

Static and Genetic Phenomenology of Death

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If the aim of phenomenology is ‘to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself’, or, to state the same thing, to get ‘to the things themselves’,¹ then death presents a unique problem for the phenomenologist. For how *can* we let death show itself as it is in itself? As Epicurus realized, “while we are, death is not; when death is come, we are not.”² Heidegger, too, recognizes this problem: “When Dasein reaches its wholeness in death, it simultaneously loses the being of its “there.” By its transition to no-longer-Dasein, it gets lifted right out of the possibility of experiencing this transition and of understanding it as something experienced.”³ However, I am not the only one who dies; others die too, and in the death of the other, the phenomenon of death becomes ‘objectively’ accessible to the phenomenologist. But if we give a phenomenological interpretation of the death of the other, have we got to the thing itself? Heidegger thinks not—for even if I attend to the death of the other, *I* am still alive. Therefore, according to Heidegger, ‘the dying of others is not something that we experience in a genuine sense; at most we are always just “there alongside.”⁴ If, in the death of the other, we do not experience death in a genuine sense, and we cannot go through our own death, then are we, as phenomenologists, forced to conclude with Epicurus that death is nothing to us?

Epicurus’ view is correct, in a sense, but rests on an ontologically unclarified notion of ‘nothing’. In Epicurus’ proto-scientific atomism nothing is considered as nullity: “the whole of being consists of bodies and space...Beyond bodies and space there is nothing which by mental apprehension or on its analogy can be conceived to exist.”⁵ As such, it is a precursor to modern science which, according to Heidegger, “is solely concerned with beings [and] wishes to know nothing about the nothing.”⁶ But even this rejection of the nothing is a relation to it. Science, in defining its field of investigation as beings *and nothing else besides*, ‘has recourse to what it rejects’.⁷ Could there be an experience of the nothing that science forecloses? If there is, might the statement ‘death is nothing to me’ take on a new sense?

This is indeed the case. In *Being and Time*, Dasein is 'defined' by its existence. That is to say that it is not something actual, present-at-hand, but rather *possibility*. Dasein 'is' its possibility, and possibility is always futural. I can never truly say that I am 'actually' x, because tomorrow something might happen that would stop my being x.⁸ The most that I can say is that I am a 'potentiality-for-being' x. The only event that could put an end to Dasein's possibility is its death; before that there is always something still outstanding. The logic that Aristotle applies to *eudaimonia*, to call no man *eudaimon* until after his death, applies to all possibilities of Dasein's being.

If death is an end to my being a possibility, this means it itself is a possibility—the possibility of my impossibility. This is, for Heidegger, how we may experience the nothing that is our own death—as the possibility of the utter nullity of all our possibilities. But is this only wordplay? In referring to death as the possibility of my impossibility, is Heidegger not, as Paul Edwards thinks, "carrying the misuse of language to the ultimate degree."⁹ If we try and think the utter nullity of all our possibilities, do we not just fall upon further possibilities? If I try and conceptualize my death, I can only do so by analogy with possibilities from life, such as doing nothing, sleep, unconsciousness. These are possibilities of my being and thus do not give me access to the utter nullity of my possibilities. We cannot gain access to death through conceptualization or theoretical contemplation. How, then, is the phenomenologist to gain access to death?

The answer lies in the second constitutive moment of Dasein's existence. Dasein is its possibility, its 'projection', but it is also thrown into the world. Heidegger first articulates this notion of thrownness in his interpretation of the phenomenon of mood. Dasein is always already attuned to the world in one way or another, and this mood colours its encounters with things in the world. Heidegger gives the example of fear: Dasein can only encounter something as fearful insofar as it is already afraid. It is my fear that reveals something to me as fearful. One might 'fear' death, but this would seem to be a category mistake; fear is always of some determinate thing, and death is, by its nature indeterminate—it is no-thing. But there is a mood, anxiety, in which nothing is made manifest to us. Anxiety is such that its object is indeterminate, nothing. Anxious Dasein "finds itself *face to face* with the "nothing" of the possible impossibility of its existence."¹⁰

Furthermore, in death Dasein finds its ownmost possibility of existence. In everything I do, I can be represented by another person. Somebody else could do my job for me, go through the various activities that constitute my job so that I do not have to do them. But with death, this possibility of representation breaks down. Nobody can die my death for me. Of course, there is a sense in which someone could give their life to save mine, but in this case my death would still be to come. I would still have to die. Thus death appears as stripping Dasein of all its relations to others, and confirms Heidegger's definition of Dasein as in each case mine.

