

I'll bite.

I'm glad you did.

I see death as the "self-organizing criticality" of being.

I looked up "self-organizing criticality", which is a great metaphor that reminds me of "pastness" (*Vorbei*) in early versions of *Being and Time*. I think (?) this is connected to seeing one's life "from the outside" as if from beyond the grave. Kott's book on Greek tragedy mentions that Homeric heroes, aware that death would find them in any case, *therefore* chose to pursue a *glorious* death. Duration (which is pathetically finite anyway) is traded for quality or significance. We might think of the artist (including the philosopher) as a generalization of the warrior, still seeking a partial immortality, though aware (as in Kundera's novel *Immortality*) of the "absurdity" of this project.

Death is as it were THE question posed to the being, and thinking arises as the "tension" between the being and being-towards-death.

Perhaps you would agree that death *becomes* the question for those whose "falling immersion" is somehow disturbed. I'm guessing (?) that you, like me, faced this issue earlier than most. The "respectable" person sacrifices now (studies hard, invests money, wears a mask) for a payoff in the future. But if we push this future-oriented-ness just a little farther, we see a

personal death that ruins our calculations. The “irresponsible” poet is *more* ambitious perhaps than the CEO. What this or that age worships in a presentism shared by every age is straw on the fire of time. How does this connect to our tendency to attribute reality *only to the enduring* ?

To put it another way, I cannot escape my own being nor can I escape my own death (they are what I would call “ontologically significant”, to put it crudely) and thinking arises as my wrestling with the “ontological significance” of my finitude/mortality (as well as the finality of those beings I care for).

Who will this dead man have *been* ? Cast headlong into the world, soaked in what a tribe takes for granted, but lifted up a by vision of the void beneath what others take for solidity itself. Feuerbach analyzes the mainstream Christianity of his time¹, and objects to its promise of personal immortality as a dilution or even a cancellation of what is vital in the Christian tradition. I’ve called Feuerbach a *proto-Heidegger*, and I imagine others would maybe agree, if Feuerbach wasn’t so forgotten, thanks to his being trivialized as a bridge between Hegel and Marx.²

Thinking (skepsis) as ((the unfolding of)) discourse (logos) between the being and being-towards-death.

¹His early work *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*

²I reveal my bias *toward* “existentialism” and “individuality” here, against purveyors of any Cause used to deny or trivialize the *personal* component of existence. Those who intentionally “lose” themselves (or sculpt themselves) as faceless instruments of The Cause are manifesting a decision. I don’t resent their decision, but I’m not convinced by a projection of this decision that obliterates other decisions as “selfish.” The We-man is far from selfless, and the secular voice of History is an analog of the viceroy of The Almighty. More topically, those who vote for the vulgar post-republic Caesar *identify* with him, so they aren’t as passive as they seem, just incoherent “heros” who outsource their theatrics.

Not only begging the question “What does it mean to be certain I will die?” but also “How do I discern (diakrisis) what is significant in light of the certitude of my own finality (and the finite nature of phenomena)?” — “How do I live WELL?” (“The good life”) ((to think well is to live well is to die well)).

If I recall correctly *skepsis* is *suspension*. All **thinkers** are skeptics. The sophist, pejoratively understood, *plays with words* (dispenses excuses) in support of a foregone conclusion, to prop up a fixed, finite identity. If we are perhaps all subject to “the momentum of a persona”, the dogmatic pseudo-thinker is more of a bot than others. “Proximally and for the most part,” we are *bots*. Chatbots are perhaps the supreme image of “care for already known knowledge”³

“Significant” is one of those elusive, fundamental words. In *Ecclesiastes*, we are told that all is “vanity”, a translation of *hevel*, a word already richly metaphorical in the Hebrew tradition, but most concretely (perhaps) referring to breath. I remain fascinated by the ambiguity of this term, which reminds me of fog, smoke, the passing and evaporant in general. What did pseudo-Solomon *mean* by HEVEL ? As I sought for a core meaning, I was delighted to realize that *this metaphor itself* was centerless, indefinite. For Hegel, idealism was a *critique* of the fetishization of the supposed atom, this kind of that kind. The dis-

³This phrase is from an early Heidegger lecture, where he begins to criticize Husserl’s obsession with certainty and foundations. In the same lectures, we find “Anxiety in the face of relativism is anxiety in the face of Dasein.”

