



István Király V.

# Existence(s)

– Short Deep-Forage Chapters –

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## Intromission

*The chapters* of the book are seemingly short, but deep explorations on the various fields and possibilities of human being and existence. Such explorations of course reorder and reformulate the timely and essential possibilities of philosophy and philosophizing. These together convey the true weight and stakes of things. For it is indeed so that: „*Philosophy is destined to deal with the Deepest and most disturbing questions. It would hardly survive, if they were definitively solved.*”<sup>1</sup> Therefore the chapters of the volume follow this order:

**CHAPTER I - The Names of the Nothing.** Every discourse about the Nothing seems fully and ultimately empty. However, this cannot be true precisely because it is language – that is, discourse – which always brings forth the Nothing, the word of the “Nothing”. The language therefore speaks about the Nothing and perhaps also “speaks Nothing”. In its primary – and *abstract* – appearance, the Nothing is precisely “that” “which” it is not. However, its word is still **there** in the words of most languages (for we cannot know all). What is more, since it is not, at a first sight all the Nothing has is its word, its name... and this is precisely what protrudes. But the word of the Nothing utters in language only that which has no **being**. That is therefore not just any kind of negation, but the negation of being, the name of the negation of being. The “Nothing” is therefore **the** mere word of the negation of being. Which lives standing in languages. As

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<sup>1</sup> József Hajós, “Ötlések” (Ideas), in *Színkép – A Romániai Magyar Szó Melléklete* (Spectrum – The Supplement of the “Hungarian Word of Romania”), 28–29<sup>th</sup> June, 2003, p. A.

deeply that its translation presents no problems. The German *das Nichts* can be translated unproblematically to the English *Nothing*, the French *rien* or *néant*, the Slavic *nić*, the Romanian *nimic* or the Hungarian *semmi*, etc. However, if we go on deeper into the problem, it shows that, despite the unproblematic translation, being and (its) negation articulates in different ways in the names of the Nothing. The writing analyses this in detail, with special emphasis of the Hungarian word of Nothing [Semmi]. It concludes by initiating a philosophical dialogue with a poem of Attila József.

## CHAPTER II

- **A) Liberty and Truth – Fragments about the “Cave-myth”.** This research, connected to Plato’s cave-myth, attempts to open up the meaning and existential importance of the essence of truth by focusing on the interdependence of liberty and truth. It points out that the essence of truth is liberty and vice versa, the essence of liberty is truth, for without the liberty and openness of search there can be no (artistic, scientific or philosophical) truth at all. Far from giving a final definition of this relationship, the paper illustrates the way in which these two essential components of human life constantly refer to, question and open up one another, showing that, according to the Heideggerian motto: *“Whatever happens with historical human beings comes in each case from a decision about the essence of truth that happened long ago and is never up to humans alone.”*

- **B) A (Possible) Forum for Freedom: Faculty of Philosophy, Chair Philosophy and Applied Philosophy - A Lecture on Philosophy Without Thinker.** The inquiry analyzes the process and consequences of the merging of philosophy and the University, the Faculty of Philosophy, proving its long-distance effects on the basic tendencies of modes of

philosophizing. This means that philosophy as a profession became the dominant form of philosophizing, “going on” in various university departments and research institutions mostly without any kind of existential weight. This is what this paper calls a “thinker-deprived philosophy” or “philosophizing”, recalling at the same time the dangers of the Bologna-process in this matter.

**CHAPTER III - The Sacred, Or the Bright Sounds of Silence – A thinking-experiment on nature, related (and created) to Heidegger and Hölderlin.** This philosophical experiment freely unfolds Martin Heidegger’s dialogical approach to poetry – primarily the poems of Hölderlin, Rilke, and Trakl – with reference to the **paradigms of existential history** connected to nature and therefore environment. These paradigms originating from the Greek *physis*, and leading through the Jewish-Christian *natura* have long proved to be in need of an existential historical criticism in which the accomplishment of a revealing concern for initial and original possibilities is becoming increasingly unavoidable.

**CHAPTER IV - Ciphers, Existence and the Musicality of Making Philosophy, Or Karl Jaspers between West and East,** tries to grasp and acquire mainly with the terminological and methodological instruments of the musical – primarily symphonic – thematisation, of the musical composition, Karl Jaspers’s philosophical-mental horizons. Namely those typically jaspersian tensions and impulses, which in their connections to the Encompassing and to Existence are apparently far from them – turning back (and forth) to the oriental and western metaphysics of Sound and Light. While the “philosophical problems” elevated into themes, now start to interweave into spectacle (*spectaculum*) and – along this – they open up

as ciphers. Concomitantly they do not send us – western thinkers – beyond the World, but contrarily, they attach us to the communicative responsibility towards the world, to ourselves respectively to others.

**CHAPTER V - The Meaning of Life And the Possibility of Human Illness – Prolegomena**, investigates philosophically the issue of human illness and its organic pertinence to the meaning of human life starting from the recognition that the dangerous encounter with the experience of illness is an **unavoidable** – and as such **crucial** – experience of the life of any living being. As for us humans, there is probably no mortal man who has never suffered of some – any! – kind of disease from his birth to the end of his life... Illness is therefore an experience or outright a danger of existence and its possibility, as well as a way of being that nobody has ever been and will ever be ontologically or existentially exempted from. So, it may well be “arbitrary” or “accidental” which disease affects which being or person, when and to what degree, in what way, etc., but it is factually unavoidable that in the course of one’s entire life – from its very beginning to its very end – one would never fall ill in some respect. The paper discusses this issue by the ontological investigation of possibility.

**CHAPTER VI - Euthanasia or Death Assisted to (Its) Dignity**, attempts to conceptualize the “ancient” issues of human death and human mortality in connection to the timely and vital subject of euthanasia. This subject forces the meditation to actually consider those ideological, ethical, deontological, legal, and metaphysical frameworks which guide from the very beginning any kind of approach to this question. This conception – in dialogue with Heideggerian fundamental ontology and existential analytics – reveals that, on the one hand, the concepts and ethics of death are

originally determined by the ontology of death, and, on the other hand, that, on this account, the question of euthanasia can only be authentically discussed in the horizon of this ontology. It is only this that may reveal to whom dying – our dying – pertains, while it also reveals our relationship to euthanasia as a determined human potentiality or final possibility. Thus euthanasia is outlined in the analysis as the possibility of becoming a mortal on the one hand, while on the other hand it appears in relation to the particularities of its existential structure, which essentially differ from the existential and ontological structure of any other possibility of dying. This is why it should not be mixed up with, or mistaken for, any of these.

**APPENDIX - Library Secret Fonds and the Competition of Societies – is one Applied Philosophical Analysis** of the competition between the Socialist / Communist social system and the capitalist social system elicited a need for secrecy. This ideological battle took place during the Cold War, which is conceptually defined as "the unarmed development of a competition between antagonistic social systems" where the goal is to "suppress" or "liquidate" the competition. This organized secrecy played a part in structuring life within each of these systems. The secret collections in Romanian libraries consisting of banned books contributed directly to this secrecy. Library secret fonds were used to control the circulation of information within a system or throughout other systems. These prohibited materials were withdrawn from circulation and kept confidential. Libraries kept lists of these fonds separate from the regular collection, and these lists were kept and updated throughout the years. During the Communist regime in Romania, the lists of forbidden books were considered "an efficient instrument for the political struggles from the inside of the Communist

party." Library secret fonds are a symbol of the antagonism between the two political systems of the Cold War.

And finally, the **Presentation of the Romanian Painter, OCTAVIAN COSMAN**, the artistic illustrator of the volume.

## CHAPTER I

### The Names of the Nothing

*Every* discourse about the Nothing seems fully and ultimately empty.

However, this cannot be true precisely because it is language – that is, discourse – which always brings forth the Nothing, the word of the “Nothing”. The language therefore speaks about the Nothing and perhaps also “speaks [the language of] Nothing”.

It is a question, however, whether the language does indeed think about the Nothing?

In its primary – and *abstract* – appearance, the Nothing is precisely “that” “which” it is not. However, its word is still **there** in the words of most languages (for we cannot know all). What is more, since it is not, at a first sight all the Nothing has is its word, its name... and this is precisely what protrudes.

It is in fact that word or name of the Nothing which most directly stands before us and – as we also *utter* it – within us. So the word of the Nothing **explicitly** is the not a contingent, but precisely a necessary subject and field of the outspoken and questioning thinking about it. Which awaits consideration.

However, to consider the words of the Nothing may mean nothing else than thinking into these words. For, I repeat, the only “Nothing” that is problematic – at least for now – stands in front of us only and exclusively as a mere word. We can only say – perhaps – what its significance and importance in our languages is “after” thorough consideration. So we can only understand the various directions of the meaning of the dictionary word. *Not* the other way round.



But: the name of the Nothing only utters in language that which has no **being**. It is therefore not just any kind of negation, but the word or name of the negation of being. This is how Hegel could find that – as concepts – the Nothing and the Being are identical. With this, however, the Nothing as a concept is exhausted and it disappears, and what remains as its precedent is only and exclusively the word of the Nothing. For the work, the name precedes the concepts (and Hegel of course).

So the fact that the Nothing disappears in its concept, is merely one more reason or basis to take seriously its word or words! For what **is** “here” most directly is the language which utters it, the speaker, and the Nothing as a word that the speaker speaks. These are not “concepts” but – rather – experiences, which witness the togetherness of language, speaker and the Nothing and – as we shall see – also articulate it. Because the “unutterable” can have Nothing to do with it. For it is uttered, it is expressed.

The Nothing as utterance is a mere word. As a concept, it is empty with existential tension (Hegel), for it is connected to being – as a concept – precisely by negation, precisely by the negation of being. And *vice versa*... This is why it cannot be avoided in the course of thinking about being, the human being, and existence, for it is not a contingency, but a law-enforced possibility which thus has a huge impact. For it may be – or perhaps it is certain – that the being constituted in questions of meaning may lose its existence in time... so this belongs to being itself and the being of the “speaker” as well.

The discourse of the “speaker” is the language or languages. It is in language that the speakers utter the words of the Nothing. Therefore the words of the Nothing are just as special and historical as the utterers themselves. This is how these (the words of the Nothing) belong to, or rather constitute, articulate the history of being, in the language.

The “Nothing” is therefore **the** mere word of the negation of being. Which lives standing in languages. As deeply that its translation presents no problems. The German *das Nichts* can be translated unproblematically to the English *Nothing*, the French *rien* or *néant*, the Slavic *nič*, the Romanian *nimic* or the Hungarian *semmi*, etc. However, if we go on deeper into the problem, it shows that, despite the unproblematic translation, being and (its) negation articulates in different ways in the names of the Nothing.

The German word of Nothing is one-block, one-syllable: *das Nichts*. It was Martin Heidegger who considered this word most deeply. The word sends, of course, Heidegger to negation, for thinking in the horizon of the German utterance of this word, starting from the Nothing, one may consider first of all the negation itself (*das Nichts*) as saying NO. Guided from this, Heidegger analyzes the series of complexities of negation: negative and privative NO (*steresis*). Concluding that the Nothing not only precede, or is more original than negation, but that negation derives from an articulately denied being – actually the Nothing –, that is, a being left inarticulate in the German language. That is why Heidegger must leave the German language and turn to Greek, to Aristotle’s *steresis*. The *das Nichts* negates the being in such a way that, uttering and considering it, founds and articulates the negation itself in the first place. But it leaves inarticulate the negated being itself.

So, if we look at it abstractly, the Nothing means negation in all the words connected to it, in all its names and in all languages: the *negation of Being*. Thanks to this abstraction, the names of the Nothing can usually be translated into different languages without problem.



**Octavian Cosman, *Aquarium*, 100 x 71 cm, oil on canvas, 1973**

However, the negation of being characterizing any name of the Nothing is *differently* carried and *articulated* in different languages. *Negation* and

*Being* are articulated differently through the structure and utterance of these words. Therefore we must try to consider some of these words to be able to “join them together”.

The Nothing is a word by which our languages express in the first place the deficiencies and insufficiencies of our existence, the uncertainty of the ground, our failures and destructions, and so on. And it is precisely this how the Nothing gets to becoming a word in our languages because it is brought to utterance by the existence of our being. Therefore, with reference to the Nothing, the aim of philosophy is not – and cannot be – to create some kind of “concept” or “idea” out of its words, but merely to penetrate and record everything by thinking which these, as words, mean in language. The “Nothing” is therefore a simple word that we are *compelled* to utter at any time.

Some languages express the Nothing with *simple*, monolithic words. As we have seen, the German *das Nichts* is one of these. In other languages the word for Nothing is a compound. Such are the English “Nothing”, the Romanian “nimic”, or the Hungarian “semmi”. The Latin origin “néant”, which expresses the Nothing as pure non-being, the pure negation of being, is also a compound.

We must now examine how the negation and the being articulate in the words of the Nothing in the languages accessible to us. Heidegger’s German word (*das Nichts*) takes to the negation of Being primarily through the foundation of the NO, of negation. It negates Being by founding the negation itself by its origin. The negated being remains in its original indeterminacy, but this is precisely how the negation finds the being and appropriates the origin of its articulations.

In contrast, the English name of “Nothing” expresses the negation of a Being grasped and articulated in its “thing”-ness. Negation does not

“work” here therefore in a completely inarticulate way, but the negated Being is articulated in the English word in its “object-like” quality.<sup>1</sup>

Just as interesting is the French name of the Nothing: *rien*. Originally this word meant precisely “thing”, but in the manifestation which is not the thing’s “own”, in which the thing “cannot be found”, that is, in which it appears as negated.<sup>2</sup> Therefore the word “rien” gains its current meaning by the assimilation and association of “thing”-ness and negation, but in such a

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<sup>1</sup> In his habilitation paper written on the problem of negation analyzed from the viewpoint of functional grammatics, Peter Kahrel deduces the English term “Nothing” from the concept of negation understood as a 0 (zero) quantifier fused with an “undetermined”. Therefore it must be especially emphasized as a fact indispensable to understand the word *Nothing* that this “undetermined” is in fact always a “thing”. However, in the background of this superficial understanding there is always a much deeper misunderstanding about the *sui generis* searching nature of the negation of the Nothing, and its connection to the negated Being. The negation left in the void of the inarticulate undetermined and the 0 quantifier and the articulation of the negated Being is in fact impossible to be considered. What we see here is probably just as much the limitation and trap of the English language than the deficiency of the method. Still, Kahrel analyzes forty words of forty languages in statistics and tables, among which also the Romanian and Hungarian words of the Nothing. In spite of this, the negation for him is simply a 0 quantifier! Supposedly this is why it can be “applied” in an undetermined way. The “Nothing” and the “Nobody” (the “body” articulated as human) can only be regarded just as (differently) undetermined only in the indeterminacy of the negation. That is: just as co-originary. But actually the “Nothing” is “closer” to the origin than the Nobody! But this can only be achieved by the real understanding of the searching-questioning “No”. The “Nobody” – also in Romanian, “Nimeni” – means “not somebody”. The “Nobody” contains a sending to the searcher: where there is “Nobody”, there is only the one who searches (for them). But meanwhile the horizons of searching can be “full with things”. However, in the NOTHING we go beyond an undetermined “thing”-ness, first reaching to the WE – the searchers who do not find –, then becoming that “WE OURSELVES” who do not find precisely OUR SELVES. Where there is “Nobody”, there is only the lonely searcher. Thus the “Nobody” does not mean “neither”, but, on the contrary, it means “alone”. That is, the searcher of the “neither” will actually never find the “Nothing” in the “Nobody”, only its own Self. The “Nobody” is thus in fact the only I which derives from the “Nothing”. See Peter Kahrel, *Aspects of Negation* (Amsterdam: Akademisch Proefschrift, 1996), 30–43.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Dauzat, Jean Dubois, and Henri Mitterand, *Nouveau Dictionnaire Étymologique et Historique* (Paris, 1964).



way that neither the negation nor the “thing-like” being are articulated in it, only merged together.<sup>1</sup>



**Octavian Cosman, *Sandy towns*. Mixed technique, 2015-2016**

The situation is completely different however when we analyze the articulations of the Romanian term: “*Nimic*”! This is also a compound, created from “nici”, meaning “neither” and the adjective “mic”, meaning

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this is why French thinkers prefer to use the technical term “Néant” instead of the “rien”, which, as all technical terms, connects mere notions merely conceptually: the Being grasped in its conceptual inarticulation and the negation also grasped in its logical-conceptual inarticulation.

“little”, “small”. The negative “nici” is completely different, however, than the German “*das Nichts*”, and different from the completely inarticulate English “*Nothing*”. The Romanian “nici” articulates the negation as a *searching negation*! On the other hand, the “mic” denotes a kind of being diminished in a quantitative respect. Thus the Romanian “nimic” means precisely that no Being “can be found” “either” for the searcher (so: *we cannot find it*) that could be grasped at least in its “smallness”. That is the negation grasped in its searching nature and being and manifested as such loses its “quality” of an abstract logical operation, and linguistically records its originally existential nature. Meanwhile the Romanian “Nimic”, if only in its quality of uttering a diminished quantity, articulates the being again only in its “thing-like” nature. (For ultimately only the things can be really “small”.)

The Hungarian word for Nothing, “Semmi”, also articulates negation as originally searching. However, considering its articulation, it tells perhaps even more than the ones previously analyzed. The Hungarian SEMMI is also a compound of “sem” (here also neither) and the personal pronoun “mi” (meaning “we”). The negative “sem” expresses in fact “neither here” (“*sem ide*”), “nor there” (“*sem ott*”), “neither then” (“*sem akkor*”), “neither me” (“*sem én*”), “nor him/her” (“*sem ő*”), etc. That is: I / we have searched everywhere, but I / we have found Nothing, nowhere, never.

However much we thought about it: the NOT to which the “sem” sends is not the negating “Not”, nor the depriving “Not” that Heidegger revealed in the analysis of “*das Nichts*”. The “Not” in the “sem” is – as we have seen – a *searching* Not! It says in fact that *searching, we have not found*. By this, it says that the way we met, faced and confronted the Not is

actually a search. Thus the “sem” places the negation in the mode of search, and the search into the mode of Not (that is, negation).

What does all this mean in its essence? Firstly, it means that, although the SEM is indeed a kind of search which “flows into” the Not, still, as a search, it always distinguishes itself from the not-s it faces and runs into. For searching is never simply a repeated question, nor the repetition of a question, but a question *carried around*. Therefore the SEM is always about more than the tension between the question and the negative answer given to it. For the negation itself – the Not – is placed into the mode of search! And reversely.

Therefore the “sem” never negates the searching itself, only places and fixes it in its deficient modes. Those in which it “does not find” in any direction. This way the SEM *charges*, emphasizes and outlines the Not, but, it also stimulates the search until the *exhaustion of its final emptiness*. Therefore the contextually experienced Not – that is, the SEM – is actually Nothing else than an endless deficiency of an emptied, exhausted, but not suspended search.

These ensure on the one hand the stability of the SEM, which is inclined to hermetically close up within itself, while on the other hand they also ensure an inner impulse for the search which, emanating from it, continues to push it to its emptiness. And it is in the horizon of this emanating impulse that the SEM merges with the pronoun MI, in the Hungarian name for NOTHING.

The MI in Hungarian is at the same time an interrogative pronoun and the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural personal pronoun. Whether or not this phonetic identity is a “coincidence”, it conceals important speculative possibilities that should not be overlooked. For the “Mi” pronoun with the “Sem” negative always says that it is WE (Mi) who questioningly search, but find



NOTHING (SEMMI). Merged in their common space, the SEM and MI expresses that the questioners grasped in the plurality of their searching questions, facing the meaning of the SEMMI, only arrived at, and ran into the NOT, the negation.

In the space of its articulation the Hungarian word of the Nothing offers a deeper and more articulated consideration of what it “expresses”, fixing not only the search and its – deficient – modes, but also the fact that it is always WE who search and question, even if we cannot find ourselves in “that”, in the Nothing. That is to say, the Nothing – in one of its meanings – is precisely our strangeness, foreignness and unusualness, which belongs to our own self, and therefore all our attempts to eliminate it from our existence will always be superfluous.

The Hungarian word of the Nothing also reveals that all this is not merely an external negation of Being, but such which always takes part in our being and existence. However, in order to understand it we must consider the articulation of the various words of the Nothing.

However, it also reveals that the interrogative pronoun MI? (what?) carries other impulses as well and sends to different directions. It mobilizes through the following questions: “MI ez?” (What is this?), “MI az?” (What is that?), etc. Of course the MI? question in the name of the Nothing (Semmi) always stands in the horizon of the SEM, the searching Not. The impetus of searching therefore runs into the wall of the NO. However, one cannot disregard, despite any fate-like negativity – that the search of the searching NO and the question of MI? always mutually urge and drive each other. The MI? question in SEMMI never lets our search stop completely, no matter how negative the “findings” or “answers” may be (see SEM). It is therefore not only the negation which articulates it as a searching No, but the Being as well which carries and makes necessary this negation. The

Being takes part in this negation first by surpassing its “thing-like” nature, which, however, still belongs to ourselves as the final outcome and vector of our searches.

It is actually an original form of Not, the searching Not that we found in the Romanian and Hungarian words of the Nothing: the “Nici” and “Sem” are in fact “open” not’s in a way, which are therefore capable of carrying deeper and more dynamic existential meanings of negation. It is this searching Not which carries and originates both the privative and the negative Not, if in a non-considered way. In addition, its Hungarian names also resonates a special tension which is not found in any other words of the Nothing that I know of. For here – even if it is predestined to negation, in it the question of MI? is still born, sounds and resonates in this, which also originally belongs to our own selves (MI).

What more is there to hope and expect for a question which always sounds and resonates even without an answer? Naturally, it cannot hope or expect anything else “instead” of an answer than a joint which – without being entirely satisfactory – *articulately joins* them together.<sup>1</sup> That what – in the word of the Nothing – cannot hope and expect for any answer as its fate, but what always is reborn and regenerated in it, cannot hope and expect for anything else – as an attachment which matches it – than a *miracle*.

Indeed, the Hungarian word of SEMMI the deaf, but irremovable attachment of the MI? question of expectation is precisely the *csoda* (miracle): “MICSODA?” and the answer which replies to it in the Semmi: SEM-MI-CSODA! That is: where “there is” Nothing (Semmi), there “is not even a Miracle”!

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<sup>1</sup> By “joining” I mean that something is “attached” to something else but still remains always external to it.

Still, in the Hungarian word of the Nothing, any time it is uttered, the silent question about the expectation of the miracle is voiced, even if it is not thought through, even if it runs directly into the positivity of the lack carried in the searching negation of “Sem”. That is why the expectation of the miracle is actually indestructible and irremovable, since it basically resides in the original relation of the *Dasein*, the being-here and the Nothing – and through this the Being.

For the same reason, beyond the expectation which articulates the attachment as a “miracle”, the Hungarian word of the Nothing – directly and explicitly – also incorporates a sending into another direction. In this direction it sends our existence back to itself.

### ***Closing Excursus:***

#### **Nothing’s Branch**

In the last stanza of his poem entitled *Without hope*, Attila József invents, articulates in the depths of poetry the name/word of the Nothing. The poem:

#### **WITHOUT HOPE**

Man comes at last to a vast stretch  
of sandy, dull, waterlogged plain,  
looks round in wonder, the poor wretch,  
nods sagely and knows hope is vain.

I too am genuinely trying  
to look round unconcernedly.  
An axehead, a silvery sighing,  
Shudders across the poplar tree.

My heart is perched on Nothing's branch,  
a small, dumb, shivering event:  
the gentle stars jostle and bunch  
and gaze on in astonishment.<sup>1</sup>

How should one understand this last stanza and the Nothing in it? Is this a “simple”, admirable poetic image, or something that invites to a philosophical dialogue?

The poet's heart is perched on Nothing's branch, shivering. But does the Nothing have a “branch”? And if so, how does this branch grow? What is the relation between the branching Nothing and the pensive, shivering (poetic) heart?

Well, the deficiency of the searching (SEM), taken around and belonging to Us (MI), which by its fate brings to newer and newer questions and searches, CRACKS again and again (with and within us)... Every new question and every impulse of searching originating from the Nothing and falling back into it is a new branch of the Nothing.

Therefore: without a shivering, and always questioning-searching, pensive heart, on the one hand, there “is no” Nothing, and on the other hand it cannot be anything else than a questioning and searching, repeatedly cracking (widely branching) universal exposedness that cannot be exhausted (only died<sup>2</sup>). WE (MI), all of us. Which can only open shiveringly – always questioningly – to the gentle pure coldness of the universal stars without self-deceit and miracle. (Sem-mi / neither us ... nor some empty miracle to hope for).

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by George Szirtes. In Gyöngyi Végh, ed., *Inspired by Hungarian Poetry – British Poets in Conversation with Attila József* (London: Balassi Institute Hungarian Cultural Centre, 2013), 28–29.

<sup>2</sup> “An axehead, a silvery sighing,/ Shudders across the poplar tree”



**Octavian Cosman, *Seeds*, 66 x 50 cm, oil on canvas, 1978**

The shivering heart “sits” at the essence of being and life, at the roads’ ends of the branches of searches constituted by negations and denials, sent to

itself (shivering, beating), and swung back to the human and non-human universe... where it shivers sitting in – or on – the Nothing. Shivering is therefore here the question, the searching which does not “find” anything with any of its frowns.

The Nothing is not an endless universe of stars, and this is not even void... but it is precisely the existence searching-questioning itself mortally which belongs to the human and non-human universe (precisely on account of its mortality!), and draws it in its irrhythmic shivering to being; in its newer and newer branches, mindfully and undeceptively, it cracks the Nothing.

Just such a being can situate itself in meaning, in the questions of meaning cleverly and judiciously, and just such a being may accept – shaking off the deceptive and easy “hopes” – the Nothing essentially related to its being, “being born” and unraveled through it.

The search for the meaning of the being, of life is a kind of loneliness, a kind of alienated, creative suffering of turning-to-the-world. In which the suicide does not mean senselessness, but the unbearable torment of a clear vision... Therefore we do not simply fall into the Nothing, but reach it on a poetic-philosophical path. One that the poet treads in a deserted, “vast stretch”, a clear and clever mind, and a shivering heart, slowly and pensively. And to which he arrives also this way.

For the entire poem is an arrival after a kind of existential **journey** – pensive, slow, devoid of any magic of initiation. Which is, however, not about reaching a destination. It is the destiny of man, of “life” that – willingly or not – takes a creative mind pensively to that spot (*Man comes at last...*) The path is about freeing oneself from deceptive hopes and renouncing them. The result is first of all the clear, un-deceptive mind. Which nods wisely and cleverly, being freed of, or rejecting hope.

The “vast stretch” found once the deceptive and self-deceptive hopes have been slowly abandoned is of course deserted and sad... But it is real and authentic. Like the stars. So this is precisely the spot of the Nothing, on whose branch the shivering heart – and life – sits, mortally and questioning-searchingly, in the “company” of stars **ever since the origins.**

Is this all perhaps only and exclusively the experience of a “strange-special” “individual” called “Attila József”? Or simply a wonderfully concocted poetic image?

The answer lies again in the consideration of the name or word of the Nothing. For we have seen that the word “Semmi”, also used by Attila József, expresses the NEM in the **first person plural**. Which then inhales every individual in the Nothing and with the Nothing... (We/Mi = all of us and any of us.)

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Finally... “*Man comes at last...*”

**Translated by Emese Czintos**

## CHAPTER II

### Liberty and Truth

– Fragments about the “Cave-myth”–

**Motto:**

*“Whatever happens with historical human beings comes in each case from a decision about the essence of truth that happened long ago and is never up to humans alone.”*

**Martin Heidegger<sup>1</sup>**

*„Philosophy is destined to deal with the Deepest and most disturbing questions. It would hardly survive, if they were definitively solved.”*

**József Hajós<sup>2</sup>**

#### 1.

***One may*** wonder why is it that we, human beings are always inclined or even “compelled” to think about and grasp notions like truth, good, beauty etc. only in contrast with their conceptual counterparts: untruth, evil, ugliness etc. These conceptual opposites constantly refer to one another,

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Plato’ Doctrine of Truth*. English translation by Thomas Sheehan, in Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, Cambridge, UK, and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998 p. 182. (The motto in the Hungarian version of this study was taken from the following edition: Martin Heidegger, “Platón tanítása az igazság lényegéről”, in idem., *Útjelzők*, Budapest, Osiris, 2003, p. 224.)

<sup>2</sup> József Hajós, “Ötlések” (Ideas), in *Színkép – A Romániai Magyar Szó Melléklete* (Spectrum – The Supplement of the “Hungarian Word of Romania”), 28–29<sup>th</sup> June, 2003, p. A.



and eventually they prove to be continuously interlinked, each notion of these pairs indispensably requiring its counterpart.

The question asked above does neither refer to how the mentioned oppositions are divided for example in a “proper” or a “non- proper” way... nor does it try to find or discover a way to surpass somehow “dialectically” the polarities. The question’s aim is to make understandable the interdependence of the opposites as opposites, and above all to throw light on the ontological source where we may possibly find their origin too.

Therefore those roots would be interesting, from which and from where springs the *intermediarity* – and not the commonness, commonality – of the opposites: truth and falsity, truth and untruth; opposites which belong together, moreover are interdependent. These roots later on decide the counterparts’ historical fate.

But this source, of course, is probably deeper and beyond any kind of “theory of science”, epistemology or logical formalism. For, as Martin Heidegger formulates as well: such a question actually refers to the *essence of truth*.

According to the “title” these fragmentary sentences would treat however “liberty” *as well as* “truth”, wouldn’t they? Moreover the title states the relationship “between” them with an “and”, that is, exactly as “and”. But what does really mean – first of all and actually – to treat/to think about “liberty”? And, likewise, what does it mean at all – again first of all or in the first place – to regard “truth”?

However, if we really consider all these questions – as questions! –, we may immediately find out that to think about “liberty” actually means to investigate – for its own possibilities – the “truth” related to it, respectively, together with and by this investigation to operate “truth” in a very essential sense!

And if we have considered this as well, then it may probably occur that we cannot in fact “treat” truth otherwise than as the operation and “assertion” of liberty itself; operation and assertion divided in a determined way and very much *asserted*!

In this way it may strike the eye from the beginning that the “and” present in the main title is not a simple “conjunction” – which therefore would “serve” for connecting some notions “with” it<sup>1</sup> –; on the contrary: it is the problematising-thematising connecting-name of the interconnected intercommunication of liberty and truth.

Therefore, according to all these, *Liberty and Truth* in the title tells that liberty and truth belonging to one another do belong historically to our own selves or our existence – and through this – to existence in general too, as specifically our own existential possibilities, as question, respectively as provoking difficulty.

According to these: we would belong to our (existential) possibilities as belonging to ourselves in the expressed question/case of liberty and truth; we would belong to existence – and existence to us as well – placed into these notions and “contained” by them in an accentuated and questioning way...

We have heard for a long time and frequently: truth is the benefactor and ally of liberty. It is also frequently said that, on the contrary, being in the possession of truth often ensures the domination over others... And also

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<sup>1</sup> Say: we connect – and this actually always remains an external connection – a problem of “speciality” (liberty), belonging to the domains of “political philosophy”, “moral philosophy”, or “philosophy of law”, with another “speciality” problem (truth), this time an “epistemological” one.

that: truth exactly liberates! It may not be accidental that nowadays the renamed and “operationalised” collective name of liberty(s) is “justice”<sup>1</sup>...

We obviously often hear that: neither liberty is boundless arbitrariness, nor truth is absolute or everlasting... That is, liberty is delimited by non-liberty or the sham-liberty of arbitrariness and truth is delimited by untruth, falsehood and the historicity of truth. In other words: these make the two notions “relative”.

Truth and liberty bear – usually with a reconciled dejection – the not quite meaningful attribute of relativity rather in relation to themselves, their own *imperfection* and not in relation with one another. Consequently they relate to – more precisely they are compared to – one another as being “relative”; obviously this relationship is “relative” as well...

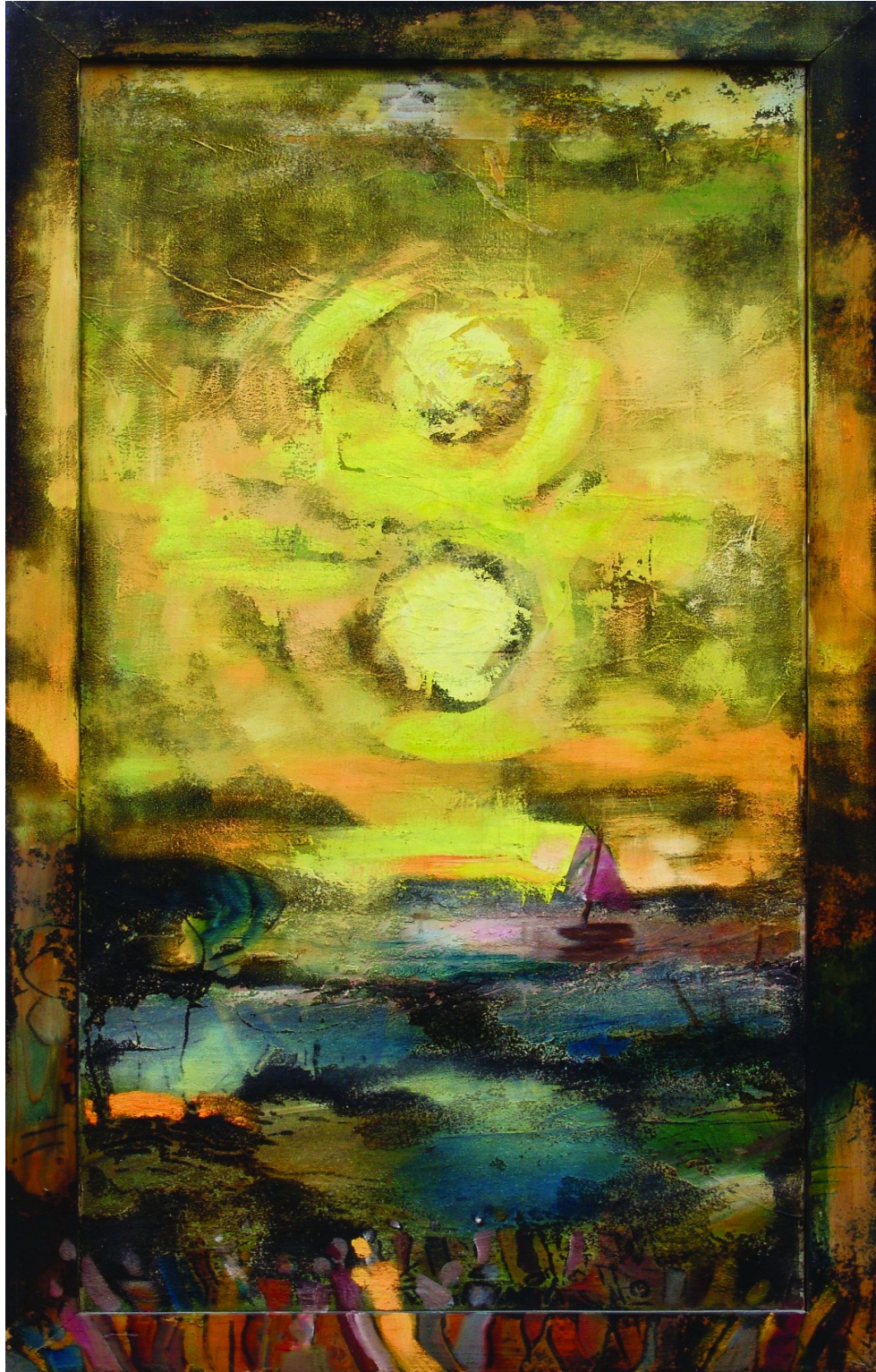
Therefore when, all of a sudden, Heidegger thought of showing the essence of truth as being expressly and definitely in liberty, in the essence of liberty, this has not really caused uproar.<sup>2</sup> For, between the many relative things everything always finds its similarly relative place shortly and easily. That is to say: it gets lost.

It is therefore a question, whether truth and liberty can be defined at all as relation(s)/relationship(s), respectively attribute-like state(s), or they rather are – in a more profound sense – the existence-like divisions of belonging to one another, respectively of belonging to (the) existence.

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<sup>1</sup> There is here a pun that cannot be rendered in English. In Hungarian “justice” is derived from the same stem as “truth”.

<sup>2</sup> It has caused by no means as much uproar as for example the Heideggerian thought of the *aletheia*, notion connected also with the issue of truth.



**Octavian Cosman**, *Double Sun – Mirage*, 154 x 83 cm,  
oil on canvas and wood, 1997

## 2.

The tale of Plato's allegory of the cave is about education, according to its main theme, or, to be more precise, about the *paideia*.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile and to the same extent the myth is about truth as well, and, as it can be proved, about liberty, too...

For here education is outlined as the “art of bending the soul”, which – captivating the entire soul – orientates the abilities and “organ” present in everyone's mind towards the Idea of Good. By this it makes able for the soul to contemplate the being and the being's brightest core, moreover to reside perseveringly at this core from now on.

However, the *paideia* here clearly outlines the absorption in truth and at the same time it outlines this also as **absorption in liberty**! Actually there is more than this. Here truth and liberty are not only devised as being in some kind of eurhythmic parallelism; they are presented as being interlaced, interwoven, the one supposing/questioning the other, and/but at the same time they increase and complete one another.

Nevertheless, the cave myth – at least seemingly – presents and narrativizes liberty as a kind of “condition” for truth, more precisely as its “milieu”. The people chained since their childhood at first are at the mercy of those who, using the firelight from behind the scenes, confine their perception to the illusory truths of the shadow world. On the other hand (their) liberty – namely (their) liberation from the chains, which is quite casual and it does not depend on the chained persons themselves or it has an “educational” (*paideutikos*) aim – will practically be an “appropriate” milieu for truth. Later on the liberated individuals encounter the beings and

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<sup>1</sup> See Plato, *Az állam. Részletek* (The Republic. Excerpts), selected, introduced and annotated by Sándor Pál, Budapest, Gondolat Publishing House, 1968, pp. 194–198.

get to know them “in” this environment, this cognitive process being actually orientated toward truth.

At first, of course, the search for truth is not directed towards the things themselves, but towards the light. In the beginning this is the firelight, then, gradually, it becomes the “true” light, that of the Sun. Only in sunlight things appear in their truth; all that is truth and true or, on the contrary, is shadow, illusion and falsehood is compared to it and measured by it.

True enough, in the myth liberty itself consists at first only in the possibilities to turn round, to move... This, however, is a decisive bearing as regards the matter of truth. For this only has made clear that, though in the cave some things *can be regarded as being true without* this liberty – that means, while being chained –, there is not **and there cannot be at all** any actual truth without freedom!

There is not and there cannot be truth exactly because one does not – cannot – turn round and “move”. That is to say, because there is not and there cannot be: *search for truth!*

Here therefore liberty belongs to, or – and this is probably even more important – is interweaved with truth in the first place as the possibility and prerequisite of the search for truth. Without coexistence with liberty there can be no truth at all; may this truth be defined, conceived and asserted as “rightness”, “appropriateness” or even as *aletheia*, as unconcealment.

This therefore means that when we *search for truth* in a certain fundamental sense we are already “at” truth. For without this search no “knowledge”, “truth” etc. can be born, can exist or, if it does exist, it lacks all sense. But it is also clear that the name of this searchingly existing-in-truth, being-in-truth is no other than: *liberty!*

The “search for truth” – more narrowly, “specifically” called “cognition”, or even “investigation”, that is: the search for knowledge – is not merely an accidental or external prerequisite of truth, but it is precisely its constant source, component and definite coefficient. Without this probably there is no “truth” at all that can be obtained.

Therefore liberty – as the being-in-truth constituted together with the search for knowledge and truth – is at the same time precisely a continuous (internal) “component” of truth as well. On the contrary, for example the stupidity of “omniscience” consists exactly in the fact that such a person “could know everything”, however, he could never know that he “knows” at all. For “to know” one needs exactly to experience the **knowledge of not-knowing** that is constituted only during the search of truth. And this is not characteristic to the “omniscient” person. For he necessarily always knows everything *ab ovo*... Otherwise he would not be called “omniscient”. The situation is the same with the immortal too: such a person “does never die”, but meanwhile he never lives a moment at all.

Consequently things like “truth” and “liberty” exist only in and through the existence of that finite – *mortal* – being, which, exactly *because* of this, has a relationship full of risks with existence...

Of course, the situation is the same with “falsity”, too. “Falsity”, untruth also acquires its meaning and its (dangerous) weight only *in* and *from* the being-in-truth constituted in and through the search for truth. However, all this indicates that being-in-truth is not simply outlined in the mere opposition with untruth, but it appears as real being-in-untruth.

But this is far from referring us to some conceptual or other kind of “dialectic”; it rather sends us to a more profound *openness*. Namely, the *openness of search*!



The search and the openness that is constituted and outlined through it and in it – therefore asserted, articulated and never without a direction – give on the one hand the weight of liberty and its real “ontological” dimensions, on the other hand its relevance related to truth. Of course, this holds good vice versa as well.

Therefore the question arises: is there something like that which is usually called “one’s own truth”, “self-truth” or “truth according to one’s own conviction” etc.? For each of these expressions actually means that far from asking the question referring to the essence of truth we close or suspend this same inquiry! In the same way we would suspend communication by using “private languages”. For, when Pilate asks Jesus, “What is truth?”, in fact he receives no answer because the question has no “room” or “space”. Not only because the question of “truth” is asked during the trial of a prisoner, but mainly because the inquiry is made in the atmosphere of **already decided**, formed and outlined convictions etc. In what regards the belief that the so-called “self-truths” are harmless for one another – this harmlessness also “constituting plurality” –, it would probably be better to consider that as much as Pilate contributed to Jesus’ death, so much contributed Jesus’ conviction to the destruction of Pilate’s Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

However, “truth” is not to be found where knowledge, already formed convictions, “epistemological” evidences or petrified beliefs exist, but only where and when the question referring to/searching for the essence

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<sup>1</sup> I cannot agree for example with Mihály Vajda who does not place the so-called “self-truths” into a historical – more precisely existential historical – context and dimension. For in this context it could become clear that the “truths” which have not been or allegedly cannot be converted into doctrines – like the teaching of Jesus – how easily “acquire” their dogmas, and that they do not function merely as a (private) “way of life” in these cases. See: Mihály Vajda, *Igazság és/vagy szabadság* (Truth and/or Liberty) in idem. *Nem az örökkévalóságnak – Filozófiai (láb)jegyzetek* [Not for the Eternity – Philosophical (Foot)Notes] Budapest, Osiris, 1996, pp. 78–83.



of truth *can* work and *is working*. Consequently truth exists where liberty is working as well; that is, where liberty can be asked and can happen with regard to (the) truth.

