality. Without which we would probably not investigate the “past” at all. However, this preliminary insight is precisely historical to the highest possible degree! And as such, on the one hand it also takes part in the shaping of history, and on the other hand, it is constantly changing, that is, it is always different. Therefore one must also go “behind” it in a philosophy of history perspective, for it should also be found out where it actually comes from or derives.

However, if it can be proved that **time**, the actual, that is, **finite** time as well as “all” our factic and being-like “relations” to it, to the past, the present, and the future, **derive** in fact, ontologically and existentially, from human death, which is human mortality in all its aspects, then it can also be essentially proved that history and historicality also derive and originate from the same thing, namely from death, from the mortally living, continuous **being-like** relation, **constitutive of being**, to our own death, our mortality, a relation not only of continuity but also of repeated unavoidable emergence with particular reference to every single generation! Quite regardless therefore of the aspects or questions – or rather: anticipating these at least in regard to essentiality – of what the “building stone” of history is, or what counts as the “essence” of “historiology” from the point of view of historiological – or intellectual history (*Geistgeschichte*) – scholarship, or from that of different philosophies of history connected to these in various ways. Perhaps the actions of great historical personalities, the anonymous actions of the masses, or rather the event (Hayden White), the change (Arthur C. Danto), large timeframes (Fernand Braudel), the narrative (Paul Ricoeur), or the various structure of the different discourses making up the narratives, etc. Or perhaps the fact whether or not history has its general laws (Aristotle, Schopenhauer, Hempel), or whether or not there is “universal history”, or what/who the “subject of history” is (Hegel, Georg Lukács), etc. ... Quite the opposite, it is not at all incidental that the great historians and philosophers of history of the 19th century (Michelet, Droysen, Ranke, Dilthey, etc.) emphasized, unanimously in fact, as Droysen formulated it, that history is the shaping of human things and that these belong to the scope of historical research precisely because human things are historical.

But what do “human things” mean and how is this connected to the fact that these “things” are – as if from the outset – “historical”? But what else can it mean that some things are “human things” if not that these are the matters and things of a being living in time as a mortal being? And indeed, “matters” and “things” whose beings as “matters” and “things”, primarily and directly, are particularized and emphasized by their – being- and mode of being-like – pertinence to this being. As a permanently reborn and outlined challenge, givenness, possibility or task. For what else does it mean to be a “mortal” than to be and live finitely, in need and

satisfaction, in challenge or threat, or in possibilities? The case is therefore that “human things” – and by this, the ontological identity of man, and consequently also man’s so-called “specificity of being” – is particularly rooted in, originating from, and focussed by mortality, that is, human finiteness. Therefore this aspect and the possession of this aspect, a possession attained and accomplished over and again, should/must guide the handling of the problem itself.

3. Leviathan and the “human things”

“Human things” are finite. And they are finite in a human way. That is to say, they are “imperfect” because they are mortal. And thus: alive! As such, they “belong to nature” on the one hand, while on the other, so it happens, they also have their own particular “nature”. One that differs and is beyond their “physical” nature. This is what thinkers – and not only them – have called “human nature” for so long. No matter how “human” it is, “human nature” is also nature. And as such, it is moving, dynamic.

In Thomas Hobbes’s view the dynamics of physical nature is the dynamics of moving matter. Then the dynamics of human nature is precisely the movement which may rightly be called **history**. At its basics, this history begins with the “natural state” of man, this is from where it begins and comes into being, and this is also to which it always relates and is compared. Precisely through “human nature” and its constituents. Which are “comprised” of human needs and the desires and wishes unquenchably and increasingly connected to them. While “happiness” is nothing else than the permanent and repeated or expected satisfaction of these desires and wishes. To give up the efforts and competition for this therefore actually **means to die**. However this also ensures two things, two directions for insight. First, that the man who stops his efforts or endeavours to satisfy his needs and desires will die – that is, death directly awaits and threatens him because of this – and second, that a dead man will no longer have such needs or desires urging him for actual dynamics. Again by his nature, man is also characterized by the ability to speak. The ability, that is, to form signs first, then language in relation to his experiences. With help of which he will then always currently interpret (present) his experiences or desires (future), sharing them with others and referring them to others, and also always recalling (past) his memories about them. Man therefore, with its own human nature, belongs to nature while raising above it in such a way that it steps **into being** as a central and essential shaper – yet of course not necessarily omnipotent lord – of its own universe, conditioned by his own nature. That is: he builds! He builds, shapes the possibilities and conditions of his being, his life connected to the always timely and dynamic necessities outlined in the shadow and impulses of the manifold and pluridirectional perspectives and threats of death. The threat of death is therefore a task and circumstance which is always present and but should always be fended off. And which, therefore, must always take place most organically and intimately in the motivation, drawing-up and articulation of the temporal existence and actions of man. As well as, of course, also for their actual and “practical” interpretation. No matter how problematic Hobbes’s idea of the non-natural conditions of man and the ensuing new political, legal or moral society may be historically – or rather from the point of view of historiological confirmation –, he

still offered a completely new perspective of the philosophy of history with his insights. A perspective in which the fundamental question is by far not merely “How events and actions have occurred?” but much rather why and wherefrom history is, what it is, where it comes from and how it actually works?!

It is only possible in fact on the basis of such an inquiry to discuss, say, the issues of political institutions, etc., that is, the “human things” pertaining to these. For the establishment and permanent operation of even the state and all the connected political and legal bodies is dependent on the life of people and communities – mainly and ultimately articulated by the threat of death and its various possibilities – and the quality and well-being inseparably linked to them. And the opposite is also true! That is to say, the preservation of human life, also against the constant possible threat of death inseparable from human life – including its possible well-being as well – precisely to this end and reason, as human creation, is only possible by and with the help of the state founded on contractual and agreement grounds and a political, legal etc. body. First and foremost then, this is precisely what must be admitted and accepted about these formations, together with their historical, social, political, legal, or organizational changes in time. Consequently: this is also the same thing that the various sciences and the always problematically connected philosophies of them – social philosophy, philosophy of history, political philosophy, moral philosophy etc. – should admit and accept in the first place.

It is no accident therefore that Hobbes’s Leviathan, as shown also in the subtitle, treats indeed the **matter** that lies at the basis of the form and power of the ecclesiastical and secular state.²⁹ And this matter is nothing else than **the man!** Of course, not in the sense in which it appears as a “subject” or “problem” of some kind of “anthropology”, but essentially. More precisely, as an utterly **particular being** in its own **being** and in the – deeply historical – unfolding and pursuit of this being. Therefore this is in fact what this entire study deals with from beginning to end. To such an extent that it handles even the state and all organs and organizations connected to it as an “artificial man” created – of course, particularly through human art – in an artificial way. The matter, as well as the creator of which is man himself.³⁰ Hobbes clearly states therefore that “...I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power, **that ceaseth only in death.**”³¹ This ambition is general and unstopably continuous because man “...cannot assure the power and means to live well, whitch he hath present, **without the aquisitions of more.**”³² However, in their lives conducted through and amidst these ambitions, **the fear from death and being hurt** necessarily makes people first create public authority and then obedience to it.³³

²⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3.

³⁰ “...I will consider First, the *matter*, thereof, and the *artificier*; both witch is *Man.*” Ibid., 7.

³¹ Ibid., 66. (Emphasis added)

³² Ibid. (Emphasis added)

³³ Ibid. (Emphasis added)

Death is therefore, on the one hand, an explicit **end**. In that very definite sense that this is exclusively what is able to end the ever newer longing for power, necessary for well-being. That is to say, death is specifically the end of life. On the other hand, however – precisely because of its nature as end, as that what ends life – death is also something which is fearsome for the living being, it triggers fear. But the constitutive fear of death for Hobbes is **not** merely a kind of **paralyzing** “feeling” or an overwhelming “condition”, but this is precisely what **organizes** and articulates the will – although prevailing amidst the longing for power, but creating public authority nevertheless – as well as the respect and obedience towards it. Which, therefore, has a decisive role and task in the further support and articulation of a life evolving amidst the – necessarily also “permanent and ceaseless” – fear of death. For public authority and the *sui generis* meanings of public authority outline and defend something – namely, human life itself – the loss of which cannot be compensated by anything.³⁴ So, given that the human ways of self-preservation are connected to desires and ambitions, and under circumstances that all humans are actually equal in their essential aspects, they also inevitably pursue things that they **cannot** simultaneously enjoy. As a result, people will compete in their pursuits, therefore they will also collide since they can only actually satisfy their needs with the destruction or oppression of others. This of course also mutually threatens their security – and primarily the security of their lives. It is in fact everyone’s **war** against everyone, which lasts, unrestrainedly and hazardously for species and genus, as long as there is no public authority. But war is most characteristically “continual fear, and **danger of violent death**.”³⁵ Death is therefore undoubtedly finitude. Man’s – so to speak – natural end, that is, the end which naturally pertains to man. The end which can indeed be “lived through” is the time that nature usually allows us.³⁶ In this sense (as well) it is only death that can end the also human ambitions of gaining power. However, this end does not only “margin” threateningly human existence from the outside, at its edge, as a physical or natural feature, but death also becomes a real “inside” of human life – precisely by the actions of people. Like, for instance, the violent causing of death, violent threat of death in times of war. Which is, as we have seen, surrounded by constant fear. But death and the fear of death becomes an inner organizing force of the life-long articulation and pursuit of a **meaningful** human life and public life not only in this sense or direction, but, on the contrary, as a source of human feelings and ambitions specifically inviting for peace.³⁷ To such an extent that everything that Hobbes directly and unhesitatingly calls “natural law” revolves around and connects in fact in its entirety to the above aspects and focuses of death. For he writes: “A LAW OF NATURE (*lex naturalis*) is a percept, or general rule found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the

³⁴ Ibid., 67.

³⁵ Ibid., 84. (Emphasis added.)

³⁶ Ibid., 159.

³⁷ “The passions that incline men to peace, are **fear of death**, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them.” Ibid., 86. (Emphasis added)

same; and to omit, that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved.”³⁸ The “law of nature” described like this is connected therefore in its entirety, in all its aspects, and essentially with human life and being, living indeed because defined, interwoven and threatened by death. Just like everything else which derives from it as a consequence or conclusion. It is connected to a life which is – also essentially – outlined by its inseparable relationship and connection with death. Including primarily the kind of relation recognized by reason precisely as “law of nature”, and from which, as a prescription or general rule, it validates the “laws of nature”. Or rather: directly **establishes!** With all the established and validated consequences – like contracts, but also wars and peace, etc. – of these laws.