On Heidegger's account, then, when anxiety brings Dasein face to face with death, it realizes that its being is being-towards-death, that its life, and all the decisions it makes, are haunted by the indeterminate yet certain possibility of its impossibility, and

moreover that its life is *its* life, its decisions *its* decisions. All my plans and projects can be annihilated at any time and will be annihilated at some time. This is no comforting thought, as Heidegger realizes when he calls anxiety uncanny (*unheimlich*). When brought face to face with death there is a temptation to flee to what is comfortable and keep Dasein's being-towards-death secret (*heimlich*), to accept what 'they' say about death: one dies, but *not yet*. But one can also face up to death recognize that one's life is being-towards-death and live one's life accordingly.

II

To ask how one would live one's life in recognition of one's being-towards-death would take us to a discussion of Heidegger's notions of resoluteness and authenticity, notions about which there is ample debate in the literature. What I want to notice here is that there are, according to Heidegger, only two fundamental modes of comporting oneself towards death: fleeing in the face of it and facing up to it. These two existential modes are the condition of the possibility of any *existentiell*, or concrete, attitudes to death. This is why I say that Heidegger's phenomenology of death is a static phenomenology of death.¹¹ For if we look at history we can see manifold ways of relating to death, but, in Heidegger's view, all of these are founded on the two fundamental comportments. Thus, for instance, Heidegger writes:

the ways in which death is taken among primitive peoples, and their ways of comporting themselves towards it in magic and cult, illuminate primarily the understanding of *Dasein*; but the interpretation of this understanding already requires an existential analytic and a corresponding conception of death.¹²

Heidegger pays lip service to the importance of the historical investigation of death, but then takes it back again. Heidegger displays here, I think, the same 'lack of historical sense' that Nietzsche claimed was the 'family failing of all philosophers'.¹³ His 'static' phenomenology of death needs to be supplemented by a 'genetic' phenomenology of death.

I shall turn to the work of the historian of death, Philippe Ariès. If we take Ariès's history to be correct we can see that Heidegger's prioritisation of one's own death would be incomprehensible before the 11th century:

between the year 1000 and the middle of the thirteenth century "a very important historical mutation occurred."...Here we can grasp this change in the mirror of death, or, in the words of the old authors, in the *speculum mortis*. In the mirror of his own death each man would discover the secret of his individuality...Since

the early middle ages man has come to see himself in his own death; he has discovered *la mort de soi*, one's own death.¹⁴

Except in the case of some exemplary individuals (Jesus and Socrates, for example), the relationship between the individual's death and his being an individual as such was not emphasized; death was just one of the 'great laws of the species'.¹⁵ Ariès discerns four 'attitudes towards death' that have been present in the West since antiquity. Two of these, 'one's own death' and 'forbidden death', roughly correspond to Heidegger's 'facing up' and 'fleeing' respectively. Ariès refers to a 'procedure of hushing-up' that characterizes attitudes towards death 'in our day' (already 'very noticeable in Tolstoy's stories about death'¹⁶). Heidegger also refers to Tolstoy in his discussion of 'fleeing' and the 'constant tranquillisation about death' provided by *das Man*.¹⁷ The other two attitudes that Ariès discusses are: 'tamed death', which he places chronologically from the end of antiquity to the beginning of the second millennium, 'in which death was both familiar and near, evoking no great fear or awe'; and 'thy death', from the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, in which the death of the other takes priority over one's own death. Can these fit into Heidegger's existential analysis of death? With regard to the latter, we have already seen how the death of the other is considered of secondary importance. The former, in which one is 'at home', both literally and metaphorically, with death is incompatible with Heidegger's equation of the anxiety in which one feels uncanny (*unheimlich*, literally 'unhomely') and being-towards-death. Heidegger believes that one cannot be 'at home' with death.