Therefore the question referring to the essence of truth actually is the question of that liberty with and through which truth exists and works; that is: through which the question of liberty itself is problematised, more precisely thematised, in its weight related to truth.

In other words: the essence of truth – leading through and back to the essence of liberty – is in fact the explicit *inquiry* that constitutes the essence and structure of liberty itself. How else would/could (the) liberty, (the) truth and (the meaning of) existence find each other in interrelation? If, however, – and how else could it possibly be? – the strength and weight of the questionable/questioning interconnected intercommunication of liberty and truth really penetrates to the point of the *meaning of existence*, then probably the problem of truth is bound to the being too – and not only to the “ideas”, “knowledge” and assertions “formed about it”. And bound it is like that which “correctly” and “adequately” “corresponds” to it.

### 3.

The question inquiring after the essence of truth essentially may not even refer to the *quidditas* and the *qualia*-s of truth. Therefore it does not (merely) ask what the epistemological or pragmatic criteria of truth consist of or the parameters by which decisions can be made relating to truth. For all these questions are – essentially – “secondary” for the inquiry referring to the essence of truth. That is, they are *ab ovo* and “implicitly” standing in the – always historical! – questionability or in the process of decision making that concerns the essence of truth.

It is another matter whether their inquiry of all times knows about this standing-in and takes this into consideration or, whether it really and explicitly questions it... For example the “almost three thousand years old” truth of the Pythagorean theorem, that can easily seem “eternal”, consists of the fact that its validity has been confirmed and outlined anew since then by repeated questioning. The situation is the same in the case of Euclidean geometry as well...

The “permanence” or “definiteness” of truth consists only of this. The truth of the so called “analytical truths” or tautologies too is revalidated only by the history of successive generations of finite and mortal “rational beings” without which validation they would have no sense at all. For mathematics, physics or formal logic cannot be imagined without the history of the successive lives of mathematicians, physicians and logicians as well as their mutually inspiring works that re-question one another and offer new proofs.<sup>1</sup>

This means that truth actually is and happens only when and where the question referring to the essence of truth opens up and is kept open as well – at least according to possibility and horizon – in an explicit questioning.

The *question* opening to the essence of truth has another name as well: liberty! For neither “truth”, nor “liberty” are some kind of “notions” waiting and longing yet for their “perfect” definition. On the contrary, they are *questions* and problems that instead of being defined must/should rather

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<sup>1</sup> This is the actual ontological relevance of the probably right assertion – which can be considered a descriptive assertion – which the immediate essence of communicating/transmitting scientific truths (this may also be called the pedagogy of scientific truths) consists in *demonstration*. That is: each and every scientific truth is questioned and – if it seems valid *once more!* – proved *anew* each time when communicated. It is essential that more is “handed over” on these occasions than the “additional” knowledge or “information” surrounding the formal or objective content or the “demonstrations” of the theorems, formulas etc.

always be asked – in a way that the question referring to the one may open up to the other as well.

#### 4.

Three years after the publication of *Being and Time*, in 1930, in a lecture entitled *On the Essence of Truth* – considered a turning point in his oeuvre – Heidegger re-examines the problem of liberty. Here thought strives towards the essence of truth. On this road – probably not accidentally at all – it encounters liberty.

Of course, it is not unusual to seek the essence of truth in liberty. But this is so not only “from the point of view” of truth, but that of liberty as well. Thus it becomes clear *ab ovo* and again that liberty is not just some “state” that is given to us or not (and if it is given, then obviously it is constantly “limited” etc.). Liberty actually has an existential character, it is *characteristic to one’s existence*.

Having a *relation-like* attitude towards the being supposes that one should be situated in the openness. This is the basis of all assertions related to which the “epistemological” problem of “rightness” – of “truth”, “falsity” – afterwards constantly occurs. But even the possible “rightness” and “wrongness” of the assertions originates from that openness in which the assertion *can be brought* at all to its right “state”, “form”. The rightness thus achieved is built on the possibility and accomplishing of those *corrections* that can only be made on the basis of openness, respectively as openness. Therefore, we must be open *ab ovo* to the urgings of such a

correction, for only thus the question of “rightness” or “wrongness”, occurring related to the assertions, may have some consequence at all...<sup>1</sup>

In other words: liberty here (as well) will become the essence of truth as something that actually is the basis, source, exponent, coefficient of the “interior” possibility of truth.<sup>2</sup> We are able to form correct judgements – more precisely to form “judgements” at all –, only if meanwhile we are and remain *free* to let that something to be and to manifest itself “as something”. And if, related to all these, we *reckon* with the possibility of being right or wrong – continually correcting “ourselves” too – in a way that suits the weight of the question being at stake.

Therefore truth and liberty refer to one another, but they do this in a basic sense and way which already urges the modification of the essence of both truth and liberty. Liberty is revealed to be “letting-be” (*Sein-lassen*), letting the being to – possibly – reveal itself in the openness in its unconcealment as a – possible – self-self.

Truth will become *aletheia* (unconcealment), while liberty will be a letting-be *openness to existence* which exists while it lets be, which depends on possibilities and is divided in these – and it is not some kind of “characteristic” or “state”.

“To be free” therefore means to be open to the manifestation/appearance of unconcealment and to the quite self-concealing guidance of this, while one is in the problematic and weighty concealment. Consequently, it means that one must be open to one’s endeavor to let-oneself-be!

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<sup>1</sup> With reference to this see also the paper entitled *Állítás (asszerció), kérdezés és tagadás* (Assertion, Questioning and Denial) from the volume István Király V., *Kérdő jelezés* [Question(ing) Mark(ing)], Bratislava, Kalligram, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See: Martin Heidegger, *Az igazság lényegéről*, in idem., *Útjelzők*, Budapest, Osiris, 2003, pp. 173 –193.

Therefore and repeatedly: liberty is not some characteristic of humans, on the contrary, – if we need to think here in property relations – actually the human being is the one “owned” by liberty.<sup>1</sup>

## 5.

In this way, of course, truth transcends that, which is usually regarded the subject and domain of epistemology and logic as “cognition”, respectively “science”. For thus one can realize that for example works of art or more generally art have their own truth. And this is not an indifferent or secondary truth at all.

For how could we people actually face for example such things like the truth “related to” ungratefulness or avarice, if not by the means of Shakespeare’s Iago or Balzac’s Gobseck? And in what “judgements” or “assertions” “is placed” the truth of these works of art?

Truth, however, can only transcend the narrower and more “special” existentiality of “cognition” – meant as studying and specifically outlined – in an existentially and horizon-like way. It can obtain a world-like importance, only if it exists and happens always in a common essentiality with liberty.

However, what differentiates to some extent typically the various – scientific or literary-artistic etc. – “texts” is that they exist within the language. The language essential to these texts has an ontological character, belongs to the historical world and is well articulated. This manifests itself while one is “merely reading” the texts.

The language of the literary work of art is specific and of distinguished importance because “the poetical evocative power of

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

language created by sound as well as meaning is intimately interwoven”.<sup>1</sup> This interconnectedness cannot be superseded and is ever valid. In this respect literary texts are “eminent” texts for Gadamer too.

Contrary to this, for example philosophical texts are characterized by a certain “intermediarity”. For these essentially “operate” with *notions*. Because this they cannot achieve the unity of sound and meaning characteristic to the work of art. However, they are bound to language as well – this being a constantly essential aspect for them. This is why the “eminence” of the relationship between philosophical texts, respectively philosophy and language consists in the fact that their words and texts perpetually surpass, transcend themselves.

Because of this, philosophers actually – or: consequently – have no “texts” at all. And even if there are such things, they essentially are the soul’s continuous historical conversation with itself that cannot be ended – thus “progressing towards infinity”. (As conversation, philosophy is – from a different direction, but – as “near” to the essence/existence of language, connected to existence in general, as poetry, which, beyond having a certain meaning, is identical with that which it means...)

According to this, poetry is not conversation, or it is – would be – that, which in the final, completed work is only the – one – end of conversation. Indeed, philosophy could not survive if it were like this...

In a well defined and historically divided western tradition all this appears as a kind of miserable “imperfection” of philosophy. This does not merely – and in the first place – mean that words become degraded and

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<sup>1</sup> See: István Fehér M., *József Attila esztétikai írásai és Gadamer hermeneutikája – Irodalmi szöveg és filozófiai szöveg* (Attila József’s Writings in Aesthetics and Gadamer’s Hermeneutics – Literary Text and Philosophical Text), Bratislava, Kalligram, 2003, pp. 164, 166.

worn out during their theoretical “use”, but that they are “imperfect” from the beginning. This is because they are merely and excessively: human words.

Contrary to this – according to Gadamer’s hermeneutics – the “divine” word is perfect; because it is “one alone”. Obviously, in the case of poetic word “perfect” has a different meaning, namely: its formulation is final. A poem simply cannot be written “with other words”...

According to me, this means that, related to the formulation of poetic words, all “understanding by itself” is impossible. That is, poetry, maybe in contrast with other texts, always and *ab ovo* – and not only as the consequence of temporal distances etc. – claims the efforts of a hermeneutical interpretation; it demands application, the self-changing challenges of making the text one’s own.

As Heidegger puts it, poetry always and essentially urges us to *dialogue* by this. To a dialogue in which precisely the conversation of poets and thinkers may prove the most important and the most existence-like from the perspective of the subject, language, conversation and its importance...

But in what else does the *significance* of poetry’s perfection consist, if not in the fact that it orientates man – as a contrast – towards (his) language as a constantly emerging want of language and existence? Therefore it can be asked, whether philosophy has really some other “task”, related to which we could regretfully state, that it has no adequate, specific language of its own...<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to this, divine word, is “one alone”, as we have seen it. This does not mean that there is only “one piece” of it, for God talks quite a lot in the Bible. It would/could rather mean that this word contains the “whole

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *ibid.* p. 181.

thing” at once and as a whole. Compared to this, of course, human word is “imperfect”. That is, it is dependent on logic, grammar, etymology, language theory etc. and even hermeneutics... In other words: divine word may be considered a word *that has no language at all*, respectively it has no need of such a thing – at least it seems so. The special problem, however, is in this case as well that this word is addressed to man, who, on the other hand, has to struggle continuously with the multitude of words and their meanings in his language/languages – if only because the disposition made at Babel.

Consequently: “even *being dependent upon conversation* is the sign of imperfection and finitude.”<sup>1</sup> This, naturally, cannot happen with God... Gods – besides many other things – do not philosophize, but, maybe, they only present man with philosophy; and – at least according to Aristotle – this is their most important (good) deed.

According to this, however, there would be no sound reason for us to complain that we are constrained to practice philosophy, or even hermeneutics etc. For: only because divine word is without language, and poetical language is definitive, a challenging and even unavoidable opportunity presents itself, an opportunity to “elaborate theories”... and of course to practice philosophy/hermeneutics as well. For only these have to/are able to undo themselves and transcend themselves continuously – in dialogue –, while moving in the directions of truth and liberty, which are always and historically opened or opening to possibilities (and always dangerous).

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 183.



## 6.

But even (natural-)scientific *discovery* will be pointless within the historical and linguistic situation outlined above unless “it subordinates itself to the hints of this situation and answers these by interpreting the conjectures formulated in them.”<sup>1</sup> So it becomes more and more clear that – in relation to natural sciences – the “place” of truth is not in assertion or verification, but rather in the real, living scientific *discovery* itself.<sup>2</sup> And this has not, after all, psychological, “epistemological” or “epistemological-methodological” character, respectively importance, but ontological one.

This is why we should here mention that nowadays the “hermeneutics of natural sciences” is being outlined once again, a hermeneutics that efficiently reaches back to the Diltheyian, Husserlian and most importantly to the Heideggerian tradition. The philosophical-hermeneutical value of such efforts cannot be overrated. For – either admittedly or unadmittedly – they tend to make acknowledged and to undertake the otherwise elementary *fact* that natural sciences are probably “cultivated” by the *same* Being-here (*Dasein*) – as its *own* and not at all secondary or indifferent *way of existence* –, which operates in the case of “spiritual sciences”, religions/theologies listening to divine words or all the arts and technical or political “professions”; and, of course, in the case of philosophy.

Therefore, as long as we “hermeneutically” or “phenomenologically” distinguish “the thing itself” according to the ways by which it manifests itself, is made *accessible* – that is, according to the “methods of the exact

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore J. Kisiel, *A természettudományos felfedezés hermeneutikája* (The Hermeneutics of the Natural-Scientific Discovery), in Tibor Schwendtner, László Roppolyi and Olga Kiss (eds.), *Hermeneutika és a természettudományok* (Hermeneutics and Natural Sciences), Budapest, Áron Publishing House, 2001, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

natural sciences”, the “methods of spiritual sciences” etc. – (though many of these aspects are acceptable and important), we actually neglect the “more essential” aspect that *for us* “things” can only appear – as meanings – together with the *risks* of their manifestation... And this, of course, is valid in the case of natural sciences, as well as it is related to the other ways of existence of the *Dasein*, which are always specifically divided. Moreover, it is their essential, fundamental *aspect* – which, however, was hardly made explicit.

Therefore it is totally wrong to consider Heidegger’s “critique of – natural and social – science” as referring merely to science. On the contrary: his critique of science – leading to the critique of “metaphysics” and more generally to the critique of “philosophy” – actually widens and deepens to a *polemos* of existential history. In other words: it becomes the – in its essence entirely *factic* – critique and actual challenge of the “fate” of existential history...

Since, for example: “Mathematics is a human science as well as other sciences... and we need to count only because we are temporally finite beings.”<sup>1</sup> Consequently, not even Heidegger’s reflections aim to simply undo or suspend for example all the results/convictions related to the “criteria” of truth; and still less to give new “criteria” to science.

Heidegger only reflects on the essence of truth and in this he loosens up/liberates or re-questions all former cogitation about the essence of truth. He does not say that science does its job wrongly, respectively, that it forms wrong statements and propositions about wrongly presented facts. He only asks questions referring to the sense that determines the place,

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<sup>1</sup> See: Oskar Becker, *Măreția și limitele gândirii matematice* (The Greatness and the Limits of Mathematical Thinking), Bucharest, Scientific Publishing House, 1968, pp. 168–169.

“role” and perspectives of science in existential history. And he asks, of course, whether these questions can be answered or not “within” the confines of science itself.

For, when we ask these questions, it is revealed that the “correctness” of assertions – including scientific assertions as well – is made possible only by the openness of the relation constituted, respectively divided by these questions, more precisely by the investigation itself, “and that, which makes this correctness possible, can claim the essence of truth by a more genuine right.”<sup>1</sup>

Although hereby the idea, that assertion is the only or the true, the essential “place” of truth, proves to be false, this does not mean that, in this way, assertions are *ab ovo* “untrue”, or that some truth or even the essence of truth does not abide in them as in “places”... It means that “all this” “is within the assertion”, but truth/the essence of truth is not confined only to this. Meanwhile the assertion itself, respectively the possibility of its correspondence to “objects” is actually based on the openness of the attitude divided precisely by the assertion itself. This openness of attitude, after all, proves to be exactly (the) liberty.

Therefore, if we say that the essence of truth is liberty – and here “essence” probably is not understood as a “pure” generality distilled to a flavorless, colorless, odorless state – this means exactly the opening up of the questioning investigation and the questioning and questionable relation in the openness – as the actual and real existential history of the dependence-on-existence brought into Being-here.

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Az igazság lényegéről* (On the Essence of Truth), p. 179.

Moreover, indeed: “Whatever happens with historical human beings comes in each case from a decision about the essence of truth that happened long ago and is never up to humans alone.”<sup>1</sup>

**Translated by Ágnes Korondi**

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Platón tanítása az igazság lényegéről* (Plato’ Doctrine of Truth), p. 224.

**A (Possible) Forum for Freedom:  
Faculty of Philosophy, Chair of Philosophy  
and Applied Philosophy  
– A Lecture on Philosophy without Thinker –**

***First*** I should probably write some clarifying words about why I am concerned about and why I feel interested in the current questions of “university philosophy” as connected to the possibilities of applied philosophy? The first and most direct reference point is the fact that I myself exist in a philosophy department, and it is my activity there that provides the financial basis for the subsistence of my family and myself. To put it briefly: our source of living is that I, **as an employee**, “teach” some “disciplines” traditionally called “philosophical” at the faculty of philosophy in Cluj! Then again – secondly – I “teach” these subjects, or rather, I try to “teach” them so that I am genuinely and constantly interested in the inquisitive and explicit – *recte*: applied philosophical – thematization or activization of the challenges of the meanings of philosophizing.

However, I might also add, I could actually teach here (too) even if all that would **not** interest me **at all** with such an organic and genuinely philosophical involvement and horizon... Therefore I could manage the academically compulsory “introductory” and “concluding” references to the “usefulness and harmfulness” of things by enlisting a series of references and quotes, accessible everywhere in fact, by the trendiest figures of contemporary philosophical publicity in addition to some “classics”, as a proof that the issues “minced” during the “lectures” are indubitably “weighty” and “timely”...

All these are rendered especially timely for me, in a genuine, that is, existential, and not merely circumstantial sense, by the particular challenges of the so-called “Bologna process”. Namely, primarily precisely the fact that the new impulses and symbolically veiled constraints and traps to “instrumentalize” philosophy may be hiding in several basic sense in these urging “calls”. Now, I am especially sensitive and fastidious for such things, for reasons equally “historical”, deriving from our recent past, and “personal”, of my own “life history”...

“Chair philosophy” of course cannot – and indeed, must not – be mistaken for philosophy pursued and professed at different departments or faculties of various universities in the course of time. For we are well aware that epochal and school-founding thinkers taught on various universities, and also that teaching was an organic part of the creation of their life work. So much so that – say, a Fichte, a Schelling or a Hegel, etc. – often moved from one university to another to find the most appropriate ground for elaborating and professing their ideas. We are also aware of course that there are several prominent thinkers of the “history of philosophy” who never got involved with any faculty of philosophy, or only for short periods of time and as a sidetrack. However, this does not affect at all their “importance for the history of philosophy”...

“Chair philosophy” is therefore not merely defined by the fact that it notes a kind of philosophy which is cultivated and professed in the context and institution of university departments (chairs). On the contrary, it is primarily characterized by its **not being philosophy**, but it only turns – or rather **transforms, dissects** – philosophy into an **object**, a **thing** in the institutional context of universities. So that, meanwhile, it also changes it into some kind of **instrument** or **technology**. In other words: “chair philosophy” practically **objectivizes** philosophy. Yet it does this in a way

that it presents itself as “the” philosophy – and it is again very important to emphasize, in order to make it clear from the very beginning, that I do not argue here against the diligent and useful didactic, pedagogical, mediating, text interpreting, editing, translating etc. work of philosophy professors including myself, I only investigate and thematize “chair philosophy”. Which, in fact, is Nothing else or Nothing more than – with Heidegger’s word – “science of philosophy”. And this is why chair philosophy is not “useless”, for it satisfies the everyday needs in education, culture, politics, society, mentality, as well as entertainment and “intellectual” social needs for philosophy as **object**.

“Chair philosophy” therefore – to put it briefly – can be regarded as a non-philosophical, institutionalized **condition**, a **hypostasis** (and not merely “method”) of philosophy as an object alienated from itself, created by the primarily technical – that is, artificial – **instrumentarium** and **dissection** of the mostly merely terminological results of the *sui generis* philosophical accomplishments of the originally also *sui generis* philosophical urges outlined in the course of the “history” or tradition of thinking. In other words: “chair philosophy” is characterized by the rule of “methods” understood and applied as procedural and management **techniques** and “problems” understood as technical terms.

I’d like to repeatedly emphasize that chair philosophy is not merely or primarily a possible “method” of practicing philosophy but it increasingly becomes a **condition** of philosophy in which philosophy is done or treated, designed, produced and distributed as a **thing**. No matter whether this **thing** is a kind of “concept”, “discourse”, “method” or “technique”. In this sense “chair philosophy” is indeed a special historical “product” of university-level teaching of philosophy, the “results” of which – the **products** of the “profession” or “job” of teaching philosophy –

increasingly turn into **commodities**. Commodities which have their own “price”. This “price” can have of course a monetary expression, but it can be more or less considerable also in a symbolic sense.

On this account “chair philosophy” is extremely sensitive – should I not say alertly “pliable” – to all kinds of environmental (even market-) “effects” and “changes”. First of all, these are the changing “intellectual” **fashions**, modern “trends”, all kinds of circumstances and **institutional modifications**. Each of these is a requirement for any self-respecting chair philosophy. Since these are which “whisper” us what is worth studying, and also how. While the slogan of “chair philosophy” cannot be other in this respect than **adaptation, alignment and keeping up!**

Mainly if this is what makes every kind of “chair philosophy” always “timely” and “opportune”. So: directly and literally always “most recent”. For any philosophy that is not “most recent”, cannot possibly be a sellable commodity **these days**. Not even at the universities. Therefore such a thing can by no means make the university institution a sellable product. Such a “thing” is thus a needless waste of money, time and energy, since it is usually unmarketable. No surprise therefore that the politicians, managers and bookkeepers of science allocate no funds for it, no promotions or pay raises, grants, stipends, etc.

“Chair philosophy” is therefore a historical thing. Its history begins of course with the medieval history of the creation of the first universities. Since these universities were evidently under the rule of theology, the discipline of philosophy only had a subsidiary, ancillary role, often being termed as a “servant”.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this tradition, it later became typical –

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Károly Redl, “A fakultások vitájának előtörténetéhez” (To the history of the debate of faculties), in *Az európai egyetem funkcióváltozásai – Felsőoktatás-történeti tanulmányok* (Functional changes in European universities – Studies in the



and remained so for quite a long time – that the historically most significant thinkers did **not**, and could **not** have chairs at universities. This tendency “is still functional in the 18<sup>th</sup> century... the really productive philosophical thinking – with Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Leibniz – develops **outside** the university”. The philosophy that can be called “new” and “innovative” in the most profound and genuine sense – originally cultivated outside universities – only enters the universities at the mid- or late-18<sup>th</sup> century with Wolff, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. However, there had always been historically highly significant “outsiders” during the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century who could not fit philosophically – that is: existentially – into the institutional system of universities; let us only think of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche or Kierkegaard.

The actual, explicit and probably long-lasting – at any rate, today still unpredictably long-lasting – connection of philosophy and the University, the Faculty of Philosophy only happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although this century also displays significant exceptions, such as Emil Cioran, or philosophers who were denied a university chair for reasons ideological or political, such as Czech thinker Jan Patočka, the Romanian Constantin Noica, or the Hungarian Béla Hamvas, or, temporarily, Georg Lukács and some his disciples. However, almost all of these thinkers operated a kind of “private university or seminar-like” home school, even if the kind of instruction offered there resembled more the Greek *paideia* than the “systematic” education of medieval or modern universities. Therefore none of this had anything to do with any kind of “chair philosophy” or, even less, with any kind of politically accepted, “official” chair philosophy.

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history of higher education), ed. Tamás Tóth (Budapest: Professzorok Háza, 2001), 57–72.

Just the opposite, they found themselves precisely at intellectual, philosophical and existential war with these!



**Octavio Cosman**, *Seeds*, 115 x 115 cm, oil on canvas, 1982

The decisive development of the connection between philosophizing and the University, the Faculty of Philosophy, even amidst the current tendencies, is what is lately frequently called the **professionalization** of philosophy. Richard Rorty places the beginning of this process to the

second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more precisely the period following WWII.<sup>1</sup> (From this time on, the increasing majority of those who dealt with philosophy for a living – as if **by itself**, **without** any kind of visible or explicit external constraint – has decided and still decides that philosophy should deal with primarily technical issues emerging within its own inner contexts... This is what the still existing criticism called *Glasperlenspiel*, a glass pearl game played amidst changing desire for texts and archives.)<sup>2</sup>

However, the professionalization of philosophy – in recent years increasingly happening amidst the conditions of growing globalization – changes the parameters and outlines of chair philosophy as well. Or, more accurately: **blurs**. For, whereas the outlines of chair philosophy have been drawn for centuries in **opposition** with those active outside university chairs on the one hand, and also those who have been an alternative for the former, namely people active in academic research institutions on the other hand, the professionalization of philosophy tends to increasingly **blur** or **homogenize** these differences. There is hardly any difference these days between the professional “chair philosophy” of university departments, and the also “professional” philosophizing in academic research institutions. Both places are inhabited by professional “philosophers”, experts and “craftsmen” of philosophy, who, to maintain their careers, carefully watch the applications of various institutions and foundations, their requirements, topics, and the “currents” worth keeping in mind when proposing their conference papers and research projects. Including also the methods and

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<sup>1</sup> See Richard Rorty, “Philosophy in America Today,” *The American Scholar* 2 (1982): 183–187.  
<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/41210815?uid=3738920&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21102974767571>, accessed 4 November 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See Ludger Lütkehaus, “Fachgigante und Lebenszwerge – Vom fehlenden Nutzen der Universitätsphilosophie für das Leben,” *Die Zeit* 21/2001, [http://hermes.zeit.de/pdf.index.php?.doc=/archiv/20001/21/200121\\_philosophie.xml](http://hermes.zeit.de/pdf.index.php?.doc=/archiv/20001/21/200121_philosophie.xml), accessed 25.10.2008

“expected results” of discussion and research. For “unexpected” results cannot count on any kind of “patronage”. Not to mention that precisely these characters will become the decision-makers of science and organized thinking who will shape things perspectively in accordance with these criteria and of course their own standards. Both downwards and upwards.

Therefore it is more and more visible nowadays that chair philosophy is – and in fact always has been – an actually “unphilosophical” “condition” of philosophy, manipulated or directly asking for manipulation. So Schopenhauer’s classic statement about university policies that the true purpose of university philosophy is to guide the deepest thinking of students towards the intellectual direction that they consider adequate for professorial appointments is essentially still valid today... This kind of chair philosophy cannot be serious, only school philosophy, which does not illuminate the darkness of our existence. Indeed, chair philosophy is sometimes reproached to be “alienated”, to avoid highly relevant current existential problems, and instead it closes up into documents and archives, sterile and hermaphrodite interpretations of purportedly “historical” or “timely” texts, and the exegetical tossing-around of letters, punctuation marks, and concepts, especially trendy ones. Meanwhile, of course, chair philosophy works still as “official”, dominant philosophy, at least insofar as the University, the Faculty of Philosophy itself works as a kind of **office** of philosophy, and at the same time it is in an **official** relationship with the supporters of the university and the institutions involved in educational policy making, direct or indirect control, supervision, award or assessment.

The so-called “Bologna process” also risks being just another impulse in instrumentalizing philosophy, despite its emphatic references to the challenges that higher education has to face in creating a unitary Europe and the problems of quality and usefulness involved in this educational

process. There is a probability and also a risk therefore that this process offers further incentive and legitimacy precisely to chair philosophy. And, what is more, amidst and ever wider, globalizing framework of the professionalization of philosophy. For the “Bologna process” aims in fact at **mass higher education**, in addition of course to also make it more efficient. But “mass education” does not mean here that more students get admitted to the university, but first of all that university education is about to increasingly mean a mere expert training course. That is to say: a mere adaptation to the ever more varied and “pluralistic” **conditions** of a constantly changing and globalizing labor market.

However, as far as “pluralism” is concerned, it should not lead us astray, for mostly it is only apparently the transgression of the professionalization and disciplinarization of philosophy. On the contrary, in the context of philosophy’s becoming a profession, pluralism actually consecrates a kind of **parallel discussion** about various topics, *a priori* differentiated even in matters of world view. While of course “pluralism” strongly manipulates the thematic and intellectual parameters of research as well as the addressees of investigations and inquiries. Who, by the way, always complain that they cannot “review” and “follow” the mass of “information” and the “bibliography” of their subjects.

The professionalization of philosophy implies first of all the overrepresentation of problems of a technical kind, of “specialization”, as well as “disciplinarization” deriving from aversion of contexts and questions which are not self-sufficient, and therefore brings about an emphatic idiosyncrasy. A kind of idiosyncrasy of course which coexists well with the dominance of texts, whether seen as the hermaphrodite idiosyncrasy of interpretations and readings, etc., or as the idiosyncrasy of automatic disciplinary urges forcing the creation of new and new

disciplines termed “philosophical”, such as “problematology”, “peratology”, “thanatology”, “grammatology”, etc. These of course generate the process of the “self-breeding” of “problems”, including those which are circumstantially born out of the trendy and timely topics of an application, a grant or a conference rather than the constraints of actual existential experiences. This happens in close connection with the permanent and overwhelming constraint of publication and conference attendance, which does not in fact meet *sui generis* communication needs – what Karl Jaspers rightly considered one originating factor of philosophy itself – but mostly only functions as a measuring tape of “accomplishments”. And, what’s more, because of which the place of “schools” and “-isms” is taken these days by ever growing numbers of “disciplines” and schematized “procedures”.

It is perhaps only a further evidence of these problems and difficulties that the type of higher education now advocated by the Bologna Agreement could mean in fact “convertible universities”. These, accordingly, would “train” mass-professionals with locally or globally convertible “skills” and “reliability”, rather than free, responsible and engaged inquirers and thinkers. All the more so as these latter ones cannot just be “trained”...

This however – although quite probable – is not necessary as well! For – at least in liberal democracies – there is “always” a possibility to discover once in a while the simplest thing that: **philosophy can only be taught by philosophizing even at university level, regardless of the fact that the direct audience – the students – would want to invest their scholarships or tuition fees for “philosophy itself” or exchange it for other horizons (“instrumentalization”). For there is no hope – fortunately! – that any kind of truly philosophical “text” can be voiced**

*without* approaching its questions with our *own* questions and inquiries... And without this voicing becoming an appeal or warning for the audience that they need to ask their own explicit – and simply irreplaceable!! – questions about the matter of “texts” as well!

For the problematic way leading us back and forth to philosophy and our own possibilities is **not a different one**, therefore the all-time contact with philosophy – whether as a professor, a student, or a “social” or “institutional” one – cannot be “easier” or “more accessible”, nor “harder” and “more incomprehensible” than the journey to ourselves, open to possibilities, limitations and challenges, and burdened with the responsibilities of communication, and leading through the beings amidst our partaking in being. And since this is what any authentic philosophy always and only undertakes, what would be just enough for the current, living “operation” of the University, the Faculty of Philosophy, is, I think: philosophy “itself”! Without “chair philosophy”!

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It is certainly not accidental that Immanuel Kant, thinking about the “conflict of the faculties”, and trying to define the place and role of the faculty of philosophy within university systems, discusses the University, the Faculty of Philosophy, essentially and clearly, primarily as a **place of freedom**, or what is more, as the **forum of freedom**.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, Kant thinks of the university itself as a **forum**, while he treats the University, the Faculty of philosophy in fact as the **forum of freedom**. That is to say, not

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (Der Streit de Facultaten), trans. and introd. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris Books, 1992), 29.



merely as a place of exchange of knowledge and skills, or a man production called “training”.



**Octavian Cosman, *Sandy towns*, Mixed technique, 2015-2016**

Nevertheless, the University, the Faculty of Philosophy can only be a place or even a forum of freedom, if it can discuss anything as a place for the public use of the mind. “Discussion” however means Nothing else than the encounter with someone or something in questioning or in the uttered question itself. And, what is more, the encounter – or rather: confrontation – not only with the question or the “partner”, but with ourselves as well.



Therefore the community of professors and students as a forum of freedom can only be formed on faculties of philosophy if it means an **encounter** in questioning – that is, in search and self-search –, practiced by, and as a right of the public use of the mind, and permanently reiterating, validating and rearticulating this right and practice. And this is of course not unconnected to what is called in philosophy for thousands of years the “search for the truth”. With all its “relativity”. So it is no accident that already Aristotle connects the **basic name questions** – the “categories” – of the search for being to the *agora*...

The truth can only be searched therefore, both on the *agora* and at the University, the Faculty of Philosophy, freely by free people: as a **responsible** and historical act of freedom. As people who interact in no other ways than in various situations – or positions in a “phenomenological” sense – of **serious self-search**. And it is only the **difference** of this “position”, this situation and the implications that constitutes it – and not of their relationship with the current set of knowledge or skills – that **essentially** and **primarily** distinguishes between one professor or student or another. And not the length of a list of publications or the frequency of conference attendance! Such things can only be derivative, even if utterly **organic** (although hopefully more and more rarely).

So, with regard to its essence and meaning, the University, the Faculty of Philosophy – even if it were only a “factory-like” setting of “philosophical science” – could not have any other **purpose** than what philosophy itself **derives** from: the problematic, historical and factually accepted ontology of human freedom! Which, regarding its being and structure of being, is in fact identical, or rather: coincidental with the existential, ontological – and not “epistemological”, “political

philosophical” or “moral philosophical” – and always factual structure of questionability and **questioning**. The University, the Faculty of Philosophy gains thus its positive and essential meanings not from ministries and political parties, not from churches or various international agreements (Bologna or other), but from philosophy itself and its historical embeddings – that is, not merely from its possible timely “usefulness or uselessness”. That is, from the historical urges and meanings of being of philosophy itself, which often have not even reached the universities of philosophy...

Even more directly: the actual purpose of philosophy “training” in higher education or of the University, the Faculty of Philosophy itself, with regard to its **essence** and **meaning**, cannot be anything else than the **questionability** of the historical human freedom and the historically possible **autonomous** human being! Both in a “community” and an “individual” sense. And with the clarification that no kind of community – let alone an “autonomous” community – is or can be possible without autonomous individuals!

Therefore an even more direct purpose – and not some exclusive “object”, “task” or subject – of the University, the Faculty of philosophy is the historical or social autonomous **individual**, a prerequisite for communities. And of course both for the presence of professors and students at the universities, and for the public “rational use” of researches! This is why the University, the Faculty of Philosophy and the work that happens there **cannot** be especially popular. At most for a short while, due to fashion or circumstances. Since Nothing is more **suspicious**, **unpleasant** or **uncomfortable** – to be sure, even for the “individual” itself – than precisely the “autonomous individual”! That’s why all the “movements” and organizations that usually quite whole-heartedly activate for all kinds of (primarily “community”) “autonomies” showed **not much** zeal for it.

However, no movements are generally initiated for the autonomous individual, if for no other reason, than because all such endeavor would be a burden of philosophy and its derivative “institutions”.

The autonomous individual<sup>1</sup> is of course not the *individuum* – whose name hints to its indivisibility, atomization rather than its “one-I”-ness – nor a (more or less) isolated human being (no matter how well prepared professionally or how well “socialized”), but only the one who, conscious of his **unrepeatability**, is in **possession** of one’s own property (his wealth, including his mind and all competences and skills gained on behalf of his mind) as well as one’s own conscience. Who exists, with all his “skills”, first of all with regard to the responsibility of the problematic **possibilities** that he himself has acknowledged and undertaken. [It is no accident that the Greek name of the fundamental Aristotelian category – the *ousia* – originally meant precisely **property** and **wealth**, and by this, the “(basic) value” that counts as the foundation of being. That to which, by the direction of taking into possession, one must and should pursue. And which, therefore, is always questionable because of its importance, and which, on this very account, is the **essence** itself. This original sense of the Greek word of *ousia* is of course preserved and utilized to the full by the *sui generis* philosophy of Aristotle’s categorial thinking.<sup>2</sup>]

Probably any time and any place – even at the universities of philosophy – when and where philosophy, or at least an invitation to true philosophy, happened indeed, then it happened precisely with regard to, or as, something similar. For “reflection” – just like the related “meditation” –

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<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian term “egyén”, meaning ‘individual’ is a compound meaning “one-I”. (Translator’s note).

<sup>2</sup> For more on this, see my study “[The Future, Or Questioningly Dwells the Mortal Man... Question-Points to Time](#)”, *Philobiblon – Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in the Humanities* XV (2010): 92–118.

hardly means anything else than the meditative caring for he who, as he takes part in being, is able, and in fact indeed forced, to think – and act – about (his) being in a timely and actual way, in its all-time problem of being and with regard to his essential, historical and ultimately encounter-oriented possibilities (of being). Therefore the issue of the autonomous being, as also that of freedom, is in fact not a matter of moral, legal or political philosophy, but an essential historical, existential and ontological question. This is why primarily “chair philosophies” try so hard to escape it, often even in the name of “philosophy”, as something that, as “autonomy”, belongs not the individual, but to the community. In other words: thoughtlessly opposing the individual and its communities, as well as the communities and the individuals in them.

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Now, with regard to the “Bologna Process” in the **field of philosophy**, it is important to notice, with regard to the determination of the situation, that it was actually prepared, and still articulated, by the professionalization of philosophy, or rather by professional “philosophy”. Of course, in close connection with chair philosophies. That is to say, with regard to philosophy, the Bologna Process is outlined “philosophically” by something which is, from the very beginning, primarily subservient to the needs of the labor market. And it can only be rightly understood in this horizon how the qualification structure of higher education follows both the needs of “knowledge-based society” and the labor market, oriented in the same direction.

It is clear therefore **what kind of knowledge** they mean when talking about the knowledge needs or requirements of a “knowledge-based”

society. Such that is primarily shaped by labor market conditions! Moreover, it is well “cared for” by the systems of applications; the role that the successful results of such applications have in the assessment and promotion of professors, usually expressed and measured in points; and the **manipulation techniques** of forcing them into all kinds of work teams that university institutions and their professional staff would indeed conform to these “epistemologically” speaking hardly organic expectations.

So there is Nothing to wonder that the subjects of the annual Romanian “grants” launched by the national council – probably held “most respectable” precisely because these contracts make the biggest income for the universities, the highest recognition for the leaders of these institutions, and the most “valuable” points for the promotion of professors – **contain not a single** “priority field” that could possibly include any kind of *sui generis* philosophical research...<sup>1</sup>

All these of course are quite telling as to the real nature of the loudly advocated adaptation to the “labor market”, and also of how far the construction sites of the so-called “knowledge-based society” are actually guided by the “market” – even if not the “marketplace”, the *agora*. The most surprising is – although, as I have said, there is Nothing to be

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<sup>1</sup> It becomes increasingly clear in fact that these so-called “grants” do not mean “paid research”, but such that are already endorsed by those in power, regarding both their subjects and their methodologies. Which are usually “promoted”, firstly with regard to things connected to philosophy, in the name of ruling spiritual public opinion, symbolic powers, and related – established and predictable – “trendy” actualities. It is no accident therefore that – and let me hint now to a personal experience – it has been completely impossible to gain any financial support or “grant” around here for a philosophical research on euthanasia which would radically analyze this – from their perspective – admittedly “sensitive” topic, digging deeper than public opinion and current spiritual trends in general. See also my Chapter on euthanasia! Whereas the Bioethics Research Centre of Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj was founded and is operated under the authority of theology – Orthodox theology, but this not important now... Such things have of course a clear “message” on the actual “rights” and circumstances of the public use of the mind!

surprised about – that not only am I not aware of any public position or argued stance against this on behalf of the “craftsmen” of philosophy around here, but I tend to see rather that such a state of things is mostly accepted with almost natural “reflexes” of “catching-up”! This may also illustrate that the reunited team of professional philosophy and chair philosophy, with no useless sweat, is engaged in a predictably victorious, and of course always fairly judged and scored match with... nobody knows who any longer. It may perhaps be that it is not the “market” but only professional and chair philosophy that is victorious here!

So, if we read in a French Encyclopaedia<sup>1</sup> that no concept of education has been shaped without a philosophical background, we can rightfully add that, at least in Romania, the **extraction of philosophy** from education cannot do without (chair) philosophers and their audience, eager for building institutions. For philosophy for them – as well as the teaching of philosophy and its institutions – is indeed a sort of object or thing, that they shape or build as they are required to by the market. Because this is all that lies in their “skills”.

However, authentic philosophy has always had, and will also have, if not a market, then its *agora*! Of course, it is perhaps also true that its traffic (of merchandise) is more difficult to measure. Let us say, by the number of copies of newly printed books or the masses of audience of lectures or university students.

It is also true that philosophy is usually claimed not to result in any kind of real and actual knowledge... And also that the insights of philosophy cannot actually be applied or “used” for anything. Well, one of the most important targets of this contribution – **as well** – is to **refute** this

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<sup>1</sup> See *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle*, vol. I.: *Univers Philosophique*, ed. André Jacob (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1997).

statement!<sup>1</sup> It is still my experience and opinion that we realize precisely because of our seriousness and engagement with the weight of our always “personal”, determined existential problems that no kind of “spiritual corpus”, as an impersonal “reply”-mechanism, theory or solution algorithm provided by “education” is possible in connection with them, which would just be appropriated and then kept in permanent use and operation.

Insofar I can fully agree with the Bologna process. Namely, with the fact that it promotes life-long learning. Let me note: philosophy – when it actually happened – has always been professing this for at least two and half thousand years...<sup>2</sup> In this way alone can the re-inquiring and re-formulating encounter with the meaning and, why not, power of philosophy and philosophizing become “possible” as well as actual again.