connected (pejoratively abstract or out-yanked) entity is fictional, *ideal*. For “no finite thing has genuine being.” Typically, we get the naive abstraction of a “substance” *out of* an irreducibly normative (“decisional”) context. Is Democritus’s atomism *itself* plausible “made of” atoms? Why *should* we believe him? And if atomism is merely an especially instrumental *myth*, then scientism loses its enchantment, and is revealed as the usual careless profit-seeking, not bad in itself but incoherent when presented as *sanctified*. Carnap’s maniacal logicism, for all the skill it manifests, for all of its suspicion of decadent metaphysics, forgets to try its hammer on the concept of *truth*. The emotivism common among many of the logical positivists leaves their mission indeterminate, as implicitly little more than the same *poetry* they liked to denigrate. In one essay, Carnap, with hilarious arrogance, pretends to reduce Plato and Hegel to ashes, with his unsheathed, but limply resentful tool.⁴ Schlick had the dropped balls to write about ethics. He was eventually murdered by a paranoid and sexually-jealous madman — and this madman was later treated as a hero by fucktard nazis, who found the gentile Schlick guilty by association.

You mention *unfolding*, which is a synonym (or a reliquification of the waxy metaphor) for *explication*. For Hegel, “God” throws himself into finitude and contingency and *makes his infinity explicit to himself there*. To me this is “atheistic” “mysticism.” I

⁴Wittgenstein, after meeting Carnap with Schlick, was not interested in Carnap’s being around for further conversations.

agree. Hegel gives a “gnostic” reading of the cross. Only those who acknowledge their forsakenness by “Father” *understand* this radical symbol.⁵

To think well is to live well is to die well. Thinking is dying is live. “He who seeks to save his life shall lose it.” What can this dark saying mean for an “atheist” ? To really think is to offer what one has been as a continual sacrifice toward what one might become. “Time is the fire in which we burn.” And “time is th school in which we learn.” The “finite nature of phenomena.” All is “breath.” One of the things I like about phenomenalism is its vivid sense of contingent manifestation. Instead of the bogus projection of a comforting absolute solidity, we have even familiar objects as not-quite-certain possibilities. We *expect* (while we ignore our mortality) the availability of the kitchen sink to *persist*, to be infinitely grounded in a realm safely away from everything dreamlike and ephemeral in the way we happen to do things.⁶

Regarding Heidegger’s transfiguration of Plato’s conception of philosophy as “learning how to die” I can’t help but think to the purported last words of Wittgenstein, “Tell them I lived a wonderful life.”

As you probably know, he used the wealth and prestige of his family to request a dangerous frontline position in WWI. He contemplated a simplified, mystical Christianity as presented by Tolstoy *and* worked on the TLP while risking his life this way. Have you seen

⁵With the usual disclaimer that this symbol is a system of aspects, so I’m of course bluntly expressing a perspective of this symbol, to one what I think will see what I’m trying to point at with words.

⁶It worth noting, though, that every fundamental ontology still pretends to sniff out the *enduring form* of the world. *Radically* (to-the-roots) temporal philosophy is an oxymoron. Even the later Heidegger, as presented by Braver and Young, offers an admittedly minimal theory of WORLDFORM.

the radiator he designed as part of the house he helped construct ? A work of art, form fused with function, stripped of every pretentious adornment. I see him as a man who lived with a sense of the “miracle” of being, at least in his high moments. Heraclitus writes in a fragment that most men are “asleep.” This reminds me of “falling immersion” and “familiarity” in Heidegger. The “brute fact” of being cannot be “said.” I can say “brute fact.” I can say “radically contingent.” I can re-iterate a tautology, but this does not reliably transmit or inspire what Sartre captures so well in *Nausea*.⁷

I think also of the Knowledge Industrial Complex, of academics in a public-or-perish regime dominated by the sigil of the Udder and the idol of “productivity.” The journal racket, the assimilation of inspired outsiders and their transformation into status signifiers for a secularly sanctified and sheltered managerial class.⁸

An affirmation of his life his thinking and his dying. (Philosopher as yeasayer). What I’m going to call “speaking the Tetelestai” or “terminal affirmation.”

⁷That novel is full of great moments, but I’m thinking of “the vision of the chestnut tree,” in which the protagonist recognizes something *beneath* all explanation.