This inability to fit certain historical attitudes towards death into the general schema of the existential analytic suggests that Heidegger's fundamental modes of comporting oneself towards death are not fundamental at all, but are themselves historical. His diagnosis of early twentieth century attitudes towards death as characterized by 'fleeing' is correct, but he wrongly generalizes this idea, makes it an ahistorical characteristic of Dasein's existence—'makes a mummy of it' to use Nietzsche's phrase. According to him, Dasein *always* has a tendency to flee in the face of a more authentic comportment towards its death. Moreover, this more authentic comportment is itself historically determined, as the 'one's own death' that Ariès identifies; whereas Heidegger would have it that it is the condition of the possibility of Dasein being able to 'have' a history:

*Authentic being-towards-death—that is to say, the finitude of temporality—is the hidden basis of Dasein's historicity. Dasein does not first become historical in repetition; but because it is historical as temporal, it can take itself over in its history by repeating. For this, no history [Historie] is as yet needed.*¹⁹

I would suggest, rather, that being-towards-death, if indeed one can still use this term, is historical through and through, and cannot therefore serve as the 'basis' of history. I am not suggesting that the categories of authenticity and inauthenticity, 'facing up' and 'fleeing', are invalid. They need to be understood hermeneutically *from within* a

particular cultural-historical understanding of death. But Heidegger hypostasizes these categories, turns them into conditions of the possibility of history itself.

How can this be explained? How is it that Heidegger, the same philosopher who declares 'Dasein is historical', came to see human beings, and particularly their being-towards-death, in such a de-historicized way? This de-historicization reflects a certain conservatism in Heidegger's thought. Johannes Fritsche has noted the concurrence between Heidegger's language (*Vorlaufen*, *Entschlossenheit*, *Held*) with that of conservative accounts of World War I.²⁰ This concurrence of language finds its disquieting conclusion in the 1933 speech in which Heidegger praised the executed nationalist Leo Schlageter as a paradigm of authentic being-towards-death. Adorno—in a section of his *Negative Dialectics* entitled 'Dying Today', a title that recognizes, against Heidegger, that death is historical²¹—recognizes the inherent conservatism in Heidegger's death analysis:

Our current death metaphysics [by which he means Heidegger's death analysis and views derived from it] is nothing but society's impotent solace for the fact that social change has robbed men of what was once said to make death bearable for them, of the feeling of its epic unity with a full life.²²

Adorno recognizes that death and history 'form a constellation', that the one (death) cannot be held up as a condition of possibility of the other (history). Indeed, for Adorno, it is impossible to grasp the facticity of the ontic, of concrete historical events, such as the French Revolution, if one only has ontological categories such as being-towards-death and historicity to guide one.²³ The complexities of real history exceed the *existentiales* of fundamental ontology.

Although I do think that Heidegger argues that death is a condition of the possibility of history as such, we could attribute to Heidegger a slightly weaker claim, namely that a conception of death is the condition of the possibility of any history of death. He writes: "the existential interpretation of death takes precedence over [and] is also the foundation for any investigation of death which is...historical [*historische*]." ²⁴ There is at work here what Derrida has called a 'logic of presupposition'. The historian of death, such as Ariès, must, in order to delimit the field of his enquiry, *already know what death itself is*. A conception of death, ontologically clarified or not, is *presupposed* by any history of death, and thus an ontological clarification of death must *take precedence*. However, the converse also holds true. An ontological clarification of death *presupposes* an entire history of death, because any clarification needs something to clarify (in this case, death), and that something must be handed down to it from the heritage of the Dasein that is engaged in the clarification. Heidegger's existential analysis of death has as its foundation a whole history of death. Derrida points out the paradoxical or aporetic character of the death analysis in this respect:

On the one hand, no matter how rich or new it may be, one can read a history of death in the Christian West, like that of Ariès for example, as a small monograph

that illustrates like a footnote the extent to which it relies, in its presuppositions, upon the powerful and universal delimitation that the existential analysis of death in *Being and Time* is. The existential analysis exceeds and therefore includes beforehand the work of the historian, not to mention the biologist, the psychologist, and the theologian of death. It also conditions their work; it is constantly presupposed there.