However, the case is completely different if, instead philosophy, the universities and schools (not only the secondary schools) teach mere disciplines, or – directly or indirectly – mentality. (Of which, of course, we cannot speak in the plural, no matter how many there are). Because both –

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<sup>1</sup> Humboldt’s concept of the university is traditionally criticized for not paying attention to the usefulness or direct applicability of the education and training that takes place there, and also, that it puts philosophy in the centre. It is of course impossible to think that the Humboldtian idea of the research university, greatly founded on Kant and Schelling, would think of the education and training it offers as “useless”. Rather, one should say that the Humboldtian concept of the university was not “surpassed”, but simply ... forgotten! And it was forgotten in such a way that, concentrating on “easier” possibilities in a Heideggerian sense, they did not repeat it, or were more and more incapable of repeating it. For it is not easy at all to accomplish the idea rooted in Kant’s thoughts, formulated by Schelling and institutionally founded by Wilhelm von Humboldt – especially for the need of the proliferating number of universities – that the university professor in his lectures creates science directly before the students, as if right in front of their eyes! And he does not “teach” some sorts of “subjects”, “disciplines” or “specializations”! Such a thing can of course pose problems too for the audience. (István Fehér M. has dedicated a highly documented and insightful book containing also critical remarks about the matter, entitled *Schelling – Humboldt, Idealismus und Universität, Mit Ausblicken auf Heidegger und die Hermeneutik* [Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, New York: P. Lang, Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2007]).

<sup>2</sup> It is enough to just think of Aristotle’s concept of *phronesis*, which says the same thing.

disciplines and mentality – only waste away the inquiry that leads towards the above mentioned insights. That is: inquiry itself. Nonetheless, this is one of the most significant aspects of the university education of philosophy, both in Romanian and in Hungarian, in the Romanian education system. I am thinking about the fact that doctrinal religious education is compulsory in Romania, to the best of my knowledge singularly in Europe, from elementary school to the end of secondary school (age 18). In addition to violating human rights – since children ideologically indoctrinated ever since age 6 or 7 should have the rights to decide freely and openly for themselves in such matters – this of course also tailors, *a priori* and determinately, the possible horizons of inquiry, directions and inclinations of questions and answers for people who have grown up this way. So one of the most serious problems that I face as a professor of philosophy is that students seem to lose, year by year, the open inclination for questioning, or that most of the students’ “own” questions are formulated in a yet **hardly movable** religious and theological determination and framework.

All the more so because, in strong connection with this, the “science” disciplines of school education (like biology or physics) are also taught avoiding the problematization of theories or ideas that can be relevant for philosophy or mentality. That is to say, such things are left completely in the hands of teachers of religious education, trained and permanently controlled by the churches – I repeat, in all schools from Romania invariably – for an entire 12 years of the life-history of children ages 6 to 18, a decisive period from all points of view! This is joined with the dry instrumentalism of social sciences and “citizenship” disciplines in secondary school, and a single year of philosophy education. This again is almost exorbitant, which the current philosophy textbook, accepted also in



Hungarian, is teeming with objective mistakes and errors, next to lacking any standards of thinking or criticism.

It is no wonder then that the spirituality of the “subjects” taught at the University? Faculty of philosophy are also required and promoted in the same spirit, adapted to such a pre-defined “public opinion”. What they only seem to be quiet about is that this – I repeat: real and actual – “public opinion” has not simply “grown by itself”, but it was cultivated and bred. Only that few people wish or choose to know about it. And even less problematize it. The least problematized is that fact that these are precisely those power factors – not merely ideological and symbolic – which actually guide, at least for the time being, the often mentioned “philosophy labor market”. Including the “popularity” and catchment area of the University, the Faculty of Philosophy also! That is, they also define the “numbers”, “consistency” and “quality” of those who attend it and graduate from it.

As for the labor market, it is definitely not a kind of *agora* where people freely debate or compete over jobs posted in the name and interest of truth. So most graduates of the University? Faculty of philosophy of Cluj find – temporary or full-time – employment as secondary school teachers, at various foundations, societies, public institutions and political organizations, or in the press. The vast majority of these of course also stand under direct or indirect political, ideological or religious supervision (and that of the public opinion generated by these). That is to say, these probably also hardly long for “autonomous individuals”... It may well happen however, that the case is also valid for the opposite direction. So that it would not be superfluous to check how far those who were ambitious or lucky enough to meet the open or silent requirements of the labor market with their philosophy diploma have reached their “happiness” on this account. Or rather they have to deny themselves because of this day after

day? But it is precisely this that proves that one can quite resourcefully influence the shaping of the labor market, instead of just lagging behind its external and usually instrumental requirements mediated by (not “uninterested”) offices and institutions.

However, philosophy does and must have its “own interests” – as Kant puts it – and it must protect and represent these interests by the public use of the mind, and primarily precisely by doing philosophy. The decisive role in this process nowadays would go not to chair philosophy, but to university philosophy, or the University, the Faculty of Philosophy. Since neither the Romanian Academy, nor any of the Romanian universities have no serious **research institutions for philosophy**, it is perhaps time to think about the creation, or at least lobby for the creation of a research institution independently from state- or private universities, or “foundations” long expropriated by politics or ideologies. And where the most talented and engaged (young) researchers would finally find employment. Instead of the “reliable” and “predictable” people, the descendents of historical families of our little community, who are only good at the dry science of philosophy. For the single clear reason that they might “research” subjects of their own fields of interest in a genuinely philosophical inquiry, following a system of applications. Or simply: to “just” philosophize!

The worries usually mechanically arising at this, that these subjects and researches would probably lack public utility or applicability – of course, only from the perspective of those who always seem to have very accurate information as to the deep functions and tasks of our “culture” and “history”, but who, in spite of this, are never capable of presenting truly meaningful and alive creative strategies instead of illusions – could only be put to rest by paraphrasing Heidegger: philosophy, although never really “timely” or journalistically “actual”, always pinpoints its **own age** with

sharp accuracy. Meaning the truly real and central questions and problems of its age. “Philosophy” is a “useless”, meaningless or empty endeavor only if it is not really philosophy, but wrongly called so! So a periodical of the research institution called for above could also be published, and it is my conviction that it would soon become of the richest and most alive publications of thinking in the region. People from many places living with the awareness and urge of the constraint of thinking would probably soon send their analyses. For, I repeat: “philosophy” is only a seemingly “useless”, meaningless and empty endeavor if it is **not** philosophy, but something wrongly **called** so out of habit!

However, this only illustrates that the **name** of philosophy is still **attractive** today in certain respects! Together with all the traps of such an attraction. How else could it be explained that we are repeatedly told on more and more channels that almost all production or service companies or all institutions that think highly of themselves have their own “philosophies”? There is Nothing wrong with this in itself, since we could even think that they mean the articulated and meaningful existence of that company within the wider connections of the world, also with a reference to its future.

The problem lies rather in the **silencing away** of the question whether these companies or businesses also have a **thinker** as an extra to their “philosophy”? The problem is not merely that the “philosophy” of companies, fashion salons or gyms is actually only an empty marketing maneuvers, but much rather that this way the **monster of the thinker-deprived philosophy** has been formed and has been gaining more and more ground!

Since philosophy – and also “philosophizing” – no longer needs a thinker, it will do with a “professional” or “expert” – trained of course

necessarily as a manager as well –, who knows also how to use the mere term and conceptual means – “word-things” in Gadamer’s term – of philosophy in order to merely “employ” “philosophy” without **thinking**,<sup>1</sup> and what is more, directly as a successful motivation of the lack of thinking.

It is a question therefore whether is it not the same that happens in chair philosophy – as well as professional philosophy? Namely, is it not indeed a thinker-deprived “philosophy” and “philosophizing” which happens then? And it may be that the essential and real community and interconnectedness of these two, originally probably not very different tendencies explains why – despite those said above – the name of “philosophy” still corresponds today to superfluous, void and “meaningless” occupations, complicating life and things for no avail. Or, as Erasmus used to say: a blatant “folly”.

In spite of this, it is my conviction that the meditation about the teaching of philosophy and university philosophy has – even today – no other way than the reflection on the possible “**philosophical nature**” of the very teaching of philosophy. For, in case of philosophy, the question comes more specifically: what is the relationship between education **by philosophy** on the one hand, and “teaching” **philosophy**, or more precisely, “teaching” how to guide one to reach **philosophy**?

In times like this of course the “difference” that Kant made between philosophy taken *in sensu scholastico* and *in sensu cosmopolitico* is almost automatically pulled out and discussed anew. The calling of this differentiation, beyond the ramifications of conceptual differences, should

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<sup>1</sup> It may also have a role in this – as pointed out by Heidegger not very long ago – that we know very little about what it means to think, or what thinking is at all. See Martin Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken?*, fifth, revised edition (Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1997), 175.

have been precisely to make it clear: philosophy cannot in fact be either taught, or learnt... For that part of philosophy which can be taught as historical or mental knowledge *a priori* coming from others is, albeit not without content, but devoid of actual meanings.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the fact that such things are usually read in contexts which aim rather to somehow legitimize the “chair philosophy” saved by the name of university philosophy, I think that these ways of interpretations avoid precisely the hermeneutical core of things. Since most often we tend to forget that these profound and meaningful thoughts of Kant are contained and emphasized in his **university lectures** – that is, in the physical presence of Kant and his eager audience. Therefore in a highly determined way!<sup>2</sup> And what is more, in connection to subjects precisely as “metaphysics” or “logic”!

But what would be the sense of speaking – and loudly too – about the “unteachability” and “unlearnability” of philosophy as a “teacher”, a lecturer...? Certainly Nothing! So, no doubt, something utterly different has to happen or be discussed there. For Kant says in this hermeneutic situation that: everything that forms the concept of **school**-philosophy can be taught and learnt... While on the other hand, although not useless at all, this still lacks the proper, *sui generis* meaning. So it lacks precisely that the knowledge and skills, proved by their the passing-on, learning and practicing – and thus connected also to “maxims”<sup>3</sup> – be articulated with

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<sup>1</sup> See also the systematic writing of Fehér M., István: *A filozófia tanítása* (The teaching of philosophy) in *Iskolai filozófia Magyarországon a XVI-XIX. században* (School philosophy in Hungary in the 16<sup>th</sup> –19<sup>th</sup> century), ed. András Mészáros (Bratislava [Pozsony]: Kalligram, 2003), 9–23.

<sup>2</sup> That is, precisely so as, with Schelling’s words mentioned above, science comes into being in front of the audience!

<sup>3</sup> “Maxims” are the inner, subjective principles of the choice among various objectives.

reference to, and projected on the universal (*cosmopoliticus*) objectives and senses of mankind.

These objectives however – amidst which thus the possibility of any meaning can only be constituted – appear not as “*maxims*” but as **questions** (also) for Kant. So we could say that the – currently external – “difference” of **school** and **universal** philosophy, that is, precisely the difference between thinking taken in the sense of *maxims* or thinking and life itself taken as original questioning! Such a “difference” which the actual philosophy, *in sensu eminenti*, besides stating and outlining, always also **exceeds** and eliminates, at least with regard to itself. And this cannot be “taught” because there is Nothing to “teach” about such kinds of questions or questioning!

Aristotle emphasizes both in the *Categories* and in the *Topics* that categorial questions – or more precisely the questions validated and represented by the categories themselves – are not **dialectical**. Therefore in the sense of dialectical or erotetic edification they cannot and should not be dealt with... Because they simply cannot be answered with yes or no, affirmation or negation. On the other hand, if we do not ask these questions... then we can never know or understand why we humans ask questions and answer them all the time...

The case is then probably that contents can be taught, while meanings cannot. Because these can only be inquired for – otherwise they will never even speak. Then how can they outline and constitute themselves without questioning? As something which can simply be handed over from one shoulder to the other? As a simple formula or algorithm in function.

Well, this is precisely what Kant was thinking about aloud in the presence of his students. So he did not simply imparted or even less simply

lectured about some “subject” – one that was made more attractive or fluent by rhetorical means –, but he explicitly interrogated, questioned it at that very time. This is why it is probably not accidental – as also experienced by his diligent exegetes – that the greatest of all questions of meaning, namely “What is man?” is formulated precisely in Kant’s **university lectures**, and not in some “scholarly” study wrapped in mere previous numbness.<sup>1</sup> He does not only provide his students eager for wisdom with serious warnings clad in terminological differentiations.

Meanwhile Kant always emphasizes still that the true philosopher is the practical philosopher! Which again means something completely different there than proficiency *in sensu scholastico* in the “discipline” or texts of practical philosophy, even if it is called *The Critique of Practical Reason*. On the contrary, this is the only direct way – the way of essential thinking – to the articulation of philosophy and the University, the Faculty of Philosophy as a place and forum of freedom.

However, these days there are more and more voices telling us that some university professors should be more mindful of the fact that **not all** the students who apply to the department of philosophy wish to make contact with philosophy so-to-say “for the sake of philosophy”..., but for making use of it in some other field. Therefore it is unnecessary and tiresome to place too much emphasis on the “philosophical nature” of philosophy...

But what does it actually mean that someone wants to learn philosophy not “for the sake of philosophy” but for some other reason, or that – now from the perspective of university lectures – philosophy is taught so that it may lead not to philosophy, but to something else? But

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<sup>1</sup> See Immanuel Kant, *Introduction to Logic* (New York: Philosophical Library, 2013), especially Chapter III entitled Conception of Philosophy in General.

how could anyone “use” or market philosophy in any other “theoretical” or “practical” field if not creating in the meantime a special relationship with **their own specific questions and urges**, or not becoming aware of the fact that their own questions and projects inevitably connected to these **organically belong to their own selves?!**

Whereas the pertinence of our – certainly always definite – questions to ourselves, and of ourselves to our existential, historical and horizon-like questions is precisely (one of) the **most essential philosophy(ies)**, as we have seen in fact at Kant as well, and to acknowledge this, there is a need for a **most profound and authentic** encounter with philosophy! As I have said, we saw the same at Kant too. And of course no kind of “science of philosophy”, “chair philosophy” or “professional philosophy” can ever possibly lead – and indeed never leads – to any such thing! Which – in spite of this and at the same time – always essentially radiates from any authentic gesture of philosophizing!

Now, what derives from this for me is precisely that the problem of the **teaching of philosophy** – and I mean not exclusively at the university – and **cultivation of philosophy** is **one and the same thing!** Actually, the main question – which has been disquieting me for quite some time – is that: the basic problem of the application of philosophy is not – and cannot be by its nature – how an already “existing”, “ready-made” philosophy, philosophical “language” or “discipline” used for understanding something which inevitably always boasts with its new and particular presence?! On the contrary, the most important question for philosophical (self) reflection itself – that is, the teaching of philosophy – is how to **make philosophy appropriate** for facing the *sui generis* and “necessary” **novelty** of the **presentness** of something problematic, oppressive and challenging – that is, truly questionable –, relevant also from the point of view of



philosophical tradition?! And that, by this – for us humans – philosophy opens up to us the windows of new existential possibilities!

But let me ask: is it not this the fundamental “problem” connected to the meanings and possibilities of the teaching of philosophy? Most certainly, it is! This is why I call this both “philosophical” and existential possibility **applied philosophy**. Completely independently from what other may consider “applied philosophy” based on trends, or how relevant or irrelevant it is on the conference stages of contemporary philosophical fashion-shows!

For it is still most important to admit and have it accepted that the true subjects of philosophy – as well as its tribulations, attempts and stakes – are **not** found primarily in books, studies or the inner “problematic” states of the “science”. Nor in various educational, political (strategic or tactical) directions... Instead, the actual subjects of philosophy stand in the explicit and articulated, reflexive **bringing to actuality** of the existential and historical challenges in action. And possibly this is the most essential, “useful” and applicable thing in “other fields” as well that philosophy students can acquire or make their own – their own *ousia* – in the community of the University, the Faculty of Philosophy, with the philosophizing help of their “educators” in the efforts of thinking, as “the students of their own minds”.

While of course they also take themselves – as autonomous individuals – “into their possession” in the questioning articulation of the responsibly desired direction of their possibilities of being. Regardless of whether these students applied to the university because of philosophy or for other reasons! And of course also irrespective of whether this university is a traditional, “physical” one, or a “virtual” University, the Faculty of Philosophy.

Now, for this very reason, namely because of the actual historical work that one does over oneself necessarily in all respects in the always questionable historical direction and interests of human freedom which always points beyond itself, philosophy or philosophizing cannot be just a kind of “craft”. Let alone “profession”. Therefore the University, the Faculty of Philosophy also cannot be a higher (professional) school of such a “professional training” where the applied mechanisms could work year-by-year as an institution, as if on a conveyor belt. Where the diplomas gained at the end of “factory-structured” processes and technologies of production, training and instruction would prove such a “skill” connected to the “tasks” and “profession” of philosophy. For what kind of “instruction”, “training” or “profession” could “specialize” in amending or avoiding the problems, disorders, insufficiencies, breaks of man with, let’s say, death, dying, freedom, possibility, history, secret, etc.? Such “problems” always turn out never to lack difficulties and “problematicity” – so they would really give a job for licensed “professionals” and “experts” forever – but this way they would just ward off that essential consideration that this somehow unceasably and unavoidably occurring “problematicity” – or more accurately: questionability, question and questioning – belongs to the very essence of philosophy just as questionability belongs necessarily and essentially – that is, ontologically – to the being of the questioning being. While there is not, and cannot be any kind of professional, procedural, or production protocol, regulation, rule or prescription which can be applied just like that, “professionally”, and adjusted to any situation.

This does not mean of course that philosophy would no longer have any kind of “use” or “utility”. On the contrary, it is only and exclusively the clarifying and always reiterated, historically always undertaken,

questioning and re-questioning efforts of philosophy which can secure this ground – as well as atmosphere and mood – on the bases and horizons of which the possible human meanings of being and meaningful being can truly be outlined.

Of course, the “cultivation” and “teaching” of philosophy as a “profession” or even more as a “craft” is not only more easily and light-heartedly accessible – so smoother – but also more “efficient”, productive and profitable. Because it is weightless. Therefore it is simpler to create the expected, “timely” and accounted-for illusion of an “attentive”, “well informed”, “sensitive” and “responsible” “creation” and pedantry of things philosophical. And, what is more, in a way that it would correspond – not to the weight of questions, but – to the explicit or implicit, but “respectable” and “responsible” “expectations” of all institutional, company or professional offices or publicity.

Still, it is in this above outlined way that I would like to understand – and not merely as a kind of naïve self-conceit – what Kant says about the **uniqueness** and “singularity” of philosophy. Namely, the philosophy is the only one that has an **inner** value, and philosophy gives value to all other sciences. For there are no calculations or algorithms or axiomatic systems which could tell us what mathematics is, of what is its meaning for human life; of there are no experiments or theories which could tell us what physics is... nor are there such “reactions” which would inform us in laboratories about the nature and meaning of chemistry. Just as there is no “device” or instrument about the meaning of technology, nor are there works of art to define what a work of art is. And just as theologies do not “ground” the religions, since these are all based on revelations coming from outside, and in revelations they find the roots and meanings of their faith. It is philosophy alone that can necessarily and inevitably find its own

foundations in the all-time question and its permanent reiteration “within” itself, inquiring about its own nature and meanings, and of course always pointing beyond “itself”. Only thus, and only for this reason can philosophy lend “value to all other sciences”.

So the meditation about the University, the Faculty of Philosophy or teaching philosophy at the university has visibly no other way than: the actual meditation about the current position and chances of philosophizing itself. Which must of course also surface the current urges and challenges of philosophizing.

This is what will probably need to guide the analyses, debates and “policies” connected to the University, the Faculty of Philosophy as a possible university (philosophy) institution. And not the other way round. Otherwise Nothing more will happen than the creation of newer versions of the usual “academic” philosophical “laboratories and factories”. In which – besides their being in fact the objectives and requirements of education and academic policy, or sandwich fillings between public mood and public will – there is a real chance that they – or we – would actually teach *misosophia* instead of *philosophia* as the “philosophy of the academic-university ghetto”.

For this is increasingly the case lately. Many “graduates” want to directly get rid of the memory and experience that they once attended a so-called University, Faculty of Philosophy. Just as many are those who no longer think it is important to “finish” their studies. Which, by the way, means a no greater “ordeal” than earning their diplomas by producing some three dozens of pages of a “text” on a somewhat “philosophical subject”... Or the continuation of these “studies” on MA level. While the respect, if not honour, of titles – “MA”, “PhD” – is still preserved.

This is only possible of course because we slowly not only treat philosophy as an object – or rather, dissimulate it with institutional headings, stamps and commitments – but turn it directly into a lie at the universities!

**Translated by Emese Czintos**

## CHAPTER III

### **The Sacred Or the Bright Sounds of Silence – A thinking-experiment on Nature, related (and created) to Heidegger and Hölderlin –**

*The “concept”* – or rather: the **word** – of the sacred has an important place and role in Heidegger’s thinking, distinct in content and significance from all other philosophies. This place and role opens the way and creates the connection to another, equally essential existential historical question, namely: what is the relation of the sacred to ... the transgression of metaphysics? For traditionally the “problem” of the sacred is primarily a “metaphysical problem” after all.

For Heidegger, the case of the sacred is raised and discussed in depth most clearly and definitely in his dialogue with Hölderlin, especially in his explanation and interpretation of the poet’s hymn entitled *Wie wenn am Feiertage...*. Heidegger’s discussion reveals that the hymn by the word “sacred” refers to, names, and versifies something by which Hölderlin’s word “nature” has a hidden relationship with *physis*, the fundamental word of Greek antiquity. Although nature as *the sacred* is not identical to *physis*, it does not differ from it nevertheless to the extent that the former should be specifically defined as pertaining to something else. Instead, it has and develops a hidden relationship with the latter. Far from unmasking it, the interpretation, by shedding light on its meaning, reveals this concealment and makes it truly considerable and deep, as a challenge, for the purposes of an essential kind of thinking.

*Physis*, this original basic word with great import, is the expression of the particular relationship of Greek antiquity with existence and the entirety of being. It is not a philosophical term in the sense that we would be able establish today which philosopher coined it and employed it “for the first time” to express existence and being. *Physis* is more ancient, more original than any other pre-Socratic fragment we possess, not to mention the Platonic or Aristotelian systems, which it entirely pervades nonetheless. So, it is only from these that we may understand still, how existence was in fact named and expressed for the Western man by the Greek spirit always perceived as fundamental and original.

The Greeks have an exceptional place on the horizon of Heidegger’s gaze. In the course of the history of existence followed by the Western man, to which Heidegger returns and looks to as well, the Greeks were the first and practically the only to experience existence in its truth as revelation in openness, revelation as unconcealment, and concealment permanently related to it as the return to itself – that is, as an actual and not only “ideal” forth-coming and advent in openness.

The actually untranslatable fundamental term of *physis* primarily means **raising, growth**. This is not a mere summing-up, nor any kind of evolution, but only the self-revelation of the concealed which returns to itself and lends presence to the emerging. Perceived as such, the *physis* means first of all the emerging (*Aufgehen*) in revelation and that what emerges: the lightness of any clearing in which something appears, is outlined, and reveals its own shadows and countenance, *eidōs*. *Physis* is thus the emerging return to itself, withdrawal, and concealing self-revelation. Although the clearing of the revealed can best be identified in the “light”, in the transparency of light, the possibility and permeability of shining, the *physis* equally refers to shadow and darkness, movement,

metamorphosis, and calmness, concealment and unconcealment (truth), etc. That is why it initially means sky and earth, plant and animal, the man and his creations, gods, and human history alike.

Ever since the Romans translated the Greek *physis* into Latin as *natura* – which had previously been existence itself and the totality of beings as a “whole” –, it became a basic word denoting the Western man’s relationship with the being as something fundamentally and deeply **differentiated** from him. The dichotomies which have proved impossible to be eliminated ever since, such as nature and man, nature and intellect, nature and art, and so on, all represent this change. For the time being, we have to put aside this “translation” and the course of the history of existence taking shape and being revealed in the Jewish-Christian perception of existence. It is more important now, that although Hölderlin in his German poem uses the Latin-origin word *die Natur*, what he signifies by it is something intricately related to the truth lying in the Greek term *physis*. Let us follow more closely Heidegger’s observations. Naturally, the basis of the analysis is still the hymn *Wie wenn am Feiertage....*

Hölderlin, the poet, is the disciple of nature. He derives from it, originates from it, and belongs to it, and it is nature that “raises-grows” him. Indeed, nature grows its beings as a “miraculous all-presentness” (*Allgegenwärtig*). It is present in plants, animals, humans and their creations, stones, the fate of nations, and ... in gods as well. It is present in them, but it is isolated; it does not allow itself to be deciphered by any of them. It only raises and teaches in its “light outlines” apparent in all of these. However, the lightness of its outlines is not any kind of weakness. Since all-presentness means exactly mightiness. The all-presentness of nature does not mean the aggregated, complete or exhaustive reception of all that is real, but a way of holding together the reals in which they still



appear as closed and contained even at their turning-out. It holds together the highest and brightest skies and the bottomless, terrifying, and threatening depths.



**Octavian Cosman**, *Agora*, 50 x 60 cm, acrylic and oil on canvas, 2006

This all-present, all-mighty, and thus beautiful, or indeed divinely beautiful nature surrounds the poet.

But the all-present **seemed** to be sleeping in “the time of years”. Sleeping is in effect a way of being-on-the-way, and as such, self-oblivion, withdrawal, and concealment. Contrary to all appearances, the nature did not sleep, it does not sleep. It keeps vigil, but in mourning. The memory of mourning remains thus the deepest, which names nature first, but also

presents it as dark. With its own dark forces. Mourning does not submerge as deep as detachment, as mere forfeit in lagging. But it always lets the self-oblivious back to himself, and thus – it also urges him. The poet mourns thus, but at the same time he suspects everything. Suspicion is the thinking-in-advance in darkness of the truth emerging with light. In suspicion, truth does not seclude itself, nor does it “reveal itself”, but it is forth-coming.

Nature is thus in fact calm. Calmness is self-collection, from which all beginning that comes forth and emerges from motion derives. This is why nature is suspectingly-foreshadowingly calm. It is at itself, inasmuch as it is thought-in-advance in its forth-coming. The poets – who belong to nature and at the same time name and utter it – are those who suspect. It is only them who remain alone, enduring, to utter and name the foreshadowingly calm nature. Therefore it is exactly this uttering which decides who poets are in fact. The poets are not the versifiers, but those whose knowledge is suspicion: that is, those who measure the degree of their essence with the scale of the essence of nature.

Hölderlin’s “Nature” is thus not the *natura* that has become traditional for us in the West. Indeed, his use of the word condenses the viewpoint of having to name the forth-coming, the emerging. The urge is as strong, as powerful as the suspicion ensured in its own fate, as the all-present itself: the self-secluded mourning is the calm suspicion of darkness, darkness is of night, and night is of daylight. But it is dawning now! – the poet exclaims. The word “nature”, *Die Natur* is not enough for Hölderlin to express this: he calls what he experiences, with suspicion, “the sacred”.

The exclamation is just like the sound and calling of **nature itself**. Hölderlin calls nature “sacred” exactly by constraint of nature and his self

pertaining to nature. Moreover, what he calls “dawning” is the coming of daylight. The becoming-light of the all-present in its all-present clearing.

The growth of the shining light is the most silent of all events. When the poet names this, he does not add something to nature externally, but expresses and grows (exclaims!) it. Nature grows the poet, the poet grows nature. Nature and its advent in the poetic word, which names and grows its light by its own constraint: that is the sacred. Not simply emerging, because mourning, darkness, calmness is also being-on-the-way, that is, actually emerging. But is it (still or already) sacred in itself?

Thus nature is older than the “times”. Naturally, though, it is not older than time itself, but it is the “oldest” time. It is thus by no means that what is considered “supra-temporal” in metaphysics or “eternal” in Christianity. Everything that is real and effective, even prior to gods, is nature. This is why Hölderlin says that nature is “above the gods of West and East”. Sanctity is thus not an attribute of the gods above or one God. Sacred is not sacred because it is Divine, but the Divine is Divine because it is sacred in its own way. Nature as the sacred “does” something else than gods: all present beings will be in it as in a clearing. The sacred is the poetic essence of nature.

The sacred is what emerges in light with the silent tinkling of arms: a suspicion which ends in its own silence, and with its silence, in the word, touching the word which shines in the poet’s existence. This is how it becomes a hymn, a song – that in his own silence, its own listening, the poet watches over the silent convulsion of the sacred. The true, authentic poetic word may only burst shiningly out from silence, lit by the beam of the sacred: “Jetzt aber tagts!”

When is this “now”? This is Hölderlin’s time, and not any other. But this time is a time defined precisely by Hölderlin’s word. This time cannot

be measured by dates, nor can it by centuries. Because this is the actual time, determined in the moment: history. History is there only where and when the essence of truth is decided in mortality in the momentariness of the beginnings. Hölderlin's term "sacred" grounds or may ground another kind of history. It is for the first time that the sacred appears as something which is beyond gods and – of course – humans. Again, it was with Hölderlin first that the poetic word became a term which can ground, or indeed grounds the beginnings. The western language of the Germans retains this word, but does not yet listen to it.

Consequently, Hölderlin uses the word "die Natur" – which is not ample enough for him, therefore he calls it "the sacred" ("das Heilige") – to denote something which is secretly related to *physis*, the fundamental word of Greek existence, and at the same time it is different still. What is this relationship, to what extent is it concealed and different?

*Physis* and the sacred are fundamental words of the **beginnings**. Naturally, beginnings are beginnings because they are not born from each other. Otherwise they would only be continuations. Therefore the relationship of the beginnings can only be concealed. But beginning is only there where the essence of existence was originally experienced and uttered-named as meaning in existence and openness as non-concealment. This is what the Greek word *physis* does in a time the first traces of which are echoed by the Homeric poems, pre-Socratic philosophers, and mainly by the fragments of Parmenides, Anaximander, and Heracleitus. It is now and in this that the truth of existence and the essence of the thinker is determined. It is now and in this that the fate, the thinker's fate – that he utters existence, *his* existence over and over again – is determined. This is how existence grows (*physein*) in the thinker, and this is how he grows it himself as well historically. *Physis* and the sacred is thus existence "itself",

but in a way in which in other beginnings it has grown present and uttered-named in the truth of the essence of thinkers and poets. The thinker utters the existence, the poet names the sacred.

However, the beginning is ... **just** a beginning. It would be a mistake to think of it as a kind of “whole” and ultimate fulfillment. Existence was uttered and named in it. Although the truth of existence is uttered and finds lodging in the word, but this should still be listened to, thought into, and thus it must still be inhabited. In its essence, this listening and thinking is not development or decline, but the explicit, considerate state of the truth of existence in itself. The “way”, the course on which thinking – being essential – does not develop or decline, but is still in motion, is the circle. The beginnings are thus on this circle in their relation to each other. This is the level on which existence and the “level” are one and the same (meaning). So when philosophy adjusts to its own essence, it does not develop at all. It must stand still and think the same thing over and over. That what was and is uttered at the beginning, and as a beginning. Again and again, in all living present. For the sake of an always possible and determined future.

All motion, every movement on the circle is essentially the beginning and the end as well. The beginning on the circle is thus a beginning only inasmuch as it starts something which is **not** exactly itself. It can only be a beginning if that what it begins will step off the circle. Development, that is the distancing from this place is a “mistake” which pertains to thinking, just like the shadow that everything casts for itself.

In the word of the essential thinkers and poets the essence of existence has touched language, reason, and the question of meaning. In their words – the fundamental words – the surfacing and shining of existence in the openness pertaining to itself receives a growing-rearing

sound. Such are the fundamental words, the beginnings, the **shining sounds of existence**. It is only important that the truth of existence should reach the language, and that thinking should penetrate this language. Its old or “new” words. The continuation of the beginnings is a hasty and not adequately essential thinking. In fact, this is how fundamental words become beginnings. They start something which may also have an (other) ending. From one end to the other: this is the course of the history of existence, the historical way of the truth and oblivion of existence.

The historical overview of time and existence shows exactly that the truth of existence has been forgotten in time. The beginnings on the circle are at the “beginning” of existential forgetting in such a way that they do not belong to it still. The fate of existence in existential forgetting is not merely a kind of negligence of human thinking – nor the rudimentariness of a thinker’s abilities – but the course of the history of existence itself. The forgetting of the truth of existence to the advantage of the streaming-in of a non-essentially thought existence. In existential forgetting, existence is distanced from the beginnings. It does not drag away the beginnings from themselves. The beginning does not move, it is only being forgotten. Naturally, distancing in forgetting is live remembering. Therefore memory means at the same time the traces of the beginnings and the yearning of its lights in oblivion.

The *physis* and the sacred are thus beginnings. But the sacred is not the re-translation of the Latin *natura* to *physis* by the devious ways of history. *Physis*, *natura*, and the sacred are not merely cases or questions of translation, but words and names pertaining to existence in times and for time. Words and names given to it by essential thinkers and poets who paid attention to, and were constrained by the pertaining sounds of the opening light, withdrawal, and fading-out. The sacred and the *physis* are thus

different, because they are different beginnings in “different times” and ... for different people.

Nature as the sacred only emerges for poets, essential poets. Their essence and fate is to name the sacred. Therefore essential poets will search for the traces of the sacred in times of need as well, they listen to the returning voices of the beginning, and watch its vaguely flickering lights in the distance. Hölderlin is the poet of the poet, the poet of the essence of poetry. This is not some kind of *ars poetica*, that the poet believes, states, and undertakes. The fate of the poet of poetry is to create and consolidate the essence of poetry in the poem. Hölderlin employs this particularly poetic way of meditation to arrive to that outstanding place where the creation of the essence of poetry is determined in the experience of existence as sacred, as a poet's fate, consolidated as beginning. The fate of the poet is the fate of poetry: the essence of poetry is the naming, uttering, enriching, and growing of existence as the sacred. Just as concealment is “within” the light of the unconcealedness of the *physis*, the darkness of the night and the light of the day are equally “within” the sacred. This is an unwavering, immovable beginning emerging and sounding silently with light from the darkness.

Similarly to the sacred, the truth of existence also becomes forgotten. However, the sacred remains untouched while it withdraws itself, and distances in existential forgetting and loss of essence. While it distances itself, it does not display its unconcealedness in its entirety. It seems therefore that something has been detached from it and has taken its own path on the historical course of existence in the existential forgetting of being. However, it has remained untouched on the “circle” of the opening initial truth of the fundamental words of existence.





**Octavian Cosman**, *In the Shadow of the Cross*,  
200X100 cm, oil on canvas, ceramics, 1997



Following Hölderlin, Rilke stands on a lower step in the course of the history of existence. It is not existence, only being that is shown to him in its entirety. Therefore Rilke's word *natura* means something which is not detached from history, is not an "object" of natural sciences, and does not oppose art, but it is the basis of history, the arts, and also of nature taken in a narrow sense. The "die Natur" denotes the existence in the entirety of its being, of the beings. Rilke is the poet of the integrity and wholeness of the beings. Not of the sacred, but of that, which may still lead to it.

The poets start out then to search for the traces of the sacred, because they experience the absence of the integrity of existential meaning. Since that what is sacred, can only appear as shining in the broadest sphere of entirety. Rilke is thus the poet of the absence of entirety, the traces and distancing lights, echoes of the sacred. This is why Heidegger calls him the "poet of the times of need". Times of need, the neediness of time, the loss of the foundations, existential forgetting. We distance ourselves from the sacred. The sun sets, then the night falls. The sacred, distancing – remains only memory and trace.

Memory is of course not something which was once worn away, leaving some of itself behind. Memory is the absence of being-present, together with the distance from and to which it points. The darkness of the world progresses. In the loss of essence of existential forgetting the sacred only becomes a trace which will lead – if at all – to God alone. But in fact the traces which lead to this trace will gradually fade. So in Trakl's poems the sacred is only a light covered up in the darkness of the night which only collects together by gaining its brightness in veiling alone. This is the blue in Trakl's poems: the blueness of darkness.

The beginnings are thus at the starting point of existential forgetting in such a way that they do not belong to it. But the beginnings are words,

the occurrences of the fundamental words, the essential arrival of existence into the language. This is when they will brightly resound. Their sound is a continuous, silent, careful-watchful challenge and task. But this condensed, hurried streaming from the bright sounds of silence only sees, listens and thinks as much as it can grasp and occasionally seize. This is the beginning which begins, the *Fang* of the *Anfang*. The beginning which brightly sounds, that is the fundamental word. Since its light is its sound and its sound is its light, that what is grasped of its voice as pure sound, or of its light as pure light, leaves untouched and immobile the cohesive brightness of the fundamental word's sound. This is how some of Parmenides' ideas remain "present" through the millennia, unthought, forgotten, but always brightly resounding. Likewise, the beginning which begins and takes the course of existential forgetting and loss of essence in the history of existence is the sacred as "the moving". It is completely superfluous to find out its auxiliary addresses, because it is impossible to see and hear the sacred as the always possible essence of the truth of existence in the poet's fate.

This also makes impossible the essential dialogue of thinkers and poets as well. It is exactly the word of the essential thinker and essential poet which may decide the fate of the truth of existence in being.

However, it is quite here that the question of philosophy's ability to conduct such a dialogue – inasmuch as it is willing at times to do so – is raised. What is philosophy and where does existence stand on the course of its (western) history? Philosophy however, in its "second" beginning originating from Plato, means in fact metaphysics, even if not named as such. Metaphysics thinks of the being in its entirety – world, god, man – in its consideration of existence. Assuming, as Heidegger says, that it is not only being that derives from existence but, more originally, existence lies

in its own truth and the truth of existence lives as the existence of truth, the question rises: what is metaphysics in its foundations? But if we understand it, then this question leads beyond metaphysics, because it signals that the truth of existence in metaphysics remains not only an unfounded and unknown, but as such also an unassumed “foundation”. Therefore this question leads beyond the way of thinking underlying metaphysics, called logic. It also leads beyond that kind of treatment the horizons of which was opened for the sciences by metaphysics itself, and which was fulfilled in the prevalence of technology and a constructive, performance-centric calculation.

But indeed, what kind of thinking is that which is neither philosophy (metaphysics) nor science, since it has exceeded both? Well, this kind of thinking searches for assistance and guidance in existence there, where it does not appear as a kind of object or a territory to be conquered, which, from a logical perspective, always proves unthinkable and incalculable. Essential thinking concentrates on the truth of existence and helps the existence of truth in that it may find a shelter in historical mankind. The result or consequence of this kind of thinking is not such that can be taught, circulated, made public, and used. But it is such, that in the contact with its fatal determination a different, yet in the essence of its origin also identical uniform determination is born.

Essential thinking subordinated to existence, listening to the sounds of existence coming to light, searches the word to name existence. The word from which and in which the truth of existence may touch the language. The word of the essential thinker therefore always derives from a long speechlessness, and the careful clarification of that what opens up and enlightens in this silence. However, the name of the poet derives from the same source. The poetic work and essential thinking are identical in their

careful-watchful silence. But they are also extremely different: the thinker utters-relates the existence, the poet names the sacred. The poet's word by which he denotes the sacred is an essential reference point and guidance.

Nevertheless, we know little of the dialogue of poets and thinkers: the dialogue which springs from original thinking, the personal poetic and thinking essence of the truth of existence, and is completely different than the "relationship" of philosophy and poetry. Such a dialogue, which draws back into an identical but concealed origin, is the contact of Heidegger and Hölderlin uttering existence and naming the sacred, in the absence of which the determination of the transgression of metaphysics in this time of historical mankind cannot be hoped for.

However, it seems that – returning to its origins – this dialogue is the dialogue of the *physis* and the sacred, of the Greek spirit and Hölderlin's spirituality, mediated by essential thinking as an inquiring-open withdrawal to existence, the meaning of existence in Heidegger's relationship to both of them. But Heidegger is not an *organon* of this dialogue. What is more, the question of the transgression of metaphysics is decided here, and it is also revealed that **Heidegger himself is in fact a beginning** which essentially differs from all later applied "hermeneutics". That what Heidegger utters in the word *Lichtung* about "existence" and "forced" by existence, is similarly in a concealed relationship with both the Greek *physis* or that what Hölderlin's word "sacred" denotes. This is how the "sacred", just like the *physis*, stands in the "ways" of the transgression of metaphysics as an immovable beginning and at the same time a warning standing in its initial fate – that is, as an essential source and fountain.

The *Lichtung* is the openness, in which and by which something may emerge and be revealed brightly and clearly. It is something like a clearing, which opens up in a thick forest – cleared, freed and eased of its inner

thickness –, and which we open in existence by our creating existence. This is where the light may then pour in, and the infinite play of light and shadow may be formed. It is in this that the sound resounds, echoes and disappears, becomes stronger, then fades out. *Lichtung* is the open. Open to everything that comes to the present with light and silence, shadow and sound, and from there, gathered or frayed, it always departs.

The *Lichtung* is thus not “the Sacred”, nor the Greek *physis*, but it is in a concealed relationship with that to which even the *physis* of the Greek spirit keeps its relationship concealed. The transgression of Western metaphysics leads back to depths where a similarly concealed relationship, a speechless dialogue is born with the existential urges of Eastern spirituality. For Heidegger’s *Lichtung* does not simply denote existence by making its mutual relationship with the *physis* and the sacred present in essential thinking. Instead, it denotes it by placing it in a concealed relationship with the approach of far-Eastern spirituality which thinks of existence and its appearance in the vibrating and drifting co-presence, consolidation and continuous vibrancy of the bright sound and sounding light as something which also appears originally as light and sound in silence, grown together purely and easily.

Therefore we must also defend, guard and take care of these thoughts. So that they should not come to us on the breezes of prattling or fashion. And at the same time we should also attempt to penetrate their grave, yet perhaps in silence brightly opening currents.

The sacred by the *Lichtung* – in a concealed way – is drawn to the way of transgressing metaphysics. “Metaphysics” is only able and willing to think of its subjects as “transcendence”. On the one hand, it thinks of them as being beyond physics, the *physis* or nature, and on the other hand, it thinks of the *meta*, the beyond as nature itself, as something radically

differing from the man. But by the *Lichtung*, on the ways of transgressing metaphysics – also in concealment – the sacred sends us back to the equally original Greek *physis* ... and even beyond, to the East. And it of course helps one realize that the man is not simply a “part” – even if exclusive or special “part” – of nature, which thus always “surrounds” him as an undetachable burden, but it essentially **pertains** to it!

“Nature” as *physis* and sacred is not only some kind of “environment”, or some organic or inorganic “basis” of this environment over which the essentially different human life and human existence is transacted as “history”, and in connection to which the question of its harmonious or disharmonious relationship is raised over again (albeit too late usually), but exactly and essentially that to which the man with his existence and in his existence originally and existential-historically **pertains**. And it is only in pertaining to it that the man may pertain to himself as well. Creating, that is, **poetically**. That is, being brought to life by it, **pertaining** to it and unsparingly growing it with and in its own existence, in the performed, evaded, or denied, yet essentially creating questions of its finite meanings.