Therefore the case is not at all only about the fact that these rules and laws prescribed by reason and all the institutions connected to them, their creation and development are simply unthinkable without death, but, above all this, also about the fact that their entire being, the entire structure of their articulation and the entire changing and unfolding, reformulating meaning and operation of this structure and texture is always ultimately created, articulated, guided, pervaded and encompassed by the fact of death and its particularly human threat, directed towards, and pertaining to, human life – that is, man’s explicit and being-like, **living pertinence and relation** to this actuality, perspective and threat. So in the projection and creation of the state and its institutions, man “...is the foresight of their own preservation, and of more contented life thereby...”³⁹ And it has been clearly seen above what the provision for “self-preservation” and the “undisturbed unfolding” of human life means... Namely, that all this is indeed connected in its origins and meanings and the perspectives of its meanings to death and its – not merely denying or “negative” – threats, factually articulating life and particularly pertaining to life as its end! For which reason the public authority (state) is called “the great Leviathan”, that is, a “Mortal God” “**being born**”!⁴⁰ This, the – mortal! – public authority thus born has various forms and branches sprouting from the same ground. Forms and branches which – stimulated by determinations and motivations also grown out from and reconnected to the same ground – constantly modify or change. These forms, their diversity, changes and possibilities are treated then in works of **history** and political science.⁴¹

Consequently, Thomas Hobbes’s significance and uniqueness in the philosophy of history is primarily due to the fact that not only does he not deny death, but he analyzes and presents it as an aspect and factor which determines history in all its decisive aspects and in an original sense – that is, as something which originates and articulates historicity –, and at the same time as being a **constitutive** part of human life. In contrast, for instance, with later, 19th-20th century philosophies of history, which are mostly explicitly joined with the horizons of

³⁸ Ibid., 86.

³⁹ Ibid., 111.

⁴⁰ Which is articulated in its entirety, regarding its origin, essence, operation and formation in a way determined by the – correct or wrong – insights and actions of mortal beings, although “under the supremacy of an immortal god”. See Ibid., 114.

⁴¹ Ibid., 123.

historiology in preparation and usually problematic. And in which – beyond some suggestions, more of a resigned nature, and only raised to the level of an observation (by, e.g., Michelet,⁴² Droysen,⁴³ Dilthey,⁴⁴ etc.) – almost no kind of organic and structuring presence or significance of the “problem” of death can be found.

In contrast with this, Hobbes makes it directly and fundamentally clear that all the formations, all the “phenomena” – law and the institutions of law, politics and the institutions of politics (the state and various communities, etc.), ethics and its “institutions”, religions and their institutions – as well as all the events, happenings or changes, processes (wars, confrontations, peacemaking, workings, etc.) the research of which, their formation and change in time etc., is the object of **historiology** – whether positivistic, historicist, hermeneutical or otherwise – are completely unimaginable “without” death, the constitutive presence of human death. That is to say, not only “generally speaking”, but also in a basic and essential sense: this is what they precisely derive from! Just like the changes of these “formations” – also in their origins and actual motifs and senses –, which also always send back to death. And send forth as well. However, this also means that historiology – and all other sciences as well, whether social or natural – also derive from here in a fundamental sense. Sciences can only have, and do only have a “history”, just like history has some kind of a science – including now also the science of the history of sciences – because these are, in this same basic aspect: essentially historical. For they are nothing else themselves than precisely the actual, but of course particular and determined **modes of being** of a being which is originally temporal due to its mortality. Within and through which this being conducts its own mortal life-being, necessarily in a temporal way, that is, in a constitutive and finite co-originality and co-constitution. History (also) therefore – how else could it be?! – derives, and gains its always actual weight and dynamism from where time originates. Namely,

⁴² Although Jules Michelet – schematically – treats historiological research itself as contact with a kind of already “dead world”, and the historian approaches all the dead people of this world with diligent and benevolent kindness. After which, although what life has left behind cannot be revived again, these shadows return to their graves more cheerfully. For, as they are dead, they can harm us no longer!

⁴³ According to Droysen – schematically again – this science deals with a task which particularly pertains to human nature, the existence of a finite spirit; historical world is the essential human world. In addition, he also thinks that, in the end, nature has reached perfection everywhere, it is only man that lack perfection.

⁴⁴ In his intellectual history treatise on the structure of the historical world, Dilthey exposes very important things about life, the experience of life as the basis and source of humanities, the temporality of the course of life, which is projected from the present to the past through memory, and to the future through the design of possibilities, but he does not speak about the issue and possibility of death’s pertinence to life as a particular possibility. Nevertheless, he still proposes that any form of history is finite, and as such, it must contain a proportionate division between the extension of being and the limitation of life. In other words, Dilthey does not speak in fact about an explicit and particularly human, (living) “finiteness” defined by death, but only about limitation. See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Bernhard Groethuysen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), Vol. 7. *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, 381.

precisely from death, from human finitude, mostly compliantly or derogatorily – or at any rate completely uncomprehendingly – called “mortality”.

In spite of this, Hobbes does not explicitly thematize death “itself”, in a face-to-face, particular meditative effort. Instead, it rather only “operationalizes” it, although only as a factor which creates history and constitutes and shapes it. With this – but in some very significant aspects precisely despite this – Hobbes stands nevertheless in the “schematism” of that history of the philosophy of history which Löwith characterized and identified as an inevitable impossibility to free oneself from the theological “scheme”.

In conclusion, the novel efforts for the historiological investigation of death are a huge advancement. This research of course has only become possible through the – existential, but not necessarily reflected – loosening of historiological, as well as philosophical historical determinations. That is, in such a way only that meanwhile a fundamental and **actual**, factual, existential, and at the same time ontological and historical shift in focus happened precisely about the question of death. This shift has brought about in fact the historiological research of death as well. This of course also creates the possibility to raise anew – precisely in the system of relations of death and history – the question of the connections of death and historiology. Clearly, this relation cannot be restricted merely to the historiological and past-oriented questions of the explicit, or more precisely, outlined problem of death. Rather, the issue is that – just like history itself – historiology is in fact in a constant and ontologically articulated – although seemingly epistemological – relationship with death. Although this relationship and connection mostly remains *athematic* for it, meaning that mostly it is neither explicit, nor thematized.

Perhaps nobody was more conscious of this than Jules Michelet, mentioned above in a footnote, for whom the awareness – or, what is more, the experience! – that the historian, looking back into the past, always researches the past lives of deceased people, was a recurring idea. Therefore the “kindness towards all the dead”, required also by scholarly honesty and sympathy, is a necessary condition for the knowledge of the past. Including those deceased who during their lifetime acted in a way disagreeable to us or harmful to their fellows. In the course of historiological research – just like, almost invisibly, in history itself –, all deceased people and generations, whether murderers or victims, somehow become in a very essential way the very own deceased of every living generation. The – “deserved” – memory of which, whether wonderful or terrible, must be guarded by the historian. With the clarification that “it can no longer be revived that what life has forsaken.”⁴⁵ All this inspired Michel de Certeau to claim: historiography wants to prove that the place where it is created is able to understand the past; it is a strange process which first **claims death**, this discursively always repeated rupture, and at the same time it **denies the loss**, maintaining the privilege for the present to summarize the past as

⁴⁵ Apud: Michel de Certeau, *L'écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 7–8.

one knowledge. **The work of death and work against death.**⁴⁶ It seems therefore that itself the science of history, *recte*: historical research and historiography as well are precisely and essentially the works of death which somehow, yet always motivated and stimulated by the actuality of death, still always works against death. It is something which essentially – or more precisely, athenatically, that is, independently from the subject now analyzed – has to, and tries to turn death, exactly through death, but also in contrast to it, to the work and issue of a summarizing or analytical knowledge about the past, although now present, and primarily addressed to the present (while probably also looking towards the future). What is more, the existential distinction of historiology lies – or may lie – precisely in the fact that, searching for past lives and thing, that is, for our past, it gets, day after day, into an inevitable relationship with what we may also call “passing”. It is permanently connected therefore with time, or “this working of death”, while it also understands – or rather: can understand – itself as a “working against death”. Which of course always also derives from death...

So historiology and its interpretation and self-understanding may become a privileged domain and opportunity also because we can now dig deeper into questioning what the “workings of death” really means and what it really means that we, humans, always work somehow against the “workings of death”. Is this existential and ontological situatedness only and exclusively a peculiarity and characteristic of historiology? Or perhaps it emphasizes the same thing that Heidegger so vigorously stressed in his own time; more precisely, that Heidegger alone has ever stressed with such an unambiguous and uncompromising consistency. Namely, that human *Dasein* as such – which is we, ourselves –, with respect particularly to the **possible completeness** of itself and ourselves, ontologically, existentially, historically etc. **somehow** related to death, its death and our death, running forth with it and at the same time reflexive, is (a) being in happening and in progress in **some** respect. With the completion that this is not only related with the (equally metaphysical, ontological and existential) facticity of death and dying, but with **everything** in fact which forms human existence and its historical possibilities of being! Therefore the mortality of man is not only “proved” by the actuality of everybody’s dying, but also, essentially, by every and all of man’s **modes of being!** The very fact that, wherever there is man – no matter how primitively –, there are also camps, graves, settlements, buildings, organizations, customs, institutions, beliefs, communication networks and relations, particular human works and efforts (myths, knowledge, science, art, technology, wars, and comforting religions, etc.), betrays and proves the mortal nature of man and the human nature of finite, mortal life. In short, they prove the workings of death and at the same time the workings against or despite death. Since – as we have repeatedly emphasized – such a thing can only have its weight and meaning for the being of a mortally finite – so *Dasein*-like! – being. A being truly immortal in any respect of **being** would never actually be forced into any effort of knowledge, creation or perfection.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 61.

The question and questionableness of mortality is therefore about the **truth** of man, of the *Dasein* – and thus also being! And we, humans, can only search, question, or thematize this truth by means of philosophy in a way authentic for us, and **co-respondent** for the weight and force of an all-time historical – that is, one that articulates history –, and inevitable reiteration. Through philosophy which meanwhile also discovers and displays that a merely “thematic” – although evidently highly important – consciousness, possible in several ways and articulations, related to death and the events of dying does not exhaust and is not restricted only to mortality, mortal nature and especially “becoming mortal”... but it interests, articulates, surrounds and, of course, historically and ontologically **holds** the entire **questionable** beings of man – and being – and its whole responsibility as a real and **questionable meaning**, as all-time **response(s)** which actually decide history!