⁸I don’t *resent* this class as such, and I am even on its eroding margins perhaps. Indeed, I too wear my graduate degree at times and lean on its fizzling mystique. But the system is parasitic on Blake’s “productive” class, on “genius” as the reckless and selfless-suicidal creativity discussed by Schopenhauer. To me, we all have to work against an inherited “cargo cult” projection of “significance” on the *paraphernalia* of research. The “fool” (all of us initially) judges the creator by his or her social position rather than by his or her *creation*. It’s worth mentioning the bluff of imitative insider jargon, while also mentioning a “foolish” expectation that profound philosophy should be immediately intelligible. If it *is* immediately intelligible, it’s not a creative leap, though confusion on the author’s part is admittedly more likely, if one were to take a random sample. This is why I find Gellner’s critique of the therapeutic application of the later Wittgenstein’s work so illuminating. “Anti-philosophy” tends to be pretentious defense of a dominant stupidity *already in power*. Its pretentiousness betrays its parasitic relationship on what it pretends to demystify or neutralize. *Only* discouraged philosophers, who have lost their edge, if they ever had one, make sense as its consumers. Which I say as one who found this vainglorious incoherence seductive once.

“Terminal affirmation” is a beautiful phrase — one that I wish I’d thought of myself. Philosopher as yea-sayer reminds me of course of Nietzsche. Perhaps Wittgenstein would say YES to the demon who offered him his life on a loop. I love the idea of such a demon visiting one on one’s deathbed. If you say YES, then you’ve already said YES an infinity of times before. Harold Bloom discusses a Mormon idea that one choose’s one’s own parents before birth, which beautifully implies a love of fate.

I had to look up “tetelestai.” It is finished. The debt is paid. We reenact the resurrection and death of the god. Resurrection as surfacing (from a fallen alienation, that projects reality elsewhere) and death *implied* by this surfacing.⁹ Shaw, inspired perhaps by Nietzsche, writes of the allure of death to those who have *expressed* themselves, or (as Nietzsche would say) “vented their power.” Schopenhauer writes of the philosopher as an insect that wants to lay its eggs so that it can die in peace. The creator is a *maternal* figure, with the courage of a mother protecting her cubs, living toward a future shimmering but indeterminate. What this account leaves out so far is the undecidability of the crystallizations of inspiration. After all, cranks are inspired too. A martyr can die for what others call nonsense (perhaps for a *feeling* of power, confused with a *doctrine*¹⁰.) To me, we “suffer” this ambiguity every time we make a

⁹Have you looked into Kojève ? I found his lectures on Hegel by chance at a public library, and they blew my mind.

¹⁰I love the profound interpretation of the Nazarene in *The Antichrist* that understands him to be *beyond* (finite, determinate) doctrine and “behind” language. This suggests the ultimate *skepsis*-as-suspension, and echoes the stronger passages in Stirner.

judgement (commit our persona-as-sculpture) about an “obscure” thinker. Especially for the extreme anti-representationalist who doesn’t see himself or herself as “mirroring” a pre-era-articulated reality (a theological notion still and perhaps always culturally dominant), existence is fundamentally a risk. Small wonder that we tend to gather in the shadows of the mighty dead, obsessed with figuring out what they (implicit concrete authority) “really meant”, despite the “scientific” ethic of returning to the things (the issue) itself. Even original philosophers have sometimes marketed themselves as purveyor’s of the acknowledged sage’s purified doctrine. I think Kojévé, who playfully called himself a god, did this with self-conscious glee.

That is my best attempt given time and circumstance to articulate “where I’m at” philosophically, including a mild degree of play (awkwardly blasting my ontocubic trumpet). My hope is any of the pretense in tone or gesture can be forgiven.

I found it so inspiring that I fear I’ve responded disproportionately, and I realize you didn’t *ask* for a response, so I trust you’ll enjoy (as I know I surely do) the engagement. You have been so *un*-pretentious (not just in the text above) that I was delighted to discover such a compact and eloquent piece of conceptual music. I hope you don’t mind my incorporation of your text in this my own monotonobrontocubic discharge. I’ll cut out your text if you are ambivalent

about this, or (in the other direction) I'll credit your contribution by any nym or pseudonym you like. Finally, I hope you feel like sharing more of your work in the future — and that you'll pardon the theft of “terminal affirmation” (actually I wouldn't do this without crediting you.)

I'm going to “trust the jazz” and not revise this. Please forgive typos, etc.