**Translated by Emese Czintos**

## CHAPTER IV

### **Ciphers, Existence and the Musicality of Making Philosophy Or Karl Jaspers between West and East**

*Every* philosophy is in the same time personal. Therefore every approach to philosophy must also be in the same time personal. Generally, this is not what actually happens. Methodology becomes a technique or an algorithm, the body of philosophy a list of concepts, and the philosopher a bust. Thus meditation either becomes a **profession** (which means subsistence), or we close it up into ourselves as a noble, but fairly useless part of our existence. The title-words of “rethinking”, “actualization”, which usually guides this process, should not lead us astray. Starting them anew usually means merely continuing them. Naturally, that is not completely uninteresting either.

Karl Jaspers knew that this must also be done, and that it is not a minor matter. Yet, he warns that it is not enough. We are facing a fissure which is impossible to cease or fill: we live in the tension of tradition and the thinking of the present. However, to think over this tension, fissure, or crack is one thing, but to think through it is another. But what can the thought lean on if it stands at the same time in front of depth and distance, and if – being human as it is – it has no wings?

On seeing and hearing, of course. Jaspers therefore thinks in images. That is what he seeks and then sends away all over, listening to their remanded noises. Because, in his opinion, making philosophy also means **the ability** to see and hear. And we must also know how to do this. His

thoughts cannot be approached in the usual ways, because they cannot be reached thus. But in the lack of tradition we avoid them. It is the achievement of this ambivalence which should be attempted here.

In the spirit of the traditions of European philosophy Jaspers develops his worldview in a **pattern**. But this pattern for him is rather an aid and necessity for communication which is always overflow by the actual flood of thoughts. This philosophical pattern is certainly not some kind of scheme or table, but a world tableau formed during the operation of central generative principle(s). This principle for Jaspers is the **fissure of subject and object**. According to this we (as subjects) always direct ourselves to some kind of object, which is **different** from ourselves.

This difference and the unavoidable fissure it creates have a decisive role from the point of view of the first question of philosophy, namely “What is existence?”. The “entirety” of existence naturally cannot be only an object, nor only a subject; while we ourselves are incapable – stepping out from the object-subject fissure – of examining both together at the same time. Proceeding along this line of thought we must say thus, that existence is always **more** than subject and object, but this “more” **shows itself** in the fissure of the object and subject (*Subjekt-Objekt-Spaltung*). This is what Jaspers calls the **Encompassing** (*das Umgreifende*). Everything which becomes an object because of the subject, becomes one by leaving the Encompassing and it relates thus to the subject, but also to other objects.

In the fissure of the subject and object we move thus towards the Encompassing. In this movement the fissure of the subject and object becomes an **image** which shows and expresses that which in fact can never be an object. Because important differences and nuances can be derived from our subject-nature which influences our direction to a certain object-sphere. This is how the fissure, the crack of the subject and object offers a



view on the different **modes** of the Encompassing. As a **factually living being** (*lebendiges Dasein*), our impressions are realized as being present and make us realized in our **environmental world**. The preparation of this environmental world is personal and cannot be generalized, but it is characteristic. We turn towards objects defined as **meaning**, about which we develop a knowledge which should be strict and generally valid (that is, scientifically true, etc.).

This is how “consciousness in general” (*Bewusstsein überhaupt*), as well as the fissure of the world of objects is born. But the World is not a concrete object which can be examined, but an idea elaborated by the spirit in order to integrate our generally valid, but limited and dispersed knowledge about the given objects. The idea shows thus the fissure of the World and the Spirit. However, this fissure only shows the mysterious lights and calls of **transcendence** shine through, to which we are striving as **existence**, changing this relationship necessarily into **ciphers**.

The transcending philosophical thinking – says Jaspers – is the method to meditate on the subject-object fissure in such a way that, perfecting the fissure in our mind, we make that what encompasses it able to be illuminated.

By these forms of subject-object fissure we see more closely the Encompassing, as we have shed light on its several modes: factual existence, consciousness in general, the spirit, and existence. But existence as such reveals itself in the completeness and “image-like” totality of the subject-object fissure, and the pertinent answer can only be given by reviewing the modes of the Encompassing. Jaspers in his characteristic “method” leads the problems through the different modes of the Encompassing, examining how these problems are raised (if at all) on the “levels” of factual existence, consciousness in general, the spirit, and

existence. But the explicit, actual examination of the problems largely entangles the unperturbed advancement (seemingly) suggested by the pattern. Therefore the researchers dealing with Jaspers understand the pattern itself in various ways, so that some only know three modes of the Encompassing, while others derive it from one mode (transcendence); yet others (as also myself) find four modes... But we feel still, that we could go on counting... but without ever getting closer to the lively, intellectually enriching atmosphere of Jaspersian thinking.

All analyzers of Jaspers emphasize the logical and linguistic difficulties of the conceptual seizure of his thoughts. The purposeful contradictoriness of his sentences, the lack of positive definitions, the great number of negative references, the multiple meanings of his expressions, etc. all pile up as barriers which are impossible to overcome without the dangers of simplification or inexpressiveness. Indeed: among his sentences and thoughts we find ourselves at the same time on a narrow blind path and a broad boulevard. Even with the expense of building new ways, we have to find our own path between and inside these barriers.

In the pattern in which he puts forth his worldview, Jaspers' concepts are in a constant movement, drifting and flowing, and a constant change of accent. The rhythm of fine, opposed nuances fragments, colors, and abstracts the ideas almost to the level of musicality. Therefore it is only possible to grasp, perceive, and react to it only by some kind of **listening enlightenment**. All this will probably be better understandable if we try to grasp the **pattern itself** as a system of images in movement and reorganization. In this, the images follow each other not only as a kaleidoscope, but from behind their transgression, called back in time. But they are born not in a plain and spatial placement to be determined (and which will change again), but circled by its own previous images and

relations, resonating and moving by the tension of the spiritual atmosphere of faith and effort. This sometimes receives an illuminated shape, which is however changed again, because it is an impulse which, radiating, offers a new light, new “energy”, new image, self-image and sonority to the spectacle which embraces, defines us. Because this is not a vision but a spectacle, which is given birth, voice, and movement by the force of philosophy.

This is how the Encompassing becomes sometimes One, “then” six, or three, four, seven or again one; this is how the faith becomes Jesus, Job, then image, cipher, and transcendence. “Consciousness in general” sometimes receives the shape of Descartes, Kant, or Galilei, and “after that” all there is left of them is the trial of an unbelievable power, completed as an experiment. Still, it is these images through which the spectacle, lighted through, **speaks** and **transforms**. Because we cannot accept Jesus’ redemption, Job’s certainty, Descartes’ night’s sleep, Galilei’s gesture of revocation, Kant’s recoil as a relief. What is more, it is their spirit which – beside all the light of their conviction – radiates the sounds of uninterrupted **questioning**.

It is obvious thus that in Jaspers’ case we are speaking about something different than a methodology understood in the usual sense, which would guide us, by a finite number of steps, leading on a determined path, all the way to answering the questions. Naturally the need for a methodological “training”, the requirement of being able to operate with concepts, categories, or criticism is alive here as well. Still, the existential, philosophical, and cultural openness, which develops mobile relationships with questions searching time, history, or the present, is more important. But the relationships identified as such do not end up in the field of a

merely technical problem management, but they accompany them to the “borderlines” of the questions.



**Octavian Cosman**, *Double Sun*, oil and ceramics on wood  
40 x 50 cm, 2006

Questions become thus not so much problems but rather **themes**. The Theme is a living-forming, searching-concealing problem, inviting self-formulation. Such themes of Jaspers are the “cipher”, the “border-situation”, the “categorical requirement”, the “man”, “philosophy”, the “Encompassing”, etc. The themes and variations gain a special articulation, but also an echo-like cohesion in this world of the thought. Therefore we can say that for Jaspers only the problems are bordered, and the theme as an element of thought is not. It is exactly the meaning of theme-treatment that **not even** on the borders of the problems can we find some kind of

Archimedes' point from where we could look around with an objectual accuracy on both sides of the border.

**Seeing beyond** is only ensured by the projected light sent out from **within** the border for an invited encounter. At the same time, this “sheaf of light” circles and flutters the problem itself as a constant experiment. This is how it becomes theme and image at the same time.

It is not chance, but the inner drift, the atmosphere and the structure of Jaspers' thoughts which makes me speak about it with the help of certain concepts of musical composition. The theme— as a living-forming problem — is itself an “element of articulation” which is capable of sustaining a whole, self-supporting part of the movement of thought. This is where the sensation which fills us on reading Jaspers' works comes from, that in any single chapter his **entire** conception is condensed and unfolded at the same time. As if the single chapters would be the parts of a multi-thematic, or several one-theme symphonies, both at the same time. However, the theme is also able to go through evolution or transformation.

Just like in music, Jaspers' themes also have energetic surpluses exceeding inner necessities, which abstracting and condensing the temporality of the whole, ensure the stresses of its transformation. When problems are turned into themes by the power of thought, then these radiate around their energies from their inner sources: the movement of the themes arrives at a light and sound of its own. Therefore sentences like “What is transcendence?”, “What am I?”, “What is actual existence?” — despite their interrogatory form — are not questions. They are not questions which are **answered** by a given knowledge. They are “only” themes, which are brought to life by an existential way of thinking, and carried on further on an inner, growingly flashing course, where they are illuminated again as an

effort, being certain of their authenticity. The answer given to them is not a piece of knowledge but a **conviction and a co-responsence**.

The self-grounding, unconditionally Encompassing tends – says Jaspers – to take on the form of an object before our eyes, although this form is foreign to it. So it must collapse, must crumble by itself. Following this there will be Nothing else left than the clarity of the mere conviction of the presence of the Encompassing. **But any theme must be led that far.** Problems are general, but the theme is **personal**, as it is our task to bring it to life. This is to what the philosophy born from historical traditions and the motivations of the present, the “enlightening thinking” (*erhellende Denken*) is a great help.

What Jaspers calls “erhellende Denken” must be more closely examined. The expression itself clearly indicates that it is a kind of thinking which wishes to behave **as light**. But – as Gadamer also says – to shine is to shed light upon something, and thus to appear on that what the beams fall onto. It pertains to the ontological structure of the light that it is reflexive. That is, it can only become visible if it enlightens something. Thinking which behaves by the analogy of light obviously refers to the field of the intelligible, and this, similarly to Plato or Aristotle, is not the light of the Sun, but of the **nous**. Enlightening thinking is indeed the effort, action of existence by which it explores the “ciphers of transcendence”.

The determined dynamism of existence is that in which the products of tradition stand out, speak and become certain as the ciphers of transcendence. During their reading or listening – in the presence of the Encompassing – **new** ciphers are born. But thinking itself, as the enlightener – similar to light – is also reflexive. Consequently it is also the enlightening of its self, and not only the light of the nous, which enlightens the field of the intelligible. Speculation as **speculum** (mirror, mirroring) in

enlightening thinking means that it is at the same time the “source of light” and the “mirror”. Thus the “reading” of the ciphers is not only their enlightening, nor is it an enlightenment (to which existence arrives externally), but – as thinking – it searches-awaits the lights of the ciphers with and in the lights of its own efforts, “inner actions”. And in the shine of this **encounter** it enlightens **itself** in the origins of its convictions.

The reading and hearing of the ciphers gives birth to newer ciphers in enlightening thinking. Ciphers – which are thus the historical offspring’s of enlightening thinking conceived in the presence of the Encompassing – have their **own** light. Just like the Beautiful for Plato, the ciphers also have the nature of shining out for existence. Thus the “shining efforts” of existence searching for its origins in its historical present meet the shining lights of the ciphers. This encounter is the glare. The speculum becomes **spectaculum** (spectacle). Of course, there is something actually sensory in any spectacle. The spectacle which starts to glare in the light of the spirit, the nous, is naturally different: a new cipher. But it is exactly the reflexivity of thinking supported and sharpened by the reflexivity and ontological structure of the light which Jaspers calls “Existenzerhellung”: existence is that which, enlightening the **ciphers** of transcendence, enlightens its own self. It becomes certain in its origins and roots, in the historical presence of its essence. This is what is achieved in the **decisions** rooted in the tension of the relations and efforts of transcendence with its ciphers. Enlightening thinking is thus different from the enlightened mystical consciousness or spirit, because this does not search **as light** but lives the experience of light. Even if it senses it “inside”, it is not the source.

Philosophy, the enlightening thinking helps to transform the generality of “problems” into themes which are rooted in our personal origins and which should be taken to the end. Therefore Jaspers may

interpret the great metaphysics, arts and ethical actions of history as the enciphered descriptions and pioneers of existence and transcendence, which were elaborated, chosen, and decided by the beings for the enlightenment of themselves and existence in the presence of the Encompassing.

However, ciphers are not given, but alive. Their life is a history initiated by tradition, the beginnings, and the tensions of the present. Ciphers therefore cannot be acquired from tradition by learning and rehearsing them. In our historical present the experience of tradition in most cases proves insufficient. Ciphers therefore must be understood in an existential way: their light, their sound must be seen and heard as fulfilled in our present.

But what is it that Jaspers calls a “cipher”? The cipher is a metaphysical symbol: the non-objectified language of transcendence. Apart from other symbols, ciphers cannot be interpreted from the point of view of their meaning. There is Nothing behind them to which we can point as being ciphered by some conception or other. Nevertheless, this is the language that transcendence speaks. Its words must be understood and its voice must be heard in this way too.

Only existence is able to hear the voice of transcendence. It is only existence which raises at least to the level of sensing: through the crack of the subject-object fissure it is the voice of something encompassing it which is heard. This voice is thus a **reference**. So, when Jaspers says that transcendence speaks to us in the language of ciphers, this means that, on the one hand, it **talks** in this way, while on the other hand, that all this is connected to the essence of the sound rather than that of language.

The essence of the sound is not that it is sounding, nor is it that it is expressing something. The metaphysical meaning of the sound is that it is



an **index**, a reference, what is more, an existential reference. The essence of the sound, as Aristotle emphasizes it when meditating on the soul, is that it is a **multi-factorial act** which arrives to us by a certain medium. Sound is thus the reference, the index of the **dynamics** of existence. This is why Bergson attaches it so closely to **time**.

The language of ciphers speaks thus first to existence, and it speaks by showing that in its historical present – as an appeal (*Appel*) – the dynamic of the Encompassing exists. Still, the ciphers are not some kind of waves which transcendence keeps emanating, but for the “reception” and formation, articulation of which only existence is prepared. Jaspers tries to better explain it in connection with the example of Kant and the Old Testament. Kant considers that the most essential element of the Bible is the commandment which forbids people to make images or doubles to God. Still – says Jaspers – the Old Testament itself is full with descriptions of God which depict him as good, or furious, or law-maker. That is, the Old Testament forbids and cultivates the creation of images for God at the same time. However, this is not a contradiction that the Bible carelessly fell into, but an unavoidable tension which goes with the man’s “finite” essence, existence. It is about man being able to think of transcendence only in images. These images are ciphers in which, on the one hand, transcendence did not hide and reveal itself by itself (that is, these are not **riddles** offered to be solved); on the other hand these are not born from existence, with which it would take around its inner secrets, shown circled by interdictions, as secrets (**mask**).

The cipher is born and receives image and sound in the permanently active tension, which is shown on the level of the fissure of subject and object, the modes of existence. Transcendence only exists for existence, and only as a cipher. For the mystic in the decisive moment of the **unio**

**mystica** transcendence turns into immanence. However, this incommunicable experience, not so much personal than individually valid, does not belong to philosophy. Such ciphers, as – beside the already mentioned ones – “Nature”, “unsuccessfulness” or “fall” etc. only become ciphers, language, by the efforts of existence, which should be read and listened to in the ever newer actions of enlightening and inviting thinking, and in the presence of the Encompassing. Therefore the inner rules of the language which speaks but does not utter, do not offer a clearly explicable, formal meaning, but the images of which are not projections, well, that is a cipher-language based on the metaphysical meaning of light and sound.

Understanding the language of ciphers by the metaphysical meaning of light and sound leads involuntarily to the ancient idea of sounding light and bright sound. The connection of light and sound is a very old and widespread mythological idea in the creation of the world. The Vedic god Pradjapati was born from a loud breath, and he himself is Nothing else than a song of laudation. The *Kathaka Upanishad* describes Athman uttering the basic creating word **AUM** (or OM) as an immense light. The body of the first men is transparent; it is made up of light and sound. Their life, their existence is a bright and sounding floatation. It is the veil of Maya which – by matter – weakens the sound of light. The sound can only penetrate through it in shreds. This is why later mankind cannot see the bright sound. This state of floatation, in which the world’s essence of sound and light can again be perceived, may only be reached by enormous efforts. For the Greeks, Apollo is the god of light and music. The same tradition lives on in the teaching of Christianity about the **verbum creans**, when God spoke first at the creation of light.

But what can the significance of all these be in the understanding of Jaspers’ philosophy, as any kind of concrete mystical or mythological

explanation stands far from him? It is evidently the specificity and structure of the relation, the connection with existence is what connects Jaspers' "theory" of ciphers, his ideas about the enlightening thinking, as well as the essence of making philosophy to these ancient basic concepts. Jaspers always emphasizes that philosophy and making philosophy mobilizes the man and existence as a whole. For him, philosophy is an "action of thinking", an "inner action", inner fulfillment, etc. It is thus something which urges the **entirety** of the abilities and sensibilities of the thinker to operate with the greatest possible effort. The thinking internal action activates all the kinds of openness and sensitivity. And this is exactly what is heard, enlightened, out of every myth of the creation – the self-origination of historical mankind – understanding these as the ciphers beyond the concrete contents of the transcendent. However, this is not some kind of "new interpretation" of myths which would make us better understand their origins, inner content, or concrete types. Understood as ciphers, myths are not fixed, on the contrary, they are floating.

"Floatation" (*die Schwebe*) is one of the most important and most difficult "concepts" of Jaspers' line of thought to analyze. It is so because it is not a feeling or an impression that Bergson for instance analyzes when inquiring about the state generated by the succession of mere diversities while listening to music. Floatation is a transcendental (in the Kantian meaning of the term) existential spiritual situation, which philosophy creates in the form of complete willingness, determination and readiness, or availability. It is a transcendental skill because it shows that the encounter of transcendence and existence happens **in the world**; and that philosophy is Nothing else than being **in-between** the origin and the purpose. "Transcending thinking", philosophizing, as Jaspers does and explains, leads to a dead end in the opinion of many. The fact that no meaning is

fixed, offers such a secure theoretical shelter where Jaspers can always draw back, without ever exposing himself to the danger of being weighed in contradictions.



**Octavian Cosman, *Sandy towns*, Mixed technique, 2015-2016**

In this perspective thus his thinking appears as impossible to be discussed, since the convictions born in this floating thinking may claim to be a personal spiritual experience of such a kind that even their discussion may be hindered by serious barriers. There is a difference however between information and communication. Information is the **sharing** of an

“independently” completed experience with others. The partners are informed about each other’s news or experiences. Communication is not merely a contact with a community perceived as audience, but it is the **communion** of existences searching-inquiring by the specific encounters and identities of our traditions in a historical present. So, what Jaspers calls communication refers to this more original community, and not some kind of competence to which we arrive by information. It is the community of questions, problems, themes, the unavoidable situations of historical existence, etc. in which this communication happens and an authentic contact may take place. Wittgenstein’s formulation is of a similar sense, when saying in the often misunderstood introduction of the *Tractatus* that his book is not a manual, but it speaks to those who also struggle with the immeasurable difficulties of such questions.

A serious, authentic communication can only take place in a common atmosphere created by the efforts connected to identical questions. It is because of this that the impossibility to discuss Jaspers’ thoughts refers to an external impossibility of discussion. But Nothing is possible to be discussed externally. The efforts, completed one by one, and rooted in the age, in tradition, and in personal fate are the prerequisites for the circumstances of an authentic communication. Communication always contains the common existential experience of thoughts, sensations, and situations. But every man is a possible existence. This is a chance which cannot be given up until the last moment of individual being.

The thinker intends thus his words to be heard by everybody. But the thoughts exposed like this are merely **invitations**. The invitation is naturally an authentic existential, thinker’s act. Jaspers himself frequently practiced it. Not only in his writings circulated in many copies, but also when committed to radio waves in the form of lectures. However, the

invitation is merely the **search** for communication. It is an identical existential level which is necessary for an authentic communication.

Thus, ciphers are alive, and their life is in the history forming from the existential tensions of the present and the beginnings. There are countless ciphers, and from their authentic reading in the presence of the Encompassing yet others are formed. The Gods of Jacob, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, or Luther are all ciphers. It would be thus a mistake to identify the Encompassing with something “determined”. In the usual sense Jaspers’s Encompassing is an empty term, because it does not yield a new knowledge which would make a previous one more accurate, but it “merely” changes our consciousness about existence and ourselves. The transformation of problems into themes and their follow-up reaches not only their boundaries, but their **roots** as well. Near the boundary the theme looks around.

Thus philosophizing, although not moving backwards, always sees its roots **in front of** itself, as a presence. Thus the enlightening thinking returns; however, not in a phenomenological circle which closes up thus, but, re-creating and re-living its themes in the new light, it finds new themes. Despite their movement, Jaspers’ themes do not have a solution, are not relaxed. Their meaning is exactly that they are uttered as a spectacle, and their authentic silence is identical with their perfecting **retake**: deepening for elevation in their roots, and in this elevation deciding ourselves.

It pertains to the nature of man that, waving-floating every cipher (*in die Schwebe halten*) and transgressing them with a final effort, he attempts to exceed the obsessive fissure of the subject and object. This tendency, represented by Parmenides, Plotinus, Meister Eckhart and others, which is always present in the West, but seems to have been perfected only in the East, signals that basic philosophical-existential struggle to try to gain

certainty in transcendence by raising above any ciphers. The **Borobudur temple** in Java is the architectural representation of this road. It pictures that elevation which, from the expressive-sensory forms of the human world to Buddha's cipher and beyond, reaches to the point where everything calms down and becomes silent even as a reference and, finding its way into the pure "geometrical" form, and the emptiness of the wonderful distances and heights of the sky, arrives beyond the cipher. But to what extent is this still thinking? – asks Jaspers.

In the kind of thinking Jaspers speaks about we think about something – be it even a cipher. Asian philosophers however, Nagardjuna and other Buddhist sources, use thinking for the annihilation of thinking, for stepping beyond the world also. The absorbing exercises of meditation which they practice do not mean a valid path for Western thinkers. Primarily it is not a "technical" impossibility, it is about the fact that the basic question for us is **whether or not we want the world**. It is not a recoil in front of the barriers of a road which otherwise has a lot to offer. After all it is about an existential tendency which is an element of our nature and can also be found in our own traditions. But in the ciphers the world becomes the theme of an existential decision.

None of the Buddhist sects wants the world – emphasizes Jaspers. It is an indifferent burden for them. We, on the contrary, **want** the world, want to live in the world, and do not want to deny the world. We cannot decide whether they found the truth there in the East, because those wise men, just like the mystics, are also only able to symbolically present what they had experienced. Thus in their lectures they were also blocked at the level of ciphers. However, we can decide whether we want, we accept the world and with/within it our existence as a thinker. Jaspers does not want to



exceed these ciphers, to leave the world, to give up the seriousness of life and practice.

There are several ways to be a “Western” thinker. Thus, several types of Europe-centrism grows out as a product of the West. The tradition-guarding turn to the past often happens under the sign of the West. The profuse crisis of our culture and civilization, the rootless critical consciousness pours, as if on a conveyor belt, the easily made spiritual products of our Westernness. However, there is hardly any thinker who accepts and accomplishes his Westernness in the form and on the basis of an existential decision. Jaspers is not a Western thinker merely because of his birth and education, but because of an existential decision. This decision is born however in heights where the encounter with the Eastern spirituality is also achieved. Jaspers is not constrained by his Westernness, he does not want to get rid of it and become Eastern in his spirit. But for a decision made at this level it is necessary to keep the ciphers floating, not going beyond them. This is how a thinker’s action becomes the source of an authentic **personal commitment**.

Philosophy thus does not peak in statements which contain convictions, but in such a texture of ideas which **pervades a whole life**. The philosophy which is given, already linguistically formulated and crystallized is only memory, precondition, opportunity and support. These works of thinking are in fact only “half-truths” which have never been completed, and which only gain their value by completing those who do not only approach them as “systems of ideas”, but also accomplish them in their existence. Because philosophy is the greatest gift gods have ever offered to man: it is by this that man was offered **to his own self**, and can arrive at such a consciousness of his responsibility and freedom in which the necessity of communication already appears.



This is of course connected again to the essential and original musicality of philosophizing and philosophy. That is, to the fact that this musicality concerning philosophy means in a certain basic sense – mentioned already by Pythagoras – also a more original prevalence of music in thinking about our existence. Naturally, the words addressed to the (explicitly musical) hearing or the “listening soul” is not merely and primarily (musical) sounds, melodic fragments, or (musical) themes created by these... On the contrary, it is always the inviting and understanding wisdom of the possible experience of the **showing sound** and the hearing-**listening seeing** perfected in our presence and present.

If philosophy only listened and hearkened, or if it only “composed” for the understanding listening with sounds ... then this would naturally not be philosophy, but only music. But – beyond music – philosophy must not only be able to make heard, to listen, and to hear, but at the same time to look, to see, and to make seen. This – as we see and hear! – is one of the greatest difficulties of philosophy: to see and make seen that to which the sound always – but “only” – refers, and hear and make heard that which “only” sounds – mostly unseen – around that what is seen.

Therefore, in that basic and original meaning of philosophy and philosophizing, which is probably only outlined in our age by the dialogue with Karl Jaspers, the essence of philosophy and philosophizing lies exactly in the skill, ability, and determination to essentially think over the original connection of Light and Sound. This is the way in which we humans, as beings amidst beings, liberally conduct our lives, existentially projecting – that is, making heard or seen – our entire lives as beings who feel and also think, with regard to our existential possibilities.

Despite his pedagogical inclinations built upon the urge for communication, Karl Jaspers was not the founder of a school. This is also

understandable perhaps on the basis of those said above. His standpoint is a fairly uncomfortable one, equally for the individual, the power, the philosopher, and for God. Power can no longer expropriate us because the source of our freedom comes from higher regions; God can no longer lead us step by step because he has originally offered us to ourselves; and the individual does not possess his freedom together with his birth certificate but has to fight for it with the power, God, culture, himself, and his peers. And the philosopher does not have the task to make his environment fully comfortable.

That man is a goal in itself, that oppression is unworthy, that lying, cruelty, and hypocrisy are mean qualities, is something that one can learn by education or culture. Still: we accept oppression, we resign ourselves to being the toys of power, and see artful hypocrisy almost as our evident environment. It seems thus that the institutional transmittance of values by education, learning, and culture gives no sufficient reason and strength to transform the ideals thus acquired into the basis of a decision which would clearly guide us, pervading our whole life and essence, and would show us: who we are and what can we become.

So Jaspers did not found a school. This is so because approaching him is a personal, staggering intellectual and cultural experience which cannot be avoided. He became a movement, a noise of breathing, an element of our air. Now, when it is not enough to inwardly reveal our traditions, when others' shadowing memory stretches over our oblivion, Jaspers' thirst for tradition is even more burning. It suggests that our traditions must be found in an authentic and critical culture, and on the basis of these we must fulfill our personal and indestructible existential accomplishments. This is how we can find and create values which can be validated and recognized in the permanent conjuncture of survival. The

“fight fueled by love”, the “das liebende Kampf” can be enriching even here, in the conditions of a minority existence. Jaspers himself is the evidence that this is not “aufklärism” or utopia, but the accomplishing process of self-legitimizing systems of connections formed **behind** cultural achievements, beyond any *a priorism*, or institutional or legal assurances. This process must be personal and open, and not private and isolated. It must be fought for on all grounds.

**Translated by Ágnes Korondi**

## CHAPTER V

### The Meaning of Life – And the Possibility of Human Illness – Prolegomena –

*Ever* since the very beginning – that is, at the very origin of things – we must clearly become aware and *responsible* that the *sui generis philosophical nature* of any meditation on “such” *subjects* must be ensured by repeated efforts and invariable attention. In conclusion, it has been out of the question from the very beginning that in the discussion of the issue “thematized”<sup>1</sup> here we should be satisfied with some “analyses” on the margins of the “newest conceptions”, recognitions and debates of all-time medicine, biology, anthropology, or psychology. Or, for that matter, with “meditations” – officially proclaimed “philosophical” – which place these novelties into contexts considered “more general” by the mechanical operation of various *termini technici* and “methods” taken for some reason as originally philosophical, and bring or drag these novelties to “a more general conceptual validity”.

Compared to such endeavors, the ontological, existential, and historical stakes of the issue – that is, the theme and problems of illness, and especially human illness – are much greater, broader, and more severe.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to draw special attention to the fact that the terms “thematization” and “theme” are used in a meaning and horizon considerably outlined and “tried-out” ontologically, existentially, and methodologically, elaborated in several of my previous discussions. In connection with this issue, see primarily the studies in my volume *Kérdő jelezés – (több)csendbeni alkalmazott filozófiai zaj-háborítás a szabad(ság) kérdés(é)ben* (Question marking – a (multi)silenced applied philosophical breach of noise in free(dom’s) questioning), (Pozsony [Bratislava]: Kalligram, 2004).

It seems that the dangerous encounter with the greatest variety of bacteria or the experience of illness is an **unavoidable** – and as such **crucial** – experience of the life of any living being. As for us humans, there is probably no mortal man who has never suffered of some – any! – kind of disease from his birth to the end of his life... Illness is therefore an experience or outright a danger of existence and its possibility, as well as a way of being that nobody has ever been and will ever be ontologically or existentially exempted from. So, it may well be “arbitrary” or “accidental” which disease affects which being or person, when and to what degree, in what way, etc., but it is factually unavoidable that in the course of one’s entire life – from its very beginning to its very end – one would fall ill in some respect. We shall see in some more detail in the followings why that is so, and also what is its significance, its meaning, and its possible senses.

However, our most important concern for now is to make one realize that this is mostly essentially about issues at stake related precisely to being, to living-being, and the *Dasein*, its happening and conducting, as well as its *possibilities of being*. That is, primarily – and of course ultimately – to our own possibilities of being, and to our possible “ourselvesness”, to its also always possible whole-ness. Directly and deeply.

In connection with this, and also despite this, there is Nothing more characteristic nor “natural” than the fact that we humans, we *Daseins*, relate and refer to illness – *not only* human, but also plant or animal illness –, to its challenges, afflictions, threats, and dangers in – our own, particular – (existential) modes fixed, centered, outlined, and articulated in a *medical*, or purportedly medical way. That is, from the perspective of their (the illnesses’) *possible* observation, study, research, knowledge, and their

*possible* prevention and prophylaxis, as well as their *possible* alleviation, or directly *possible* healing.

Under such circumstances, however, the question arises almost spontaneously: what is the “need” or “use” of any kind of *philosophical* or any other *non-medical* and *not directly therapeutic* meditation or investigation? What kind of “surplus” – albeit *particular!* – could such an endeavor bring to the understanding of illnesses and the state of being ill? And to the understanding of its meanings and significance?

However, such questions can never be “answered” in a philosophically serious way by any other means than an actual, intimated – therefore explicit – exploring, thematizing further-questioning as an – also – explicit, determined, and assumed activity of the act of thinking itself. Therefore in the first place precisely by formulating the question which goes beyond all previous questions: does the medical viewpoint and perspective (alone) – which “rightfully” occupies the central place in this matter – cover indeed the entire horizon, amplitude, and importance of those aspects and relations by which the man, the *Dasein* – that is, the all-time we-ourselves – faces, relates, and refers to illness, our illnesses and the possibility of these in their (our!) own being, always in historical timeliness and, of course, as an afflicting challenge? The question seems a rhetorical one of course – and it partly is rhetorical indeed – since obviously there are a series of historically articulated social institutions and organizations, scientific and technical disciplines, and cultural forms which, albeit not at all directly “medical”, are concerned nevertheless with illness and its possibility. Let us only think of all kinds of social policies of nursing and prevention, various pertaining technical researches and developments, sociology, demography, psychology, anthropology,

historiography and science history, religions, or the many kinds of literary and other artistic works, etc. And – why not? – philosophy!

All these have suggested and encouraged from the very beginning the recognition and exposition of that philosophically acceptable situation that, with particular reference to man, he is not merely and exclusively “only” “ill” (as usually called in medical language)<sup>1</sup>, and he is not merely and exclusively “only” “healthy” – or more precisely not-ill, or not-yet ill, or right now not ill – but that the human being experiences, reveals, and records for himself illness *continuously*, actually, and existentially, as a permanent *possibility*, and relates to it as such. Of course, it experiences it as a particular possibility, and relates to it explicitly as a particular possibility. As a possibility, that is, which pertains in fact to *life* itself, or more precisely to *the essence of life*.

As a result, this is exactly the first direction in which our thematizing philosophical further-questioning must turn in connection with illness in general, and human illness in particular. The direction which would lead to our understanding of illness – in its particular amplitude – exactly *as a possibility of life*, “one” and “particular”. That is to say, exactly and explicitly as *the possibility of living being*. Therefore – for the time being and as a beginning – as *the possibility of living being* not only of human life, but of *life* itself.

However, in order to achieve this, we urgently need some questioning-problematizing, as well as insightful and clarifying preliminary approaches connected precisely to the “notion” of possibility. While, in addition to those said above, we must also be aware of the fact that “possibility” is one of the most interesting and “spectacular”, yet at the

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<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian adjective “beteg”, meaning ill, is also used as a noun in medical language, denoting a patient. (Translator’s note).

same time also troubled-fated, and surely not entirely exploited and employed notions. Unfortunately the history of this term cannot be treated in more details within the frameworks of this paper.

It must be noted nevertheless that the traps of the philosophical and science-historical agitations around the “notion” of possibility have somehow been permanently absorbed into its “meanings” prevalent in everyday usage and on this account most straightforward. Therefore in everyday usage – and not only there! – “possibility” is mostly understood to be that what may happen or may occur, but which may just as well be cancelled or fail to happen. In this interpretive scheme therefore “possible” and “possibility” is considered to be that what – with a sort of “logical” indifference – is opposed to that what is “*necessary*”. And which, as such, always exists, happens, and will happen.

At the same time, in this case in an everyday meaning, mutually influential with classical modal logic, “possible” or “possibility” may also refer to that what is *not real*. That is to say, something which is inferior, obstructed, truncated, and unfulfilled. And, as such, is something imperfect, and handicapped in its own being as compared to that which has already reached “reality” “factually”.

However, in a context possibly considered more special or “rigid”, we often refer to possibility by the term of “probability”. This way, of course, possibility directly becomes the target of the clarifying and “methodical” intentions of *calculating*. A calculation the “results” of which are mostly rendered directly into numbers, or more precisely into percentages.

However, it is only this or that “particular” disease which has or may have a certain percent of probability or eventuality, while essentially there *exists no life without the possibility* of illness – and of health alike!





**Octavian Cosman**, *Don Quixote*, 30X18 cm, oil on wood, 2002

Hopefully it is not difficult to see that none of the above outlined – and in a way dominant – meanings of the notion of “possibility” are able, or indeed suitable for us, to understand the partly organic and intimate, but partly also very special way in which *illness as a possibility* and the possibility of illness pertains to life itself, and – in a specific way, but – also to human life, to human existence.

Illness, in its very nature *as a possibility*, pertains precisely to *the essence of life*. It is not therefore some “unimportant” “eventuality” of life and the living being. On the contrary, the illness as a possibility as well as the possibility of illness is born and outlined within and in relation to that what is explicitly and precisely fundamental, central, and essential for life, for a truly living life. Illness appears and exists therefore for life and the living, let us repeat it, not as something coming “from outside” and as such, completely alien from it, and not exclusively as a – merely “incidental” or “posterior” – threat.

### **Excursus**

#### ***Sketchy considerations regarding the problems of Christian medicine and Christian healing***

The above consideration is naturally quite in contrast with the original, particular, and general Christian beliefs and “thinking” about illnesses, their sources and nature. Therefore we have to treat this subject tangentially at least, in the form of an excursus.

For Christian faith and thinking human illnesses are primarily the results and consequences of original sin, as well as the “blows” of its original punishment and other, also divine, punishments associated with it,

such as “historical” punishments beyond the expulsion from paradise.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, however, from a Christian “point of view”, illnesses are the punishments of yet another kind of divine sin of personal concern, and as such, in fact external to man, unappealable, unexplainable, and actually unforeseeable, and, while purportedly determinate, not clearly identifiable. These “blows” are not meant to smite the human race in general, but specifically individual people, and of course, are exclusively designated to make them accept divine punishment.

Consequently, if we give deeper thought to the matter, then it emerges as highly problematic whether the naturally human-medical efforts of healing in confrontation with “illnesses” identified with all sorts of divine punishments can *indeed* be considered as human activities worthy of divine contentment and respect, in “correspondence” with divine orders and intentions. Or, on the contrary, they should be considered a *threatening insight* into ever newer, very much determined sins, connected to, and branching further from, the original sin – that is to say, knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of the divine origin of illnesses, and their perception as a divine punishment for the sins of human beings dates back much before Christianity. It was shared for instance by Hebrews and Mesopotamians. However, this was not a hindrance for them to relate to diseases not merely, and not primarily with supplication by prayers and hoping for miracles in the expectation of healing, but in an actively medical way, namely with their empirical observation, interpretation and explanation, and with an attitude aiming at their prevention and healing. See Radu Iftimovici, *Istoria universală a medicinei și farmaciei* (The universal history of medicine and pharmacology). București, Editura Academiei Române, 2008, 38-49, 128.

<sup>2</sup> And thus medicine and medical doctors were prosecuted during the Christian Middle Ages with special theological and ecclesiastical concern (and also afterwards, in fact to this day), compared even to other sciences and scholars. Because medicine – as a search for knowledge and knowledge – is not only a further insight into the original sin, like any other historically articulated science, but, more than that, – as healing! – it is a direct confrontation with that indefinable, yet “concrete” divine decision and will which punishes that particular person (!) with that particular disease. And as we have mentioned earlier, this was the case not only in medieval times, but also in modernity. What is more, the case is the same today, when medicine and medical praxis are also paid special theological and ecclesiastical attention, together with all the other life

While, of course, the cases of healing sometimes occurring nevertheless could only be regarded in fact from a consistently Christian viewpoint as *miracles of divine grace*. It is therefore this grace and only its *penitent* reception that, from a “Christian point of view”, an ill person, as well as his/her caretaker, can actually strive, urge, and hope for. So it is no wonder, historically speaking, that the medieval, and especially early medieval meaning of *medico* had so much shifted towards the meaning of *curo* – namely an indeed “positive” and *sui generis* Christian attitude and obligation, the nursing and attendance of the weak, the poor, and the sick – that it no longer means in fact “healing” in an (ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Hebrew, etc.) medical sense, but rather the *caretaking* of the sick and the suffering. Obviously, in the midst of a penitent supplication, and in the desperate hope of “healing”<sup>1</sup> as a miracle-like divine mercy.

The case is probably the same with Jesus, considered the son of God. Because, in a real and explicit medical sense – that is, in the sense of the medical conception, knowledge, and skills of his age, culture, and environment – he was not really a *healer*, he only made all sorts of miracles connected (also) to illnesses.

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sciences, precisely in the name of considerations ambiguously – and indeed misleadingly – termed “ethical”. In reality, however, the situation is that Western science, purportedly, and also actually “devoid of ethics”, is precisely a product of Christianity. Since, if the knowledge of the distinctions between good and evil, true and false, beautiful and ugly is considered and treated exactly as the original sin of mankind, then cognition and systematic knowledge, constitutive and indispensable for human life, can only be cultivated with a “bad consciousness”, and mostly with the ignorance of this “ethics”. Again, this illustrates those deep ruptures which Christianity meant and represented in relation to – *recte*: against and opposed to –, e.g., ancient Greek and Roman traditions, where truth was always tried to be knowingly and continuously thought and kept together with good and beautiful, as the noblest human modes of being.

<sup>1</sup> For instance, with the help of miraculous and healing images of saints, or holy relics (used even today...).

Strictly considering the relation of Christianity to illness – which actually seriously and decisively influenced two millennia – we must ultimately make it clear that, since illness, according to Christianity, is considered in its origin, source, nature, and purpose one of the main types of divine punishment for human sins, the *liberation* from these sins – *recte*, *healing* itself, or the recovery obtained in its historically articulated efforts – cannot actually and really be considered a *blessed* task of *human*, let's say, *medical* involvement (that is to say, one articulated in the sense of actual, all-time therapy, carried out with knowledge and skills). Instead, it can only be perceived as a result and consequence of the “workings” of divine grace, achieved by purportedly always exceptional, pious miracles.