To approach the question of history and death as a real and serious matter of philosophy also means therefore to formulate **why** the human being philosophizes. Therefore philosophy and death, history and death, history and philosophy, death and the history of philosophy must – and should – have a fundamental relation (of being) with man. One that would count indeed as a *sui generis* philosophical and existential-historical project to “shed light” on. It is of course out of the question that we should now start to piously search, for example, for the “positive” sides of death next to its “negative” sides, or the “nice” and “constructive” aspects surrounding death’s “ugly” and “destructive” nature. On the contrary, this concern can only be about understanding that “nice” and “ugly”, “positive” and “negative”, “true” and “false”, “good” and “evil”, “destructive” or “constructive” are present exclusively “for” or inside the being of a dying being, who always somehow “understands” death, its own death as a possibility pertaining to itself, its own being, and endorses this understanding in a being-like, mode of being-like way.

Consequently, there is nothing more superficial than saying – as for example the old Paul Ricoeur, related to Lévinas, and in a counter-Heideggerian, quite conventionally moved manner – that human existence, human history, instead of essentially relating to death, to the exposedness to its own death, is in fact a historically unfolding being conducted **against** death and **in spite of** death. Which therefore always relates “negatively” to the “positiveness” of death, although in itself “negative”. That is to say, it exists against death and “in spite of” (its) death. But **not** opposing it, not facing it face to face, but mostly **turning away** from it. Of course, the belief or idea of “immortality” also fully belongs here. For this is also a highly explicit denial or “repression” of death. Therefore one must “define” “immortality” and all kinds of ideas and thoughts about it as the dying mortal’s ontological-existential **inability** to die, to become an actual mortal, which also **decisively** defines historicity itself and the articulation of history and its possibilities. Adding the clarification that in fact only the dying can be “immortal”. He who “meanwhile” – since factually always dies – may become a mortal in a historically decisive way. Consequently, the non-dying immortal would not only be “incapable” of dying, but would never even die. On the other hand, such a thing

could not exist, not even “against or in spite of” death.⁴⁷ Death or the ontological, existential and historical facticity of the possibility to become mortal is therefore simply a **precondition** of the latter – namely, being against or in spite of death. Including, naturally, the possibility of “ethics” or “the ethical”. Since this can only be meaningful and significant for a being who is mortal and as such – in and through history – “may” become indeed mortal. Therefore the so-called “transgression” of “being” or death by “ethics” and ethical ambition is none other in fact than mere senselessness. That is, the incomprehension of the ontological, existential and historical roots and origins of the ethical. Which stands again completely in the traditional and unquestioned mode of being against death, which denies it and “flutters” it.

Paul Ricoeur’s investigations are stimulated however also by the special ambition to make the philosophical interpretations of, or insights into history

⁴⁷ Heidegger in his later works, in reference to the fundamental aspects of being, reiterated and rearticulated by him – and primarily in connection with language –, speaks about Heaven and Earth, mortals and immortals. However, he unambiguously treats this latter as a **non-human** possibility. On the contrary: the mortals are (exclusively) the humans, who are never called “mortals” merely because their life is finite, but because they are **able to** die in their lives and with their lives! Immortals are therefore those who do not die... because they are not really alive. That is, they do not have a life pertaining and holding on to themselves. They are called and invited by the **mortals** to find their own abilities and possibilities in or through them. So there are actually no immortals without mortals, just as, without the immortals, there are no beings who can, or rather **could** die as mortals. The immortals and “immortality” therefore is not something that people should “aspire for” or pursue. For the man is precisely and clearly man by its ability and possibility to die. He would then precisely miss his own self – completely in vain in fact – if he would hope, desire or want to be or become immortal, instead of undertaking and deepening his ability to die. Consequently, the immortals can only acquire meaning if they **assist** man in his ability to die and the acceptance of this ability, by turning or guiding him back to himself over and over again. If they help him be indeed mortal, to become able to die and remain so. That is – of course, without any kind of “facilitation” – they help him **live** as indeed mortals and not merely with “finite lives”. And only thus can mortals get into open and responsible relations with the dimensions of Heaven and Earth. Therefore the immortals cannot simply be “the gods”, but **new** gods only. Who would then acknowledge themselves that they can only be gods inasmuch as, and as long as there are mortals living who believe “in them” and turn to them to open up their own capturedness because they need to be eternally returned to themselves, from their turning to the Earth and Heaven (the Cosmos). “Afterwards” however the immortals are no longer gods, only deathless. They stay in such a relation with their own immortality than the beings with finite life – but **unable** to die – are with the end of their lives. Immortality is therefore by no means a human possibility! However, it is a human possibility for the man as a being with a finite life to become indeed a mortal. Certainly only because he, in and with his being, exists from the very beginning in his relation to (his own) death. Only because he exists as a being who foregoes and anticipates (his) death, and only because (his) death is therefore always a (particular) possibility for him, can the man turn away from it and deny it or, on the contrary, become mortal and a being existing despite his death. See Martin Heidegger, *A dolog és A nyelv; (Das Ding und Die Sprache)* – Két tanulmány (*The Thing and The Language – Two studies*), 2nd, bilingual edition (Sárvár, HU: Sylvester János Könyvtár, 2000), 113.

available and “applicable” for the use of historians, that is, practicing researchers of history. Therefore he always searches for the crossing or overlapping points where the philosophical investigations and “terminological subtleties” connected to history – although always “surprisingly” – may productively and fruitfully meet and get into dialogue with the diligent daily work of the historian. The question of death and mortality acquires special importance in this process.⁴⁸ This issue has recently become a historiological “problem”, a research “subject” of history. But how could I – or anyone – be a being existing against and in spite of death, my death and mortality **in any other way** than “meanwhile” somehow raising my inquiring “awareness” of death and mortality, and, again “meanwhile”, also relating to it in a well determined or rather outlined way?

Being against or in spite of death – precisely by its “negativity” or, more accurately, in its being as denial – simply presupposes some kind of **assertion** of death! If we did not know and understand – as if beforehand and in advance – in some “positive”, asserted way that we are indeed mortals, then we could not exist even against or in spite of death, or relate to it in such a way. So, not only is being against or in spite of death not a friendlier, more attractive or ethical “alternative” to a being-like and constitutive anticipation of death, but on the one hand it directly (pre)supposes it, on the other hand it is none other itself than one of the also being-like – that is, factual and actually conducted – **derivative** modes of this relationship and anticipation.⁴⁹ Such modes in which, against and in spite of death, they usually turn away – even if not “always” from death – from an existential and thoughtful anticipation, explicitly thematic and thematizing, undertaking and understanding, as well as facing the constitutive aspects of relating to death. And also in which, **instead** of the being-like acceptance of the ontological, existential and historical – actually constitutively metaphysical – aspects of death which face, understand and explain it, the trying and excruciating task of “wisdom” is to “accept” death as “destiny” and as something “naturally” connected to the human body. Or such modes in which – at the same time – the focus gradually and sensibly shifts to the death of the Other and Others...⁵⁰ But which build in fact the entrance hall to the repeated denial or at least turning away from death. Historiology and the work of the historian is therefore something which essentially – or more accurately athematically, independently of the subject just analyzed – is constrained and strives to turn death, particularly through death but precisely against it, towards the work and matter of a knowledge, summarizing or analytical, yet being present and primarily addressed to the present (but looking to the future.

While of course the historian is alive! And lives in such a way that he is mortal. That he **will** die. For the mortally living historian too, his (own) death “is”

⁴⁸ See Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 359–370.

⁴⁹ It is not difficult, only tiresome at most, to present in detail that the discourse of both Lévinas and the later writings of Ricoeur – as well as all other similar discourses – are dependent on, and directly linked to, Heidegger’s philosophy, but they are not able to either open it up, or “transgress” it... while they also cannot break away from it.

⁵⁰ See Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, 359–361.

always in his (own) future. As something that **will** inevitably be, and which therefore will **hold**⁵¹ his being or life. It is only in this constitutive future-ness of death for the living that the explicit and heavily outlined perspective can be revealed for the historian that he himself is also mortal, and even more than that, he is mortal precisely as a living being to-be-dying. That is, sooner or later he himself – with all his works – and together with his own “generation” will get to the “region”, dimension of death essentially constituted by dying – namely: the past – with which, or rather “against” which, the then also mortally living historians will “deal with” and research diligently in the future. In other words: death not only defines historiography in fact and actually as the athenatic yet constitutive **coming into being** and connection of its “subject” to the actuality of death, but also in its all-time origin, ambitions and **meaning** always newly emerged but left unthematized. Precisely because it is precisely a determined action or directly mode of being of dying mortals, and this is why historiography may turn towards the research and analysis of the actions of mortals once living and now dead. With all its “epistemological”, methodological or other pitfalls or benefits. Let me repeat: there would be no history or historiography **without** death. And neither would there be philosophy of history.

Hopefully, it is now clear that this philosophy of history cannot possibly – and especially not “exclusively” – be any kind of epistemology or methodological aid for the science(s) of history... and also that it should not deal at all, even if only additionally, with something which – let’s say, in a “substantial” sense, using Danto’s expression – historiography “deals with”. Instead, the philosophy of history should particularly struggle with questions which historiography itself mostly **fails** to ask. It is a different question whether the “philosophy of history” does or would not precisely prove to be ontology. No matter how specialized and determined in its own history by the division of historiographical disciplines, history and historical interest always derives from the problematic nature of *Dasein* originating in fact from its own mortality. Either in the sense that the majority of the questions, “issues” emerging in their being-present are permanently proved to be results of history in several decisive respects, or in the sense that a historical perspective is never superfluous for assessing the novelty of these questions. This way the current acceptance of these questions cannot happen without the historical investigation of things. Besides, more originally and essentially, any kind of “problem”, question or challenge – that is, not merely “historiological” – gains its actual **weight** from the fact that these are in fact problems, questions and challenges of the being and pursuit of this being of a finite being, finite in the sense of mortality. In short, all the problems, issues, tasks or constraints of the present ultimately gain their weight, importance, inevitability, comfort and simply their **meaning** from finitude, and by this they organically relate **to time, the questionability of time**. That is, also in short, to the question and questionability of “When?” From which derives also –

⁵¹ See more on this in István Király V., “The Future, Or Questioningly Dwells the Mortal Man – Question-Points to Time,” *Philobiblon – Journal of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library Cluj* XV (2010): 92–118.

questioning it – the question of “What is time?”. Of course, further asked and unfolded in the direction of “What is history?” and “Where does it come from?”.