However, *on the other hand*, conversely but just as legitimately, one can also be tempted to read *Being and Time* as a small, late document, among many others *within* the huge archive where the memory of death in Christian Europe is being accumulated. Each of these two discourses on death is much more comprehensive than the other, bigger and smaller than what it tends to include or exclude, more and less originary, more and less ancient, young or old.²⁵

Heidegger passes over the historicity of his own statements on death, effaces the historical memory of death.

III

I have suggested that a static phenomenology of death, such as that which Heidegger offers, needs to be supported by a genetic phenomenology of death, that is, by a historical account of the genesis of the categories of static phenomenology. What would this genetic phenomenology be like? Firstly, a genetic phenomenology of death would have to focus on the death of the other rather than my own death, as my own death is still to come, and as such belongs to the future. Sartre implicitly recognizes the need for a genetic phenomenology of death when he writes that “the relation with the dead—with *all* the dead—is an essential structure of the fundamental relation which we have called ‘being-for-Others’.”²⁶ Our self identity, including our relation to our own death, is constituted by our relations with dead others, by the ‘the memory of the Other’.²⁷ If we want to get to death itself, to the essence of death, then we must utilize our memory and recollect the deaths of others.

Sartre himself does not explicitly realize this genetic phenomenology of death; in order to see such a phenomenology in action, I think, we must turn to Hegel. Hegel says in his *Logic* that it is not “until knowing *recollects* itself out of immediate being, does it, through this mediation, find essence.”²⁸ Whereas for Heidegger it is the future, Dasein’s projecting on to its death, that will reveal the essence of Dasein as temporal existence, for Hegel it is a recollection of the past that allows individual consciousness to become aware of its essence as finite. In the *Logic*, Hegel defines finitude thus:

The finite not only alters, like something in general, but it *ceases to be*; and its

ceasing to be is not merely a possibility, so that it could be without ceasing to be, but the being as such of finite things is to have the germ of their decease as their being-within-self: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death.²⁹

This definition of finitude is remarkable for its proximity to Heidegger's definition of death as the ownmost possibility that Dasein takes over as soon as it is born.³⁰ But, unlike Heidegger, this definition is arrived at after a genetic phenomenology of death, a phenomenology that Hegel presents in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the recollection that frees thought "from its immediacy and external concretion and attains to the pure knowing that takes as its object those same pure essentialities as they are in and for themselves."³¹ The account of the pure categories of thought in the *Logic* presupposes the concrete historical or genetic account of those categories in the *Phenomenology*.

But why is the *Phenomenology of Spirit* a genetic phenomenology of death? Because, as Hegel explains in the preface, "the life of the spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it."³² Thus, whereas for Heidegger death appears as only an individualizing factor in human experience,³³ Hegel, through a concrete analysis of the way death appears in formations of spirit, can identify the way in which death forms our communal self-understanding, because spirit is irreducibly intersubjective; it is an "'I' that is 'we' and a 'we' that is 'I'." The most celebrated example of the place of death in intersubjective identity formation is the struggle for recognition that leads to the formation of the master/slave dialectic. But, as this has been the focus of copious comment, I wish to look briefly at two other sections of the *Phenomenology*.

Firstly, Hegel's account of the Terror following the French Revolution (recall here Adorno's comment about the facticity of historical events such as the French Revolution exceeding Heidegger's ontological categories; let us see how Hegel does). He tackles the Terror in the section of the *Phenomenology* titled 'Absolute Freedom and Terror', which immediately follows the 'Enlightenment' section. The Enlightenment had rejected any normative claims that rested on tradition. Now this is already a relation to the death, a rejection of the actuality of the deeds of dead others in the present. As Marx wrote, in a different context, "the tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living,"³⁴ and the living would like to throw it off, to insist that the dead have no normative hold over them.