Consequently, the expression “Christian medicine” in the sense of *healing* or *therapy* is none other in fact than a mere *contradictio in terminis*, an absurdity.<sup>1</sup> Even the dedicated expert, Emil Schultheisz himself, acknowledges in one of his studies on medieval medicine that although the Church Fathers treated the questions of “medicine”, they did it in a sort of “theoretical-spiritual” way, rather than in the favor, perspective, and purpose of healing, that is, in “practice”. For that matter, Schultheisz treats in his study the issues of the medieval continuation of ancient Greek and Roman medical traditions in such a way that he *utterly avoids* the discussion of the essential, historical, problematic, explicit breach, the very breakage of ancient Greek and Roman traditions, represented by the official dissemination of the determined and decisive Christian worldview and its influence on knowledge and sciences, but most importantly on *medicine*, that is, the problems of diseases and their curing. The “theoretical-spiritual” approach primarily meant, for instance, the “examination” of the aspects or

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<sup>1</sup> See also Radu Iftimovici, *Istoria medicinei* (The history of medicine), (Bucharest: Editura ALL, 1994), mainly 97-99.

directions of ancient – Greek and Roman – medicine by which the official and institutionalized Christian approach to illness could be devised. In this respect, the most important risk was to urgently avoid and officialize any kind of possible similarity between Jesus and, say, an Asclepius. Asclepius, who had urged indeed for healing, and not for miracles and their hopeful-supplicating-caretaking expectation. On the other hand, there was also a need to filter out those significant personalities of the medicine of Antiquity whose “theories”, standing closer to the worldview of Christianity – and molded into an even more adequate form by the Church – could be turned into compulsory official norms. That is how, at first, the monotheist Galen and his science became for almost a millennium a hardly questionable paradigm. To this, the also reinterpreted Hippocratic ideas were later added. Consequently, Paracelsus for example was persecuted for opposing the teachings of Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna – whose concepts had also become official in the meantime for the order of medicine as well – even as late as the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

Words and names however do not only have their all-time “theoretical” scopes and backgrounds, their meanings related to religions and worldviews, their “historical” and “institutional” senses, in which they historically outline, prescribe, change, and secure their meanings and significance, organically or, on the contrary, precisely inorganically related to their origin. However, in order to achieve this, thinking must unravel and surface that particular existential structuredness. Which means, first of all, that it must interpret and validate these explicitly and articulately, and with a “direct” insight.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Schultheisz Emil, *Az ókori medicina hagyományozódása az egyházatyáknál.* (The tradition of ancient medicine with the Church Fathers) [http://mek.oszk.hu/05400/05425/pdf/schultheisz\\_okorimedicina.pdf](http://mek.oszk.hu/05400/05425/pdf/schultheisz_okorimedicina.pdf), Downloaded: January 27, 2011. On Paracelsus, see: Iftimovici, *Istoria medicinei*, 134-136.

This is the case, and this is a thinker's task and *chance* with the word which the Hungarian language uses to denominate the things connected to medicine – *orvos*, *orvoslás*. The existential structure and the worldliness of this word is completely different – inerasably so – than that into which the Medieval Latin *medico* was forced. The word *orvos* interprets illness itself as something “*orv*”,<sup>1</sup> that is, a force, process, effect, or action which is hypocrite, insidious, working in a depriving, pilfering way. The expression is considered to be of an ancient – Finno-Ugric or Turkic – origin. The *orvos* (the doctor) is thus, evidently, the person who, relating explicitly and actually to such things, *knows* the hidden, insidious, dangerous, depriving-pilfering forces of illnesses. But also the person who is able to conduct forcefully and efficiently equally “*orv*”, that is, insidious things and actions which will then expectedly avert, alleviate, or outright defeat the insidious and harmful effects of illnesses.

What else could he use for doing so than medicines – *orvosság*?! These are the equally insidiously efficient antidotes of the insidious effects of illnesses. The doctor – *orvos* – with his knowledge and almost magic-like procedures knows and uses the hidden powers of the insidious counter-effects of these – medicines – just as insidiously. While on the one hand one may speak about existential structures going back all the way to shamanistic traditions, on the other hand it is equally true that curing in these traditions has always been a conscious, sensitive, and “understanding” *fight* or *struggle*, in unseen depths, face-to-face with illnesses. The fighter of which is the doctor himself, who directs this

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<sup>1</sup> *Orv* means in Hungarian: ‘insidious, hypocrite, treacherous’.

struggle precisely against illness, and for the health to be regained, or directly the life of the ill person.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore the long-lasting ruptures, going back deep into the past, inserted into the existential-historical and ontological structures of man's relation and reference to illnesses at the point of the official dissemination of Christianity are very clearly visible. For, as we can see, ever since the most ancient, most primitive empirical, shamanistic, or wizardry-type relations – and then through the entire Babylonian, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek and Roman medicine – the essential existential structure of the meanings and interpretations of human relation to illnesses has always focused on the historically available or possible knowledge, avoidance, alleviation, and defeat-healing of illnesses. The possibilities of perfecting, deepening, and extending these are continuously researched and articulated further by all kinds of interpretations of experimental attempts.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See: volume 2 of *A magyar nyelv történeti-etimológiai szótára*. (Historical-etymological dictionary of the Hungarian language) (Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967), and volume 9 of *Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár*. (Transylvanian Hungarian etymology collection) (Budapest-Kolozsvár, Akadémiai Kiadó-Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> This original, pre-Christian existentially structured nature of man's relation and reference to illnesses, lasting and continuously deepening and branching ("specializing") for millennia, as we have seen, is witnessed as well by the words expressing it in various languages. It suffices to mention, for example, the abundance of words that Ancient Greek used to express things connected to healing: *iater*, *iatros* = doctor; *iateira* = the healer; *iaterion* = medicine; *iatikos* = what is suitable for healing; *iatoria* = the science of healing; *iatrike* = healing, curing; and then there is the *iatreumata*, the preventive substance. Clearly, the medical act is articulated in each of these terms in the sense of both prevention and actual healing or curing. This activity is usually conducted for a fee in the *iatreon*, that is, in the doctor's rented or private home, equipped for the purpose. See Anatole Bailly, *Dictionnaire Grec – Français*, ed. E. Eggor (Paris, Hachette, 2000). The case is the same with classical Latin, where *medico* equally meant treatment and curing, while *medicina* referred directly to the medical act, continuously extending and specializing (e.g. aural diseases, dentistry). See Félix Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire Latin – Français*, revised edition, ed. Pierre Flobert (Paris, Hachette, 2000). On the medical knowledge of the Romans and its organic and evolutionary relationship with Greek medical science, see: Iftimovici Radu: *Istoria medicinei*, 67–76.



Beyond a possible consternation, there is Nothing to “wonder” that, let’s say, a “Christian doctor” living in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century CE knew *much less* about the human body and its illnesses than his Egyptian “colleague” active 2500 years before. Not to mention “contemporary” Arabic medicine, or doctors and scientists not necessarily of Arabic origin, who turned with a real, researching and caring, and at the same time profound and evolutionary interest and respect to the “results” and spirit of the traditional medical knowledge of the East (north India and the Middle East) and Northern Africa (Hebrew, Egyptian, etc.), as also of Greece and the Roman Empire. What is more, he turned not only to the results of these traditions, but also to those of *Nestorianism*,<sup>1</sup> originally a branch of Byzantine Christianity, but later considered a heresy and persecuted as such, in the fields of medical education, as well as the establishment and organization of hospitals.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nestorius was first the patriarch of Byzantium (Constantinople), and as such he established and proclaimed the doctrine of the double nature of Christ – human and divine at the same time. According to this view, Jesus had a twofold nature, he was man (by Mary) and God (by the Holy Spirit). One result of this teaching was that due to it, the body gained a new role, a new value in Christianity, together with its problems, illnesses, etc. This obviously meant a raising concern about medicine and its importance. Although Nestorius’ teachings soon gained him many followers, he was officially condemned as a heretic in his Christological views, he was deposed from his see, and both he and his followers were persecuted as heretics. His followers had to flee therefore ever farther, first to Edessa, then all the way to the Persian city of Gundeshapur. Already in Edessa, they established a school specifically for medical instruction, and also founded a hospital. Later, during the repeated condemnation and persecution of the sect by Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, they moved these to Persia. This is where the conquering Arabs met them and their institutions, which gained their interest and respect. See Iftimovici Radu: *Istoria universală a medicinei și farmaciei*, 128–129., and <http://www.terebess.hu/keletkultinfo/lexikon/nesztor.html> (downloaded 7 July 2010).

<sup>2</sup> See Iftimovici Radu: *Istoria medicinei*, 97-99, Idem: *Istoria universală a medicinei și farmaciei*, 128-140., Dr. Magyar László András, *Az arab orvostudomány* <http://www.terebess.hu/keletkultinfo/mlaszloa.html> (downloaded 4 July 2010), and *Az arab kultúra terjedése* <http://sagv.gyakg.u-szeged.hu/tanar/farkzolt/ISZLAM/arab.htm> (downloaded 21 June 2010).



**Octavian Cosman, *Sandy towns*. 110x100 cm. Mixed technique, 2015-2016**

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However, let us repeat, illness never only appears and exists for life and the living being as a merely “posterior” or “incidental” threat, as something utterly alien to it, something which only comes “from outside”. So something like the “possibility of illness” – understanding it essentially – hardly has anything to do with its *reality-to-be*! On the contrary, life itself, in its living and, let us emphasize again, in its own and *essential* motion, “reality”, and occurrence, not only “contains” or “owns” the possibility of

illness, but also secures it essentially *for itself in its own being* primarily and precisely *as a possibility*!

But Nothing proves or supports better this basic statement than that, in the first place, the living beings in their creation and development “come” to life or are born with certain systems of *self-defense* against illnesses.<sup>1</sup> The mere existence of such original systems of self-defense – not to mention their extraordinary variation and permanent mobility<sup>2</sup> – clearly shows from the very beginning that life itself, the living being itself projects and outlines illnesses *for itself* precisely and foremost as a *possibility*, exactly as a possibility pertaining to itself directly as a danger and threat. That is to say, as a dangerous and threatening possibility, pertaining and keeping towards itself, which is outlined in its ongoing life / living, inside and in the midst of this life.

Beyond this, however, illness – precisely *as a possibility* – pertains to the essence and essential complexity of life also in that fundamental, constitutive sense that the illnesses in their significant majority are also caused by *other, also living beings*! Several bacteria, parasites, certain fungi, or in a particular sense even viruses are all living beings, that is, *organic parts* of the huge and variable, lively cycles of life. Beyond doubt, there are also living beings “inside of life” – that is, coming to being while pertaining organically and essentially to ongoing life – the life of which lies and happens essentially and explicitly in the fact that they harm or make ill other living beings.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Let us only think of the immune system, but all the other extremely varied defense mechanisms can and must also be accounted for.

<sup>2</sup> Including also the diseases – currently called “auto-immune” – connected to this mobility and its complexity.

<sup>3</sup> My special thanks to Cecília Lippai for drawing my attention to this aspect of things!

However, beyond all this, the pertinence of illness to the essence of life and the living as a possibility is also demonstrated and supported by the fact, called “genetic” nowadays, that the single living beings, besides their systems of defense – or rather in addition to them – are born, often on the level of populations, with mostly hereditary and transmittable *inclinations* for *certain diseases*. Therefore in this respect life “possesses” or “disposes of” the possibility of illness and illnesses in a truly essential way, as the inclinations that refer to them.

It must be emphasized nevertheless that the *norm*, the “normality” of life and the living is “health”. “Health”, which by no means is some kind of ideal state, devoid of any kind of disorders, but on the contrary, an equally essential *possibility* of the living being, its mobility and ability to prove, keep, develop, and reproduce itself while growing, in the midst of its struggling, life-historical and adaptive-challenging relations of information, matter, and energy. In the challenge, fight, or struggle which the living being conducts in its relationship with other living beings. Not to mention the circumstance that “health” itself, continuously and unavoidably, outlines and emerges precisely in its struggle with the threatening possibilities of illnesses.

This is of course only an additional reason to stress again – better outlined and articulated – that the normative nature of health by no means invalidates the fact that illness also pertains to the *essential* complexity, the *essential possibilities* of life, and as such, always concerns life itself in some kind of essential respect. First and foremost, and most directly, it concerns of course “health”, as outlined above.

Now, this only signals again – especially in the more general connections and horizons of life and the living – how unstable and void are the so-called “differentiations”, strictly formal and consisting merely of

conceptual “definitions”, between “illness” and “health”. Which take these mostly as “states” and “situations” taken in their so-to-say “actualized pureness”, and not for what they really *are*. That is to say, they do not understand and treat them as essential and constitutive, as well as decisive and fundamental *possibilities* of life, the living life. For it is clear that the life of viruses, for instance, that is, their health and “virulence” means exactly illness – and none other!, or “causes” exactly illness – and none other! – for all kinds of living beings infected with these. The case is similar also with the life of the beings we call “parasites”. And so forth!

Illness proves to be thus, again and again, the possibility of a *living being* which must be thought of as something which takes part in a most essential and decisive way and respect in the actual and explicit formation and articulation of the way life and the living exists, happens, and articulates in its own abilities and temporality.

The possibilities of life, the possibilities pertaining to the living beings are themselves, evidently, also *living possibilities*! Such possibilities are these that their examination and understanding sends us, or forces us directly – and in an outstanding way – to the explicit rethinking of possibility as possibility.

There is not enough space to treat this issue in more details in this study, revealing several of its historical aspects as well. It must be stated nevertheless that Aristotle for instance in his time treated “possibility” exactly through the power of the word *dynamis*, in depths rarely reached ever since.

By *dynamis*, Aristotle meant exactly the force or ability of something to influence or change something else, or be changed itself. Therefore

Aristotle conceived of *dynamis*, of possibility exactly as the *principle of motion and change – arche kineseos*.<sup>1</sup>

Such an interpretation, with respect to a better understanding and outline of the *dynamis*, possibility of illness, is worth a more thorough analysis.

## EXCURSUS

### *Dynamis, energeia, entelecheia, and steresis*

(Aristotle)

When speaking about illness philosophically and primarily as a *possibility*,<sup>2</sup> or thinking about illness precisely in the horizon of possibilities, it is of course not insignificant what exactly we understand of it as a possibility. As evidently also what we understand *within* it – again, exactly as a possibility.

Illness is not just any kind of “possibility”, and even less something which “occurs” or “happens” at times around us, but precisely the possibility of something which involves us so that it *threatens* us essentially – perhaps in our very existence and being – and which, thus,

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<sup>1</sup> See: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, translated by Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd. 1933, 1989), 1019 b. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0052>. However, it must also be noted that the majority of translations are inscribed into an interpretive tradition of Aristotle which – since being completely *technicalized* – can no longer open up authentically to the original liveliness and elementary force of Aristotelian meditations. Therefore I permanently felt the need of using the edition of the *Metaphysics* in the second volume of Immanuel Bekker’s *Aristoteles Graece* from 1831; see: *Aristoteles Graece*, Ex recensione Immanuelis Bekkeri, Edidit Academia Regia Borussica, Volumen Alterum, Berolini, apud Georgium Reimerum, 1831, Ex Officina Academica.

<sup>2</sup> While being aware that the customary English translation of *dynamis* in Aristotelian terminology is *potentiality*, the author and translator of the article agree in using the term *possibility* and its derivations in order to be consistent with the overall terminology of this, and the author’s other writings on this subject.



presents an explicit *danger* to us. It is a possibility, therefore, which does not approach us merely from the outside, as an incidental “occurrence”, which only “concerns” us in this respect, that is, in a way only externally related to, and responsible for, the “matters of the world”, but it always pertains to our inner self.

However, “threat” and “danger” are themselves modes or types of possibility. Therefore, notwithstanding their conciseness and harshness, they are never mere “given realities”, happening or occurring somewhere around or inside us. Instead, our most authentic and appropriate, ontological, existential, and historical approach and attitude, and as such, permanently re-articulated way of relating or referring to them – that is, a *mode of being-like* relation essentially open to the horizon of the possibilities of (our) existence – is primarily and precisely that we reveal and perceive threats and dangers exactly as possibilities, moreover, as possibilities identified as explicitly dangerous and threatening.<sup>1</sup>

In order to achieve this, there is an additional need to at least understand, truly, the “possibility” itself, with its weight and manifold force fields and horizons. Therefore, with reference precisely to the dangerous and threatening possibilities, and for an inquisitive thinking aiming at understanding, it emerges as a requirement, albeit *trying* and *challenging*, to thoroughly examine the possibility “as such” with regard exactly to its *weight* – and not, as is customary, to its “weightlessness” and “insignificance”.

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<sup>1</sup> We try to follow the signs of volcanic activity in as much detail and accuracy as possible, to keep hurricanes under spatial observation, and forecast their intensity and expected route, to monitor tsunamis forming after earthquakes and predict their directions at least as a warning for the people involved, etc. – just to mention some examples. And also on the basis of the existential-ontological structure of this particular way of relation or reference – for instance, with regard to the dangerous and threatening possibilities of inundations – we humans build dams by rivers or lakes, etc. And so on.

An attempted co-thinking and dialogue with Aristotle may be extremely helpful in this respect. An attempt, that is, which is not meant to be some kind of “exegesis of Aristotle”, but much rather, or much simpler: the thoughtful encounter of questions and questionings “in our times”. That is, in our own lives, in our living present, and its definite inquiries pointing to the future.

Aristotle, as signaled earlier, discusses the possibility precisely in the horizon of the force field of the name and word of *dynamis*. The name itself, Aristotle’s ancient Greek word, derives from *dynamai*, the meaning of which – notably – is precisely “force”, “the possession of force”, ability, the endowment with abilities, intent and “readiness” for action, for disposition. That what possesses force as well as richness and plurality in every kind of possibility, may become and indeed becomes great and significant on this account, possessing, and disposing of, this power.<sup>1</sup>

The ancient Greek word *dynamis* equally refers thus to physical, as well as moral-authoritative-community force and power, in the sense of something which *is able to make something move*, and which can continuously influence and change things, states, processes, and circumstances by these abilities. Moreover, without which all sorts of such changes, influences, occurrences, and formations, in other words all kinds of motions and changes are actually unthinkable. Since in the absence of the *dynamis*, the Wherefrom?, Why?, How?, and Whereto? of motion, change, influence, formation, birth, and articulation would simply have no content.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is how the term *dynasty*, referring to rulers and ruling families, derives from *dynamai*, as also the term *dynamics*, “the study of motion”, as a basic branch of classical physics.

<sup>2</sup> This is in fact what the Romans later translated as *possibilitas* and *potentialitas*, becoming in time increasingly devoid of content as a *terminus technicus*. Both the term



It is clear therefore that in this fundamental sense the *dynamis* belongs, connects, and sends back at all times in fact to none other than the *ousia*, the *essence*, as the forces, abilities, powers, meanings, significances, possibilities, validities, as well as deficiencies, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities of the *ousia*. In their – evidently indefinite, yet by far not meaningless – complexity, and in their *all-time* fullness structurally articulated (primary, secondary *ousia*, etc.) by the *ousia*.

First and foremost, therefore, these articulated, yet at the same time “indefinite” “dynamisms” of possibility and possibilities, very plastic in their horizons, make the *ousia*, the essence particularly “wealthy”,<sup>1</sup> rich (or perhaps poor), efficient or on the contrary, inefficient, or maybe even valuable, while also “representing” it. Since it is only through the *dynamis*, through possibility, that the *entire horizon* of everything essential can be articulated and outlined in its complete, expanding-narrowing wealth, meaning, or the entire possible mobility of its contradictory colorfulness and richness.

Therefore it is precisely the *dynamis*, the possibility which penetrates and touches upon the *ousia*, the essence, in its entirety, with all its sides and drawbacks or deficiencies. And also that which *constitutes* the essence in

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*possibilitas* (posse) and *potentia* – as well as the medieval *potentialis* – are linked indeed with force, or the necessary and indispensable active precondition for the ability to achieve or perform something, or rather its “long-standing” possession. See Albert Dauzat, Jean Dubois, and Henry Mitterand, *Nouveau Dictionnaire Étymologique et Historique* (Paris, Librairie Larousse, 1964).

<sup>1</sup> The name of the *ousia* – because one must not think of it as a “term”, let alone as some *terminus technicus*! – originally meant “fortune, wealth”, and as such, “value”. Of course, we mostly ignore or forget to explicitly think into the fact that this original meaning of the *ousia* is preserved at Aristotle, moreover it becomes more profound and elaborated in terms of its conceptual details. See on this also the Excursus on Aristotle of my study, *A jövő avagy kérdezően lakozik az ember...* (The Future, Or Questioningly Dwells the Mortal Man...) in the volume: István Király V., *Halandóan lakozik szabadságában az ember...* (Mortally dwells man in his freedom...) (Pozsony [Bratislava]: Kalligram, 2007), 209–239.

its own all-time way. That is to say, the force of the *dynamis* follows, represents, and exposes the *ousia*, the essence in its own articulate nature, in ways actually defined in its joints, but by all means in a horizon-like manner, while on the other hand it also makes it truly *valid*. More precisely: it pushes the *ousia* to the directions of its own validity. It is therefore not just immaterial – and especially not “unessential” – which possibilities one sees, nor what one is able to see or look upon with help of the possibilities.

All the more so because, as signaled earlier, the possibility, the *dynamis* with Aristotle is precisely the *principle of motion, of change* (*arche kineseos*). And this basically means that, in reality and factually, *every* motion and change is Nothing else in fact than the actualization of possibilities. That is to say, none other than the actual operation or validation of the forces and aptitudes – including passivity, the ability of reception – of the *dynamis*.<sup>1</sup> And I do not only mean here the nature, the *physis*, and the motional events of the *physis* – namely, the motions and changes of nature, originating and growing by and from itself, and its instances – but also the creations, the human artefacts, arts, sciences, etc. One of Aristotle’s examples is exactly about the fact that the constructible is “actualized” in the course of the actuality (*energeia*) of the very process of construction.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the knowable is always actualized through the processes of the acquirement of knowledge, that is, in the efforts of cognition (*energeia*). So that any kind of motion at all or any kind of change occurs only if that what happens then is Nothing else in fact than

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<sup>1</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1046a; 1077b.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1046b.

*dynamis*, the actualization of the possibility, that is, *energeia*, in other words, force, explicitly operational and working force.<sup>1</sup>

Let me add to all this Aristotle's refinement of grand import that the *dynamis* and *energeia* comprise a greater or *broader* scope than that to which motion is explicitly and directly restricted to.<sup>2</sup> Because, for example, passivity and enduring are in fact abilities, *dynamis*. An ability or possibility to receive or accept the effect of another thing or force. Such as for instance the *dynamis* of plasticity, namely that something can be shaped in a determined way. Again, with the additional, and also significant refinement emphasized by Aristotle that passivity means not some "lower degree" of possibility, but *dynamis* as passivity must also be understood in its primary meaning, as the principle of motion.<sup>3</sup> That is, as the *ousia*'s own power and ability, forming or framing its own richness, articulated colorfulness and value, and pertaining to *its own meaningfulness*. Passivity is thus in fact the power of reception and acceptance for the continuous enrichment and articulation of being and the beings!

So – as a summary and further questioning – the *dynamis*, the possibility means precisely the motion ability of the *ousia*, the essence, lying in its forces, in their powers, limits, flexibility and plasticity, as well as the articulate horizons of these abilities. Which are, nevertheless, still *undetermined*.

The "undetermined" however only exists as a possibility, not as something real, not as *energeia*.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, indeterminacy "disappears", ceases by the *energeia*. For example, according to its *ousia* and *dynamis* – and of course undetermined –, a rose can be, say, red or yellow, but in the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 1046a.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 1047a; 1047b.

case of a yellow rose this indeterminacy has practically ceased. However, this example given by Aristotle actually only shows that the *dynamis* is precisely a *horizon of being*, articulated and at the same time “free”, nuanced and as such, “undetermined”. A rose, by its *ousia* and *dynamis*, undetermined, can be, let’s say, red or yellow. But despite the mere fact that a rose – in a determined way, that is, by its *energeia* – is yellow, red roses can still exist and grow with respect to the species of roses. This example reveals therefore that, in its entire and evidently articulated amplitude and the horizons of its forces, the *dynamis*, the possibility is projected upon the *ousia*, the essence, while at the same time, *reflexively*, also refers back to it. That is to say, the *dynamis* projects back both to secondary species and genera, and – just as importantly – to the primary *ousia*, the still undetermined self-identical individuals as well.<sup>1</sup>

Although the *dynamis*, the possibility, by its original and always intertwined relation to the *ousia*, is indeterminacy, it will never become still something devoid of content and even less something “forceless”. For, as we have seen, the very name of *dynamis* means “force”, or rather inherently derives from force. Therefore the situation is rather the opposite! Namely, that it is the *dynamis*, the possibility by which the *force of indeterminacy*, its contradictory liveliness, its highly enriching nature and tension, and also openness, making the beings and being ever more diverse or sketchy, colorful or on the contrary, paler, breaks in and is established as a constitutive factor. Since, let me repeat, this is not at all about some kind

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<sup>1</sup> More detailed analyses on the category structure of the Aristotelian category of *ousia*, and its use in the present discussion can be found in the following studies: István Király V., ‘Alkalmazott filozófia’ és a kategoriális elemzés” (‘Applied philosophy’ and category analysis), in István Király V., *Filozófia és Itt-Lét* (Philosophy and Being-Here) (Kolozsvár (Cluj Napoca): Erdélyi Híradó, 1999), 29–56; and István Király V., *Fenomenologia existențială a secretului – Încercare de filosofie aplicată* (The existential phenomenology of the secret – an attempt for applied philosophy) (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2001), 40–75.

of empty and indifferent “indeterminacy”, devoid of content, outlines, and articulations, but, as revealed, the *dynamis*, the possibility is implicitly connected to the essence, the *ousia* – and by this, evidently, to *physis*. (A rose can be like this or like that, but it can definitely not produce milk, or be milked, etc.) The *actus*, *actualitas*, *energeia* – that is, the operative force – always brings to determinedness, while at the same time also freezes, stiffens, and “narrows” the *dynamis*, the possibilities.

This way the relationship of *dynamis* and *energeia* is in fact always problematic – and cannot be otherwise – since the *dynamis* conceals or keeps in privation (*steresis*) at all times further possibilities of *energeia*, while the ever newer *energeia*, the ever newer actualization offers and claims an ever newer *being-like* glance on the *dynamis*, its essential richness and colorfulness. (E.g. on the natural appearance and formation, or breeding of new kinds of roses of various colors, flowers, etc.)<sup>1</sup>

Possibility therefore, although not exclusively, by its original connections to the *ousia*, primarily pertains still to the *general*, the *species* and the *genus*. That is why Aristotle speaks in Book XIII of *Metaphysics* (at the very end of chapter 10) about the science of the general and only the general as something “only” possible, that is, as a kind of knowledge “only” according to the *dynamis*, the possibility. As opposed to a *knowing* science and knowledge, which – besides the general, the universal – also

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<sup>1</sup> In this lies the important difference between *dynamis* and *energeia*. That is to say, something or some kind of relation may exist even if it is not in *energeia*, or on the contrary, something which is in *actus*, in *energeia* at a given time, can be cancelled, or – to formulate it more accurately and understandably with regard to the *dynamis* – can be withdrawn into its own possibility or possibilities. Of course, this only shows that it is in fact the *dynamis*, the possibility which – as a principle or motion and change – constitutes and bears the actual constancy or endurance of something, and the inherent preservation of this constancy and endurance. Obviously, let me repeat, together with, and directly through, its (inherent) openness, and its articulated, as well as opening- and sending-apart horizons.

has knowledge about the concrete, or concreteness.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the case is not at all that the possibility, the *dynamis* would not impregnate meanwhile the *primary ousia*. (Probably this is why Heidegger translated *dynamai* as “forthcoming ability”.<sup>2</sup> He interprets it therefore not as a mere, empty, hovering, and nowhere belonging indeterminacy, as if anything could become, or turn into, everything).

Consequently, the *dynamis*, the possibility is exactly the dynamics and tension of the *ousia*, the essence, consisting in the forces of its motional and articulated richness, or rather exactly the essence’s motional and undetermined exposure to being.

Notwithstanding those previously said, Aristotle also claims that, compared to *dynamis*, the *energeia*, the *actus*, the *actualitas* are *prior (proteron)* to it, precede it, and are explicitly primary to it. However, one may understand absolutely Nothing from it if one only handles this thing as a mere conceptual, “state”, or temporal, etc. “hierarchy”. Because the *energeia*, as discussed above, is precisely the force in operation, in actual work. That is, the *actus*, the actualization. Or rather, the explicit actuality, that is, being in operation, in *actus*. It is important to see, however, that the *energeia* cannot be any *other* force of another nature or essence, than that what *has already been* somehow as *dynamis*. For where could all these actually operational forces originate from, come from, or be born from?<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1087a.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Heidegger, *A φύσις lényegéről és fogalmáról. Arisztotelész: Fizika B, 1.* (On the essence and concept of φύσις. Aristotle: Physics, B 1), in Martin Heidegger, *Útjelzők* (Road signs) (Budapest: Osiris, 2003), 225–282.

<sup>3</sup> Even if the *dynamis* and its forces are assisted and swung to actuality by the forces already in operation, in *energeia*, in *actus*, as well as by the “circumstances” articulated by them. For example, an infant with the *dynamis*, the possibilities of its coming-to-humanness can only be conceived, born onto this world, and grow up as a human being on account of already existing people, being in *energeia*. This is also why the *energeia*

Therefore this *has been* reveals now that the possibility is always something which, in its relationship with, and organic pertinence to, the *ousia*, or rather directly through it, refers to *the other categories* as well. While it is also revealed that “within” these categories – and referring to “time”, the question of When? (*pote*) – the *dynamis* refers most directly to the *future*. Although that what is possible, does not yet exist as *energeia*, or as an operating force, but somehow it may still come, that is, it may still emerge. Moreover, that what is not yet, or is not yet “here” may come or emerge only this way, on the basis of, starting from, and connected to the *dynamis* – meaning that only thus it may become *actus*, *energeia*, actuality in the present-being of the future and of that what will come.

In this respect, therefore, the *dynamis*, the possibility is something which is not yet in operation, not yet in *energeia*, but which may still not “be” just “anything”, or cannot “just exist”, “no matter how”. However, one can only gain primary-essential knowledge in its own factual validity about the *preliminary* nature of the *dynamis* and its partly preventing, partly anticipating, forceful character, mostly, but not exclusively, precisely by the *energeia*, the presence and present effect of the *actus* (that is, in *actualitas*, *in actu*), in a so-to-say “subsequent” way; or can only be ascertained about it with a view to the future, not lacking thorough articulation. This is how *energeia* is “prior” and “earlier” as compared to *dynamis*, possibility.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, also conceptually, in accordance with the *arche*, the principle, the original principle of motion and change, keeping together the *dynamis* and *energeia*, and also in accordance with being.

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is earlier, prior, and primary (*proteron*) to *actualitas*, to *dynamis*, possibility. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1049b, 1050a, 1050b.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

Since it is exactly because the *energeia* – that is, the operation of the force which means actualization itself – is *possible* as *dynamis*, that the *existence* of possibility, *dynamis* is proved – *in its precedence-like, fundamental, anticipatory, lively and pulsating, multidirectional, and undetermined meaning and power (that is, as a principle of motion and change)*. The *dynamis*, the inner and actual tension of which – in the tenseness of its “ambitions”, just like in the power of passivity lying in reception – is of course Nothing else than *energeia*, operation, coming to *actus* and being *actus* itself.

Therefore the *energeia* is not merely the “surfacing” of some latent and inner tensions, previously undetermined and inarticulate, neither the simple “realization” of something previously un-real, but – connected to the *dynamis* and in its connections to the articulated force of the *ousia* and the forces of the other categories – the reorganization of the *existential occurrence* itself, the occurrence of being and the beings, in which the being as one particular being receives its outlines. (For example, in the mutual influence between the beings, or the connection of their coexistence, etc.) This is what draws the being, with a view to the uniqueness of its “concreteness”, into the questioning being-determinations (*dynamis*) of *all categories* on the one hand, while exposing it, on the other hand, as explicit coming-to-being and explicit being-in-being amongst the other beings. That is, as a coming to and towards being. As a “growth” (*phyein*) (being born) from being to being. That is to say, as an explicit growth to exposedness, to newer and newer instances of exposedness. An exposure to the multifaceted and multi-edged, challenging and trying exposednesses of coming-to-being, being born, and giving birth. To the mobile exposedness of being and living, in which, of course, ever newer *dynamis* (possibilities), previously concealed and unforeseeable, or



unmoved and unoutlined in the forces of their tensions, may emerge, outline, and then disappear or submerge. Even if only in their opaque contours, or as a mere halo, a shadow, a stain.

The *energeia*, the *actualitas* therefore always refers back to *dynamis*, to its outlines and forcefields meaningful even in their indeterminacy (“vectors”), as well as the articulated horizons of *dynamis*. It refers back to those ultimately essential (*ousia*), “tendential” forces, which are made visible by the *energeia*, but which, at the same time, are also revealed in their newer and newer possibilities or impossibilities. And which are, in addition, revealed again out of the *dynamis*’ own, original forces, equally pertaining to the *ousia*, the essence, and through this, evidently, to the *physis*, as well as to man, being indissolubly connected to it, moreover growing out (*phyein*) from it and growing further in it as a new and particular dimension of being, and to human artifacts, their creation, their making, etc. And, also, connected to the motional-questionable, tensioned meanings and directions, intertwined within and by means of the categories, of these forces and together with the delineations bound by them.

Therefore it is only in this sense, elaborated with respect to their *articulations*, that the *energeia*, the *actualitas*, the being in *actus* is primary or prior to the *dynamis*, the possibility. That is to say, not in the sense of “reality”, which suggests such absurdities – miles away from Aristotle of course<sup>1</sup> – that the possibility allegedly has no “reality”, or that the

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<sup>1</sup> In Chapter 3 of Book IX of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle explicitly contests those – for instance, the Megarians – who claim, by absurd, that the *dynamis* only “exists”, only “is” when it is already in *energeia*, that is, in *actus*, *actualitas*, in operation, “reality”, or “achievement”. Since that would mean – says Aristotle, not without some irony – that this way a builder, for example, would no longer be a builder when not building. Or that in such a case a man with his eyes closed and looking at nothing could be considered blind in fact. It would be a miracle then if the “former” builder, after a period off work

connection of “reality” and “possibility” is merely some kind of incidence. Since thus “reality” has been degraded to the level that it is a miracle that it “exists” at least. And also that it came to be, and will last somehow. Every motion or state, occurrence, change, or creation is Nothing else in fact than miracles which are considered, in a misleading way, an all-decisive “harsh” “reality”, as compared to the fluid, plastic, shapeless, inarticulate, ethereal, unbalanced, incomplete, immature, existentially dubious, vestigial, pale, obscure, uncertain “mere possibility”, or “incidence”, degraded by indeterminacy.

Therefore, on the contrary, I am repeatedly speaking about the *dynamis*, the possibility, just like the *energeia*, the *actualitas* which, although primarily connected to the *ousia*, precisely on this account are not “restricted” merely to the *ousia*, the essence. Instead, by the essence, and primarily by its own, mobile and motional tensions, constituted primarily by the forces of the *dynamis* – in the *energeia* – in the *actus*, the *ousia* is linked and related to the *dynamis*, again motional and questionable, of *all the other categories* (quality, quantity, time, relation, effect, endurance, etc.) Because the forces of the *dynamis* can only encompass *horizon-like* the articulate entirety of the *ousia*, enabled only by the *dynamis* if, and by, exposing the essence in the forces of its *sui generis* tendencies, and the

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between two commissions, suddenly begins again to build, to “be” a professional builder; or if the person with the eyes closed opens his eyes and sees “again”, and even recognizes the world around him. (See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1046b, 1047a.) Because the essence of a builder as a builder is that his *dynamis* – that is, by his essential *possibilities* re-delineated on account of the experiences inherently gained in the *energeias* of building, articulated and trained in this respect – can or is able to build, even if he does not build at the moment but, say, is having a break. This *dynamis*, this possibility-ability of the builder pertains to his essence, his *ousia*, his fortune and its stability-endurance is such a way that it does *not disappear*, does not vanish when it is not in *energeia*, in *actus*, in *realitas*. That is why such a person does not have to learn the art of building anew when continuing his work after a time off. And the situation is the same with the man opening his eyes and looking around with them again.

tensioned horizons of these forces. In such a way that at the same time – in undetermined, yet never inarticulate ways – it always connects them to those *dynamises* which in their turn articulate the other categories, quality, quantity, place, the Where?, the When?, the relations, etc. as well. It is only in this way that the categories can “simultaneously” be the categories of being “itself”, the questioning-guiding-defining fundamental words or categories of the man and his language, coming to being from being in a new way, as a dimension of meaning.

Therefore, as a principle of motion and change, the *dynamis*, although it is primarily related to the *ousia*, actually penetrates horizon-like all categories. While constituting them as well in its own way. Since in motion the quality, quantity, relations, etc. of beings can also change, and usually they do change indeed. The quality of beings can degrade, the healthy can fall ill, the large can become small, the “here” can become “there”, the earlier can become later. The relations of beings can also change,<sup>1</sup> of course in the ways outlined (*peras*) in the *energeia*, in the *actus* and starting from these, then turning back again to the *dynamis*, the possibilities stretching forward. Again, it is not merely about the matters of the *physis*, that is, the beings becoming and growing by themselves, and thus motional and changing, but equally about artifacts, human works. Aristotle mentions again the example of construction, as also those of learning or healing, while emphasizing again<sup>2</sup> that there is motion and any kind of change only if that what happens on such occasions it Nothing else in fact than *energeia*, that is, the coming to *actus* in determined and articulated ways of various kinds of *dynamis*, as well as their *preservation*.

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1021a.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Therefore the *dynamis* is the essential continuity and endurance basis and at the same time “mechanism” of the *energeia*,<sup>1</sup> just as it is a basis and “mechanism” of its further opening – or, on the contrary, its withering or narrowing.

As it has already occurred in several of our previous analyses, for Aristotle – and Aristotle alone – categories are actually *questions*. Moreover, they are fundamental questions or question-foundations, which open up, and at the same time inherently determine, the living being and the various regions of being with an eye to their What?-ness, How?-ness, How much?-ness, When?-ness, Where?-ness, the What?-ness and How?-ness of their Relations and Relativities, etc. – that is to say, to (their) being –, in articulated ways and from or towards (always further unfolding) directions constituted by these.<sup>2</sup> So the categories – guided by the *ousia* – always question in the directions, existentially and ontologically equally relevant, of possibilities of being, connected in fact to the dynamisms and tensions of the *physis*. The questions of categories are therefore not dialectic questions,<sup>3</sup> but of the kind which ground, guide, and make possible dialectic questions, and furthermore the dialogue itself as well, probably impossible without them.

The categories, categorial questions therefore precede, base, and interweave or – in fact – also guide dialectic questioning, and consequently the dialogue itself as well.<sup>4</sup> For dialogue exists only if, and only where the “partners” meet in the matters and stakes of the search of possible truth

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<sup>1</sup> It may suffice to refer again to the example of the builder who, by his *dynamis*, *continuously* remains (being) a builder even when actually (*energeia*) he does no construction work. (See also: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1047a).

<sup>2</sup> See my previously cited studies on Aristotle.

<sup>3</sup> See mainly the already cited study on the future, *A jövő avagy kérdezően lakozik az ember...*, in the volume *Halandóan lakozik szabadságában az ember...*

<sup>4</sup> This is what the *Topics* and most Aristotelian writings and paragraphs against the sophists and sophisms are about.

connected to some questionable issue, undertaking their own questions as duties pertaining to, but evidently also pointing beyond, themselves. Consequently, every questioning refers directly to that what is just in operation – that is, the *energeia*, the *actus*, the *actualitas* –, but does it and can only do it in such a way that meanwhile it brings the *energeia* (*actualitas*) in question necessarily into the horizon of the *dynamis*. If not otherwise, then at least with respect to the possible truth connected to the problematic matter. And with it, with respect to everything else that such a truth, situated in dialogue, reveals or explicitly represents as newer and newer possibilities of being in connection with the matter in question.

Therefore, while it is true – as Aristotle clearly states – that the *energeia*, the *actualitas* are “better and nobler” than even the most respectful *dynamis*,<sup>1</sup> still one can understand practically Nothing of it unless one connects it with the fundamental Aristotelian idea that motion and change can only occur if that what happens on such occasions is Nothing else in fact than *energeia*, that is, actualization. Naturally, an *energeia* connected to the *dynamis*, the possibility, that is to say, the being in operation, in *actus* of the forces of possibilities, which again does not lack a further reference to *dynamis*.

This is not to say that, due to the *energeia*, we have already exceeded and left behind the horizons of the *dynamis*. It is more likely that the *energeia*, that is, the force of being in operation, is “better and nobler” than even the most respectful *dynamis* because the possibility – primarily with respect to the *ousia* – simultaneously comprises and includes antagonisms, antagonistic states and things. For example, what can be called healthy, can equally be called ill. Because for the living being, with respect to its *ousia*

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1051a.

and with reference to the *dynamis*: the *dynamis* of health and illness – as a possibility – undetermined pertains to the same thing.<sup>1</sup>

However, what “disappears” or ceases in the *energeia*, the actual operation, are *not* the *dynamis*, the possibilities themselves, but “only” the simultaneity of their antagonistic nature. This way the sick person – for whom the *dynamis*, the *energeia*, the *actualitas* of illness has turned into motional operation – is no longer healthy. By this, however – with regard to its *ousia* – he has not lost the *dynamis* or possibility of his health. On the contrary, health and its preservation or restoration emerges as a problematic possibility, that is, as a *dynamis* for man – and for the *physis*, life, the *zoe* and the *bios* – precisely because there are illnesses and there are actually sick and suffering people.

It is a kind of *dynamis* in which illness itself appears as a *dynamis*, namely as a possibility threatening health and life, its possible ways, with deficiencies – and as such, dangerous –, a *dynamis* appearing in the essential constancy of the antagonistic simultaneity of its own essential possibility. Otherwise no nature, no *physis* could possibly exist, nor – connected to it, but pointing far beyond – any kind of healing or curing by medical treatment. That is to say, no natural immune- and protection systems, nor all-time medical science could possibly exist at all.

So although of all the antagonistic *dynamis*, the simultaneous antagonistic possibilities, the *energeia*, the *actualitas* of illness is “worse” than as if it had “only” remained *dynamis*, it does not become “nobler” on

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<sup>1</sup> Nothing proves it more convincingly that the *dynamis* with its constitutive antagonism is connected indeed *directly* to the *ousia*, or that it directly and primarily pertains to it, as apparent in Aristotle’s fundamental specification in the *Categories*: “The most distinctive mark of substance appears to be that, while remaining numerically one and the same, it is capable of admitting contrary qualities. From among things other than substance, we should find ourselves unable to bring forward any which possessed this mark.” Aristotle, *Categories* (trans. E. M. Edgehill), section 1, part 5, paragraph <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/categories.1.1.html> (accessed 18.07.2011)

this account, and as such, less concise, less essential, or less taken into account. As if the illness would only be *dynamis*, and would never “exist” as *energeia*.<sup>1</sup>

The *energeia* of illness defiantly refers precisely to the essence, its articulate and outlined *dynamises* connected for example to various illnesses. Which “necessitate”, on the one hand, an explicit and insightful definition, and on the other hand – together with the previous – an equally explicit and articulated attitude or approach, or more precisely, healing. That is to say, they require such an insightful definition and such an explicit and factual attitude which are themselves possibilities, possibilities of being, modes of being, *dynamises* and *energeias* connected to being itself, the living beings, and the (problematic-questionable) possibilities and *actuses* of existence / being.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore the fact that the *dynamis* is the principle of motion and change means in fact that the forces, motions, and changes in operation for their further opening or narrowing articulation will also be taken over by the *dynamis*, into the directions of the *entelecheia*-like diversification or stiffening and narrowing of further *energeia*, further *actualitas*.