However, as the man relates – “in space and time” – to time, how he grasps it and interprets it, and how it shapes and creates in this respect the order of “historicality” that François Hartog also speaks about, ontologically presupposes that we understand or sketch in some way – if not otherwise, then “problematically” – where time comes from. That is, we somehow understand, validate, and ask the – essentially and originally **categorical** – question of When? For every single “order” of historicality – which Hartog identifies and analyzes – is nothing else in fact than a **specifically articulated, factual – explicit or inexplicit – questioning** of “When?”. This specific and factually articulated understanding in the historical articulation of temporality is always about what and how time is, can be, or “must be”. Which is of course completely impossible without the explicit or inexplicit **questionability** and “problematic nature” – at least as a “presuppositional” or “interrogative” background – of “When?”. However, examining the question and origin of this “When?”, I have previously arrived to the conclusion that, regarding its ultimate source, it derives precisely from death, from a necessarily future and inevitable perspective of death, namely from and anticipatory human finitude shaping in the sense of mortality, and relating to death, as a **Will-be-being**. Or more precisely: this is where the future always **comes** from!⁵² This also means of course – and again decisively – that the always present, always timely questionability of historical interest derives from, and comes from the same place! From a time and temporality which comes from a future articulated, constituted and burdened by death. Which truly and actually connects “together” the past and the present now already as **history** in a **being-like** way, deriving from future, or rather from a **specific** horizon or perspective of the future from which it always gains its actual weight. As such a history which, and the process (and “consciousness”) of which are permanently, and from various “directions” – with Schopenhauer’s words – “interrupted” and “cut into pieces” by death.

May it be outlined either as *historia vitae magistra*, or by historiology itself as an apparently more elaborated “historical consciousness” of modernity, the origin, essence, stake and meaning of historical orientation or interest is always precisely this. Just like history itself, historiology also, and any kind of actual, living and motivated historical interest – including of course the philosophy of history – is both initially and ultimately grounded and articulated by death, by human mortality. From the beginning to the end. It is a different, yet not less important question whether historical interest is aware of this, or applies it indeed. Especially when it conducts its most specialized and “interdisciplinary” researches, separately for countries, regions, settlements, centuries, decades or years, months, days, major or minor events or even hermeneutical problems... Whereas the most important – if not only – question in history will apparently be: “To explain what is?”. For, paraphrasing William H. Dray, the duty of a historian is to unveil what was it what

⁵² See Ibid.

really happened. And when dealing with this question, he provides an explanation of the events of a “this and this happened” type.⁵³

In the meantime however it does not even emerge what it actually means that something HAD-BEEN, as neither does whether these HAD-BEEN-nesses presented as “those which actually are” or more precisely “those which actually Had-been” become “actually” PAST just like that, on their own? Namely, why would we people now alive have to know anything about what “actually happened” in the history of the once existing HAD-BEEN-nesses? What is the actual meaning – and not merely the “damages and benefits” – of historical knowledge? Beyond some commonplaces always remaining unconsidered. The most important problem however is still that during such researches it usually never becomes admissible or acceptable that historical questions – including all kind of questions of historiology and historiological “scholarliness” – are of such nature in fact that **the inquirer himself is always and necessarily encompassed** in their horizon as well. This is only how the former people of history and their former – that is, no-longer-being⁵⁴ – things can become their own PAST for the always living “carriers” of historical interest, and **free** historical “knowledge” of meaningful and future-projected weight and significant for the directions of future possibilities for an all-time present. That is to say, not merely as a science of “things not necessarily worth knowing”, or as curiosities and events continuously becoming “former”, as Goethe had thoroughly warned us in his time. But a science of things which, as their HAD-BEEN-ness is turned into our PAST and accepted as such – that is, its actual **make-pass** – is a hermeneutical, factual, ontological and historical task, highly **actual** and **awaiting** and pertaining to us, which can only be possible to weigh by the view and

⁵³ See William H. Dray, “‘Explaining What’ in History” In *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick Gardiner (New York: Free Press, 1959): 402–408.

⁵⁴ It is the explicitly ontological conception of precisely this “no-longer-being” which is usually absent. In other words, the conception of “what kind of being” is the “no-longer-being” in fact? Because somehow the being of the Past is this or like this! However, we rather see instead something like: “There is (or rather was – *sic!*) the reality, the past in itself (*sic!*), which basically has two essential characteristics. First, by no (longer) being, that is, by the fact that the historian (in contrast with a natural scientist) examines a field that he only has assumptions about. Second, these assumptions are of course not completely unfounded, since there are traces left which bear witness to past events.” So this no-longer-being of the past is therefore more of a mere attribute, and not a *sui generis* question, but this is precisely what situates and challenges historiological researches in their own problematic nature. See Tamás Kisantal, *Történettudomány és történetírás (Bevezető)* (The science of history and historiography), in *Tudomány és művészet között* (Between science and art), ed. Tamás Kisantal (Budapest: L’Harmattan-Atelier, 2003), 20. In a different context however a kind of specificity of the “past” is an “epistemological” and “hermeneutical”, rather than ontological or ontologically outlined, “absence”. Some clarification would not hurt here either: even if the past is “absent”, it is not “simply” absent, but as something which **no-longer-is**. In such a way, that is, which cannot possibly be transgressed by any kind of filling of this absence, while any other such ambition, articulated despite of it, could only be a falsification of ontological, existential and historical situatedness. Nevertheless, that what is always absent indeed is – as already mentioned – the ontological conception of no-longer-being, in such a way that what comes “in its place” is merely some kind of groundless “no-longer...”.

acceptance of the inherence of the relations between historicity and death, always sending back and forth to the future.⁵⁵ That is, the way from death through temporality and historicity leads – back and forth – precisely to **freedom**, and from freedom through historicity and temporality to **finitude**. The historical way of the historical man and being, meant to ask the question of meaning. For what else would make a being have a history at all if not precisely that by which and from which it is explicitly historical in its being? And only by this can being itself, as well as those beings which only have a story – but not a history – become historical. That is, not merely in a substantive or substantial sense, but in an ontologically, existentially and historically constituted sense.

Therefore, far from speaking about the “present perspective” as a sort of inevitable and “implicit” circumstance which by its inevitable inseparability uncomfortably “relativizes” and “subjectivizes” all kind of historical research, one should rather see that historical research – in a most organic combination with its extensions to the past – should precisely appropriate this perspective of the present, right at its **question-points**, in a most radical way, that is, with a factic view to both its origins and its present problematic nature, therefore leading to – and actually coming and deriving from – the future.⁵⁶ For, in the absence of this, it may be feared that the diligence of historical research is rather a kind of delay, of directly a “scientific” escape into the “past”. A past, of course, which is always ensured to belong to “anyone and no one”. So that, on the one hand, this past does not “oblige” anyone to anything, while on the other hand we are and will be almost completely and defencelessly exposed to it.⁵⁷ Obviously, this is no different for the historical

⁵⁵ On the relations of Had-been-ness and Past and the – highly actual – ontological and existential problems of these relations see: Isvtán Király V., “Had-Been-Ness and Past”, *Philobiblon – Journal of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library Cluj*, 4–8 (1999–2002): 312–359.

⁵⁶ Historical “narratives” and their differences so much troubling the epistemologists probably do not firstly and merely derive from the fact that – in the words of L.O. Mink – the “chosen” beginning, middle and end of the targeted “changes”, events, actions, etc. is somehow never the “same” beginning and the “same” end, but from the fact that every question which raises, mostly inexplicitly, in its present problematicness, always has a specific source, and a specific net and map of problems. Which, even if not surfaced or thematized, fundamentally influence still the “narratives” connected to them. See Luis O. Mink, “Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument,” in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 129–140.

⁵⁷ This must be emphasized in spite of the fact that historical restrospection does not suffer in fact merely from a **lack** of knowledge or information, but it also always has a particular **surplus**. For – as we have already mentioned – looking back “retrospectively” it may see things that the actual actors or participants of the investigated ages and events could not have seen at all. Namely, the **results** of their actions, or at least a major part of these. This does not eliminate however, but makes more serious the initial aspect that historical interest can only be meaningfully motivated by the **present** and current problematic nature of things and affairs. Since it is in fact by, and because of, this that the “present” turns towards the research of the past. Trying to understand how far and in what way are the problems of the living, that is, weighty present determined by – what kind of – past, or trying to create possibilities or at

and historiographic research of the theme of death. Since this mostly happens precisely **without** the actual, explicit and thematic acceptance of the overwhelming presence of death, and the also actual – being-in-action – confrontation with it. While of course the very “theme” of death, “directly” and certainly, sends to the future of the living – meaning also those who study it historically –, also coming directly from it. Always and inevitably.

This is naturally essentially connected with what Heidegger discusses in *Being and Time* as “the existential origin of historiology”, the analysis of which actually pertains to the investigation and explicitation of the existential and ontological historicity and history itself. However, it should be known in advance about such analyses that, with a view to their meanings, their purpose is such an insight and approach which consists not merely in the production and distribution of some kind of “objective” knowledge, but much rather in the thematic outline and articulation of the always “problematic” **possibilities of being**. For, irrespective of when, where, or by whom it is cultivated, historical interest and historical research, as well as historiology, primarily and essentially, is one of the factic, determined possibilities and modes of being of the *Dasein*, of man. In which he always opens up – or closes – windows to the inevitable seizure and carrying out of his ever newer possibilities of being. If only in the sense of that elementary yet fundamental respect that “The idea of historiology as a science implies that the *disclosure* of historical entities is what it has seized upon **as its own task**.”⁵⁸ That is, the seizure and acceptance – and all its consequences – as one’s own task of the revelation of the being of a being to which this revelation and the “revealer” himself directly or indirectly **pertains**, and the being of which the revelation itself (historically) shapes, not merely as an “object”, cognitively or “phenomenologically”, but with regard to its possibilities. What else would such a revelation – or rather such a science! – gains its real weight and “import” from? All the more so because “Such historicity does not necessarily require historiology. It is not the case that unhistoriological eras as such are unhistorical also.”⁵⁹

4. *Being and Time* – death and history

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it must be settled right at the beginning of this subchapter that Martin Heidegger did not have in fact any kind of “philosophy of

least measure for itself from the experiments and achievements as well as failures of the past for the current management of the weight of these problems. Now, this is what the “disciplinarization” of the historical interest seems to cover up. When the research of the past is not merely an end in itself, but only an **automatism**. This is of course also valid for the “history of philosophy” as well. The “historical researches of philosophy” regarding an age, period or thinker are mostly hardly related to those very “present” – timely – motivations which originally and organically create this concern implicitly in their own “**problematic**” nature, but they are the “scientific” operations of a sort of simple automatisms of the “history of philosophy”. Which “meanwhile” – and instead of repetition, which would mean nothing else than what stated above – continuously gain newer and newer inorganic and external “actualities”.