The Enlightenment finds its normative criterion not in tradition, but instead in 'utility', the principle that what is good and right is whatever is useful to consciousness, or maximizes consciousness's ability to fulfil its desires. Thus utility finds its truth in absolute freedom, the freedom of consciousness to do whatsoever it desires. When applied on a social level, however, the principle of utility comes up against the fact of conflict, and the problem of how to uphold self-determination and maintain social order without any reference to traditional rules and customs. Such was the problem that Rousseau wrestled with in *The Social Contract*. His solution was the notion of

the general will, and it was the general will that the Revolution tried to actualize. But the general will subsumes all particularity: “Universal freedom...[would be] free from *particular* individuality...[and] would restrict the being of the personality to a branch of the whole.”³⁵ The particular individual will is worth nothing before the great edifice of the general will, and, as the general will could not have any traditional content, it could only will itself. Any particular will that opposes the general will is thus nothing, and must be destroyed: ‘Universal freedom...is merely the *fury* of destruction’. The truth of absolute freedom is therefore the death of the individual:

The sole work and deed of universal freedom is therefore *death*, a death too which has no inner significance or filling, for what is negated is the empty point of the absolutely free self. It is thus the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water.³⁶

Thus, Hegel’s phenomenology of death provides an insight into intersubjective dimension of human existence: a social organisation based on the concept of absolute freedom has terror and the death of individuals as its result.

My second example is taken from Hegel’s examination of Greek *Sittlichkeit*. Here, Hegel points out that death is a natural phenomenon: “*death...is a result that has been reached immediately, in the course of nature, not a conscious action.*”³⁷ Now this may not seem immediately obvious to a Heideggerian, given that Heidegger insists, both in *Being and Time* and elsewhere, upon a strict demarcation between death as a natural phenomenon that is appropriate to animals and living things other than Dasein (perishing, *Verenden*), and the death that is proper to Dasein (*Tod, Sterben*).³⁸ For Dasein can *relate* itself to death, and hence is capable of death as such, *authentic* dying. Of course it need not relate itself to death authentically, in which case its end is merely the intermediate phenomenon of ‘demise’ (*Ableben*). But it never perishes and can ‘demise only as long as it is dying’,³⁹ that is, as long as authentically dying is a possibility for it. (But how can Heidegger help himself to these strict demarcations, this typology of ways of ending? Is not Dasein an animal too? The boundaries are problematic, to say the least.)

At the very least we can argue that after Dasein’s ‘demise’, its body—the body that is strangely absent from *Being and Time*, but perhaps present in its very absence, in the talk of equipment being *ready-to-hand* and *present-at-hand*⁴⁰—presuming that it does not become ‘an object of concern in the ways of funeral rites, interment and the cult of graves’, is a merely natural thing, at the mercy of the forces of nature. Hegel writes:

The dead individual...is...merely a passive *being-for-another* at the mercy of every lower irrational individuality and the forces of abstract material elements, all of which are now more powerful than himself, the former on account of the life they possess, the latter on account of their negative nature.⁴¹

For the Greeks leaving a body to the forces of nature was the ultimate insult; thus the vengeful Achilles submits Hektor's body to the 'shameful treatment' of 'giving it to the dogs to eat raw'. Jean-Pierre Vernant describes the insult vividly:

The hero whose body is surrendered to the voracity of wild animals is excluded from death whilst also having fallen from the human condition. He cannot pass through the gates of Hades, for he has not had his "share of fire"; he has no place of burial, no mound or *séma*, no location for his body that would mark for his society the site where he is to be found; there he would continue his relations with his country, his lineage, his descendants, or even simply with the chance passers by. Excluded from death, he is equally banished from human memory. Moreover, to hand someone over to wild animals does not mean only to deprive him of the status of a dead man by preventing his funeral. It is also to dissolve him into confusion and to return him to chaos, utter nonhumanity. In the belly of the beasts that have devoured him, he becomes the flesh and blood of wild animals, and there is no longer the slightest appearance or trace of humanity; he is no longer in any way a person.⁴²

Hektor, who has died at the hands of Achilles, can no longer have equipment ready-to-hand. His hands, these human hands that Heidegger is at pains to distinguish from the 'grasping organs' of an animal,⁴³ will be devoured by the dogs or eroded by the forces of nature, just as an animal's hand will be after it has ended. Dasein's hands may be different from the ape's hands in that they can write, shake, pray and sign, but they are also the same in that they are *perishable*. This body that Dasein is or has—and it must have a body in order for equipment to be ready-to-hand or present-at-hand for it—will perish.