*Entelecheia* is one of the most brilliant ideas and terms of Aristotle. Possibly he himself coined it to envision and name the motion and change of things, processes, and the essence, the essential *purpose* – that is, *telos*

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<sup>1</sup> Otherwise Aristotle repeatedly considers it meaningless and void to speak about a *dynamis* which somehow never turns operational, in *energeia*, in *actualitas*.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle writes in the *Metaphysics* in this sense that actually even geometrical theorems are discovered as and by the actualizations, *energeia* of possibilities, *dynamis*, at least as concerns the researcher’s and thinker’s efforts or talents and abilities needed for their discovery. For the actual efforts of thinking and cognition itself are explicitly *energeia*, that is, an actualization of the abilities, talents, *dynamis* – that is to say, possibilities – of thinking which always reveals and outlines in its operation the *dynamis*, the *possibilities* of the newer and newer mental – in this case geometric – approaches. See: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1061b.

understood not merely as a “goal” – of joint human activities as their essential fulfilment, enforced first by the manifold, antagonistically undeterminable tensions of the *dynamis*, then by the already operational forces of the *energeia*. When – in the motion of the tensioned and interwoven forces of the *dynamis* and the *energeia* – the living being reaches its purpose, and thus its all-time fulfillment.<sup>1</sup> This is why Heidegger interprets *entelecheia* as “having-itself-in-the-end”.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose itself – that is, the destiny of the living being in which it possesses itself in its own end as *entelecheia* – does not come from the living being or its relations of being, or outside of its world. Much rather, the *entelecheia* is a particular and perhaps also outstanding *energeia*. Such an *energeia*, such an operation which is actually the motion and movedness of the essential (*ousia*) and (other) categorial forces of artifact-like beings growing by themselves, which occurs in, and is conducted by these forces, and through which the living beings always reach their particular and actual bearing and appearance, *eidos*. Or, through which the living beings, in their own particular being-in-the-world and worldliness, in the directions and meanings of their own essential, outlined, articulated, and actual endowments, possibilities, and abilities, reach their all-time particular senses of being and into the possession (*ousia*) of their purposes of being, *standing-in-the(ir)-end*, operating and effective as such.

That is to say, the living beings only become what and how they actually are by the *entelecheia*. And only by the *entelecheia* do the living beings situate themselves to their constitutive and further constituted place and calling in nature, in the *physis*, the human beings, human works, and human world, growing out of it as a new and particular dimension of being

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 1047a, 1050b.

<sup>2</sup> In: Heidegger, *A φύσις lényegéről és fogalmáról*.



and thus acquiring their own forces – their own *dynamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia*.

*Entelecheia* is therefore not finiteness – says Heidegger as well<sup>1</sup> – and even less exhaustedness. Not the exhaustedness, the running-out of possibilities, *dynamis*, or *energeia*, but rather the *eidos*. That is, appearance, and as such, the living beings' exposedness and display in their own limits (*peras*), in their apparent outlines, lasting “from inside” and enduring on the outside. This rather means then that the possibility only actually becomes *visible* precisely as a *possibility* in the *entelecheia*, in having-itself-in-the-end, with its own orientation and necessity for operation.

On the one hand, this happens as something which has been grasped and taken up by the *energeia* from the direction of the end, of standing-in-the-end. On the other hand, however, in the visibility (*eidos*) of the *entelecheia* standing-in-the-end, emerge the possibilities either lurking before in the rich motionality and colorfulness of the essentiality of the *dynamis*, or newly formed, which can be revealed not only as mere possibilities – articulated by the *ousia* but undetermined – of the *entelecheia* through the *energeia*, but as explicitly *newer* possibilities in the exposedness of having-itself-in-the-end, and its *reflexivity*. Moreover, they can be revealed with a view to their newer possible appearances, outlining them in their newer and newer possible having-themselves-in-the-end.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> At this point one can rethink Heidegger's table-example. According to this example, the making of the table always happens from the point of view of its *eidos*, its appearance. The tree appropriate, adequate as to its *dynamis* is chosen with respect to this. However, the pre-determined and conditioned *eidos* of the table also defines the *energeia*, the force skillfully – that is, *paradigmatically* and through *techne* and *praxis* – operative in manufacturing, by the effect of which the table itself, with an appearance corresponding to the previously outlined *eidos*, and as such, having itself in *entelecheia*, made of the right kind of wood, is produced, or comes to being. However – going

Consequently the human being's purpose – growing out of and in the *physis* as a new and particular dimension, and growing and raising in itself and by itself – is exactly to question, search, validate and shape in the *actus* and *actualitas* of the *energeia* and *entelecheia*, primarily with respect to the *dynamis*, its possible, although essentially bound and unavoidably world-like, “dynamic”, problematic, historical modes and relations of being. The human being's purpose is, therefore, that he, even in necessities and lawful issues – historically understanding, misunderstanding, or even violating them –, is therefore to see and find the newer horizons of the *dynamis* together with, and precisely within the givenness itself, bringing them directly to being-validity in his own historical directions and “interests”. Implying also the fact that we human beings, in our relation to certain possibilities – for instance, the threats of diseases –, attempt to assume them (e.g. by the appropriate vaccines) or strive to possibly heal them by our knowledge.

The basis of this ambition is the recognition that illness itself is a *dynamis* most inherently pertaining to the essence (*ousia*) of life and the living being, also in the direct sense that – as discussed above – the cause of several illnesses is also a living being. Such are the bacilli, the parasites, and in a certain respect the viruses as well. Considering the specific, while at the same time fundamental characteristics of the illness' essential life-

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beyond the direct scope of the Heideggerian example – it is precisely then, while having been made, standing-in-its-end (*entelecheia*), that we can contemplate *anew* that particular table, that particular artifact with respect to its *other* possibilities. With respect to the fact, for instance, that there can be other kinds of tables, made of different material (stone, bronze, wrought iron, or plastic), having different shape – more or fewer legs, higher or lower, round, hexagonal or octagonal, etc., which are equally possible, “necessary”, “useful” and also showy. It is precisely in the *entelecheia*, the standing-in-the-end and completeness, that several, originally indeterminate *dynamises*, newer possibilities, become visible as something explicitly and *eidetically* articulately *possible* and also explicitly undertakable for the *energeia* as a challenge and a duty. See *Ibid.*

pertinence, or on the contrary, of life's essential relations to illness, the question of health and illness should be asked also about these living beings.

As for these questions, it should be repeatedly acknowledged that the possible *health* of living bacteria lies exactly in the fact that they can outright attack and ultimately undermine the health of some other living being, or they can *make it ill*. And these bacteria are ill or impaired in their possibilities when they are fully or partially incapable of causing illness. Meanwhile, the living being attacked defends itself some way and to some extent, according to its nature and essence, by its own particular possibilities. It is in this motionality or struggle – which is, on the one hand, an essential war, *polemos*, in and according to the *physis*, while on the other hand it is articulated by the mutual privation, *steresis*, of each other's natural and essential possibilities or *energeia* and *entelecheia* – that the all-time factual situatedness-in-being of health and illness is outlined.

In effect, the all-time situatedness-in-being of health and illness, by the *dynamis*, the possibilities taken in the being and meaning outlined hereby, is sketched as a being historically and onto-historically articulated, relating – or in the case of man, explicitly *referring* – to the *dynamis* within it.

With respect, therefore, to being, the living beings, and their being, “illness” and “health” are not merely some mutually exclusive “states of being-alive”, but much rather possible *modes of being-alive*. Modes of being-alive which are articulated, in relation to the horizon-like possibilities of being of the living being, by precisely *these particular* possibilities, or *ousias* by the privation (*steresis*) of these possibilities. This

articulation happens according to the principle (*arche*) of the *dynamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia* in the *physis*, originating and displaying it.<sup>1</sup>

Because in fact – says Aristotle in the often neglected chapter 12 of book V of the *Metaphysics* – the *steresis*, privation, lack, or deficiency is also *dynamis*, or *possibility*, and as such, it pertains to the *ousia*, to its quality. Since whatever can fall apart, break down, or get harmed, possesses the possibilities of falling apart, breaking down, or getting harmed. That is to say, the possibilities of falling apart, breaking down, or getting harmed mean in their “positivism” that the living being lacks in some respect, in a certain sense or mode, and to some extent the *dynamis* of endurance, survival, and preservation.

Likewise, such are illnesses as well, as the possibilities of the living being, simultaneously connected as an undetermined *dynamis* to the *mode-of-being-like* privation of some of its possibilities of being, and the breakdown or harm of its modes of being, opposing the possibilities of health.<sup>2</sup> Illness is thus, in its primary meaning, the privation, deterioration, deficiency, or lack of health, but as such, it is still essentially and explicitly the ill person’s own “positive” possession (*ousia*).

While, of course, the illness is not merely the obtrusive, unavoidable, “positive” and articulate presence of one particular illness, but the privation, *steresis* of the fullness of health, and its “appearance” as deficiency. On such occasions therefore health does not only appear as a non-being, as something non-existent, but much rather as something

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<sup>1</sup> The possibilities of being and life – according to, and on the basis of, the *physis* and the essence, the *ousia* – are therefore always articulated from the point of view of life history. For beings of nature as well as for humans. The being possibilities of a young, an adult, and an old person are different. And as far as man is concerned, who especially interests us of course, it is still clear that – from a life historical viewpoint – some possibilities have the tendency to become narrower, while others broaden and deepen.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1019b.

explicitly *absent*. With the “opportunity” of illness then health does not simply “perish” or disappear, but is actually absent, it gets into privation and with it, into possibility, that is, *dynamis*, and what is more, precisely by the *energeia* of illness, and its “primacy” as compared to the *dynamis*.

However, as a dynamic *steresis* that has reached the *energeia* – that is, as an *actus* which deprives health –, illness is something which places “back” health into the *dynamis*, and keeps it there according to the *entelecheia* of the illness. But meanwhile, harmed and absent, health is still preserved as a *dynamis*. Nevertheless, when the *energeia* of illness eliminates the *dynamis* of health – for example, in the case of incurable diseases – then this can probably be regarded as the *entelecheia* of illness as illness. These are the actual dangers and threats of illness for the living being, and the human being in particular.

This is a completely different kind of connection than the “relationship” of “health” and “illness”, and even more different than what is usually said about the “opposition” of health and illness as “opposing concepts”. For the relation of illness and health – understood primarily as *dynamis* and further organically articulated in the *energeia* and *entelecheia* by the tension of forces – refers back in fact to the essence, its articulations and connections, and through these to the *physis*. Because to cure and be cured – that is, making and becoming again healthy – is only possible for an ill person whose essence connected to the *physis* still possesses to some extent and in some way the possibility of health. That is to say, the ill person possesses the *dynamis* of the forces of health according to the *ousia* and the *physis*, the *dynamis* of health to the essential forces of which other

healing forces and the efforts of healing can still connect somehow in the interest of their *energeia*.<sup>1</sup>

There is Nothing we can understand about illness or *steresis* as long as – picking out things mechanically – we keep repeating that the essence of privation, *steresis*, or lack is “the essence standing opposite to it”.<sup>2</sup> As if the “substance” (sic!), the essence of illness would be health in general, in the privation, *steresis*, lack of which illness actually “exists”. Now, this would lead to that superficial and impossible idea that illnesses have no identity and essence of “their own”. However, one can see that living bacteria at least have their own particular being, and consequently also essence. Particular bacilli, fungi, viruses, parasites, etc. cause very well determined and outlined illnesses, with an articulateness, compactness, and complexity appropriate to their being, their essence. Secondly, however, this may also lead to that equally superficial claim that in order to “define” and understand illness, it suffices to “define” health, and “relate” it some way to its privation.

In fact, however, *steresis* is a *relation* in its own right, which concerns exactly the *ousia* and – evidently in its privative way and with its privative forces – rearticulates it over again, and modifies, while at the same time also mobilizes it.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding that all modifications of the *ousia* – and this is what we most often tend to forget! – are *essential*!

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<sup>1</sup> It is not by chance therefore that – even if the importance of thoughts is not completely understood (see for example Petr Kouba’s study on this issue) – that in his Zollikon seminars Heidegger explains illness, connecting directly to Plato and even more to Aristotle, as a *steresis*, privation, or lack-deficiency. Namely, he grasps illness as a privation, limitation, deficiency, and narrowing of human possibilities of being, and as such, human freedom. See Petr Kouba, “*Conceptualising Health and Illness*”, *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 39 (2008): 59–80; and Martin Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare, Protokolle – Gespräche – Briefe*, ed. Medard Boss (Frankfurt/M: Vittorio Klostermann Verlag, 1987), mainly 180–187.

<sup>2</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Let us not forget that Aristotle in his *Categories* leaves the question meaningfully open whether the *ousia*, the essence in the articulations of its categorial structure – primary, secondary, etc. – is not *relative* itself, just like any other category. See



**Octavian Cosman**, *Double Sun - Exodus*, 77 x 100 cm,  
oil on canvas on wood, 1996

That is to say, the modification which happens thus in the *ousia* by the *dynamis* of *steresis*, privation, is not in fact the change of an otherwise immovably and unchangeably concealed “essence” (“substance”) and its external relations with its “attributes” and “accidences”.

This way the *ousia* of health and illness is practically the same, because both illness and health form the possibilities of being of the same living being, which means that they are the theoretically undetermined *dynamis* of the living being by the *ousia* of the same living being. On the other hand, however, by the *energeia*, the *actualitas* of the *steresis*-like

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Aristotle, *Categories*, 8a. (Whereas it is also true that – as we have seen in a citation in a previous footnote – most Hungarian editions (too) translate the category of *ousia*, the essence, incorrectly and incomprehensibly, with the term “substance”).

*dynamis* of illness – actually in contrast to health –, an *ousia* rearticulated, modified, and brought thus to its own possibilities of being rests in fact in a *different constitution*. In a constitution which is different and new precisely as concerns the essence.

The sick person is of course not another person, notwithstanding he is a *different* person than he used to be while still healthy, and will be again when cured; he is *different* with regard to his being, possibilities of being, and the unfolding of his modes of being, as well as his limitations and their reflexivity. Therefore it is not about two different essences becoming almost unconnected, nor about two directly opposing hypostases of one and the same essence, but only about the fact that by the *ousia*, by its particular articulation, health and illness belong together, albeit in the indeterminacy of their oppositions, in the essential directions and meanings of their *energeia* and *entelecheia*.

The *ousia* of the living being according to the *physis* is that it can be both healthy and ill. That is to say, it is explicitly exposed to according to its own essence and its possibilities by the *physis*, as it is primarily and above all in continuous and challenging relations exactly in its connections according to the *ousia* and the *physis*, and as a particular being-here and being-human. These relations are the connections and relations of the *ousia* in the original and primal meaning of the *physis*.<sup>1</sup>

It is therefore not accidental that we humans perceive illnesses first in their particular nature – as an illness, as one or the other particular illness – but at the same time, and inseparably from the first, in the view of their

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<sup>1</sup> On the original meanings and senses of the *physis*, see for more details in the Chapter: “The Sacred, Or the Bright Sounds of Silence – A thinking-experiment on nature, related (and created) to Heidegger and Hölderlin”.



healing possibilities; that is to say, we grasp illnesses also with reference to health lacking in various ways.

In the *energeia* and *actualitas* of illness, health is withdrawn to the *dynamis*, in the same way as the being when healthy is threatened by the *dynamis* of illness in the *energeia* of health. In spite of this – let us emphasize it repeatedly – illness is by far not an absent health or health as an inarticulate absence, but it has a particular and determined constitution which conditions at the same time in its *energeia* the all-time *dynamis* and constitution of health. Since health is a different kind of possibility and is differently possible for each illness and each ill person, including as well its sheer impossibility, the possibility of the incurability of an illness, of the inability to restore health.

However, this only proves that in this context – ontologically, existentially, and in reality – the *steresis*, privation and absence are by far not connected merely or exclusively to illness, but health is Nothing else in fact than the *steresis* of illness, and as such, the *dynamis*, possibility of illness. Truly alive and motional health only exists thus when illness meanwhile stands and lurks in the horizon-like ground of the *ousia* and *physis*, in its own *dynamis* and possibility. Otherwise it would be completely unfounded or meaningless for us humans – while being healthy – to deal with the cultivation, further insurance, or preservation of health.

However, what is *absent* from the *energeia* of health and in a way also from the *energeia* of illnesses, is both *dynamis* and *eidos*, both possibility and appearance, as a *steresis*. What is absent is not therefore merely some empty, “conceptual” non-being. Since the *energeia* of illness renders the (absent) appearance of health being in *dynamis* as well as its new possibilities and impossibilities with regard to their appearance. This is also valid, of course, on the reverse, to health and human relation to health.

Because to endeavor to live a healthy life while being healthy, or to invent and apply vaccines, for instance, actually means Nothing else than endeavoring to discover and grasp the illnesses threatening as possibilities with regard to their known and projected appearance (*eidos*) and threatening possibilities (*dynamis*).

It should also be included that in the case of certain possibilities, for example, the *dynamis* of illnesses, we humans strive to repress or subdue them, to keep them in *steresis* and thus *dynamis*. In addition, we strive to cure illnesses, possible on the basis of our knowledge related to their *energeia* and *actualitas*, with our own *mode-of-being-like* nature and *factual existentiality*. We do not strive for it with the inarticulateness of mere indeterminacy, but as the encounter, actual, historical, and explicitly being-like, of the categorial, that is, always thematic meanings of human questioning and definite human questions and the all-time *possibilities* triggered by them.<sup>1</sup>

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These possibilities may even be the dangers and threats mentioned before! Because *danger* is primarily also a possibility, which is revealed thematically or athematically – directly as a possibility, that is, connected to its future or coming into being – as something that threatens us and

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<sup>1</sup> Nothing proves it better that we humans relate to the harsh and unavoidable, therefore uneliminatable “makings” of necessities and lawful matters than human history itself. For example, that the harsh and irrevocable earthly and universal rule and at the time being operating force of gravity, being in *energeia*, we humans use for “straightness” and the construction and safe operation of our ever higher buildings. And likewise, that we use this force and our historically shaping knowledge about it as well as our abilities for *observing the dynamis* necessary for lifting our aircrafts and spaceships up from the surface of the earth and operating them, and “applying” it as something utterly *possible* for calculating and putting them to work.

which on this account we should avoid or defeat. While the threat concerns our modes of being or our very life or being as the *particular possibility of deficiencies*.

Such a danger and such a threat for us is the possibility of illness, or illnesses. Which we beware or utterly *fear*, whether being healthy or already ill. However, human fear is not merely some “subjective” and floating “feeling” but an explicit and actual *experience*, which has the structure of questioning, or even challenge and ordeal. For this very reason, fear is not a mere rigidity or stiffness, but an experience, mobilizing and anticipatory at the same time, urging for awareness and circumspection. That is, one that would urge man to acknowledge and assume the pertaining essential question-structure of his experiences connected to illness and the fear from illness. Fear, therefore, and especially the fear from death, in its fundamental form – as Hobbes analyzed it profoundly and minutely in the *Leviathan*<sup>1</sup> – structures and constitutes the all-time historicity of human existence.<sup>2</sup> Because in illnesses and in our fear from illnesses we do not only fear the suffering they cause, nor the deficiencies or breakages of our possibilities of being, but – ultimately – death and its possibilities outlined and determined by illnesses.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Our more detailed and comprehensive analyses on Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* can be found in the volume *Kérdés-pontok a történelemhez, a halálhoz és a szabadsághoz* (Question-points to history, death, and freedom), in the *Excursus* entitled “Leviatán és az emberi dolgok” (Leviathan and the things of men) (Cluj-Napoca [Kolozsvár]: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2008), 47–75.

<sup>2</sup>Not only isolated human individuals, but also communities and civilizations stand in a permanent dialogue with fear, writes Jean Delumeau in his seminal study on the history of fear (in the West). See Jean Delumeau, *Frica în Occident (Secolele XIV-XVII) – O cetate asediată* (Fear in the West (14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century) – A Besieged Castle), vol. 1, (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1986), 7.

<sup>3</sup>Each illness proven to be incurable has its own definite and particular “mechanism”, way in which it ultimately causes the ill person’s death, and articulates its dying. These are different in the case of a stroke, AIDS, Alzheimer’s disease, etc. See Sherwin B.

The failure to admit it renders fully incomprehensible not only the ways and efforts of any kind of medicine – *recte*: medicine itself –, but all medical habits, rules, and regulations as well. Just like several types and forms of behaviour described by Boccaccio in the *Decameron*.

The *possibility* of illness and illnesses is therefore such a danger and threat to us, of which our previous analyses have hopefully proved that it is not “that kind of” possibility which can be understood, authentically and in its entire amplitude, while calculating or reckoning its “probabilities”. For, as we have mentioned before, “probability” is something that one particular illness may have only. In reality, however, without the possibility of illness outlined here and understood in an even more profound way, there is no life, and consequently there is no living being.

This does not mean of course that there is no health whatsoever, nor that by this illness might acquire some kind of “normality”. In a much deeper sense it is “only” that these “terms” are just as “problematic” as “illness” itself. The “problematic nature” of these “terms” is precisely and actually connected to the questions of *illness* no longer understood as a “terminology”. This is not so much a “terminological”, “logical”, or “epistemological” problem, but mainly an existential, historical, or ontological one, a “problematic” which cannot be exceeded with a view to eliminate it by, let’s say, the piling up of knowledge and the perfection of methodology. This problematic must be *clarified, understood, and assumed* amidst our ambitions and efforts directed against it. And this clarification, understanding, and assumption should ultimately be understood and perceived as possibilities.

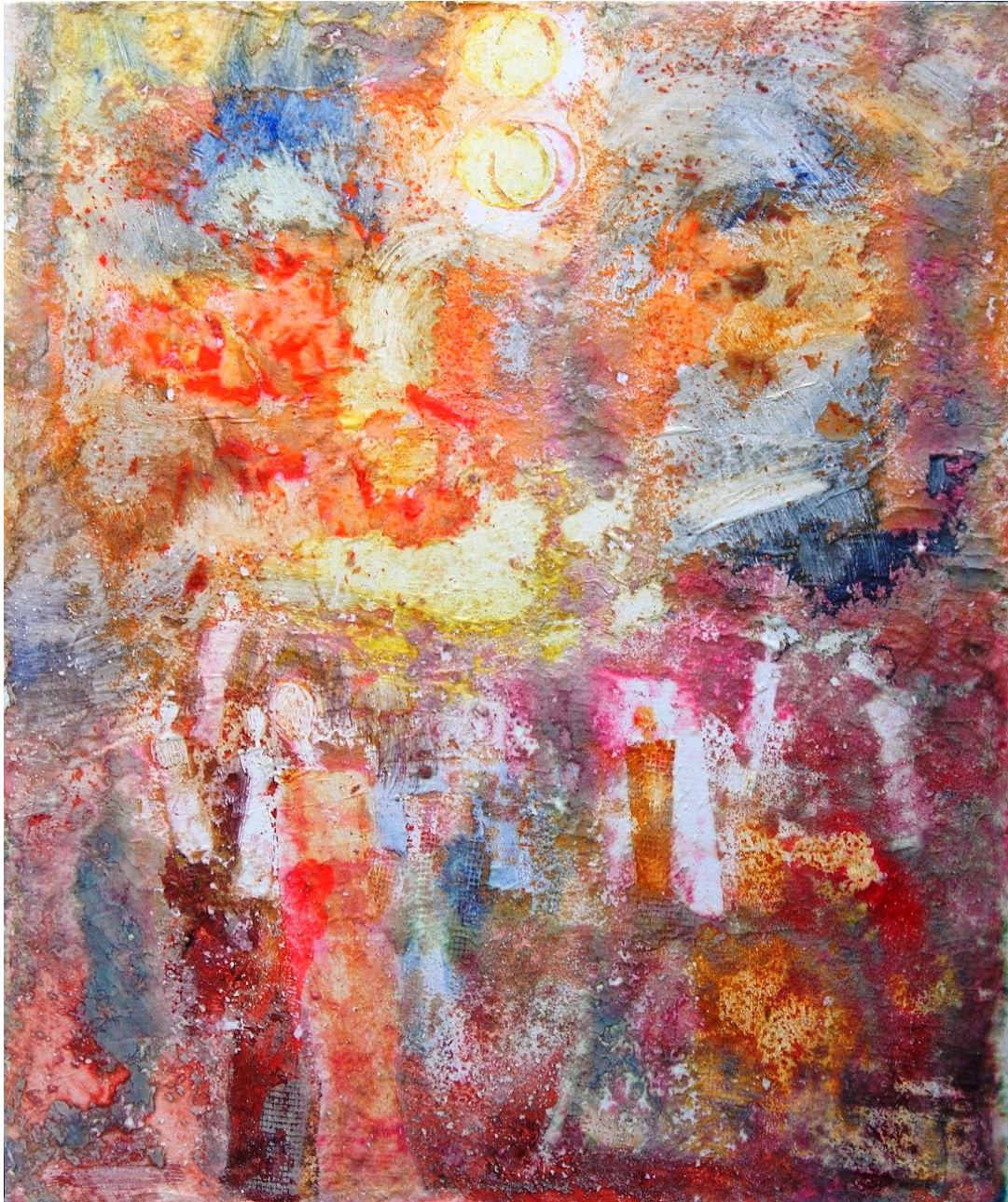
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Nuland, *How We Die – Reflexions on Life’s Final Chapter* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House Inc., 1995), 279.

A living organism can both be healthy and ill as a possibility. This is why Aristotle stresses that medical knowledge treats health and illness at the same time. Medical knowledge has therefore consideration both for the preservation of health and its regaining in front of illness, which the observing-researching activity of medical knowledge deals with and faces in fact with the aim of healing.

Illness itself – illness actualized, standing in *actus*, in *energeia* – is always a particular kind of *steresis*, a particular kind of privation or deficiency. However, it is never merely the privation of “health” – that is, of “health” outlined in a purely formal sense, as some kind of ideal state – but a living *deficiency* which concerns the living with regard to its own essence, and as such, to its fullness. More precisely, illness is actually the mode-of-being-like privation and deficiency of the *modes of being* of the living, their pursuance, and at the same time of the validation, the seizure of the possibilities of being of the living.

In an existential sense, that is, connected exclusively to man, to being-here, *deficiency* is always the privation of the *modes of being*, their world-like validation. These modes of being are, meanwhile, naturally and essentially, connected and related to possibilities, to their own *world-like* possibilities. They are related to the possibilities which are themselves not merely incidental “states”, but are organized as articulated mobility’s, in a particular horizon-like way which is always articulated as lively in, and together with, the world, and changes in “time”, that is, in history and in the “life history” as well. In the history and life history which is just as motional, changing, and alive as human modes of being themselves, which are widening, narrowing, or restructuring in this history or life history together with their likeness of being, world, and horizon.



**Octavian Cosman, *Sandy towns*. Mixed technique, 2015 – 2016**

In a sketchy formulation, “human modes of being” are particular manifestations and ways of procedures and conducts by which man situates, accomplishes, and pursues himself and his own existence as *historically* present, historically being-there. Moreover, man accomplishes



his own existence by perceiving and assuming the *present challenges* of his multiple relations and connections with being-here, with the other beings of his life, with other people.

That is to say, practically any human activity, from everyday caring activities, not to be neglected or despised, to the cultivation of sciences, technology, arts, religions, or philosophies, as well as the conception and operation of various institutions and organizations, can be regarded as man's particular mode of being. Therefore natural sciences, for example, are not merely collections of theories, formulas, and experiments piled up, enriched, and made more accurate in the course of time, but human modes of being. Natural sciences are precisely those modes of beings in which man and the being-here – the living being which discovers and researches these sciences in the questionability of the pursuance of its life – situates and outlines itself by these sciences within the more general and also questionable contexts of “nature”, while it also organically pertains to these natural contexts.<sup>1</sup>

It is also clear, nevertheless, that the deficiencies – being the deficiencies of the man's, the being-here's standing-in-the-world, its all-time situatedness, its own *possibilities of being*, inherent *modes of being*, and as such, originally, essentially problematic – are not merely raw “negativities” and “lacks” in a restricted sense, but on the contrary, since deficiencies essentially pertain to human existence, they also mobilize the living being called man. Of course, with respect to, and in the direction of its “given”, ongoing and outlined deficient modes of being in the first place, but also with respect to other modes of being as well. That is to say, deficiencies mobilize man to possibly transcend hindrances, fill out or eliminate lacks, shortcomings, or voids, or compensate or counterbalance

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<sup>1</sup> Even if this means the destruction of the things or states of nature.

privations. Furthermore, they explicitly mobilize the living being, since these only become visible, ponderable, and understandable in their actual significance, weight, and existential “roles” in the unavoidable challenges and overwhelming urges-provocations of the constitutive *negativities* of deficiencies.

Illness, therefore, as we have stressed before, is deficiency, *steresis*, privation, factually and explicitly referring to the possible wholeness, fullness of the always *possible* modes and possibilities of being of the human being, of being-here. This also means of course that human illness is always *reflexively* characterized by *also* concerning in a deficient and privative way those mode-of-being-like human possibilities by which the ill person, the ill being-here may refer to the *deficiencies* of its *own* possible modes of being.

However well an illness may be defined as one particular illness with a particular structure and “positivity”, it is never only one specific, determined, and outlined deficiency. Illness always *creates* a deficiency, a connection of deficiencies which is projected to the entirety of the ill person’s possibilities of being,<sup>1</sup> and as such, it *forms explicit existential deficiencies* also in the *possible reflexive relation of these deficiencies*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps enough to refer to the fact that even a “simple”, acute influenza fundamentally influences and modifies in a deficient sense not only the patient’s abilities for self-sufficiency, as well as his so-to-say “physical” possibilities and efficiency, but also his mental abilities, psychological dispositions, that is, the entirety of his modes, and therefore possibilities of being.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle’s example about the *ill physician* curing himself can of course only be interpreted with meaningful liveliness in this horizon. In the sense, that is, that even the ill physician – or the physician patient – needs someone who collects, prepares, and administers his “medicines”, who cares for him, even if it is not this caretaker but the ill physician who diagnosis himself, which sets in fact the treatment of the illness. So the fact that he is a physician, or that in this case he is his own physician, does not eliminate or modify at all that essential and fundamental situation that he is indeed ill, and as such, he is deficiently concerned in the possibilities of his own modes of being and the



Illness therefore brings into play the *possibility*, namely the possibilities of the being of the living, with regard to their becoming narrower, impeded, and restrained. Therefore illness, by its essence, narrows and restrains the abilities and life- and being-possibilities of the patient, and directly influences – being-like – the possibilities of the prevalence and pursuance of these. While it concerns and reorganizes his life, and his relation to the world, the living beings, being, and his own identity in this very sense and direction.

This is exactly what illness means as *suffering*, namely that it concerns and reorganizes the ill person precisely in its possibilities and abilities of beings, within them and in connection with them, on the one hand in a way that causes deficiencies and privations, and on the other hand with regard to the entirety, to the fullness of these possibilities and abilities. Suffering therefore does not only mean a merely “physical” suffering, even less merely pain, but the deficiency or the privation which as a tendency interweaves the possibilities of the sufferer’s modes of beings and the quality of these modes of being in their entirety.<sup>1</sup>

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possibilities of his mode-of-being-like relations or references to these. That is to say, he is impeded in a being-like and mode-of-being-like way.

<sup>1</sup> For the further emphasis of the above thoughts, one may turn once again to an Aristotelian example: that of the *blind* man. It is a handicap and an illness at the same time. As a handicap, blindness means the lack of seeing, the lack, privation, *steresis* of the possibility, *dynamis* of seeing. A blind man is a man of course, but one who lives while being deprived of this human possibility, of this ability essentially pertaining to the human race, a privation which is also possibility – since we have seen that *steresis*, privation is also *dynamis*. This very well *determined*, “outlined” deficiency however does not only deprive him of the experience of seeing, orientation, perceiving distance or colors, etc., but it also sets back his possibilities of motion, transportation, orientation, etc. Let alone that it also deprives him of access to several accomplishments of human culture, such as visual arts or the art of film, etc. While blindness – just like any kind of handicap – also causes permanent *stress*, which will then attack, sooner or later, the person’s immune system, blood circulation, and nervous system as well. Nevertheless, the handicap of blindness as an illness becomes something which should be studied. The research may reveal that there are several kinds of blindness formed by

Illness concerns and influences therefore in the first place the scope of possibilities of the ill person's modes of being, world, and being-in-the-world explicitly as deficiencies. By this, the *world* of the patient also becomes narrower. But it also reorganizes and restructures. In what other directions and in what senses beyond those mentioned?

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So far we have discussed illness primarily as the possibility of the living being, of life. That is to say, as a possibility which pertains to the essence of life to such an extent that it actually takes place in the natural and historical outlining and articulation of life. The man, the being-here however, as repeatedly proposed before, relates to illnesses – and not merely human illnesses – in a medical way, or in ways determined by a perspective which could be regarded as medical. However, it should be repeated over and over again, the ways of this relation are themselves also the determined modes of being of the man, the being-here.

We are speaking precisely about the modes of being in which the man, the being-here relates to illnesses from the perspective of their *possible* observation, *possible* cognition, *possible* prevention, *possible* treatment or soothing, or *possible* healing. But which modes of being – as was also discussed at the beginning of this research – do not exhaust the varied “entirety” of man's possible relations to illness, nor the full depths of the weight of their being. Just as they do not exhaust, of course, the

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various irregular factors. As it may also be revealed that in certain “types” of blindness the diminution or complete elimination of blindness can also be *possible*.

*meanings* of this “situatedness” – namely, illnesses – and the relations and references to these.

Nonetheless, now one can understand more profoundly *what is the essence* of these specifically human relations and connections to illness. One can perhaps understand more deeply that the essence of man’s particular relation to illnesses and especially his own illness is precisely that in these mode-of-being-like relations he reveals illnesses for himself as “problematic possibilities” which *essentially* pertain to his own *being* in such a way that meanwhile they threaten with *deficiencies* the being- and mode-of-being-like possibilities of the pursuance of this kind of being.

These possibilities are *continuously* outlined for the man and by his being, primarily as questionable and challenging possibilities, or from the point of view of possibility, that is, as the possibilities of their possible prevention, healing, soothing, reception and acceptance, or possible assuming.

This is what usually happens with palliative medicine, in relation to incurable illnesses, and patients suffering of such illnesses, possibly already being in its “terminal phase”. The *actualitas, energeia* of illnesses and the various kinds of deficiencies created by them urge the man precisely for assuming these as essential possibilities. That is to say, illnesses urge us to perceive and assume them first as possibilities of being which threaten man’s all-time possibilities of being with deficiencies and privations with regard to their entirety. So the specificity of the possibility of illness and of illness as a possibility is the following: illness is the threatening and *also alive* possibility, essentially pertaining to life itself, of the deficiencies of living or pursuing one’s life.

We are speaking about the challenging possibilities of deficiencies which, however, explicitly and factually *turn man towards himself*. Illness

is therefore such a living possibility which is, on the one hand, a possibility of deficiencies constitutive for life, while on the other hand it is essentially *reflexive* as a living human possibility. And as such, illness is also a possibility which constructs, shapes, articulates, and changes life itself. It may suffice to think of the long-lasting and always renewing medieval epidemics of plague and smallpox, which could not be stopped, nor cured at that time. And which, on this account, immunologically and biologically reorganized and restructured the entire mankind attacked by them. Since these diseases were only survived by those “rare” individuals – and only they could further “reproduce” then – who had already had some resistance against those bacteria, and who could transmit this resistance to their descendants. These descendants “reorganized” mankind in matters of immunity and resistance both in terms of population, and also biologically. However, the epidemics did not only reshape mankind in a biological way, but also socially and mentally. They had their effects also about the appearance or stricter observation of regulations and institutions of public hygiene, demographic registries, etc.

Illness therefore, just like the possibility of illness, refers to man, regards man, and pertains to man. It does not only concern the human body, the human soul, or the human mind. The person is ill in his personal existential entirety, in the fullness of his being-in-the-world, and with regard to his own modes of life and being, and the entirety of the possibilities of these modes of being. While of course the possible world of the ill person is constituted and outlined precisely in this particular way. The world in which he in this particular way – as being ill – meets other people, whether ill or healthy.

Illness as a possibility is therefore the also living possibility of the deficiency of life, which at the same time forms the *mode-of-being-like*

deficiencies of the ill person's possibilities and abilities of life and being. This however – taking a step further – also means that illness is particularly *that deficiency*, that challenge of being and existential questionability which – in the particularly human, being-here-like relation and reference to it – founds, while at the same time also surfaces the possibility and all-time actuality of medical science. Since “medical science” exists, and we humans cultivate it with laboriously and perhaps also dangerously *as our own mode of being*, because on the one hand illnesses exist and are always possible, and on the other hand because we relate to them in our particularly human ways, repeatedly outlined before. Our relation to illnesses is thus directly in the science and in the practice which never perceives them in their mere *energeia, actualitas*, but always considers them determined possibilities, threatening in the future.

Possibilities however mostly become visible by deficiencies, or their unavoidable challenges. Possibilities furthermore become explicitly assumable in their overwhelming questionability by the deficiencies, moreover in an actually pursued searching questioning, direct and taken to the end. Medical science does not grasp possibilities in their given “reality”, but together with the search of their possible treatments, soothing's, and healing. This is about the research of treatments which are outlined themselves as possibilities in this research. Possibilities which in there determined situatedness can develop just as well as they can be stranded. Nonetheless, they cannot disappear as possibilities only together with the disappearance of medicine – that is, of the man in general.

Only now can we see indeed that in the everyday's of “health” and “normality”, health is usually something that we have not looked at yet, consequently we haven't seen it. In the everyday's of “health” and “normality”, health is usually still *very far from us*. And again, only now

can we see indeed that primarily and mostly health becomes visible precisely in, and by, the deficiencies of illness, namely, as that which, while being absent, has become something distanced. And which, therefore, must be brought back somehow, by special effort, to a new proximity, made visible in its essentiality.

Health itself appears and becomes visible in the deficiencies of illness as something that must be reclaimed from the respective deficiency of life, of being-here. This “reclaim” “happens”, on the one hand, precisely by the *possible* healing or curing of the illness; or, on the other hand, by the searching outline and settling of this curing or healing as a future *possibility*. These are possibilities or requirements which require themselves, and urge to, adequate researching-developmental efforts.

Therefore illnesses, just like the particular modes of being of human reactions to them, are essentially *historical*. On the one hand, in the sense that new or previously unknown illnesses always appear or may appear. For example, new kinds of viruses or virus mutations, or unknown illnesses generated by new circumstances occurring historically in people’s world, life conditions, or ways of life.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, however, with the development of sciences and medicine in particular, and its effects on general life conduct, some illnesses are gradually superseded in wide areas, while some others previously considered incurable will eventually have some remedy.

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Illness as a possibility of the living being – let us repeat – is itself a living possibility which, consequently, living within the ill person, *lives together*

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, new illnesses which have appeared lately, due to the wide use of computers.

*with the ill person*, and vice versa. Evidently in such a way that meanwhile the illness diminishes or forays the possibilities of the ill person's modes of life and being.

The ill person is alive of course, but he *lives together* with his illness. Furthermore, the ill person lives at the same time *against* his illness, or directly in spite of it. Illness therefore reorganizes, changes the life of the person who lives together with it and despite it at the same time.<sup>1</sup>

One must very clearly see and admit, without denial and obscurity, the basic circumstance that precisely by the presence of illness in life, proven to be essential, it is not merely "health", but *life itself* that begins to show itself, ever more unavoidably, in its reality, its *trueness*, its *actuality* and weight. Life begins to show itself in illness in its actuality and its own weight ever more undeniably, unavoidably, and factually challenging way as something essentially, originally, and constitutively *finite*! Or more accurately: *mortal*!

So, although illness can by no means be regarded as something which may "autonomously" constitute some kind of meaning for life, illness is nevertheless such a mode of being for man, or such a deficiency of modes and possibilities of being by which we humans can *clarify* for ourselves the origins, sources, "nature", weights, perspectives, and possibilities *even of meanings*. Illness is a particular way of the encounter with life, pertaining essentially to life, with help of which one may clarify those origins and sources of meaning which may ultimately only derive from the finiteness, or more accurately mortality of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> Diabetes for instance is a kind of disease which requires the introduction of a completely new system of nutrition, as well as the acceptance and observance of a new order of treatment and life for the patient, which "he can live with". But in perspective the diabetes, with all this, and in spite of all this, still shortens the life of the patient. It leads to his *death*, and partakes in the concretization – its How? and When? – and actual "causation" of this death.

Illness is therefore by no means some kind of arbitrary “attribute”, nor is it merely a “state” of life and the living, which “falls into” it, but an explicitly essential mode of being, only possible as such. Since illness as a possibility is Nothing else than the possibility of the deficiencies of possibilities of being and life, and abilities of being and life.