⁵⁸ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 445. (Emphasis added)

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 448.

history”. His inquiries, thoughts and researches actually and essentially related to history and the **question** of history are so radical, organic, and central components of his philosophy that any kind of “disciplinary” or merely conceptual and technical understanding of these can only be counted as incomprehension and mistake. All the more so since Being and Time **calls** us mortals not “humans” but *Dasein*! And mainly because the “man” increasingly became not more than a “concept” or “term”, which moreover gradually dried to a *terminus technicus*. One by which we humans do not **call**, only **discuss** ourselves. That is, objectify ourselves. While a man objectifying himself by discussing himself... can only exist in mere “objectifications”, which are also objectified “objects” or “things”. This way, also “terminologically”, the *Dasein* does not simply leaves behind or simply pushes away or exceeds “the man” but – certainly critically – rather goes behind “him”. More precisely, man goes behind himself, and by this he opens up and surfaces himself for himself. His existence bound and held onto being, being-towards, coming and calling to being. This is how man becomes *Dasein*, that is, a being which had always been – as “man” also – and which calls, understands and validates himself as “here”, “being-here”, being-present. Which therefore he must **comply with** – and also with himself – in and by his being in the actual conducting of his life, and amidst permanent and continuous **challenges**. With the also actual, factic, and mode-of-being-like response that I am **here** and I am **present**, we are here and we are present!⁶⁰ This is evidently possible only and if this being stands somehow, always and actually, in his own possibilities, or if he grasps and outlines all other beings – including his own objectifications – again always and primarily with respect to their own possibilities. *Dasein* exists and stands thus in an understanding, that is, mode-of-being-like **relation** with possibility. However, “whenever *Dasein* tacitly understands and interprets something like Being, it does so with *time* as its standpoint. Time must be brought to light – and genuinely conceived – as the horizon for all understanding of Being and for any way of interpreting it. In order for us to discern this, *time* needs to be *explicated* *primordially as the horizon for the understanding of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of Dasein, which understands Being.*”⁶¹

Temporality however means at the same time **historicality**. If and when it **is**, the *Dasein* is in an originally historical way. That is, it does not receive or take onto itself the attribute of “historicality” externally or somehow subsequently, as a result of some kind of prehistoric or extra-historic development or evolution, but: when and where there **is**, there exist a *Dasein*-like being, then and there it is already

⁶⁰ *Dasein* “... is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of *Dasein*’s Being, and this implies that *Dasein*, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being – a relationship which itself is one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which *Dasein* understands Itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of *Dasein*’s Being. *Dasein* is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological.” Ibid., 32.

⁶¹ Ibid., 39.

“also” historical at the same time. However, the existing *Dasein* is always and primarily “in-between” birth and death, as a living and as such, relational **extension**. Extension is of course mobility, but the mobility of existence is not the movement of a thing at-hand, but **occurrence**. Therefore the occurrence is not a mere “happening” of something, but an extension with its own consistency, which – as constancy, independence of Itself – also extends. That is: it **occurs**. “On the other hand, it is by no means the case that *Dasein* ’is’ actual in a point of time, and that, apart from this, it is ’surrounded’ by the non-actuality of its birth and death. Understood existentially, birth is not and never is something past in the sense of something no longer present-at-hand; and death is just as far from having the kind of Being of something still outstanding, not yet present-at-hand but coming along.”⁶² But in a temporal way. The mobility of the occurrence lies in fact in the extension on the one hand and in temporality on the other hand, as the existential aspect of the interrelation between birth and death – actually as **care**. For the *Dasein* is indeed a kind of being whose play of being permanently “aims precisely at this being”. Such a being, that is, which is initially in a world so that it always is, exists anticipating itself, that is, being open to possibility. This also means that it discerns and projects as being the beings and itself – including its coexistence with others – from questionable possibilities or possibilities made and outlined as questionable. That is, it is in care.

In short, occurrence is none other than carrying out *Dasein*’s life-long and anticipatory-extensive factic pertinence to care. **Occurrence** is therefore in an original relationship with temporality and this relationship does not mean in the first place that it, say, happens “inside time” but that occurrence is the being and mobility of a being extending in anticipation of itself – and thus always returning to itself. *Dasein* and its character of being and ontological particularity lies in the fact that this being actually **occurs**. The being of the occurring being is not merely – or rather not “simply”, in the sense of in-between “life and death” – finite, but in such a way that it always **relates** to its own finitude in its own extension in occurrence, in a **particularly being-like way**. This is the meaning of the statement that *Dasein* is finite precisely by its being mortal. It is such that it occurs mortally, in the sense of mortality, and the other way around, it exists finitely precisely in this fundamental sense.

The process and “matter” of history is also not formed so that the initially isolated human or human-like individuals or specimens at the crossing point of a number of factors suddenly, then increasingly get somehow into the already autonomous turmoil of some of the more comprehensive and general connections mostly called “community”, “society”, “culture”, “interpersonality”, etc., which will then inevitably have their “stories”; instead, it is formed when and how the being of certain beings becomes occurrence – that is: *Dasein* – and together with it, historical. *Recte*: when certain beings **become mortal**. Or rather: when they become such that they **can** essentially and directly **become mortal**. That is, by and with their being they open up the possibility pertaining to them to relate and turn towards their death as a particular **possibility**. And by this and with this the world is also

⁶² Ibid., 426.

constituted. Because: “the world has an historical kind of Being because it makes up an ontological attribute of *Dasein*.”⁶³ It is therefore precisely fate, inseparable from death and mortality, which is the privileged **occurrence** which outlines and defines existence amidst time and temporality, the *Dasein* as **historical**, or as a **free being open towards death**. Such that is actually and essentially **in-the-future** in its extension, and which connects as such, also actually and essentially, in its own **presence** to the **past**, to **its own, appropriated past!** And only thus, only in this horizon does the occurrence of history become the occurrence of the *Dasein*, of being-in-the-world, the historicity of the world and world history as well. One in which fate turns freely and as a possibility to all the extensions – future, present, past – of the occurrence of history and its temporality. This is why actual historicity means for Heidegger fate and **repetition** as well.

The Heideggerian concept and articulation of **repetition** is again particular. It does not mean at all the reiteration of the same thing and the same way “now” or “today”, again, imperatively, as a copy or imitation, but exactly that “explicit bequeathal” in which the **having-been-present** *Dasein* and its possibilities of being are precisely “problematized”. Or rather: become questionable, as always actual responses to the questionable **possibilities** of a having-been-present *Dasein*. It is in fact the possibility which “returns” – or rather is reborn – in repetition, and not something which has once been or happened. Repetition does not answer of course the former possibilities of those already dead, by taking these upon itself in the present in some fantastic way over the distances of time, but in repetition the *Dasein*, amidst the questionable articulation and acceptance of its own being-here possibilities, acquires the inevitably appropriate – that is, open towards death – degree of challenges in his own being, as well as the heritage that can be found and earned through bequeathing. In a different approach however repetition can mean of course also the responsible present critical rejection of a past possibility. It is only the Da-sein, the questionability of the present and the explicit being-present of questions and questionability – or more precisely, their momentary rather than timely surfacing and undertaking – which may give birth to and organically articulate historical concern itself. However we have no other kind of possibility or horizon to access this questionability or its existential-ontological momentariness and references sending to the past than that which always derives precisely from death. And this highlights the connections of fate and repetition. For repetition proves, ever more clearly, to be something which always articulates and constitutes fate by its momentariness in the openness – and we should add: creativity – of freedom. In contrast with the mere display of the “past” or the mere projection of the present onto the past... and of course also with a future outlined as mere coming. It is now clear that for Heidegger the *Dasein*’s attachment and relating to death is both ontologically and existentially – that is, historically – indeed constitutive. That is, it does by far not mean, or even less exhausts in a “well-tailored” thematization of death as such. Namely, as people have publicly thought or behaved about death and its matters in time. The constitutive relation to death understood as mortality characterizes the being of *Dasein* in its (always **possible**) entirety, and what is more

⁶³Ibid., 432–433.

– precisely with respect to the direct possibilities of this “entirety” – it pervades and articulates this being. Therefore it defines it! Together with historicity and history, and of course freedom, also constitutively – that is, even athematically – connected to it.

There is no contradiction or nonsense about a statement that says: all the previous history of mankind – defined by death and dying in the sense articulated above – is mostly still the history of the escape from, and “denial” of death. “The” history which is now studied by the historiological research of death as a self-imposed subject is in fact the history of the explicit denial of, and escape from death which, in spite of it, is originated by and structured, articulated and constituted by the fundamental ontological and factic nature of human death and mortality, mostly athematically, yet still constitutively for historicity itself. However, this can also be revealed, or can only gain a – necessarily critical and “dismantling” – insight if the historical and ontological question of death is repeatedly and radically questioned not – or not only – as a traditional, yet “actual” and novel “historiological” problem, but as a present and current – and as such radically historical – (philosophical) question, with the determination and weight appropriate to its actual oppressiveness, pertaining to us *in actu*. In a repeated questioning which may – in Nietzsche’s words – open up and support a new history: as a history of being and of “man”, of *Dasein* that has become mortal indeed and has accepted, faced and validated its mortality in a being-like way.

However, any discourse about “any” kind of “end” of history is unfounded which does not essentially reckon with, or outline this end as the **coming to an end** of man as an earthly being or race. A “perspective” which, in its own way, undoubtedly exacerbates the “historically” “unpleasant” and “uncomfortable” matters and things of becoming a mortal. In exacerbates and hinders at the same time. But it does **not** make it more difficult, since this “exacerbation” and “hindrance” mostly precisely functions as a **facilitation** amidst the escape and turning away from death and mortality. Francis Fukuyama does also not speak of the “end of history” as the discontinuation of events considered to be historical, or the “natural cycle” of “birth, life and death”, but – similarly to Hegel and Marx, but rather only with reference to them – only about the fact that in liberal democracies mankind in its ideological evolution has reached that “ideal” condition which cannot be perfected any longer. This is also – although seemingly with regard to its “end” – only about what is history like and how it “is”? Or, whether or not it has any kind of direction, an internal, *sui generis* tendency, or an “end” – although not sending forth to any termination? And not about where the history comes from, is constituted and happens in fact, which is always problematic as to how it is in its dynamics, and how it must be studied, or what is the possible meaning and yield, or damage and risk of such a study...⁶⁴

⁶⁴ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 5–7.