Here, cracks begin to appear in Heidegger's strict demarcation between perishing and death, with animals on the one side and Dasein on the other. The dishonoured hero *has* 'perished', but is excluded from death. Thus we seem to have reached a situation described by Derrida:

If, in its very principle, the rigor of this distinction was compromised, weakened or parasited on both sides of what it was supposed to dissociate (*verenden/eigentlich sterben*), then (and you can guess that I am heading towards such a possibility) the entire project of the analysis of Dasein, in its essential conceptuality, would be, if not discredited, granted another status than the one usually attributed to it.⁴⁴

The problematization of the distinction between perishing, demise and death is important, for it is the strictness of this distinction that allows Heidegger to distinguish between an existential analysis of death and other discourses on death. If it is compromised in its rigour, Heidegger can no longer prioritize an existential analysis over a historical investigation of death, or a static phenomenology of death over a genetic one.

Achilles, of course, allows Hektor to be buried in the end, but, as Vernant points out, it is the *absence* of a funeral that highlights the importance of funeral rites.⁴⁵ No matter how much the individual ‘anticipates’ their death, this cannot ensure that their deeds will be remembered after it, that their death will be seen as anything more than a contingent event. It is the funeral, which is usually the duty of the individual’s family, that communally memorializes the dead individual, recognizes the deeds that he carried out on behalf of his community. It thus transforms the contingent relationship between the work of the individual, his death, and the community into a spiritual or ethical relationship. Thus the family acts (excluding a tragic clash such as that presented in *Antigone*) through the spiritualization of death in the last rites, as the mediator between nature (death), the community and the individual. It ensures that the individual is not abandoned to the merely natural by the community after their death, the ‘supreme work’ which they undertake on behalf of the community,⁴⁶ but is preserved in the community’s memory. Hegel thus gives some content to Françoise Dastur’s suggestion that maybe “one should first define man in terms of...public practices of mourning instead of in terms of the purely private knowledge he has of himself as mortal.”⁴⁷ Despite this claim, Dastur later says that “Philosophical discourse on death is...discourse on morality, or on being mortal as such,”⁴⁸ thus excluding practices of mourning from philosophical discourse. Hegel, conversely, integrates practices of mourning into philosophical discourse on death;⁴⁹ for him, our relation to the dead informs our conception of our own mortality.

To conclude: Heidegger’s static phenomenology of death, although not ‘wrong’ in some sense, needs to be supplemented and enriched by a genetic phenomenology of death. Even if one is sceptical about Hegel’s claims to have ‘sublated’ finitude at the end of the *Phenomenology*, his genetic phenomenology of death would correct Heidegger’s static phenomenology in two ways: firstly, our understanding of death could be enriched by an attention to concrete historical detail that was reduced to the ‘merely’ ontic in *Being and Time*; secondly the significance of death for the formation of our intersubjective relations can be positively emphasized (not just negatively, as in Heidegger’s description of the phenomenon of fleeing in the face of death to the comfort of *das Man*). Only in this way can we begin to start understanding some of the most significant events of the last century, including the one that Heidegger was notoriously ‘silent’ about.

The implications of the critique of Heidegger’s static phenomenology for thinking about Heidegger’s silence about the Holocaust cannot be fully discussed here. It should be emphasized, however, that Heidegger’s ‘silence’ was in no way total. In a lecture series of 1949, entitled “Insight into That Which Is” and only recently published, he twice briefly refers to the Holocaust in the context of his critique of modern technology. I quote from volume 79 of the *Gesamtausgabe*:

Agriculture is now a mechanised food industry, essentially the same as the manufacturing of corpses in the gas chambers and extermination camps.⁵⁰

Hundreds of thousands die *en masse*. Do they die? They succumb. They are done in. Do they die? They become items, resources for the manufacture of corpses. Do they die? They are inconspicuously liquidated in extermination camps. And furthermore—impoverished millions now perish from hunger in China. But to die is to endure death in its essence. To die means to be capable of this endurance. We are capable of this only if the essence of death makes our essence possible.⁵¹

Heidegger's analysis is reductive and deflationary. In the first quotation he reduces the Holocaust to one manifestation amongst many of the most recent epoch in the history of being, the technological age. Concrete events cannot change the essential determination of history as the history of being. In the second quotation, he amplifies this claim with respect to death. A concrete event, no matter how or how many people die, cannot alter the essence of death.