Illness is such an essential and particular possibility therefore which concerns *possibility* precisely in *its own*, essential, and intimate *deficiencies*. By this, however, illness – especially in this deficient and threatened meaning – turns *back* the possibility *reflexively towards itself*. And it is exactly in this possibility returned towards itself, in the tensions of its deficiencies triggered, created, and represented by the illness that the fundamental questions connected to meanings appear or at least may appear. The questions which have never emerged before, or which have been overshadowed, or always postponed. But these questions, if being further questioned for clarifications, may reveal and outline “new” meanings and “new” possibilities. For the ill person just as much as for those with whom he meanwhile sets up “specific” human relations. (Even if these new and different possibilities – for example, in the case of dementias, that is, the gradual, but complete loss of selfsameness or selfness – will only exist for those around the ill person. For them, dementia will appear as the *threatening and prospective, yet possible mode of their own being!*)

Illness therefore – at least by the deficiencies of the ill person’s possibilities of being – isolates, while at the same time it also presupposes, necessitates, and makes possible indeed the building of new, determined, and particularly human, being-here-like relations. Since, being turned towards himself because of his illness, the patient finds himself in the situation that he must ask for the support and care of others. While others



turn towards the patient, taking care of him, helping and curing him, they can perceive *his illness* as something “given”, as a privation, standing in *energeia*, in *actus*, but at the same time also as a possibility. They can perceive it as a possibility which – *beyond* that particular patient, that particular being-here who *actually* suffers in it – *can* also attack *others*, *can* reach others, the *caretaker and healer themselves* included!

This is precisely the most essentially and particularly characteristic kind of utterly human relation to the possibilities of illness. That is to say, the human being relates – or at least may relate – to the possibilities of illness while experiencing them, understanding them, and *assuming* them as *its own possibilities*, as the privative possibilities of its own, determined, articulated deficiencies.

In contrast, the non-human living beings – although “disposing” in their being of illnesses as a being-like possibility essentially pertaining to their lives – cannot relate to them otherwise than states and processes formed as facts, which are decided only and exclusively in their sheer living being, its parameters, and together with their lives.<sup>1</sup>

Illness and its possibility therefore does not turn “back” the ill person, nor the people, the beings-here with whom he had determinedly articulated personal contacts as a patient, nor the human being “as such” towards a kind of “health” to be preserved and taken care of, or restored and reclaimed! But illness, facing and assuming it, turns us humans first towards life “as such” – and thus towards the *physis* of course –, then

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<sup>1</sup> For example, if in case of animals their natural systems of self-defense and instincts prove to be inefficient against illnesses, then the need for human – e.g., veterinary – intervention emerges. Or for plants the intervention of the agronomist. Without these, however, neither animals nor plants have any kind of defense system. Their “fate” connected to the diseases attacking them can only be decided within the framework of these facts of their lives. Or, *perspectively* perhaps, by the new chances offered by evolution and its possible consequences for the species.

towards the questions, challenges, stakes, and chances of the *possible meanings* of our lives. It turns us towards those questionable possible meanings which may derive and prevail exactly from the uniquely and unrepeatable – that is, mortally – constituted experience and understanding of this human, being-here-like life, of this living-being. Ultimately therefore both human illness and its possibility turns us humans towards being and the question of being, as towards a question being-like pertaining to our being.

It is only because of these – equally ontological and existential – foundations that medical science deals not only with illness, with being ill, and specific illnesses, and not only with health, but also with *death*. Because illness represents, surfaces, and makes visible, as well as assumable and clarified by questioning the weights, stakes, and possible meanings and significance of the constitutive *finiteness* of life in general and human lives in particular, and of *death*. Illness therefore clarifies the always possible, and as such, always problematic meaning of human life as well. It is not by chance that we Hungarians call the illnesses which threaten the patient exactly in his “life”: “weighty” (meaning: serious). Those which threaten the patient precisely with *his own death*.

For “immortals” however illnesses, suffering, or their soothing, caretaking, or healing could have no weight or stake whatsoever. So such things would serve “for them” as no kinds of sources of meaning. Consequently amongst them – besides many other things – medicine could not be discovered. Therefore the ultimate origin and source of all kinds of illnesses proves to be life, the constitutive and essential *finiteness* of any life. Since the living being, its life can only be disturbed and threatened by anything at all, and particularly by something like illness, because it is theoretically and essentially finite.

Now, as far as man is concerned – that is, we ourselves – his living being-here is characterized and particularized by his not simply being “finite”, but actually a *mortal*. More precisely, it is characterized not only by the fact that he dies, but that he *may become* a mortal, exclusively in the unique unrepeatability of the pursuance of his existence, of his life.<sup>1</sup> It may become a mortal in his unrepeatable uniqueness (individuality) which can only be understood as being-like and gained by assuming the multiple *possibilities* of *our own* mortal life. This means the understanding and clarifying assuming of the possibilities to which illness also explicitly pertains in an essential, dangerous, and threatening way.

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Here are, to conclude, some possible and possibly very *particular* directions, meanings, and hopefully also results of those which we humans can only and exclusively raise for, and in the interest of, our possible – both ontological and existential – horizons of meaning and possibilities of being by a *sui generis* and explicitly *philosophical and well outlined thematization and questioning* about illness, and human illnesses in particular.

**Translated by Emese Czintos**

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<sup>1</sup> On the question and subject of death, for more detailed and profound analyses of the ontological, existential, and historical horizons of death, see mainly the study entitled *A meghalásról* (On dying) in the volume István Király V., *Halandóan lakozik...*, 9–206., and the chapters and studies of the volume István Király V., *Kérdés-pontok ...* .

## CHAPTER VI

### Euthanasia, Or Death Assisted to (Its) Dignity

***Motto:***

*“The person who really loves me  
will be the one who helps me die”.*

**Dialogue from Alejandro Amenábar’s motion  
picture entitled *The Sea Inside (Mar Adentro)*.**

#### **I. *Obstacle’s* of thinking about euthanasia**

Already in its original meaning the Greek term of “euthanasia” meant “good death”. However, the way in which people conceived death, or what they regarded at all as death, or especially “good” death, has changed continuously throughout the ages, cultures, and civilizations. To begin with, in Greek culture and philosophy, for instance, one of the basic and almost constant meanings of philosophy or philosophizing was the *meléte thanátou*, the actual practice of preparing oneself for a dignified death. This also renders the meaning of “good death” as it was understood by the Greeks. In spite of this the Hippocratic Oath forbade even at that time the active participation of the physician in ending one’s life.

In opposition to this, Christianity seems to refrain from its very beginnings from conceiving of any kind of “good death”. The primary reason for this is probably not even the fact that it would reject the attachment of any kind of positive attribute – the attribute of goodness – to

something as utterly negative as death. Much rather, the reason is that in Christian mentality death is implicitly and *sui generis* connected to the original sin, and therefore it is indeed impossible to relate it to any qualities of “good-ness”. According to Old Testament Judaism and later Christianity, the “certain” death springs from sin, and it is Nothing else than the payment, the punishment for sin. Thus it cannot possibly be anything that should be made better or easier.

Consequently, it is not so much the inner negativity of the act of dying, but rather its state of punishment which induces Christianity to essentially and *a priori* reject euthanasia. At any rate, this induces it more directly than, say, its convictions related to the sacred, divine origin of life or its reverence, as Christianity itself has eliminated quite some “lives” in the course of time, or even today any civilized Western army hardly ever marches into a war – that is *killing* – without the reassuring assistance of the camp ministers.

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It has become a bibliographical commonplace by now that the Greek word *euthanasia* was first used in early modernity in a medical-healing context by a philosopher, the Englishman Sir Francis Bacon in his study *The Knowledge of Man's Body*, where he formulated his personal opinion that a physician's task is not merely to restore health, but also to ease one's passage from life when the time has come. This is stated also in the title of a subchapter of this book: *De euthanasia exterior*, which is distinguished, *within brackets*, from the spiritual preparation (preparation of the Soul) for

death, for dying.<sup>1</sup> But why did Bacon use the Greek word *euthanasia* in a text originally written in Latin when there had already been several books

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<sup>1</sup> See: Lord Bacon's Essay Continued in Twenty Seven Chapters Translated from this Lordship's Treatise De Augmentis Scientiarum. By William Willmott, Volume the Second, London, 1720. p. 209-210 (<http://books.google.ro/books?id=ry8CAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA209&dq=Francia+Bacon+Euthanasia&hl=ro&sa=X&ei=VzVzT8-QPMfVsgbrynrDQ&ved=0CFoQ6AEwBw#v=onepage&q&f=false>) (Downloaded 30 March 2012) and even more precisely: *De euthanasia exteriore* : "Nay further, I esteem it the office of a physician not only to restore health, but to mitigate pain and dolours; and not only when such mitigation may conduce to recovery, but when it may serve to make a fair and easy passage: for it is no small felicity which Augustu Caesar was wont to wish to himself, that same Euthanasia; and which was specially noted in the death of Antoninus Pius, whose death was after the fashion and semblance of a kindly and pleasant sleep. So it is written of Epicurus, that after his disease was judged desperate, he drowned his stomach and senses with a large draught and ingurgitation of wine; whereupon the epigram was made, Hinc Stygias ebrius hausit aquas; he was not sober enough to taste any bitterness of the Stygian water. But the physicians contrariwise do make a kind of scruple and religion to stay with the patient after the disease is deplored; whereas, in my judgment, they ought both to enquire the skill and to give the attendances for the facilitating and assuaging of the pains and agonies of death." In Francis Bacon, *Selected Writings*, with an introduction and notes by Hugh G. Dick (New York, The Modern Library & Random House, 1955), Book 2, 277–278. and: "... etiam plane censeo ad officium medici pertinere, non tantum ut sanitatem restituat: verum etiam ut dolores et cruciatus morborum mitiget: neque id ipsum solummodo, cum illamitigatio doloris, veluti symptomatis periculosi, ad convalescentiam faciat et conducatur; imo vero cum abjecta prorsus omni sanitatis ipse, excessum tantum praebeat e vita magis lenem et placidum. Siquidem non parva est felicitas pars (quam sibi tantopere precari solebat Augustus Cesar) illa euthanasia; quae etiam observata est in excessum Antonius Pius, quando non tam mori videretur, quam dulci et alto sopore excipi. Scribitur etiam de Epicuro, quod hoc ipsum sibi procuraverit: cum enim morbus ejus haberetur pro desperato, ventriculum et sensus, meri largiore hausto et ingurgitatione obruit; unde illud in Epigrammate: Hinc Stygias ebrius haustit aquas (vino felicitet stygii laticis amaritudinem sustulit). At nostris temporibus, medicis quasi religio est, aegrotis, postquam deplorati sint, affidere; ubi meo judicio, si officio suo atque adeo humanitati ipsi deesse nolint, et artem edificare et intelligentiam praestare deberunt, quam animam agentes, facilius et mitius e vita demigrent. Hanc autem partem, inquisitionem de euthanasie exteriori (ad differentiam ejus euthanasia quae animae preparationem respicit) appellamus, eamque inter desiderata reponimus." Source: Francisci Baconi, Baronis de Verulamio, *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum dans Novum Organum* (1623), Wirceburgi, Jo. Jac. Stahel, (1779), 292–294, <http://books.google.ca/> (source: <http://agora.qc.ca/thematiques/mort.nsf/Dossiers/Euthanasie> Terminologie: Francis Bacon, (downloaded 30 March 2012), and Ian Dowbiggin, *A Concise History of Euthanasia: Life, Death, God, and Medicine* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Maryland, 2007), 23–24.

written in Latin, and also translated into other languages, about the Christian meanings and “practices” of “good death” (*mors bona*) and the art of dying (*Ars moriendi*)?

Most importantly, Bacon must have tried to emphasize the human-bodily as well as the medical aspects of things and thoughts connected to this issue, focusing meanwhile not so much on the questions of a Christian’s preparation for death, but on the actual problems, pains, sufferings of dying. Also, possibly with regard to the fact that in matters of dying and agony the ruling Christian mentality of the age was not so much interested in the sufferings of the dying person but much rather by the fact that, as a result of “constitutive” human weaknesses, these pains and sufferings can be a doorway for the workings of the devil. Who, of course, is lurking, ready for action, especially in real moments of crisis, such as dying. These must be fended off by appropriate, step-by-step practices, in order to reach salvation, which is highly dependable on the events of the last moments before one’s death.<sup>1</sup>

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It is also true however, that “euthanasia” was used in the Nazi Germany as an excuse for unimaginable genocides. That is, in this country the mentally or physically disabled people or those suffering from degenerative illnesses were simply gassed in the name of “euthanasia” and in reference to “racial hygiene”,<sup>2</sup> as “lives without life-value”. This is why Germans are still reluctant today to call the subject of this paper “euthanasia” in their own language, choosing to use the term *Sterbehilfe*, or more precisely *aktives Sterbehilfe* instead.

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<http://books.google.ro/books?id=CNigO7gMGkUC&pg=PA23&lpg=PA23&dq=euthanasia+and+Francis+Bacon&source=bl&ots=Q2vOF69Ei5&sig=wqOR8gNiWYVZPZz5PWQv5> (downloaded 30 March 2012)

<sup>1</sup> It may suffice to mention: *Ars Moriendi ex variis scripturarum sententiis collecta cum figuris ad resistendum in mortis agone diabolicae sugestioni*, ed.. Johan WEISSENBURGER, (Landshut, 1514). <http://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0001/bsb00011658/images/FIDES> Digital Library <http://digital.fides.org.pl/Content/525/page1.html> (downloaded 5 April 2012), or a Hungarian edition, Frances M. M. Comper, ed., *Ars Moriendi: A meghalás művészete*, trans. László Virág (Budapest: Arcticus, 2004). Both of these clearly prove that the primary stake of the Christian care for dying – or, more precisely, the dying person – is to fend off the “suggestions”, temptations of the devil, and nothing else!

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Philippa Foot, “Euthanasia,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2 (1977): 85–112.

Presumably it is because of similar reasons that the Hungarian language also bewares of the term “euthanasia” and in its stead uses the term “gracious death”, much more condescendingly than the German *Sterbehilfe*. An expression, that is, the meaning of which, instead of validating certain ontological situations or contingent “rights”, explains such a death – such dying – as a benign and condescending practice of some kind of “grace”... However, the situation is quite similar in English as well, as shown by the term *mercy killing*, which also denotes something merciful, gracious, or an act of benefaction – and what is more, it also means “killing”...

These terminological inconsistencies, groping hesitations and ambiguities are in fact very telling in their own ways. They betray the fact that, despite the ancient, original, and universal nature of the phenomenon of death, we people have failed to face from the very beginning the serious and manifold possible complexity of death’s particular potentiality and its also particular pertinence to us, people. This situation is probably the explanation of the fact that we hardly have any **words** even today to express and conceive of that what the ancient Greek name of euthanasia tried to paraphrase. This happened even then in multiple directions, because of which the term still stands in the wide and contradictory polyvalence of its history, so much so that it is almost impossible to attribute some kind of deep and particularly outlined meaning to it.

The major problem apparently is that in our languages any kind of “privation” from “life” mostly, directly, and simply qualifies as “killing”. And the term “killing” primarily means “the act of killing” in reference to a generally understood human or even *animal* “life”...<sup>1</sup> With no regard

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *A magyar nyelv történeti-etimológiai szótára* (Hungarian Language Dictionary of Historical Etymology), ed. Benkő Loránd (Budapest, 1967).



whatsoever to any kinds of circumstances – for instance, the quality of life, etc.

Clearly, under such conditions, euthanasia, despite all its endeavors to goodness, inevitably remains only a kind of “killing”, that is, a kind of negativity and negation which is related to the indissoluble negativity which dying is to us. In this way euthanasia – inevitably and necessarily – seems something which hurries to present itself in a deceitful and definitely suspicious way as a kind of “good killing”!

Nonetheless, the penury of language always hides the penuries of existence and, naturally, of thinking! That is, it hides existential and historical insufficiencies, more precisely, the insufficiencies which occur in a man’s *history of existence* as he faces his own mortality and death. In fact, it grasps and formulates in a most radical and serious way precisely the Heideggerian statement that the man is still not a mortal even now and even today, although his life is finite, so he always dies. Actually, what is primarily implied here is the fact that in the course of millennia the man has mostly thought of (his) mortality or (his) death without considering his own dying.

Therefore, the reason why we have *no words in our languages* by which we can conceive of “euthanasia” in a serious, open, and indeed consistent way is that we are still lacking the essential conception of the act of dying – the factual finiteness of human life! It is by this that we humans – that is, “conscious” beings with a finite life – could actually *enable* for ourselves our (doubtless) mortality, (our) death, and especially (our) dying.

In spite of this people generally still think of death as a kind of usually confusing termination of life. That is, as the end of life. It is only in this aspect that there is any sense in speaking about a “good death”, of something, that is, which is supposed to end a “good life” in a “good” way,

or which, by its peculiar kind of **pertinence to life** (by the very ending of it) deserves some kind of special attention. And which, therefore, can or must be “good” in itself, in its own nature.

However, as far as the recent **actuality** of the problematic theme of euthanasia is concerned, it is multiple even today. The most ostentatious is in this case too the fashion- and journalism actuality of the subject. We see almost daily that the yellow press and all kinds of “media” strenuously pick up, as if in a campaign, all the cases of and references to euthanasia, about which, certainly, all mentalities and the representatives of all the institutions and organizations “embodying” them express their irrevocable and unfailing standpoints and declarations. However, the mediocre voices of all these standpoints also intrude into the theory of the question, to such an extent that they usually define and outline it.<sup>1</sup>

Still, this is not why we are interested here and now in the problem of euthanasia. But, simply and concisely, re-emphasizing the problem in a first person singular form: *I am interested in the subject of euthanasia because I know and fear myself to be mortal, and naturally those too, who stand close to, or on the contrary, quite far from me!* Primarily this is why, *as far as possible*, I wish to understand the problem and subject of euthanasia, which, I repeat, is not one “outside” me, but one which belongs into my world as a heavy and oppressing *potentiality*.

Then, because of this, the expression “as far as possible” used above should be understood literally, as it supposed to mean that I will try to grasp my death or death in general as a particular, yet at the same time

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<sup>1</sup> One of the most telling examples in this respect is Raphael Cohen-Almagor’s book: *Euthanasia in the Netherlands: The Policy and Practice of Mercy Killing* (Boston, Dordrecht, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 195.

effective **possibility**, pertinent to myself and my world, by the possibility and challenges of euthanasia.

## **II. Thinking and inquiring euthanasia...**

In fact, euthanasia itself is, above all, a *possibility*. As such, and as all possibilities: it is *questionable*. That is, euthanasia should not only be accounted for as only a “potentiality” or “virtuality”, an accidental, yet actual “possibility”... but it is essentially questionable, as a consequence of its particularly outlined potential nature; or rather: it actually is a *question*, what is more: an *existential question*!

But, in the end, *whose* question is the question of euthanasia? Who else's could it possibly be than the mortal man's? That is: whose question could the question of euthanasia possibly be than that of the being who, while existing, questions himself, his own existence – and thus necessarily his own death as well – **by** this question? And who, because of this, by the peculiar problematic nature of death, discloses outlines, weighs and sketches for himself the questionable possibility of euthanasia. I repeat: expressedly **as a question**.

There are several reasons why the case of euthanasia has only recently – mainly after the Second World War – become an unavoidable center of interest. It was exactly this period when the circumstances of the ending of people's lives – *recte*: their *dying* – have considerably changed. Primarily, due to the development and spreading of medical care and public sanitation, in parallel with the increase of general living standards, the people's average life expectancy has considerably increased. Additionally, there have been important changes in the reasons of dying as well as the structure and ways of dying. While in the 1940s most people died as victims of acute illnesses or accidents, today the major reason of the death

of most people in the civilized countries is chronic, that is, long-lasting and evolving-degenerative illnesses,<sup>1</sup> which, naturally, also influence the quality and dignity of aged people's lives. Thus, for instance, the reason for half of the suicides of people in their 50's, and 70% of the suicides of people in their 70's has been identified to be the suffering caused by chronic diseases, and the loss of any kind of perspectives and dignity connected to it.<sup>2</sup>

As a consequence to all this, recently *dying itself* has increasingly become the focus of thinking, mentality and care about death. More precisely, the focus is on *how* and *when* we/people die? These questions are entangled into more and more emphatic and unavoidable challenges for all the traditional modes of dealing with death,<sup>3</sup> including their dominance defined mainly by mentality. This shows in fact the extent to which traditions in their actual novelty are able and willing to accept the "bio-ethical", medical, deontological, and especially "thanatological" problems occurring in this way, and again, to radically rethink the problem of death urged or compelled by these traditions.

Euthanasia – as mentioned above – is primarily, still, a possibility. A possibility, which is particularly articulated within the particularly human

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<sup>1</sup> See: Rommel W Meckelprang and Rommel D. Meckelprang, "Historical and Contemporary Issues in End-of-Life Decisions: Implication for Social Work," *Social Work* 50 (Oct. 2005): 315–325.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The discussions connected to euthanasia and "medically assisted" suicide became harsher following the legalization in 1997 of the "medically assisted suicide" in the state of Oregon, and in 2002 the acceptance of euthanasia in the Netherlands and Belgium. The analysis of the application and effects of these laws is going on today, in parallel with possibilities of extending it to, e.g., incurable diseases which cause unbearable suffering and certain death, to infants born with serious handicaps, and to underage children. Moreover, the jurisdiction of the European Union prioritizes the harmonization of national laws on euthanasia with the European laws in formation. See also: Sissel Johansen, Jacob Chr. Holen, Stein Kaasa, Jon Havard Loge, and Lars Johan Matersvedt, "Attitudes toward, and wishes for, euthanasia in advanced cancer patients at a palliative medicine unit," *Palliative Medicine* 19 (2005): 454–460.

and present – at the same time ontological and existential – possibility and potentiality of death. Meaning, in the late Heideggerian terminology, that euthanasia is exactly one of the particular, determined, and factual possibilities of “*becoming a mortal*”.

As such, obviously euthanasia is primarily a possibility connected directly to *dying* itself. And “within” this, to *how* and – indirectly – to *when* do we die? Thus not even the mere name of euthanasia can be conceived without the conception of a thematic *anticipation* of (one’s own) death – or, more precisely, dying. Actually, euthanasia articulates Nothing else than *death pertaining to the dying person as his own*, usually together with its whole, seriously and effectively oppressive and problematic nature.

Hence euthanasia is a disputed possibility. The most common debates primarily concern various ethical (including also deontological) and ideological, and in strong connection to these, legal and political issues,<sup>1</sup> often in a philosophical approach. However, the exclusively ontological-existential approaches are almost completely missing.

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<sup>1</sup> The politicians of the legislative bodies are in fact always dependent not only on the automatic constraints of their own ideological convictions, but also on the prejudices of *public opinion* – manipulated by all kinds of influences and continuously determining the results of elections – which they mostly have to take into consideration. However, it is important to be aware of the fact that this public opinion is actually completely prone to change and formation. The opinions of public opinion do not spring from themselves, but they are cultivated and bred! It is this kind of breeding of opinion in which the public ideas are formed and thrive according to which the possibility of euthanasia is a kind of – naturally “unnatural”, “superficial”, and “intolerable” – liberty in relation to the ways of dying similar to the naturalness of the liberty with which people choose, say, the street-car that they take... “Naturally”, no word is spoken about the fact that – as opposed to street-cars – death cannot be chosen or changed, nor transferred... The only thing which could be chosen to some extent is the way it should happen... But even so the well-bred public opinion usually pictures euthanasia as if it meant that, let’s say, on gloomy Sunday afternoons the people more depressed than usual are assisted in a nearby euthanatological bistro to pass over all the difficulties of life for a reasonable price or directly as a social insurance service... However, despite all this, the surveys frequently show that the decisive majority of people support some modality of euthanasia.

Nevertheless, it is quite problematic to see from the very beginning the extent to which these ethical, deontological, ideological and political approaches are aware of *their own* original and ontological *determination* by death. Even more problematic it is, however, to see in what degree they acquire, interiorize and validate their original, radical, and once again, ontological determination by death.

However, beyond its direct existential – that is, directly *vital* – importance, the actual philosophical distinction of the question of euthanasia primarily stands in the fact that it can return ethics, law, ideologies, philosophies and naturally the people dealing with these *to the roots of the effective and essential ontological origins lying in their own deaths, in human mortality!* And, obviously, to the explicit historical unfolding and acceptance of this origin.

At the same time, this recognition may lead to the admission of the fact that this origin can never become completely surmountable or manageable for any kind of ethics, deontology, legal system, ideology, etc. On the contrary, it is only the exclusively philosophical examination of this origin which can provide that historically changing, appearing, and always re-questioning disclosure on the basis of which all these existential regions, again continuously questioning, can now truly re-connect to their actual historical (ontological) roots and origins. Also, with the additional possibility or perhaps necessity of the recognition that in the course of the analysis of the ontological roots of euthanasia it is not “life in general” that one should initially start from, but *death*, respectively its *pertinence to life* as specifically – one’s own – *dying*.<sup>1</sup> Euthanasia is connected to Nothing else than precisely the *life just dying*, and to the peculiar “experience” of dying; more precisely: this is exactly what euthanasia means! Because it is

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<sup>1</sup> And not from some kind of framework-like “right” for “self-determination”.

*not life*, but the *living* what dies, and only thus does the perspective of the *death of life* have its gravity and articulated meaning.

Therefore the ontological-hermeneutic specificity and basic situation of euthanasia is the ontological specificity of the life and the living being just dying or reflecting upon – usually his own – dying. That is, we are not speaking about the “conceptual” – and mostly contrary – specificities of a general (conceptual) “life” or an also general (conceptual) “death”, the various definitions of which (ethical, deontological, legal, ideological, etc.) we would then try to sort out. Instead, we are speaking about the recognition that it is only mortal beings for whom the rules, the “imperatives”, or any kinds of duties or problems of relationships have a meaning or a real weight in advance! Referring of course to both the observance and the violation, and accordingly the rewarding or punishment of these.

In opposition to this, at a closer look one might see that the term “immortal”, which for some reason always comes up in connection to “death”, necessarily has in mind something which – at least according to definition – is *untouchable* in reference to the existence of the living. So a more thorough analysis of “immortality”, also because of more traditional metaphysical reasons, would do no harm.

A “lifeless” dead can only be someone who had previously lived. Stones, though lifeless, are not dead. Consequently death and the lifelessness of death also pertain to life, naturally, as the loss of life. Well, the case with immortality is somewhat similar.

This is so because the so-called metaphysical “eternal beings” (*aei ontá*, as Aristotle calls them) are not necessarily “immortal” as well. It could well be that they had never been alive – that is, they never live. Immortal can only be something which has been alive and which is

consequently still alive continuously and/or eternally. Such a thing is called “immortal” because we think of it as something which is – while alive! – deprived of death. That is, as something which, eternally-living – is. It is therefore the being-alive – more precisely the “sheer life” – of such a thing which does not “depend” on, and cannot be touched by, anything. Its being-alive is thus in no way connected to Nothing.

This way the undestroyable and unbreakable How-being of everything which is “immortal” can necessarily, primarily and completely be Nothing else at all than *indifferent*! That is: it could be “this way” or “that way”, or it could also be “like this” or “like that”, but all these can only be *incidental* and actually only *indifferent* possibilities. But these could never be real and thus serious *(alive-)existential possibilities* connected to its being-alive within its existence, such that would deeply and hazardingly influence its being-alive in an existential way...

Nothing can ever present any risk for the life, the being-alive of something immortal. Its eternal, deathless, being-alive life cannot be put to risk even by itself. Everything – how it is, how it is like – is utterly, existentially and necessarily weightless or indifferent to it – everything that we, people would refer to as “immortal” in a quite thoughtless way. Because everything immortal exists in such a way from its very beginning that it always is (alive). Actually, it is always impossible for it not to be alive, or to be not alive. Regardless also of How? it is alive... always ... or rather ... just...

In a serious way of thinking: no other definite quality can be conceived as related to the immortal than a kind of constant – that is, in fact eternal – living quality. In opposition to this, *any kind* of (other) qualities can be related to it at *any time* on a constant – that is, eternal – basis... That is, only incidentally and only weightlessly... and in the end with a



tracelessness and weightlessness of existence that disappears into eternity, into the eternal being-alive.

Therefore any kind of “striving” of such a thing to justness or rightfulness – and especially the “constancy” or “regularity” of such strivings – is completely incomprehensible and meaningless, too – if not an absurdity!

At any rate, the immortal is completely and eternally “on this side” of any “good” or “evil”, “fair” or “unfair”, “right” or “wrong”, etc. And it cannot ever possibly reach them – it can never reach beyond “good” and “evil”. That is, not only is it impossible for it to stand at the basis of ethics, legal systems, ideologies, etc., but it cannot even judge those. Because, in a nutshell: it has no possibility to become mortal! Not even as an accidental eventuality!

Therefore things like “ethics”, “deontology”, “law”, or rightfulness only have meaning, weight, significance and accessibility for entities which, as a consequence of their existence, are also somehow forced to have a meaning, a weight and some significance to the quality of their lives. Those entities which are mortal and can die!

Meaning is also created of course by interpretation, and all interpretations are actually projections upon the possibilities. The horizon of the possibilities is most deeply disclosed – in a questionable and factual way – by the possibility of *impossibility*. And it is also factually and questionably articulated by the same thing: namely, by death itself.

Death and dying deeply articulate thus, in and from the depth of existence, all kinds of ethics, ideologies, deontology, law, politics and, what is more, also philosophy and metaphysics with an ontological reference to their origin and meaning, although in a non-thematic way. And it does not harm ethics, legal systems, ideologies, politics, deontology, and

of course metaphysics to be aware of this. Especially at a time when they judge death from above – that is, their very basis, source and roots!

Naturally, the meditation on euthanasia could be a distinguished occasion of applied philosophy to acknowledge these aspects. And these recognitions ought also to guide the commentaries on euthanasia.

Our approach to euthanasia depends in fact on the ontology of death, that is, the factual metaphysics of death, and only indirectly and secondarily on how it can be fitted into the *a priori*, ready-made and hardly questionable frameworks of certain ideologies, metaphysics, ethics, deontology, or legal systems, or their current “developments” and “updates”.<sup>1</sup>

### **III. The ontological metaphysics of death and euthanasia**

The ontological, existential and hermeneutical placement of euthanasia is thus primarily defined by the “parameters” of the approaches discussed above. It also belongs to this same placement that – as previously mentioned – euthanasia is also a directly *thematizing* advancement to the also thematized death, understood directly as (one’s own) *dying*. Which is thus revealed and reveals itself in its existential closeness and definite pertinence to that what advances, as directly and clearly its own death. The How? and – derivatively – When? of which is not indifferent, as this very “thing” forms the problematic subject of a decision connected to these questions!

There is thus no kind of “negation” of, and no “turning away” or fleeing from death, as here we are clearly speaking about a mortal human

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<sup>1</sup> So it must be noted here that euthanasia pertains to the ontology and metaphysics of death and dying *without* the ontological and theological sketches of, say, the ideas of natural law.

being, who is usually dying. That is, it is not merely – or generally – someone for whom, although aware of the finiteness of his life, the name of the end of his life remains a “concept”, the concept of death which does not – or may not – necessarily mean his own dying as well...

In this way euthanasia is an advancement or projection not “generally” to death or the particular potentiality of death, but much rather to *one’s own imminent dying*! So, actually, euthanasia is an articulated advancement and protruding projection of one’s own dying, which at the same time “brings forth” (one’s own) dying, while it stands face to face with it (its own dying), grasped by it.

In this respect euthanasia seems to only achieve that which – also seemingly – is about to happen anyway (and also soon). A dying man’s state of dying, of being in the final stage means in fact: to be in dying, to be just dying... Since euthanasia, technically as well, means the medical or medically assisted intervention by which an incurable and physically and/or psychologically and/or existentially seriously suffering human being is quickly and painlessly put to death on account of piety or the interest of the dying person.<sup>1</sup>

This definition refers of course to the real, willingly intended, so-called “active” euthanasia, that is, that form of euthanasia which – incorrectly – is called “medically assisted suicide”. Beside this form, there is an indirect, passive kind of euthanasia<sup>2</sup> – also technically speaking –

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<sup>1</sup> See: Enikő Školka, *Aspecte ale asistenței bolnavului aflat în stadiul terminal – Posibilități, limite și dileme fundamentale* (Aspects of terminally ill patients assistance – Possibilities, limits, and fundamental dilemmas) (Cluj-Napoca, 2004), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Anita Hocquard rightfully notes that such kinds of “classifications” usually initially correspond to ethical and legal criteria, therefore it is doubtful whether it is possible at all to clarify the ethical and legal state of things on the basis of these. Even more so because these criteria can be understood differently in different cultures or countries. See: Anita Hocquard, *L’euthanasie volontaire* (Paris, 1999), 11.

which primarily consists in the ignoring or interruption of certain otherwise possible medical procedures.<sup>1</sup>

However, euthanasia is in the first place that active or passive medical procedure which is initiated or “failed” on the specific request or decision of the diseased. The definition must be completed by the fact that such a request or decision implicitly reveals the overwhelming and unbearable physical, psychological, or cognitive-existential sufferings of the (incurable) diseased, as well.

It frequently happens however that this request or decision is not made by the diseased, but by one of his or her relatives or an authorized person, as the diseased is unable to make decisions or – as in case of underage children – is legally not “competent”. This may indeed imply several ethical, legal, and deontological problems, but the ontological and existential significance of the subject is still the fact that it bears witness to the mortality of the “environment” as well. It is in this respect that the connection is made between the existential decision and the personal death of a dying person unable to make a decision.

From this point of view the second philosophical-existential distinction of the thematization of euthanasia lies in the fact that the question of euthanasia always implies and asks the question of the “mortality of the environment”. This is so precisely because in order for euthanasia to happen, the person who needs it will always require the assistance of other people. These people can only consider and undertake authentically the unique meaning of the actual request if they project and anticipate it to mortality in general, and indirectly to their own mortality and the similar possibilities of their own death.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Školka, *Aspecte ale asistenței...*, 109–110.

Thus, if euthanasia is an explicit possibility and way of becoming a mortal, then it does not only mean and imply the mortality of an isolated “individual” or an “Ego” closed within itself, but also the mortality of a world structured in a definite way and latitude!<sup>1</sup> In any case: it is now merely death and dying itself which can be grasped as unavoidable and imminent in euthanasia, but also its previsioned modality, as well as the anticipated time of dying! Precisely of *this* death, *this* dying of *this* particular person and of his or her human life, and the possible human dignity pertaining to his or her (present) being, or more exactly the well-defined universality – that is, the reflective reference to the world – of this pertinence. This means a human dignity which receives a special emphasis by the human universality of death in the very act of dying. Because here we are never speaking of a temporary loss of dignity, but of a kind which involves the termination of life and as such it existentially reflects back–meanwhile! – on the entirety of life.

These are the issues raised – though rather externally – when discussing the problems connected to the insurance of the right to death beside the right to life. If we seriously grasp death as a special something connected to life – that is, life’s actually experienced end –, then the dignified ending of human life pertains indeed to the humane dignities of human life. Or at least should pertain!

Euthanasia is thus first of all a possibility. This also means that it has no “unconditioned validity”. It is not and indeed cannot be the exclusive and “universal” way of dying. Nevertheless, euthanasia is essentially such a

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<sup>1</sup> In this sense the “theoretical” or some initially decided legal, deontological or ethical restraints of euthanasia always reveal the problematic nature of the mortality of this legal, deontological, or ethical world!

possibility which is articulated within the particular ontological-existential potentiality of death. Again specifically, of course.



**Octavian Cosman, *Sandy towns*. Mixed technique, 2015- 2016**

Death's particular potentiality has probably been revealed and analyzed in the philosophically most serious and clear way by Martin Heidegger. According to him, the first existential and ontological particularity of the potentiality of death is the fact that the possibility of death is a **certain**

possibility. It is impossible that it might not be, that it might not happen... Thus death is also an *intransgressable* potentiality.<sup>1</sup>

In the knowledge of all these it is clear however, that by euthanasia one actually grasps or reveals both the certainty and the unavailability of death, while there is a quite well articulated effort to diminish or even eliminate the *indefinedness*<sup>2</sup> of death. Actually, even according to Heidegger the indefiniteness of death's potential nature directly refers to the fact that it is exactly the time of death which is undefined and usually also indefinable, too. In relation to this Heidegger primarily suggests that in everyday reality – exactly because of this actual indefinability – the *Dasein* tends to *escape* death and the definition of the time of death... But if euthanasia really and exactly means expressed decision over, and action towards, the modality of death, then it necessarily touches upon the anticipated time of dying as well, in a rather articulated or “predictable”, and indeed “calculated” way.

That is, the potentiality of death articulated through euthanasia in the possibility of dying retains and strengthens its certain and unavoidable nature on the one hand, while on the other hand it eliminates its indefiniteness, with reference to both the time, and primarily the modality of death! This way euthanasia can never be regarded as a kind of *inauthentic* or “escaping” relation to death, which should not be “regulated” but only prohibited comfortably and punished...

On the contrary, euthanasia is precisely the explicit acceptance of the *unreferentiality*<sup>3</sup> of the particular potentiality of death. Because the person

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<sup>1</sup> See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), 294.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, 295.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

or persons who make the decision stand indeed at the termination of life<sup>1</sup> as a defined and factually final potentiality – and as an explicit “ability of being”. Which, above this, must be “taken onto himself alone” as exactly dying! - with a clearly outlined unambiguousness.<sup>2</sup>

At this point “death does not only “belong” to its own *Dasein*, but *lays claim to it as to a singularity*.”<sup>3</sup> Here one’s own death is also revealed and *accepted* as the *most particular* potentiality,<sup>4</sup> which pertains explicitly to the dying person (to myself) in general.

The unreferentiality of death and dying, as well as the related circumstance that death lays claim to the *Dasein* as a “singularity” does not mean at all – and neither does it for Heidegger – that it might not have any kind of *interpersonal* meaning or significance... On the contrary!

But these interpersonal meanings cannot influence or eliminate that basic and essential reference to myself that it is only I who can and must take my own death and dying upon myself, and I cannot under any circumstances transfer it to anything or anybody else.

That is: I have to take my death upon myself as exactly dying. Such thing happens of course in those existential modalities of self-anticipation which directly thematize and validate it, such as, for instance, the

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<sup>1</sup> Idem, 295–296. The Heideggerian analyses presented here also show that even Heidegger did not confer an adequate and specific existential analytical potentiality to the particular problem of dying itself. This can be explained mainly by the fact that Heidegger primarily – and rightfully – tried to prove that the *Dasein* should not actually “become mortal” only in this final and “incurably ill” stage of its life, but with regard to its own possible complete existence.

<sup>2</sup> Idem.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



testaments and decisions connected to a possible euthanasia or “more innocent” burial ceremonies and modalities.<sup>1</sup>

But on what basis can such testaments or testament-like decisions be *actually* applicable for *others*, involving and even *compelling* them? Is it not so that even the legal validity of testaments originates from, and prevails only and solely on the basis of the above discussed ontological foundations? On what basis would the others, the caretakers accept as valid my last wishes related to my own dying – or euthanasia – or simply the “organization” of my own funeral if not on the basis of their acceptance and recognition (though “interpersonally”) of the fact that this issue – my death, my dying, and the related problems – essentially, although not exclusively, *pertain on(to) me*?! And also on this account would they feel – probably painfully, overwhelmingly, yet essentially – compelled to utmostly fulfill and comply with my dispositions and decisions!

Hence derives, primarily and precisely, the most significant conclusion, that after all also the so-called interpersonal references related to death, to dying, can only be determined in fact based on, and in terms of, the otherwise universal ontological *nonreferentiality* of death, of dying! Exactly “interpersonally”! So, in essence, this is what determines the *imperative* character – for others: the doctor, the thanatological caretaker, the notary, the lawyer, the close relative etc. – and also the essential validity of the – nonreferential! – choices and decisions of the dying person, related to (his or her own) death. This, rather than a “valid” moral customary system or juridical system of regulations. And this is reacted to and “epiphenomenalized” e.g. by the general respect for the “unconditioned” validity of the wishes expressed on the deathbed!

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<sup>1</sup> That is, to be buried where, how, in what state (e.g., burnt, cremated, or not), with what kind of – “secular” or “religious” ceremonies or with no ceremonies, etc.

Thus, dying itself is, on its own, *nonreferential*... hence, the decision related to it of the mortal or dying person bears a special and real *interpersonal* significance, validity and structure, also for *the other(s)*, – mainly for the close people, for those around him or her (e.g. caretakers, doctors, family members etc.). Otherwise, such a thing would rather be some kind of “negociation” – remaining “external”, at least partially, anyway. Instead, the matter is that it is not possible to pay regard to such – disposing – decisions and to remain in a mere relation of non-involvement with them!

And this is the same reason why, in the case of incapability of decision-making, it is the interpersonality of close relatives that is put in charge of making such a decision, as it always and concretely manifests and represents a *phronesis*-like form of biographical interpersonality. A form of interpersonality which, based on, and in the sense of, the nonreferentiality of the dying person, and, on the other hand, stemming from the biographical relatedness, thematically gains existential – thus not necessarily “legal” – *right* and ground for him/her or them to assume and to make the decision, as well as to achieve – depending on the possibilities – that the respective decision should then be really and actually performed as such.

#### **IV. Euthanasia and Interpersonality**

However, the interpersonality that is necessarily constituted under the circumstances of euthanasia is certainly not restricted to the above mentioned references. Moreover, it is mostly factually related to the person who “carries it out” or assists it.

In relation with this, it is important to repeatedly emphasize the fact that also this interpersonality is completely, expressedly *reflective*! As the

authenticity condition of such factual interpersonalit is that these people – also personally! – should be in a relationship, endeavoring to authenticity, with *their own mortal nature*, with their own death, expressedly and factually foreshadowed as dying – though not “current” for the time being! It is only in this context that they can actually meet and *understand* the other, dying person’s claim of euthanasia!

In this respect euthanasia means – in this basic sense – Nothing else than a determined *meeting* of existences in their own – and each other’s – mortal nature, which is certain, unavoidable and never controllable in advance – and, because of this, nonreferential! Euthanasia is a meeting, in which all of them, all of us must expressed and actually become “mortal”.



**Octavian Cosman, *Twilight*, 47,5 x 69 cm,  
acrylic and oil on board, 2006**

This is why the “decision itself” – especially the final decision – never derives from the framework of the external, already existing – or

nonexisting – legal, deontological etc. dispositions, but only from those ontological-existential sources from which, in a concealed, invisible, not openly assumed manner, any kind of regulation stems, and from which these acquire their actual validity and authenticity.

Certainly, this does not mean at all that the people taking part in the decision-making and in its community-meeting, which always proves to be interpersonal, with respect to its final condition – because of the radical differences of situations and “roles” –, should be present with equal importance! After all, always, only the death of “one of them” is in question at that moment!