The main problem here is precisely that, to call a highly “problematic” ideal state of mankind’s ideological development the “end of history”, means nothing else in fact than to **forget** and **veil** – and thus “facilitate” – the highly explicit and constitutive perspective of the actual finitude, end and termination of history. Irrespective of whether or not mankind (and the western man) has reached indeed in liberal democracies the ideal ideological form impossible to be further perfected! This veils precisely the perspective that could and should be undertaken explicitly and thematically in connection with the insight into the essence of history. That is, what is history and where does it come from? Of course, not by “analyzing” it merely “in itself”, or in its differentiation from other regions of being (e.g., from nature, or the “world of ideas” or “the otherworld”), but on the contrary, as a particular, therefore finite–temporal–mortal pertinence to being, and as its particularly constitutive pertinence to us. As an all-time and actual happening of a being open to **possibility as possibility** and being in a **questionable and inquiring relation of meaning and being** with the beings, with regard to **itself** and its weight outlined amidst the pertinence to this being, **holding and being held**. Which of course also defines or **refines** the question regarding the “meaning” of history! Or connects it to the question of meaning, the relations between meaning and question, meaning and questioning. With regard to the fact that history is because and ever since there is a being – coming to being, to existence – “one” finite, explicitly mortally finite, which therefore **relates** to its finitude in a being-like and mode-of-being-like way, bringing-to-life its **questions of meaning**. In other words, by this, history is because and in such a way that it has (will have) an “end”. There is history therefore because there is a being, having come to life, whose being in its freedom is indeed (a) **Will-being!**⁶⁵ That is, one that is held in its being by the fact that it always Will-be and **how** it Will-be. It will be in such a way that, and because, it is mortal. That is, because while being alive, it will always die – differently, under different circumstances or at different ages – and also because thus it has come to a being held and constrained to itself which if finite – ever since its creation – both as a species and as a race. That is to say, finite not only in the sense of being destroyed or extinct, but in a mortal way. Or, the other way around, because, while being mortal, it must also be prone to destruction and extinction.

Excursus

Human life on Earth

Earthly life and the future horizon of the destruction of its conditions and possibilities – outlined by the cosmic perspectives of the Sun and the solar system – concerns not only humans but, sooner or later, all other living beings and life forms on Earth. This case brings about radical and serious consequences with regard to the existence and perspectives of man and history alike. The weight and oppressiveness of these perspectives is usually eased through various and, at least seemingly, much

⁶⁵ On Will-being and its original and essential relations with death, both constituting and articulating temporality, historicity and meaning, see Király V., *The Future, Or Questioningly Dwells the Mortal Man*.

varied ways, avoiding thus the need to consider and think them through. One way is of course the End of the World and the ascension to Heaven connected to the apocalyptic last judgment. The other is apparently more “philosophical” and is particularly connected – even if mostly not admittedly – to the interpretation of Heidegger’s thoughts on *Dasein*. This – as repeatedly claimed – does not say anything more or different only about “man”, but also means a calling or invitation which can be applied in fact to any “intelligent” being of the Universe. That is to say, the “extraterrestrial intelligent beings” can also only be *Daseins* in their own way, that is, *being-heres* (or rather *beings-theres*), and we, earthly *Daseins* can only get in any kind of meaningful – even if “combative” – relationship with them because of this. All these can even be meaningful considerations, but they can only gain their actual weight with the condition that we make sure that the stake of these considerations is by no means the “easing” of this *Da*, this “here”. Or, perhaps, a new dissolution or fluttering of *Sein*, of Being and Existence. So that we might disregard again that fundamental aspect that “man”, or simply the being which now calls itself *Dasein* as its own accessibility and openness is only **what it is** as an **Earthly** being! So that it is what it **can be** at all – as a non-Earthly being – only as an Earthly being. The situation is probably similar with “intelligent” extraterrestrial beings of a being-here-like, therefore *Dasein*-like, nature. These can also be being-here(there)-like beings only as they are **present** for themselves in their possibilities of being in relation to other surrounding beings, in a being-like and mode-of-being-like way. So in this essential aspect they are not only Other, but entirely Different being-here(there)s or *Daseins*! To these, a third facilitation connected to the “end of history” adds up, which yields the possibility that, with the development of science and technology, earthly *Dasein* will sooner or later create the conditions for itself to simply move away, before the end of the Solar system or of anything else, from the planet which gave birth to it and carried it all along, but which is now squeezed of everything either by this being or by cosmic forces, and made it impossible for living, for life... Now, without dwelling much on how fantastic or “real” this possibility is – including the “social”, “ethical”, as well as “historical” complications inherent in such a planetary mobility – it should also be asked whether this *Dasein*, as a **non-earthly** being, would be the **same kind** of being **there** as well? Or – in perspective – we ourselves. As also whether is this perspective as such not a kind of relevant, meaningful but at the same time very ordinary ontological escape from ourselves, from being? Or whether is it not an also ordinary escape from history – or rather: from the ontology of historicity itself – that is, from death? Apart from the fact that the *Dasein* moving away from Earth should also leave behind its own earthly history, its life-like being – and also “death-like” being, namely its graveyards and tombs – or at least pack it up for itself compressed into mere “information”, the “human” race, in the course of the (e)migration of its worthy “representatives”, must inevitably proliferate to form not only a new generation, but outright a completely different *Dasein*. However DIFFERENT may this *Dasein* deriving from humans be or become, it will fail to become either immortal or endlessly “historical”. On the contrary, just because it is mortal, and as such, historical or historically finite, can the being come into being and present as *Dasein* keep opening responsibly the incidental possibilities of its extra-terrestrial existence.

But not for immortality, and neither for an endless and eternal history or historicity.

History therefore cannot have any kind of “meaning” outside or beyond itself which will shine somewhere “after” or “behind” its end. And which, of course, would always prove meaningless and – as seen at Löwith – completely inaccessible.

It is a different question however how all this is connected to the “natural cycle of birth, life and death”.⁶⁶ Is this “cycle” “natural” in the sense that it is, let’s say, biological (belonging to nature), in opposition to “social”, “cultural” or “intellectual”? or in the sense it forms the otherwise non-social “foundations”, “sources”, “conditions” or “parameters” of social formations or simply “societization”? As something which, for and from the point of view of history and historicity, is precisely **not** historical, or as we have said, actually **without** history? Something which only has a story, but not a history?

The cycle of birth, life and death seems “natural” first of all because it pertains to being, to the living being as nature, living nature. As something which is different but at the same time is somehow inevitably “common”, overlapping and in this sense somehow still identical with man, “society”, “culture” or “history”. But, just like human life, human death, although it is according to *physis*, in the above sense is not at all “something natural”, not a “natural event”. More precisely: not a historical “course”. But one which does not only alternate in its cycles connected to birth and life, but also **changes**. And not merely “under the impact” of the forces of nature – let’s say, biological evolution in the narrow sense. But people are born, live and die differently in the “cycles” of birth, life and death, which should actually be called history! This can only happen this way because they always stand in a relation of being, open to possibilities and meanings, with their birth, life and death, dying, which factually precisely means, and is “connected” to, their being, their existence. Therefore, regardless of how many supposedly “natural” and “hard” “elements” the cycle of human birth, human life and death essentially contains in its overlapping “composition” – that is, by the opening and closing, being-like or relation-of-being-like nature of the *physis*, the pertinence to being, forming a particular, new dimension of being – it is “natural” precisely in a *Dasein*-like way, and not in a “physical sense”. Thus can it be precisely historical, or thus can, and does, it constitute historicity, that is, history itself! So, we can say that the history which the historiological research of death has appointed as its own subject of research is essentially the history of the denial of, and escape from, death, which is – although athenatically, but constitutively for history – nevertheless originated from, and structured, articulated and “constituted” by, the fundamental ontology and facticity of human death and mortality. However, this also means then that it is, above all and mostly, the history of the disclosure, “understanding” and recording of death from the point of view of the **fear** from it, or a history articulated by precisely this.

⁶⁶ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History*.

Perhaps it could also be understood – like for Hegel – as the wilful defeat or transcendence of this fear. Since the militant and wilful defeat of the fear of death risked in favour of recognition, control and domination of the other, about which Hegel speaks as preconditions of “historical” success and victory, illustrates and justifies both a basic aspect of the history-constituting role of death, and also the fact that death in this history was and is primarily, if not exclusively, revealed from the point of view of an explicit and “thematic” fear from it – and **not** from that of **understanding and recording** it from its problematic foundations. And it proves to be even truer as the ideological, political, institutional, philosophical, anthropological or psychological efforts which should be of assistance in gaining more insight into it become more outlined or intrusive.

We have seen in connection with Hobbes as well that the kind of thinking which understands and explains fear, and particularly the fear of death merely as a kind of paralyzing “feeling”, in its mere “negativity”, is a dead end. On the contrary, fear, and particularly the fear of death continuously articulates the world of man with regard to its historical unfolding, always inevitably and not merely as a psychological “overtone” to be tempered. This means that no kind of human caution or circumspection is possible without fear. When man builds a house which will possibly not collapse to crush him to death, although by this he does not explicitly “thematize” and “defeat” his fear of death, this fear is in it nevertheless, and by ways of caution, calculation, provision, or circumspection always operates in the accomplishment of this task. The same happens when we say about something that it is completely harmless. Since this also needs the outlining of danger, harmfulness, while dangerous can only be something which, ultimately, is in some kind of relation with the threat of death of life as such. Something which we are afraid of, must be afraid of, and it is “advisable” to be afraid of. Man is not only “afraid” of (his) death, but he also related to it, and with it, to his fear of death. But it is short-sightedness not to understand that any kind of human attitude towards the fear of death, as well as its heroic defeat, is itself motivated, articulated and pervaded by this constitutive, therefore not solely “negative” fear. For it if was not so, then it should not, and indeed, cannot be either “defeated” or dominated. Let alone “managing” it, as many psychologists would want. Not to mention that fact that the endangering of life – that is, exposing it to a threat or risk of death – of which Hegel speaks in a general tone in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* as one of the historical conditions of the earning and primary unfolding of freedom and as a process, an occurrence of freedom, can only have such a role or function if, and with the condition that this life – including the freedom possible in it and through it – exists and outlines from the beginning in a being-like and relation-like connection with (its) death. And articulates as well. Otherwise human life could not be risked at all in any way, not even in the direction and for the purpose of freedom.