From a Hegelian perspective, this approach to the Holocaust is a product of a bad philosophy of history, which proceeds 'without reference to actuality' and "approaches history as something to be manipulated, and...*forces it to conform* to preconceived notions and *constructs history a priori*."⁵² A philosophy of history must apprehend history accurately rather than forcing it to conform to preconceived essential structures. If we want to get to the things themselves, we must let concrete historical events inform the essential concepts of philosophy (which will give them an air of provisionality, transience and historicity). With a genetic phenomenology, concrete events can inform our essential conception of death, as we saw with Hegel's account of the Terror, where if the essence of death is not understood in relation to the past and the death of the other, then death becomes a nullity, insignificant. Therefore we have to incorporate an account of history and the death of the other into our essential conception. This is not to suggest, however, that we should understand the Holocaust in an identical manner to Hegel's understanding of the Terror. It is a different event in a different historical context, and we need to incorporate it into our own genetic phenomenology of death, and carry out our own work of mourning.

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Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) 58.
2. Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus," trans. R. D. Hicks, *The Epicurean Philosophers*, ed. John Gaskin (London: Everyman, 1995) 43.
3. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 281.
4. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 282.
5. Epicurus, "Letter to Herodotus," trans. R. D. Hicks, *The Epicurean Philosophers* 14.
6. Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics," trans. David Farrel Krell, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 84.
7. Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics" 84.
8. Heidegger says that "Higher than actuality stands *possibility*" (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 63), a maxim that informs all of *Being and Time*. He understands possibility, however, not in the traditional sense of "a modal category of presence-at-hand...what is *not yet* actual and *not at any time* necessary" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 183), but in an *existential* sense of the potentiality-for-being of existing Dasein, that is, what an individual Dasein is capable of. It is only in the latter sense that possibility stands higher than actuality, because it is genuinely futural rather than a mode of presence. Heidegger takes actuality always as a mode of presence, meaning that which is present now. He does not thematically consider that there may be an existential sense of actuality corresponding to possibility. However, the 'moment of vision' in which Dasein is "carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered in the situation [and] *held* in resoluteness" (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 387), is possibly an attempt to formulate an existential conception of actuality, having the temporal sense of a stretching-along rather than a now.
9. Paul Edwards, *Heidegger on Death: A Critical Evaluation*, Monist Monograph no. 1 (La Salle: Hegeler Institute, 1979) 33.
10. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 310
11. The terms 'static' and 'genetic' phenomenology are used here to indicate that Heidegger's phenomenology in *Being and Time* is concerned only with the ahistorical fundamental structures of Dasein's existence (i.e. the *existentiales*), not with the historical genesis of these structures. Thus, even though Dasein, as thrown possibility, is dynamic, the fundamental structures of its existence (e.g. thrownness itself, being-towards-death) are not. The terms come originally from Husserl, and indicate a difference between his earlier transcendental phenomenology, which brackets all historical considerations in order to discover the fundamental structures of consciousness, and his later investigations into the historical genesis of the very possibility of this transcendental phenomenology, which attempts to '*reflect back*, in a thorough *historical* and *critical* fashion, in order to provide, *before all decisions*, for a radical self-understanding'. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1970) 17. Thus, as is pointed out by Dermot Moran in his recent book on phenomenology, Husserl's later phenomenology, despite his distaste for post-Kantian German Idealism in general, came to bear a close resemblance to Hegel's 'phenomenology' as presented in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. See Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000) 167.
12. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 291-2.
13. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986) 13.
14. Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Patricia M. Ranum (London: Marion Boyars, 1976) 51-2.
15. Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death* 28.

16. Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death* 87.
17. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 495, n. xii.
18. Ariès, *Western Attitudes Toward Death* 13.
19. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 438.
20. Johannes Fritsche, *Historical Destiny and National Socialism in Heidegger's Being and Time*, (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999) 3.
21. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, (London: Routledge, 1990), 368-73; cf. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1978) 231: "death comes within the scope of history, and the latter in turn can only be understood through it."
22. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 369.
23. See Adorno, "The Idea of a Natural History," trans. Bob Hullot-Kentor, *Telos* 60 (1984): 111-124.
24. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 291.
25. Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993) 45.
26. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966) 693.
27. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* 692.
28. G.W.F Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1989) 389.
29. Hegel, *Science of Logic* 129.
30. "Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is. "As soon as man comes to life, he is at once old enough to die.'" Heidegger, *Being and Time* 289.
31. Hegel, *Science of Logic* 28.
32. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977) 19.
33. Despite his claims about the necessary intersubjectivity of Dasein in *Being and Time* I, 4, Heidegger, I think, does not manage to totally overcome Cartesian individualism. This is especially evident in the 1925 lecture course published as *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*. Dasein is individualized by death in much the same way that the *res cogitans* is individualized by radical doubt for Descartes: "The certainty, that "I myself am in that I will die", is the *basic certainty of Dasein itself*. It is a genuine statement of Dasein, while *cogito sum* is only the semblance of such a statement...*The MORIBUNDUS first gives the SUM its sense*." Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1992) 316-7. Hegel, conversely, shows that human self-consciousness is, in its basis, intersubjective, by showing the contradictions inherent in purportedly individualist modes of self-consciousness, and deduces the intersubjectivity of spirit from the ruin of these individualisms.
34. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," trans. Ben Fowkes, *Surveys from Exile: Political Writings Volume 2*, ed. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 146.
35. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 358-9.
36. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 360.
37. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 270.
38. See *Being and Time* §47 and §49. Heidegger is very insistent on this distinction, and it remains in his later work. See, for example, "The Thing," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) 178: "To die means to be capable of death as death. Only man dies. The animal perishes. It has death neither ahead of itself nor behind it."
39. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 291.
40. See Jacques Derrida, "Geschlecht II: Heidegger's Hand," trans. John P. Leavey, Jr., *Deconstruction and Philosophy*, ed. John Sallis (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 161-96, in which the constant recurrence of the image of the hand in Heidegger's work problematizes or is a "focus of questioning" the "difference between animality and humanity."

41. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 271.
42. Jean-Pierre Vernant, "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic" *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, trans. Froma I. Zeitlin, et al (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992) 71-2.
43. Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) 16: "Apes too have organs that can grasp, but they do not have hands. The hand is infinitely different from all grasping organs—paws, claws or fangs—different by an abyss of essence."
44. Derrida, *Aporias* 31-2.
45. "This finality of funerary practices is revealed precisely where they are missing." Vernant, "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic" 70.
46. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* 270.
47. Françoise Dastur, *Death. An Essay on Finitude*, trans. John Llewelyn (London: Athlone, 1996) 7.
48. Dastur, *Death* 18.
49. As well as the discussion of Antigone in the *Phenomenology*, there are constant references to mourning practices in the substantive part of the *Philosophy of History*. Indeed, I would argue (although I won't do so here), based around the concept of 'transience' (*Vergänglichkeit*) that the *Philosophy of History* is itself a work of mourning. See especially Hegel's reference to transience on 68-9 of the Nisbet translation. G.W.F Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World-History*, trans H.B Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975). This should be read, I think, in conjunction with Freud's short essay on the same topic. See Sigmund Freud, "On Transience," *Art and Literature*, trans. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 283-90.
50. Martin Heidegger, "Das Ge-stell," *Bremmer Un Freiburger Vorträge*, GA 59 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994) 27. My translation.
51. Heidegger, "Die Gefahr," *Bremmer Un Freiburger Vorträge*, GA 59, 56. My translation.
52. G.W.F Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World-History* 25.