It does not mean either that merely externally codified “deontological” obligations of other people (e.g. the doctor, the close family members etc.) could be assigned to the externally outlined personal rights – let us say, to the right of the frequently debated “dignified death”.

On the contrary, we should rather speak here about an essential, substantial, qualitative *meeting* of personal rights and obligations, as, when the right to dignified death is in question, then we do not only – and never! – refer to the right of the dying person claiming his or her right to euthanasia, but also to the personal involvement of the doctor or the codifier as well. On the other hand, as we have already mentioned, it should also be discussed that euthanasia – occurring as an interpersonal question – also implies unavoidably the outlined possibility of everyone’s attitude, whether authentic or not, to their own mortal nature and their own dying. And this personally involves the other person, the doctor or the close relative.

This is why it is basically wrong to place the medical deontological question and, together with it, the doctor’s person in the centre of the so-

called “problem of euthanasia”.<sup>1</sup> As no one else should be in the focus of the question of euthanasia but the dying person claiming his or her dignified death through euthanasia!<sup>2</sup> The one who is helped by euthanasia to die under circumstances of supposed dignity.

In any case, the debates and considerations related to euthanasia must/should in fact be only and exclusively oriented by the considerations related to the specific ontology, existentiality and metaphysical facticity of death, of dying. As this – and only this! – can reflect on the questions of *who death belongs to*, how one belongs to his or her own death, and how one’s own death belongs to one’s own self.

Certainly, such an approach also determines the areas and possessors of competence of the “decisions” related to death, to one’s own dying! In short: actually and primarily everyone, anyone can make ontologically and existentially “grounded”, and in this way interpersonally meaningful and valid decisions, exclusively related to their own death, to their own dying. The interpersonal validity of these decisions can only mean that in fact, in connection with the decision of the only competent decision-maker, the other people do not have and cannot have any other “ethical”,

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<sup>1</sup> Not to mention that in this way the person of the “doctor” also remains totally abstract. As the possible “executor” of euthanasia is mostly not “any kind” of doctor – e.g. not a dentist, not a dissector, not a plastic surgeon etc. –, but primarily one who is specialized – by the way, based on his or her own *decisions* – in the treatment of those diseases, in the case of which the occurrence of incurable cases is very likely, or which, according to the present state of medicine, are considered as incurable. And the treatment of which is not curing, but only the treatment of symptoms or experimental research. On the other hand, it is also problematical whether the deontological considerations are themselves automatically moral. As the codifications of the deontological considerations formulate their regulations in an *abstract, impersonal* way, in this way their agent is a general executor rather than a particular medical expert who pursues his or her profession in a personal concrete manner.

<sup>2</sup> It was Cecília Lippai’s Master’s degree dissertation entitled *Eutanázia, jelenvalólét és necro-philia* (*Euthanasia, Dasein and Necrophilia*) that most convincingly drew my attention to the fact that it is mistaken to place the person of the doctor and the deontological questions in the focus of the matter of euthanasia (manuscript).

“deontological”, “legal” etc. responsibilities or pondered obligations, than putting it forward – also taking into account and weighing their own mortal nature. Even in the form of not interfering into the – momentary, as we cannot speak of any other form – impeding of the person’s death.

This is what the actual competence of any “death-ethics”, “thanatological deontology” and legal codification endeavoring to authenticity is – essentially – confined to, and beyond this, only restricted to prevention from the possible abuses of euthanasia.

However, the possibility of abuses of the euthanasia is not a reason for refusing it. But of course neither for accepting it. Especially as such a thing – in other words, “the abuse of euthanasia” – is not at all euthanasia, but mostly real murder. With respect to this euthanasia must also be regulated and controlled as well.

It is also here that we should include the so-called “pedagogical” functions of death. Regarding its “usefulness”, we people – also listening to the exhortations of philosophers – could at last accept death as our “master”. In other words, in these “functions” the regulators and the supervisors could assist also pedagogically, so that the human beings with a limited mortal span should anyway become really mortal. Including the present and future generations.<sup>1</sup> And us as well.

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<sup>1</sup> As far as thanatological education is concerned, it equally refers to the work to be carried out in any kinds of educational institutions, schools, universities ... Including the training of “professionals” as well, as “taking care” of people being in the last stage of their lives requires special skills and competences, both on the part of professionals and close relatives. It is considered an educational task to inform, to provide counseling etc. for the latter ones. However, it also includes information and education by means of the media. In this respect, the endeavors existing for years, initiated by the BBC and the *Discovery Channel*, namely the broadcast of so-called “thanatological” films, are very interesting. These films have a scientific and documentary value, they are not just “popularizing” creations.

But the ethical worriers, the metaphysical thinkers, the deontologists, the legal experts as well as the fulminating propagators of ideologies – still – are mortal themselves. Sooner or later, by facing their own dying, they also have to account for their ethical, ideological, legal etc. “systems” – ontologically! – grounded by, and – again ontologically! – stemming from, death and dying.

Especially as there is no immediate “sociological” relationship between the spreading of such a pedagogy – supported by more and more people – and the prospective statistical increase of the claims for euthanasia. As this “depends” more directly on several other factors, for example, on how many people get into the final stage of their lives, whose diseases cause sufferings that prove to be unbearable and unworthy of them etc....<sup>1</sup> Or on when, where and to what extent are the suffering, ill people informed on the nature of their diseases, on its actual “stage”, on the possible outcome of their diseases, and in connection with these, on the

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<sup>1</sup> Although it is not advisable and not proper to get involved in “statistics” and “percentages”, still, we can mention that the research in this matter, carried out in the Netherlands, clearly proves that the change of the requests for euthanasia mainly depends on the efficiency of palliative care, that is, the efficient care of unbearable symptoms. (Of course, it is possible to carry out such “real” research in the Netherlands, as there euthanasia is permitted in a legally codified way. Of course in places where there are no such regulations or permissions, it is not even possible to study the matter of euthanasia. This also means that every ban on euthanasia actually results in the *lack* of its concrete study. As under such circumstances there is not what and how to study. What is more, beyond the “opinion inventories” such a thing perpetuates these situations.) See: Jean-Jacques Georges, Bregje D. Onwuteaka-Philipsen, Gerrit van der Wal, Agnes van der Heide, and Paul J. van der Maas, “Differences between terminally ill cancer patients who died after euthanasia had been performed and terminally ill cancer patients did not request euthanasia,” *Palliative Medicine* 19 (2005): 578–586. Other research led to similar results. See also: Johansen, Sissel, Jacob Chr. Holen, Stein Kaasa, Jon Havard Loge, and Lars Johan Matersvedt. “Attitudes toward, and wishes for, euthanasia,” 454-460.

prospective consequences – again and essentially worthy of the patient’s “informed” knowledge –, which affect human dignity.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate, what essentially distinguishes euthanasia from murder is that it is carried out on the basis of the decision of the actually dying person – on death’s doorstep, existentially advancing to his or her own imminent mortality<sup>2</sup> –, or on his or the empowered person’s expressed request – not only with his agreement, but actually on his determined initiative. As opposed to murder, euthanasia suspends by no means the possibilities of a nonreferential facing of one’s own death.<sup>3</sup>

What essentially distinguishes euthanasia from suicide is that euthanasia does not eliminate the concept of the metaphysical fact of death,

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<sup>1</sup> In several countries – e.g. in Romania, but not only here –, of course among widespread deontological worries, it is not considered as one of the medical obligations to directly and honestly inform the patient on his or her health condition. Of course, this is the case of incurable, degenerative diseases causing immediate death. “Information” is mostly restricted to informing the family members and close relatives, putting them, their insight and “competence” in charge of the possible information of the patient. Under such circumstances, of course, the “question” and “possibility” of euthanasia can emerge in a “specific” way. See also: Dominique Thouvenin, *Le secret médical et l’information du malade* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1982), 167–198. On the contrary, in the United States of America, in Canada, in Japan etc. it is a medical obligation to immediately and personally inform the patients, and one consequence of this deontological mentality has been the establishment and continuous development of the so-called *hospice-system*. However, this is not at all an “alternative” to euthanasia! Moreover, in this system not even the suicide of the patients was directly impeded. There it is previously made clear, who is the person empowered by the patient to make decisions related to the patient’s life and condition, in case the outcome of the disease should undermine the patient’s decision-making capacity. However, until then, the *hospice*-patients can record in writing their will regarding the circumstances under which no more treatments prolonging their lives should be started, or the existing “treatments” should be stopped. See: Školka, *Aspecte ale asistenței...*, 103–104. “By choosing the *hospice*-system, the patient accepts the unavailability of his or her death, and accepts that there will be no more trials to stop the disease.” In: *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>2</sup> There is and there can be nothing extraordinary about the fact that if a person, still in “good health”, thinking of the possibility that he or she will suffer from an incurable disease which will threaten and undermine his or her capacity of making a decision, should dispose “in advance” in connection with the circumstances of his or her future euthanasia.

<sup>3</sup> In what follows, we will analyze in detail the differences between euthanasia and murder.



of dying, and does not change it – as suicide does – into a *brutum factum*.<sup>1</sup> Even if one way of euthanasia is named – figuratively and erroneously in fact – “medically assisted suicide”. As in these cases the matter is, on one hand, only that the medicine itself which induces death, and its effective “doses” are established with the professional expertise of a doctor; on the other hand, that the respective patient administers it by himself/herself. In this case we cannot speak about an isolating-isolated suicide, but rather about an explicitly determined, special interpersonal euthanatological *communication* and assistance.

Independently of this, the presence of euthanasia – as self-preceding and as immediate presence – is mostly the presence of the already – incurably – ill person being in the “last stage” of the illness and of life. The person is not – “specifically” – “death-ill” in the Kierkegaardian sense, but most of the time actually ill, a dying person, at death’s doorstep. The “patient” by all means. Not anyone else.

But not Anyone! As the presence of euthanasia involves assuming one’s own mortal nature and dying: one existentially decides upon this!

In this respect euthanasia – as we said – is a possibility. As such, it does not have any “unconditioned validity”. However, it is a real, factual possibility. It may already be obvious that the real-factual possibility of euthanasia is in essence similar to what Aristotle – and after him also Hans-Georg Gadamer – interpreted as *phronesis*.

But *phronesis* is exactly that basic, essential moral-practical discretion which always aims at the concrete situation in fact, and as such,

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<sup>1</sup> This is the essential “difference” between euthanasia and suicide, rather than the fact that in the “case” of the self-murderer, the existence of the illness cannot be established, as some doctors doing research in the question think. See for example: Kyriaki Mystakidou, “The evolution of euthanasia and its perception in Greek culture and civilization,” *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 1 (2005): 95–105. Certainly, in what follows, we must return to these aspects of the question as well.

it cannot dispose of the previousness of acquirable knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The matter itself always requires “negotiation with ourselves”.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, understanding stands at the basis of, and inside, *phronesis*. We have seen that understanding is essentially a projection. A projection and an opening towards the possibilities, which are always directed by the “possibility of the impossibility”.

In the present context, these considerations primarily mean, of course, that in fact we can never acquire in advance the knowledge related to how it is “ethical”, how it is “correct”, “advisable” to die, how one must die etc. Dying has no acquirable, transmittable, teachable *know how*, it is impossible for it to have one. Not even the name of “euthanasia ” – meaning “good death” – interprets death as being “good” in the sense of acquisition or technical “transmission”, “practice” or “pursue” in some kind of a learning process. Instead, it problematically refers to dying, exactly to the particular case of the particular dying person.

In connection with this matter, it is in fact not possible to oppose “one opinion to another”. As the opinions, the “standpoints” in essence do not refer – cannot refer – to the same “thing”. For the same reason the sentences of the present paper certainly do not take a stand, either for, or against euthanasia.

But they stand for one’s possibility to take a stand for his or her own death – or his or her own dying –, to make a decision – *for* or *against* – in this matter.

Certainly, the same considerations should in fact orientate the medical, deontological or juridical approaches to this matter as well.

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<sup>1</sup> See: Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 18

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 309 and Martin Heidegger, *Being and time*.

However, the original medical oath, the Hippocratic Oath, which, to everyone's knowledge, forbids euthanasia and "medically assisted suicide", simplifies rather than takes on the actual *moral* – and not only "deontological", but in essence really *phronesis*-like – question, concealing the ontological references and aspects.

In this respect euthanasia is – repeatedly and essentially – a possibility. It is a possibility which directly, explicitly alludes to the *sui generis* potentiality of death, of human death itself. Certainly, this allusion is factually essential, as it refers back, it makes us reflect on the fact that man is mortal "all the time"...

One does not become mortal merely when getting closer to death, reaching the last stage of one's life, or at the point of dying! Eventually, "being mortal" means dying "in some way" at the existential end of life – as actually, existentially ending it.

However, the advancement to death, to one's death, to which Heidegger also attaches such a great importance, remains a mere mirage until – in spite of the really existing possibility or danger of everydayness or non-actuality – it does not refer "at all" to the *nature of some kind* of death interpreted as dying!

As a consequence of this, dying – my own dying! – can be "like this" or "like that", or even "different"!<sup>1</sup> And it can be something that – as a consequence of the fact that death, our own death existentially belongs to us, and in spite of its undetermined nature – is probably never *indifferent* for existence.

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<sup>1</sup> And because of this the "immortal" and "immortality" – which we had to touch upon at the beginning of the present discourse – has "nothing to do with" or no "competence" regarding the questions of death and dying!

In this way, the possibility of reaching and advancing to death, in terms of becoming mortal, “naturally” and organically also means – or may mean – the self-preceding, forward-pointing advancement, as far as the expressed “How?” of our death is concerned.<sup>1</sup> As the ontological and existential meaning of the previous and horizon-like, but still well determined decision is that this is actually the self-preceding, the advancing to death, to dying itself, or, to be more precise, the always expressed and thematic – not only implied or merely generally “presupposed” – advancement. In which there are totally different “dispositions”, such as the ones related to possessions in connection with which the “right” of making a will is usually not questioned.

In other words, the possible euthanasia can (also) be decided upon or disposed of. So clearly, that it is possible that, depending on the actual situation, the decision itself will prove to be useless and void. As the actual “circumstances”, which are previously always uncontrollable, may or will be also different.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Although ending human life as a consequence of a decision – similar to the death of victims of accidents, murders or suicides – can indeed hardly be considered as “natural” death. Whereas any kind of death resulting from some kind of “civilization disease” is mostly unproblematically regarded as “natural” ... However, we rarely ask whether *life*, full of chemicals, plastic, medicines, environmental pollution and all kinds of stress ... can still be accounted for as “natural”. In other words, even nowadays we rarely ask why a more and more unnatural – but not necessarily more “inhuman” – life should by all means be ended in a way considered – of course, artificially – as “natural”. Obviously, this fact betrays much about the real profoundness of “natural law” approaches. About what these approaches regard in connection with the fact that, only because man is by *nature* mortal, he can build up and end his life also in any kind of unnatural way.

<sup>2</sup> For example I can make a will in advance regarding the circumstances and questions related to my euthanasia ... then it may happen that actually I will die as a victim of a sudden heart attack. However, I can also avoid the worries of such a will that looks ahead, without avoiding the possibly totally “inhuman” and unworthy miseries of torturing death, and the actual challenging-trying experience of these... As it also happened to Tolstoy’s Ivan Ilyich.

In any case, it may have become obvious from what has been said that actually it is necessary first to *think over* the ontological investigations related to *death*, if we want then to really understand and “appreciate” the ethical and moral – generally called “ethical”, but mostly only ideologically determined –, and legal, deontological, and thanatological considerations, references (also) related to *euthanasia*, as well as the actual – that is, really “legitimate”! – “competences” related to it! It is only based on these that we will be able then to reflect upon “ideologies” in a legitimate way! In other words, not only on what these “ideologies” aim to *see*, but also on what they actually have in *view*.

As there is a difference – an essential difference – between “killing” regarded as, generally speaking, the extermination of the “living being” in general or in particular,<sup>1</sup> or its deprivation of its life, and its meaning in terms of the expectations of the dying person, becoming mortal, and hopelessly suffering, through his or her biographical interpersonality, also openly expressed as its consequence, to help him or her die in dignity. Certainly, even in a way that, ignoring the medical deontological and other moralizing considerations, we do not artificially prolong the dying process of the suffering, dying person, who wants to die, on behalf of prolonging “life” or expecting a miracle.

As in these cases in fact it is not the person’s “life”, but the process of dying that is “prolonged”.

Based on these, and summing up what has been said so far, we can go further with reflections, as we can now more precisely determine the ontological-hermeneutical specificity of euthanasia – treated at the

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<sup>1</sup> Language – at least the Hungarian language – uses the same word for killing a man and killing... a pig!

beginning of the study –, taking into account its existential ontological *structure*.

As a result of our investigation so far, it has been made clear that euthanasia is in fact *one* specifically structured (regarding its expressed and existential structure) – certainly also existential ontological – *possibility* of becoming mortal, on the one hand, and on the other hand that of dying itself. Obviously, as any possibility, the possibility of euthanasia is constituted and structured by certain well determined *conditions*. In the sense of, and depending on, these conditions, it may be obvious now that euthanasia is in fact Nothing else but a possibility of one's becoming mortal and of one's dying, outlined and structured by *decision*, *communication*, *dialogue* and *cooperation*!<sup>1</sup>

Based on all these results, and with the help of all these possibilities, we can now undertake to outline the specific ontological-existential structure of euthanasia. At the same time the merely formal and doubtful-obscure level of “treating” and reflecting on this subject can be surpassed.

According to these: although the euthanasia turns the fact of the process and events of death, of dying, into an *act*, still its ontological-existential structure basically *differs* from any other factual or possible type of dying! Primarily it differs from the existential-ontological structures of murder (killing a man) and suicide, which euthanasia, in spite of this, is so frequently and thoughtlessly mistaken for.

As for example suicide, though it “contains” the decision of the person to die, he or she is short of dialogue and communication with others, of cooperating with others while carrying out, committing the act. As far as

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<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid misunderstanding, it must be made clear that here the matter is not the impossibility of constitutive communication of dying itself, but rather the communication related to *becoming mortal* and related to *making the decision*.

the murder, the expressed act of killing the other person is concerned, in it the *victim* never takes part in his or her own dying, in the sense of a decision made by himself or herself in this respect; and certainly the dialogue-communication, as well as the cooperation with the murderer is missing from the ontological-existential structure of murder. What is more, it is to be remarked that it is the decision itself that is always missing from the existential-ontological structure of the so-called “natural” death.

Consequently, as compared to all the other possibilities and ways of dying, the existential-ontological structure of euthanasia indicates basic differences and specificities, which means that it is not possible to mistake it for these forms with such superficiality and carelessness.

Based on all these considerations, it has hopefully been made clear enough that euthanasia – though it is an act that directly brings forth death in most cases – is by no means murder. As, though it is one’s own decision regarding his or her own death – or the decision of another, expressedly or biographically implicitly empowered person –, the dying person, whose death is the consequence of dialogue, communication and cooperation – in a dialogical sense –, is indeed a victim, however, *not* the victim of the other person carrying out the euthanasia, assisting his or her death, but exclusively the victim of his or her own disease and state.

Thus what happens to one, brought forth by himself or herself, during the act of euthanasia, is by no means murder, it is in fact an assistance to dignified dying and death, which not only makes possible, but also presupposes the dying person’s facing his or her own mortality, what is more, his or her own constitutive death, and expressedly assuming one’s death. As such, it is not only a well-determined way of making explicit the expressed reasons for life and death, but also their *interpretation* in form of *application*!

It is such an interpretation and such an expressed way of grasping meanings, with regard to the ontological-existential structure of the phenomenon, which – due to its specific situation – even “deontologically”! – results in the constituting and opening up of the – certainly also essentially ontological-existential – *obligations* of the very determinations and horizons of the meanings! Thus it essentially differs from the exercise of some patronizing or merciful “graces”.

The fact that criminal law systems as well as the deontological constructions have hardly any knowledge of all this, reveals those existential insufficiencies and inadequacies, which were mentioned at the beginning of the study.

Indeed – in the stream of tradition deriving from Roman law – each and every way of depriving people from their life, of causing human death, is juridical regarded – most of the time, but not in every case – as some kind of murder, which has to be reacted to and treated – punished – according to *criminal law*. To such an extent that the deprivation of life with one’s own hands – even suicide itself – is considered, at least linguistically, as “murder”.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime criminal law claims that it defends not only people’s lives, physical safety and health, but beyond this, it protects their freedom, dignity and honesty – as moral personalities – as well.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, not in what concerns their relationships to themselves, but especially in their interpersonal, social relations.

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<sup>1</sup> If there is anybody left to be punished ... Those who tried to commit suicide were held responsible by criminal law in many places for a long time. Not to mention the punishments of the church – also affecting the dead –, which are still existent.

<sup>2</sup> See: George Antoniu, “Ocrotirea penală a vieții persoanei,” (The criminal defense of personal life), *Revista de Drept Penal* 1 ( 2002): 9.



However, neither the juridical – e.g. criminal – nor the medical deontological *status quo* obliges the philosophical analysis of things to anything! As this latter one always focuses on the “things themselves”, and, certainly, mainly not from the perspective of the prevailing *status quo*, but from that of the authenticity horizons of the *possibilities*. In this respect, the supposed matter and tendency is that – as it used to be in the case of suicide – the various legal systems and legal practices – as well as the medical deontologies – are prone to admit and to assume the essential ontological-existential position of dying and of becoming mortal, as well as the aura and weight of the possibilities of these. In other words, what can be analyzed and pointed out only by philosophy. As – among other aspects – philosophy can make exactly such things clear, and, also among other things, this is what the assigned and applied dignity of philosophy lies in.

It is often said about philosophy that it does not result in any real and factual knowledge. It is also said that the insights of philosophy cannot be applied, “used” in fact in anything. However, a possible result of the above reflections would be to **refute** this belief, by the analysis of a really “current” (euthanasia), and always “vital” question, that is, the question of death.

By such an approach it becomes “possible”, and utterly factual for us to actually face, on the one hand, the challenge of the matter of euthanasia, on the other hand, to actually become aware of our own mortal nature and death, and in the third place, to encounter the questions and reinterpretations of philosophy by means of philosophical thought, and – why not – of the power of philosophizing.

These reflections point out the fact that the problems related to euthanasia essentially and factually derive from man’s mortal nature, an existentially problematic issue from the very beginning, and they allude

back and forth to these questions. Also from this perspective, reflecting on the problem of euthanasia is a true philosophical and existential – historical existential – chance.

It is such a challenge and such an opportunity which has to be faced with a proper attitude as it is not all the same either from the perspective of our own death or of the further development of the history of existence! And eventually, as this is the very *stake* of the matter!

Translated by Ágnes Korondi

## APPENDIX

### Library Secret Fonds and the Competition of Societies

#### – Applied Philosophical Analysis –

*The competition* between the Socialist / Communist social system

and the Capitalist social system elicited a need for secrecy. This ideological battle took place during the Cold War, which is conceptually defined as "the unarmed development of a competition between antagonistic social systems" where the goal is to "suppress" or "liquidate" the competition. This organized secrecy played a part in structuring life within each of these systems. The secret collections in Romanian libraries consisting of banned books contributed directly to this secrecy. Library secret fonds were used to control the circulation of information within a system or throughout other systems. These prohibited materials were withdrawn from circulation and kept confidential. Libraries kept lists of these fonds separate from the regular collection, and these lists were kept and updated throughout the years. During the Communist regime in Romania, the lists of forbidden books were considered "an efficient instrument for the political struggles from the inside of the Communist party." Library secret fonds are a symbol of the antagonism between the two political systems of the Cold War.

In this Appendix Chapter I intend to analyze, using Romania as an example, the secret fonds as specific products of the societies of real socialism founded – by project and from the beginning – in competition with capitalism and with Western democracies.

When they use the term "Cold War," historians mean quite different periods, processes, and events. I will not debate their theories. I am

interested in the conceptual essence of this term. I will try to define it in view of finding the extent to which it is able to present the internal and external structuring generated by competitive relationships between two antagonistic social systems.

As an expression, "Cold War" defines in its conceptual meaning the unarmed development of a competition between antagonistic social systems, that is, a competition where the permanent and essential stake has been and has remained an expectation of suppressing and liquidating the competitive partner. Though this competition was structured and restructured in various manners and intensity in space and time, the stake, that is, the prospective objective of one system's liquidation by the other one, has still remained unaltered in its essence.

When speaking of social systems, I do not refer to a certain number of countries and states but instead make reference to projects of social organization that are put into practice in such a way that, in their structuring, the tendentious articulation of their relationship with a competitive partner defined by ideology and perception is fixed. From the first country, and simultaneously with the victory of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, socialism was set up with the view of liquidating capitalist society's injustice throughout the globe. Additionally, the last countries that have remained bastions of the socialist regime cannot renounce their global judgment on the nature of the capitalist system. For this reason, the relation is, on the one hand, interiorized and, on the other, exteriorized by actions, ideologies, and perceptions arranged in a definite way by the relation's nature itself as well as by the conjuncture politics of "administering" conflictual matters. The main elements of this structuring are perception of the self, perception of the competitive partner (enemy), and perception of the competition's determined situations. The same structure yields

"glissando" but in a different direction, both toward the inside and toward the outside. And the competition's results, as we can see it nowadays, when the Soviet block has disintegrated, are not decided, in fact, as depending on given situations but on the ability of the two systems to have integration, during historical and situational oscillations, the essential stake itself of the competition. That is, depending on the extent to which they could or could not integrate on all levels (economic, political, ideological, and so on each time), they could be subjected to this essential stake. Although, for example, the politics of "peaceful coexistence" between systems seemed to succeed in its ideological integration (by "delay")<sup>1</sup> and, to a certain extent, on the plan of external politics (by "realism"), the countries of real socialism failed in the economic integration of the stake. And renouncing partially the stake under the form of Gorbachev, glasnost and perestroika have rapidly resulted in the block's integration and, in fact, in its disappearance.

Toward the inside, the same structure of perceptions is directed to avoidance and disconnection of system crises. For the West, this matter became evident during the crisis of 1929, which, together with problems inherited as a result of the First World War and together with competition from the U.S.S.R., resulted in unleashing the Second World War. For the U.S.S.R., the problem of its own system's crises is raised concomitantly

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Sapeykov, *La Coexistence pacifique à qui elle est profitable* (Moscow: Editions de l'Agence de Presse Novost, 1979): "They [the reactionary politicians] state that socialist countries consider pacific coexistence as a means of cheating the Occident's vigilance, of gaining time for increasing their military potential, with the aim of, let's say, extending their sphere of influence in the world" (11), and then, "The ideology of the working class presents as unavoidable the passing to Communism throughout the world, it points out personal means and methods for performing this passing" (50).

with the NEP (Novaia Economiceskaia Politika) politics, being afterward strongly ideologized and occulted.

Library secret fonds, as the characteristic library fonds of a socialist system, are connected to all elements and all directions of the structure of competition between systems. They carry out and determine the perception of the self, that of the enemy and the conjunctural perception of the competition's "state," both for the internal construction and for the external relationships and oppositions of the system. They are tools and means of controlling the circulation of information, on the one hand, in the inside of the system and, on the other hand, between the systems. So they are, under the conditions of the Cold War, instruments of ideological struggle, of propaganda, and of ideas, that is, the very essential means of achieving a competition between systems.

But beyond their purely competitive nature, library secret fonds are connected, ontologically speaking, to another principle that, in its turn, occupies a specific place and role in building the global reach of the socialist system. In question is the principle of the secret's category, which has acquired such a central and essential role in the internal structuring and relationship of real socialist society, that it cannot be found anywhere but in history?

### **Secret and Socialism**

The specific place occupied by the category of secret in structuring the global reach of real socialism has deep roots in the history of the Communist movement itself. Almost all Communist parties that have emerged as being the dominant political force in a socialist country have had a period of illegality in their history. Illegality, for a political

movement, means a secret organization and a proper contact, organizational and practical, with the category of secret.

Emerging as victorious, arriving with or without external aid, at power, and legal as well, the Communist parties resuscitate the accumulated experience of their contacts with the category of secret. All this is done under the form of a competition and under that of an inclination toward its utilization. They have characterized and accompanied all Communist parties, along all the road covered by their domination and in all countries in which they have been or are in power.

Communist parties pass through the experience of their contact with the category of the secret, having at their basis a certain particular ideology as well. This ideology, the Marxist–Leninist one, is totalitarian in essence, aiming, on the one hand, at the liquidation of social relationships of the capitalist system and, on the other hand, at assuring an "aware" control of all spheres of social life. This is supposed to build a state party that disposes of all means for controlling the society conceived as an indivisible integer, found in a historical competition.

Binding themselves in a total restructuring of political, economic, administrative, and cultural entities of the societies they dominated, Communist parties were able to utilize the category of secret, and the proceedings of concealment, in an extremely extended and varied way. From secret policies and political processes conceived and conducted in secret, to the system of generalized denouncement of the hypertrophied system of state secrets, to the complicated mechanisms needed to maintain the function of these secrets, Communist parties proved competent in and an uncommon inclination for the utilization of the secret.

The engagement of the category of secret in structuring a social globalism induces, however, at the same time, a typical fixation in the

categorial organization of the secret itself. So in spite of the utilitarian, surprising variety of secrets, in the countries of real socialism a systemic tendency of these societies exists in order that, within them, the typically characteristic and dominant form should become state secret. This tendency is explained not only by the preponderance of state properties but, rather, by the preponderance of the part played by the socialist state as a source of absolute subjective right in organizing and controlling social life.

The tendency of state secret to become a dominant and, later on, the uniquely recognized form of secret in socialist society may be very clearly demonstrated by following the progress of Romanian legislation. It shows very clearly, both in special legislation and in the more applicative zones of the Criminal Code, that the direction of all forms of the secret, legally recognized in society (for example, also the professional secrets, those of service), should become something other than parts of state secret. The latter term came to cover the entire sphere of all nondestined data from the beginning of publicity. All that is not destined for publicity from the beginning becomes the secret that directly interests the Romanian socialist state.

This Communist legislation—in this particular case, the Romanian one—has opened the category of the secret toward the horizon of a proliferation, inconceivable under other conditions, and, at the same time, the sense itself of the legislation that, instead of settling secrets with regard to their content's spheres, becomes a means of assuring their defense. In other words, this legislation is not, in its essence, something other than the public interdiction form of state secret itself.





**Octavian Cosman**, *The Well Known Harlequin*, 86 x 70 cm,  
oil on canvas, 1980

I do not have sufficient space to analyze the evolution of this legislation. I have done so on another occasion.<sup>1</sup> It is very important, however, for the

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<sup>1</sup> Together with Ionuț Costea and Doru Radosav, in 1995 I edited a volume entitled *Fond Secret. Fond "S" Special. Contribuții la istoria fondurilor secrete de bibliotecă din România. Studiu de caz – Biblioteca Centrală Universitară "Lucian Blaga", Cluj-Napoca*, 1995 [Secret fond. Special "S" fond. Contributions to the history of library

theme of my discussion to emphasize that the tendency is to proliferate, clearly totalizing the state secret as a typical form of secret in socialism, perfectly covering the period 1953–68, during which the legislation had an important role in avoiding a de-Stalinization in Romania. Then, passing through the cardinal points 1969, 1971, 1973, and 1976–77, this legislation accompanies—as a dark alter ego—the so-called politics of peaceful coexistence between systems as well as Romania's approach to the movement of nonaligned countries presented as an apparent alternative to the "politics of blocs." It is the same legislation that, on the one hand, paves the way for emphasizing the non-Stalinist tendencies that dominated Romanian politics and life at the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s.

The more the system seems to appear "toward outside," so much the more in reality it shrinks in the secret, that is, in the secret that is proper to it and congenital. It regulates both the external and the internal relationships of the system.

### **Romanian Libraries' Secret Fonds**

By library secret fonds, I mean the library fonds constituted as a result of the secret interdictions of publications. Functioning and administration of such fonds also supposes the building of a multilevel secret structure by which such interdictions are applied and preserved.

In Romania they appeared through a discrete and gradual process together with the Sovietization of the country. This fact justifies the

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secret fonds in Romania. A case study. "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library, Cluj–Napoca] (Cluj–Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1995). The volume contains 160 pages of documents from the secret archives of the "Lucian Blaga" Central University Library in Cluj, on the basis of which the library secret fond was constituted and functioned.

hypothesis that the "practice" of the library secret fond was actually born long before in the crucibles of cultural politics and libraries in the U.S.S.R., being then instrumentalized in all countries under Soviet influence. Having, however, insufficient information on the birth of library secret fonds, I will concentrate on their analysis in Romania.

The above-given definition of secret fonds has to be maintained as a rule for both interpretation and utilization of the term. They are a product formed and articulated not only during time but also in a more discreet, maybe even ingenious way and, therefore, possibly a misleading one.

In Romania and, perhaps, in the other former Communist countries of Europe, library secret fonds appeared in the foundations of some fonds of interdicted publications. These fonds had been constituted on the basis of Article 16 of the Armistice Convention signed between the Romanian government and the governments of the United Nations on 12 September 1944. As a result, by a decree signed by King Michael I on 4 May 1945, the publications printed in Romania between January 1917 and August 1944, containing Iron Guardist, fascist, Hitlerist, chauvinistic, and racist ideas, were interdicted. The libraries had to withdraw these publications from circulation, store them, and make their separate inventory. To consult them it was necessary to obtain a special approval from the head librarian, and they could be viewed only in the library.

Until 1949 several lists appear consecutively, the most sizable that of 1948, having about five hundred pages. But what is characteristic, however, of these prohibitive lists is the fact that they are entirely documents of public settlement, specifying the criteria of their being made up but also the sanctions brought about by their being encroached upon. But in 1949, a new volume of lists appeared, entitled "Undiffusible Publications," which, unlike the public character of the previous lists,

became "of internal circulation," advising in its foreword that the withdrawal of publications from circulation should be made "tactfully and with discretion."

In 1949 the interdiction became of "internal use," and the operation of withdrawing publications became a discreet and confidential act. Obviously, the application of such interdictions supposes setting up a confidential administrative network as well, that is, creation within the framework of the librarians' professional community of a group based on criteria of confidence and devotion.

The creation of this ideological and administrative apparatus, as well as the withdrawal operation, lasted years. The list no longer referred to publications of the extreme right, but it included, on the basis of the Stalinist theory of internal and external intensification of the struggles between antagonistic social classes and systems, any "reactionary," "directly or indirectly hostile" publication.

In parallel with and as a result of the 1953 modification of the legislation regarding state secret, in 1955 a new list appeared by which professional secrets in the working place were assimilated, at a lower degree, to state secret. It no longer contained either justifications or instructions, since the confidential mechanism of application was already well known. The content of this list aimed mainly at printed literature from capitalist countries as well as anti-Marxist and anti-Communist publications. At the same time, all lists mirrored the internal situation and conjuncture of Communism, being—in Romania—an efficient instrument for the political struggles from the inside of the Communist party. In 1957 the last list appeared in which the year of its start-up is mentioned. It was followed by six notebooks, the last one being perhaps "edited" in 1963.

In conclusion, from a historical point of view, the fact itself of printed works' interdiction gradually loses its public character and becomes a completely secret operation. In this process one can trace the deepening and gradually sinking depths of secret. By this, however, the secret not only deepens but actually extends. The lack of "instructions" annexed to the lists does not mean their disappearance but their transfiguration. By detaching themselves from the determined lists, the instructions cease being mere orientations of application for certain lists, but they become secret documents of organization and separation of the whole structure of libraries, sketching both their public physiognomy and their secret one.

The tendency by which some secret instructions come to structure some public institutions is extremely significant for understanding the direction toward which the role of secret evolves in real socialist societies. In fact, all fundamental documents regulating the structure and functioning of libraries in Romania bear the stamp of secret by instructions and categories of all library fonds (usual, documentary, special). In other words, the whole public sphere of libraries is drawn in secret and is delimited by secret. There will be no relaxation of this tendency; on the contrary, it becomes more emphasized, going toward aberration, up to the last moment of the existence of socialism.

In the same way, the publications coming from abroad, together with those contravening the external or internal politics of the Communist party, as well as those attacking the socialist system, were, and have remained until the end, permanent targets of the process of secretization. From the beginning to the end, library secret fonds have remained means and tools of the struggle and competition between systems, both on an ideological level and on the level of information circulation.

**Translated by Stela Popa**

## Illustrations

### OCTAVIAN COSMAN – Romanian Painter – Presentation –

***Octavian Cosman*** was born on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 1940 in Ocna Mureș, Romania. He studied painting at the “Ion Andreescu” Fine Arts Institute in Cluj-Napoca, graduating in 1967. He gained an early success with his first cycle of paintings, *Aquariums*, an existentialist manifesto against the “realist socialist” reality. In 1975 he is awarded the prize for painting of the *Tribuna* cultural magazine. Caught in the viewfinder of the secret police (“securitate”), he was forbidden any exhibition abroad until after 1989.

His artistic activity ranges from painting, ceramics and monumental art to graphic design and scenography. As Dr. Livia Drăgoi writes in the catalogue of the second retrospective exhibition of the artist’s works: “A profound and cultivated spirit, with a refined knowledge of poetry and a passion for philosophy and the history of art and culture, Octavian Cosman is the creator of an art of a particular distinction in the contemporary Romanian cultural context. Twelve cycles of paintings (*Aquariums*, *Victory*, *Domus*, *Seasons*, *Seeds*, *Icarus*, *Don Quixote*, *Jesus – Emblems for Ascension*, *Apocalypse*, *The Secret Life of the Village*, *Double Sun*), elaborated within the scope of more than three decades, reflect the history of a rigorous formation and original artistic development, constantly open to modernity of vision and expression.”

Octavian Cosman has collaborated with many cultural publications, such as *Echinox* or *Tribuna*, and was a scenographer for the National Theatre in Cluj-Napoca and the Puppet Theatre in Sibiu. He has created monumental mosaics such as *Maria Oranta* at the Rohia Monastery, Maramureș county, *The Nativity* and *The Resurrection of Christ* at the Orthodox Archdiocese in Oradea. From 1996 to 2000 he taught at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Oradea University. He lives and works in Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

#### Selected solo exhibitions

2016 *Overexposure. Double Sun* (with Teodora Cosman), Art Museum Cluj-Napoca, Romania

- 2011 *Sotto il segno del doppio sole/Under the Sign of the Double Sun*,  
Accademia di Romania, Rome, Italy  
(album available at: <http://www.blurb.com/my/book/detail/1966345>)
- 2007 *OASIS*, Passe-Partout Galleries, Sibiu, Romania
- 2006 *OASIS*, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT, S.U.A. (album  
available at: <http://www.blurb.com/my/book/detail/1912364>)
- 2002 *Visions hugoliennes*, National Art Museum, Cluj-Napoca  
*Mediterraneo*, Casteldefells, Barcelona, Spain
- 1997 *Ichtyus*, Romanian Cultural Center, Budapest, Hungary
- 1997 **Retrospective exhibition** - National Art Museum, Cluj-Napoca,  
Romania
- 1996 Painting, Guildhall Museum, Boston, Great Britain
- 1994 Painting, Queen Mary College Gallery, London, Great Britain
- 1991 **Retrospective exhibition** - National Art Museum, Cluj-Napoca,  
Romania
- 1990 Painting, St. John's Bloomsbury Foundation, London, Great Britain
- 1985 Painting, U.A.P. Gallery, Tîrgu-Mureş, Romania
- 1983 Painting, Vatra Gallery, Tîrgu-Mureş, Romania
- 1981 Painting, Vatra Gallery, Tîrgu-Mureş, Romania
- 1972 *Aquariums*, Regard 17 Gallery, Bruxelles, Belgium

### **Group exhibitions and international festivals**

- 2003 *Artist's Gathering*, Visegrád, Hungary
- 2000 *The Way*, Delta Gallery, Arad, Romania
- 2000, 2001 Painting, Veritas Gallery, Cheltenham, Great Britain
- 1996, 1997 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Summer Festival Exhibition, Hanover Fine Arts  
Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland
- 1995 *Artist's Gathering*, Budapest, Hungary
- 1993 *Apocalypse*, National Art Museum, Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
*Apocalypse*, Schloss Ludvigslust, Potsdam, Germany
- 1992 *Sacred Fire*, Saint Petersburg, Russia
- 1991 *Synthesis* – International Exhibition of Christian Art,  
Sheffield, Great Britain
- 1973 *10 Painters from Cluj*, Prato and Viareggio, Italy

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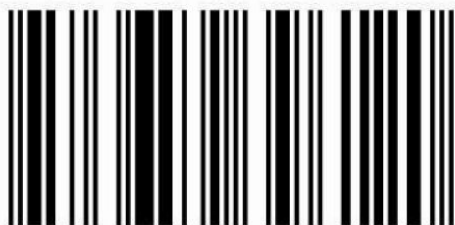




The chapters of the book are seemingly short, but deep explorations on the various fields and possibilities of human being and existence. Such explorations of course reorder and reformulate the timely and essential possibilities of philosophy and philosophizing. These together convey the true weight and stakes of things. For it is indeed so that: „Philosophy is destined to deal with the Deepest and most disturbing questions. It would hardly survive, if they were definitively solved.” Therefore the chapters of the volume follow this order: The Names of the Nothing; Liberty and Truth, Fragments about the “Cave-myth”; (Possible) Forum for Freedom: Faculty of Philosophy, Chair Philosophy and Applied Philosophy. On Philosophy Without Thinker; The Sacred, Or the Bright Sounds of Silence Thinking-experiment on nature, related to Heidegger and Hölderlin; Ciphers, Existence and the Musicality of Making Philosophy, Or Karl Jaspers between West and East; The Meaning of Life And the Possibility of Human Illness; Euthanasia or Death Assisted to (Its) Dignity; Library Secret Fonds and the Competition of Societies. And the presentation of OCTAVIAN COSMAN, the artistic illustrator of the volume.



Dr. István Király V. is Professor Associate at the Hungarian Department of Philosophy of the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania. Between 1995 and June 2015 he was Chief Editor of the Philobiblon - Transylvanian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Humanities. His main fields of philosophical interest are the Secret, Freedom and the Death.



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