But what does it actually mean to “risk life”? For it can be – and must be – lost even without its explicit, definite risking! Is it not rather the case that human life can – and often must – be risked just because it is originally mortal? That is, exposed – although with some caution – to a definite and at least broadly outlined and projected threat of death. So that in this “exposition” the **target** is not death, one’s (own) dying, but precisely the “recognition”! That is, supremacy, domination,

victory. The actual possibilities of the stake(s) and decisions of the “struggle for recognition” are in fact: death; or victory and domination; or defeat, subordination, servitude. All three however essentially concern human life and its possibilities as such. That is, its human possibilities. Such of which it turns out, consequently, repeatedly and in this respect as well, that at the bottom of its essence it is outlined and decided amidst its constitutive relation, attitude, threat and risk – and also denial and concealment – towards (its own) death. Thus: it occurs. With that further critical clarification that the “superior”, “intellectual” and “ethical” ability of man to overcome his “instincts” and especially his basic instincts of life preservation in themselves do not originate or explain any kind of “history” since man could use this ability even in suicide, for example... and does use it quite often in fact. So, in this case as well, (human) life and (human) death and dying can only have an always coming-(in)to-being, therefore existential and ontological relation, much deeper than its “intellectual” and “moral” meaning aspiring for elation. One that radically originates and articulates morals and “morality” itself in its very historicity! For really, actually “immortal beings” could not possibly have any kind of morality, as it would be, precisely ethically and morally, completely weightless and therefore meaningless for them. The weight and stake of morality and the origin of these can only be a historical life intertwined by (one’s own) death and the perspective and threat of (one’s own) death, mortally returned to oneself, and connected with the rest of – living, dead, or not yet born – mortals. And this is precisely what the great 19th-century spiritual philosophies of history as well as the historiology of that age disregard. Precisely during a time when the specificity and relevance of “human things” for the philosophy of history is identified to be in their “moral” and intellectual “nature”. The case is similar with the great German philosophies of history as well, which are generally against Hegel (especially in what regards Hegel’s concept about the pure rationality and clarity of history), but are nevertheless completely consonant with him in the emphasis on history’s determination by intellectual and ethical aspects.

In what regards the analyses conducted in this paper, they are rather focussed on the ontological “determination” of history. The kind of “determination” which always grounds the appearances and partial truths of the in turn intellectual-ethical-ideological, or economic, material and natural (biological, geographical, etc.) “determinations” of history. To such an extent that it may indeed form and solidify the quite strange “situation” and idea that although history has long before “come to an end”, it continues nevertheless in the “events”. Moreover, it continues most joyfully and truly exactly after it has “come to an end”... The situation when the “end” of history, or rather the constitutive finiteness of history – and of course the essential historically constitutive aspect of finitude – has no real weight any more. It is not at all only the “modern” (western) society which denies death or turns away and escapes from death or the raw fear of death. On the contrary, every age had and continues to have its particular kind of **fear of death**. This also proves only that, despite all its appearances of being an eternal problem, death and the question is death is to the highest degree and in a very particular way **historical**. Firstly, in such a way that there is probably no kind of “ideal” age in history in which man would have been in an ideal or carefree relationship with “death”, in which death was not

any kind of oppressive and “unsolvable” “problem” for him. And secondly, in such a way that in a fundamental sense history and “historicality” itself derives from death and “mortality”.

It is an important question however – therefore it must be asked – whether historiography, that is, the ever sprawling historiographical research of death, reckons with it, or how it reckons with it. For, as it has been repeatedly claimed, these researches never **re-question** but rather only take into account and interpret the former “meanings” and understandings of death in various ages, so that, meanwhile, they also try to surface the various social or other “functions” of these. Additionally, the historical knowledge of death also reacts to the modifications which have occurred in these functions and interpretations in the course of times. As mentioned before, it is not incidental that historians speak about the “system of death”, since by this they highlight the complexity and variety of roles that the structure of death has undertaken in various ages. By this, it becomes increasingly clear that the “historical perspective” as such is simply inevitable for the understanding of the actual significance of the subject of death for human existence. Nevertheless, the actual situation is rather that these researches, as a critique of a “present” only sketchily outlined, tend to confront this present with the “more ideal” conditions of a better analyzed, yet already lost, former age. In which, perhaps, humans were in a “domesticated” or “tamed”, (as if) almost friendly or carefree relationship with death and dying. In such cases it is usually the Middle Ages, or at least some pre-modern age which seems to appear particularly glorious. Admirable or directly enviable about these ages would be precisely the fact that then “...dying meant **transformation**, and death a stage of passage **to another life**”.⁶⁷ The legitimacy of such an interpretation was largely, yet essentially, based on the institutionalization of mythical-religious systems, which at the same time offered the certainty and security of **non-dying death**.⁶⁸ So these ages should not (have had to) “repress” death – as it allegedly happens ever since modernity.

It must be repeatedly asked therefore: what does it actually mean that dying is “transformation”, and death is “the stage of a passage to another life”? And what does it mean for this to be presented and served as offering “the certainty of security”? But what else could this mean if not precisely that – at least until the “beginning of modernity” – death “meant” precisely **non-death**, and dying **non-dying**? Namely, that even in these long and allegedly enviably “carefree” ages (as well) death as well as, even more, dying was in fact “denied”. It is incomprehensible

⁶⁷ See Georg Weber, “Reprimarea morții – o caracteristică structurală a modernității? Aspecte din perspectiva teoriei sistemelor și a sociologiei cunoașterii” (Repression of death – a structural characteristic of modernity? Aspects from the perspective of system theory and sociology of knowledge), in *Discursuri despre moarte în Transilvania secolelor XVI-XX* (Discourses on death in 16th–20th century Transylvania), ed. Mihaela Grancea and Ana Dumitran (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2006), 120.; Maria Crăciun, “‘Moartea cea bună’: intercesori și protectori în pragul mării treceri. Între discursul clerical și pietatea populară” (‘The good death’: intercessors and protectors at the great passage. Between clerical discourse and popular piety), in *Discursuri despre moarte în Transilvania*, 226–269.

⁶⁸ See Weber, “Reprimarea morții....” 120.

however why could we not regard the denial of death a particular and highly radical “repression” of death even if it was often publicly “displayed” while being denied? In other words: it was denied particularly in its being displayed, and it was “displayed” precisely in the denial of death. Well, in contrast the former and alleged “homogeneity” of the image of death was lost indeed in modernity. To such an extent that it cannot be secured even to this day...

Nevertheless, it would do no harm to investigate the **possibilities** of historiological research on death with reference to a different – critical, therefore **negative** – perspective, and mainly to apply this perspective as well. What I have in mind is that it would primarily be **historiology** itself which could demonstrate or honourably acknowledge that during, and **despite**, the methodical research of the history of death – that is to say, of the history of the denial and repression of death – as well as the history of the variety of mentalities connected to it **has not come across any single case, valid for its discipline**, in which someone would have **avoided** or in a different respect **survived** his own dying! Whereas it would be just befitting for a science – especially if it almost infatuatedly deals with the criteria and methodologies of its scholarliness – to represent this as well, in addition to various images of death etc.

The actual situation with “modernity”, just like the “present” age, is much more complicated. We should therefore consider more seriously the conclusions of researches which qualify the public discourse on the contemporary cover-up and tabooing of death - instead of a serious inquiry – as more of a commonplace-like and superficially or automatically repeated *slogan*, emphasizing that it is precisely the modern (western) society which eventually started to seriously and responsibly deal with the oppressive human things of death and dying. Indeed, nothing proves it better than the emerging hospice system and its equally novel mentality, “philosophy”. Or the recent emergence of the “discipline” of thanatology or, say, the legislation on, and practice of euthanasia, or the explicit caregiving and palliative undertaking of “accompanying into death”.⁶⁹ Which of course also reveals that modernity, our own age, approaches the inevitably actual question of death particularly by concentrating on dying and the process and event of dying. That is, with a focus on the very aspect which has mostly been neglected so far, since the escape from death and the denial of death as dying was primarily and repeatedly fuelled by the escape from this aspect.

It is a different question altogether whether our age undertakes and applies this specific and novel perspective, motivation and intention. However, it seems doubtless that all this is part of that actual and current change and mutation of mentality which triggered in the first place the historiological – and also anthropological, psychological, or social – research and investigation of death. It is therefore part of the **mutation** in the preparation of which philosophy has accepted a huge, if not decisive role, despite all its basic contradictoriness and problematic nature. And in the first place by the works of radical and allegedly “subversive” thinkers like Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, or Heidegger. This is not to say

⁶⁹ See Camilla Zimmermann, and Gary Rodin, “The denial of death thesis: sociological critique and implications for palliative care,” *Palliative Medicine* 18 (2004): 121–128.

of course that our age no longer tries to escape, deny or veil the question of death and dying itself. And even less that the contemporary man had indeed succeeded to become mortal. But the outlines of certain possibilities begin to show – and among these also the possibilities of autonomous, free and forceful thinking – which would now indeed be a sin to – again?! – give up or miss. On the contrary, these should be protected and applied.

Furthermore, although death and dying is indeed increasingly medicalized in contemporary society, it is not merely this modern society which “institutionalizes” death. On the contrary again, death and dying were probably institutionalized from the beginning, and various kinds of formal, informal or symbolic institutions or powers of various complexity were employed around them.⁷⁰ As a fight for the dominance over death and dying, or more precisely for any kind of dominance over the **event** of dying – of course, essentially over life, outlined and usually “comforting” **not** amidst dying, but precisely amidst the denial of death. A fight which, meanwhile – that is, amidst the denial of death – becomes an essential and very efficient corner stone and purpose of the dominance over life or the articulation of life.⁷¹ So these days we should indeed think more fundamentally of the historical possibilities of man and human existence which not only dies, but is already truly mortal. That is to say, it has truly and explicitly become mortal already. Because it could well be that this would now truly and actually be part of a story, as Nietzsche suggested, more glorious than any other previous stories. Part of such a story in which it is always explicitly questionable, and it is always radically and originally asked whether we understand – or better understand – time and history? Whether we

⁷⁰ This statement is proved by archaeological, anthropological, ethnological, ethnographic, historical, and religious historical researches as well. To such an extent that, as we have seen, Pierre Chaunu could even state that man became “mortal” and “religious” at the same time. See Pierre Chaunu, *Trois millions d'années*; and Marius Rotar, “Istoriografia românească asupra morții...”. For the anthropological, religious historical or other disciplinary aspects of the question, see Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase* (The history of religious beliefs and ideas) (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1999), vol. I., 31–98; Carmen Florea, “Despre tensiunea unei solidarități în evul mediu târziu: exemplul unor orașe transilvănene” (On the tension of solidarity in the late Middle Ages: the example of some Transylvanian towns), In *Reprezentări ale morții în Transilvania secolelor XVI-XX*, 51–69.; Edit Szegedi, “Moartea, disciplina ecleziastică și socială în mediile protestante din Transilvania,” (Death and church and social discipline in Protestant environments in Transilvania) In *Ibid.*, 70–85.; Sultana Anca Avram, “Aspecte privind trupul și moartea în tradiția populară românească” (Aspects regarding the body and death in Romanian popular tradition), In *Ibid.*, 229–237.

⁷¹ This is particularly emphasized in the brilliant thematic dictionary edited by Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt which discusses the main issues of the medieval West, among which also the medieval problem of death, with a special regard to the fact that death is always found in a **hierarchical** network of connections and relations, in structures of **power** and **authority** and **symbolic systems**. (Emphasis added) See Jacques Le Goff and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'Occident Médiéval* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 771–789. To such an extent that the dead were also ranked: worship was only due to the dead bodies or remains of saints, so that the living, although praying for their dead, addressed their prayers to the saints.

understand, or better and more seriously understand its pertinence to us, or the questionableness and particular question-nature of this pertinence? And with it also whether we understand it indeed that the real “problems” are primarily not caused by the insufficient, unclear or ambiguous knowledge due to the lack of historical “information” or “data” – that is, of historical “omniscience” –, but, on the contrary, precisely by the “**certainties**”. In other words, by the fact that every kind of really fundamental and essentially categorial certainty will sooner or later prove to actually, originally and precisely be: a **question!** Which must always be asked and re-asked. This way it might also be revealed that, while asking them – these questions deriving precisely from certainties – always lead the all-time inquirer to what he must call (so: we must call) **death** from one direction, and **history and freedom** from the other! So they lead to further questions which are co-originary and co-constitutive, they have common origins and they are questionable in a way always interconnected in origin and always sending back and forth to one another. And which, this way – inside and through us – always question and search for the inquirer’s and their own all-time **truth**. Since it is a truly and actually inevitable question What? is the “meaning” of human existence, human life, human history amidst death or in the “shadow” of death, or, perhaps even more seriously, amidst the **finitude** of human existence, the human “race”?

However, the meaning of human existence, human life and human history cannot be sought from the outside – since, as we have asked already, Who? and How? could search for it “**from there**” with a real insight and weight? – neither “outside” of it or “beyond” it. For how should we know that this “meaning” “outside” or beyond living being and history pertains indeed to this or that being and history? By the fact that the meaning and human existence and human history can only be sought (in) there, from where itself the **question referring to meaning** derives! The question is therefore actually What? is the meaning of human life and human history, or more precisely What? is the meaning and **being-like weight** of these questions **as questions**? Since, as long as we do not clarify it or understand it to a certain degree, all kind of inquiry about the meaning of being, life, or history would become completely weightless and as such, completely arbitrary in its answers as well. However, if by “meaning” we do not simply and hastily understand a kind of purposeful – perhaps ideal, yet transferably beyond-like – condition, nor some kind of mechanical, but somehow externally determined “function”, inaccessible and uncontrollable as to its origin, and if we decide to investigate what it the *ratio* of meaning, or the question of meaning, where it comes from and what it is based on, then in order to thematize it, we shall need a shift in focus. For human existence, human life and human history do not “receive” their meanings or any kind of meaning merely externally and independently from themselves, but meaning can only be born, outlined and unfolded for man in the **search** or **inquiry** of that very meaning. And closed as well. So that, in the strictest sense of the word, man explicitly and in a being-like manner **comes onto** the meaning or meanings in his searches and inquiries!

Furthermore, if by inquiry we do not only mean a kind of superficial staring at anything, but – as seen above – precisely the “constitution” of meaning, then it results that meaning itself – and by this inquiry as well – can only derive and

originate from where they gain their weight and their stakes. Namely, precisely from finitude, from human death.⁷² Under the circumstances that all search and inquiry is actually and originally precisely a kind of relation to human death, albeit mostly not a thematic or thematized kind.

For its thematization however there is a definite need for a shift of focus. Namely, we must now proceed with the thematization of freedom – in a particularly ontological way, and in an essential relation with the also ontological issues of death and history, therefore maintainable in their inquiring relationship.

5. History – Freedom – Death

The actual meaning of **human freedom** or its explicitly **occurring** “actuality” or validity is by far not despotism or imposing someone’s own will, nor an ultimately meaningless and weightless “universal power or ability” of any kind of omnipotence, but much rather a living “problem” being in action, or an explicit and carried out question and inquiry. Or rather the “problem” of the existence and unfolding of being-here, of *Dasein*, always constituting and articulating it. Ultimately, in fact, the question and inquiry of being itself, always open and unravelled for the sense of being and the being. With even more precision, the “essential problem” or questionability and question of the unfolding of this being itself, appearing again always like a new challenge, and in **this particular way** proving always **constant** and **persistent**. Therefore freedom can only derive and come from where the **weight of being** also **derives** and **comes** from. And to or “towards” where inquiry and through or within it also the questionable, problematic, weighty, risky freedom – structurally and in a being-like manner – necessarily directs. That is, from the future. However, the future itself, just like also time, **derive** and **come** precisely from finitude, from human **death**.

It has been revealed so far that history, human history and historicity also derive and “come” in fact from there. Freedom and history are therefore not only connected “conceptually” or refer to each other as formal or partial “overlappings” of conceptual contents or circles, but in ways much more fundamental and essential. That is, ontologically! With respect to their origin, articulation, being, and also to what they consist of and how they exist. Previous analyses offered insight in fact into how history, death and freedom pertain to us precisely by **constituting each other**, and this is also how they pertain to, proceed to, and mutually find, each other

⁷² Which does not mean again, that the quite disagreeable and uncomfortable philosophy would be thinking or make one to think of death all day long! For, regardless of whether or not we accept or understand Spinoza’s geometric and axiomatic statement that the free man thinks **less** of nothing than death, and that the wisdom of the free man lies particularly in his meditation on life, and not death, we should understand that the issue in **not of a quantitative nature**. The question and the stake is not therefore whether man thinks “much” or “little” of death, but whether he really thinks meanwhile?! Man could think – and does think often! – of death all day long, or even for millennia, without seeing himself or his own freedom in it. Perhaps, he thinks “about it” precisely because, although he cannot avoid it, it stands in his freedom – while turning away and escaping from it – to not see either his death or his freedom in it. Including also the history constituted by the freedom of such a “wisdom”, and the ontological insight connected to it.

as well. Moreover – I cannot stress it enough – as a mode of being and particularity of being. That is, precisely as the **constitution** of the lasting, ontological identity of man, we ourselves, the *Dasein*. Which must be outlined and **validated** over and over by explicit inquiry. Namely, it must be conducted and enforced. And in which history, death and freedom find and keep the man in being while constituting and “holding” him, and pertain to each other. It has also been found that death as a particularly human **possibility** also has a question-structure. A structure, that is, which (“also”) structures and constitutes at the same time the essence of freedom. In a being-like way. Or rather: in a mode-of-being-like-way. That is, in the facticity or actuality always referring to the possibilities of being of the all-time unfolding modes of being – all human modes of being. That is, as **occurrence**, as the **occurrence of history**. Consequently, the structure of death is constituted by freedom, and the structure of freedom by death: as history! The revelation or research of this cannot be a “subject” of any kind of historiology or anthropology, but it is something that can only be hoped to be enlightened by the philosophy of history – precisely by a philosophy of history understood, **accomplished, and taken to the end** as ontology. In which we can offer a more articulate answer to the question referring to the “meaning” of human life and human existence. It has become clear and unambiguous that the meaning of man, the being called *Dasein* – as the **actual possibility of being and the actual horizon of these possibilities** of being – **cannot** be taken **beyond** question and questioning, therefore neither beyond the questioning being! Since without questioning there cannot exist or open up any kind of meaning or horizon of meaning outlined and articulated as an explicit and challenging possibility!

Questioning is exclusively the possibility, mode and ambition of being of a being whose relationship with the other beings, sending always back to itself is always also being-like. Which, while validating and conducting its own being in its own modes of being, must always experience the all-time weight of its being as well. Which is thus inquiringly and questioningly mortal, and as such, in the aspects and manners revealed here, **historical** and **free** in its being. So the meaning of human existence, with its temporal, spatial etc. diversity, *lies* in fact in the kind of **freedom** outlined here and the human finitude constituted by it, as well as in the human modes of being of this finitude; in other words, in the **history** constituted and conditioned by **death** and **mortality**! Human existence is therefore not at all “meaningless” or “absurd” or “tragicomical”! It is “only” questionable and inquiring, always as an ambition, expectation or challenge of being! And as such, always “in expectance” of itself – always outdistancing itself. Philosophy *exists* in fact **essentially** for the revelation and opening up of this. For which reason the particular duty or task of philosophy cannot be any kind of comforting or consolation. But only **clarification**, or the achievement and securing of all-time clarity. With the addition that clarification means here not the “clarification” of concepts – as word-things – but always precisely the increase of questionability; that is, it can “only” mean the continuous, all-time, actual and possible re-asking of questions, corresponding to their own weight.

However, it is not excluded at all that this clarification, if made possible, carried out and achieved, may bring both “calmness” and “ease”. Such that has

nothing to do with the arbitrary and unquestioned, promising and/or threatening “piety” – which turns away from consistent inquiry and often even prosecutes it – of either illusory consolations or comfortable illusions. But only with the meaning of philosophy and life. More precisely: the question of meaning! Which philosophy repeatedly asks and in which – just like man himself – it repeatedly stands, and can only stand, with being-like inquiry and questionability... For, only because he dwells mortally, therefore does man dwell, and must dwell questioningly and historically in his freedom – that is, in being, bringing to life history itself as a new dimension of being.

Translated by Emese Czintos