

The seduction of immortality

Jung, Heidegger and Hegel on death

Jon Mills

Introduction

The ontology of death is universal, hence archetypal. Nowhere do we witness any organic creature escape its talons. Analytical psychology has had an intimate relation to death for the simple fact that it contemplates the soul, the numinous and an afterlife. From Hegel to Heidegger, Freud and Jung, death was an existential force that sustained and transformed life, the positive significance of the negative. Rather than merely a destructive phenomenon, death informs Being, the power of nothingness that dialectically drives life. In this chapter, I will introduce the notion of what I call the *omega principle*, the psychological orientation and trajectory of our being towards death, what we may say is a universal preoccupation and recapitulation of the collective unconscious that subsumes our personal relation to death, an eternal return of the objective psyche constellated as *esse in anima*.

The philosophy of death

No words can placate, intellectualize or rationalize away our private encounter with death, for life hangs by a hair (*de pila pender*). Despite the impersonality of death and our brute rational acceptance of the implacability of finitude, logos cannot prevent the inevitable. Although there is an inherent teleology to both life and death, death becomes our final aim and destiny. In the sombre words of Quintilian, everything that is born passes away (*deficit omne quod nascitur*).

The fantasy of a return goes back to the ancients. The Primordial cosmic unity, the Neoplatonic One, the myth of the eternal return, the *eschaton* – all have to do with the fantasy of a return to origins. The return fantasy has metaphysically and symbolically conditioned culture since the time of civilization, such as in the need for a cosmogonic ordering principle, Godhead or eternity, like the view that the cosmos has always been infinite (*Ananta*) and uncaused, such as in the Vedic tradition or its permutation as the *Ein Sof* in Kabbalah. And for the Neoplatonists, all that exists – the many – is contingent upon the one as an unconditioned unity that conditions all unity (*Enneads*, V.31[49].15.12–14). Here One is a unity of singularity that conditions all being. Singularity as unitarity is the essence of anything

that exists, as the existence of all things is being. Yet the One is indivisible and is the original cause of being. There is no division, no separation, no difference within pure identity. It embraces a simplicity, thesis of the rudimentary presence of identity where everything is collapsed into solitariness. The solitary is also further intimately connected to the notion of nothingness as 'that which is not one (*oude hen*)' (Plato, 1961, *Republic*, 478b), which Plotinus (1966) espouses (*Enneads*, V.2[11].1.1). Only one exists or it is nothing (*ouden*). So we either return to One or have never left it. Symbiosis, the merger fantasy, a return to a tensionless state – all presuppose a cosmogony of holism, a participatory metaphysics with divinity, a heavenly Eden or its equivalent in other religions, and peace, hence death (tensionlessness).

Jung on death

The Chilean diplomat and writer Miguel Serrano, who had travelled widely in India studying yoga, and who had close friendships with Jung and the poet Hermann Hesse towards the end of their lives, visited Jung less than one month before his death at his house in Küsnacht. In his interview with Jung in his study, he describes how 'Jung was seated beside the window, dressed in a Japanese ceremonial gown, so that in the light of the late afternoon he looked like a magician or a priest of some ancient cult' (Serrano, 1961, p. 465). After giving him a gift, Serrano said that he had just come from visiting Hesse where they had talked about death.

I asked Hesse whether it was important to know if there was something beyond death. Hesse had said that he thought not, that he thought that death was probably like entering the collective unconscious, falling into it, perhaps.

Jung replied:

Your question was badly put. It would be better phrased in this way: Is there any reason to believe that there is life after death?

"And is there?" responded Serrano.

Were it possible for the mind to function at the margin of the brain, it would be incorruptible.

"Is such a thing possible?"

Parapsychological phenomena suggest that it is. I myself have experienced certain things which also indicate it. Once I was gravely ill, almost in a coma. Everybody thought that I was suffering terribly, but in fact, I was experiencing something extremely pleasant. I seemed to be floating over my body, far above

it. Then after my father died, I saw him several times. Of course that does not mean that he in fact appeared. His appearances may have been entirely subjective phenomena on my part.

(p. 466)

Jung was referring to his space dream he reported in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Jung, 1961, p. 289) after he suffered a heart attack and had a near death experience where he had the most profound sense of euphoria merging with the cosmos. Serrano continued,

But isn't it possible that all these things are in fact external and objective, and not merely something which happens in the mind? Hesse talks about the Collective Unconscious as if it existed externally, and he considers that death may merely be a *falling* into that state.

(p. 466, emphasis in original)

In a lecture Jung (1958) gave at the Basel Psychology Club, he was asked whether or not we can assume that individual consciousness continues after death. Although he replied that we can never know that, he offered 'an opinion about it with the help of the unconscious,' for 'the unconscious obliges and produces dreams which point to a continuation of life after death' (p. 377). Jung had reported dreams and several experiences of psychic phenomena including 'telepathic precognitions of death' (*CW*, 8, § 830, p. 430) associated with people who died or were about to die that point toward an afterlife (Harding, 1948, pp. 180–185). But in his famous *Face to Face* (Freeman, 1959) interview with John Freeman for BBC television, Jung to space and time, nor is it 'subjected to those laws,' hence pointing towards a psychological existence beyond the material world as a 'continuation of life' (p. 437). Elsewhere, on several occasions (*CW*, 8, § 440, p. 231; § 837, p. 434; § 855, p. 445–446; § 948, p. 506), Jung had speculated that the psyche was subject to its own laws beyond quantum mechanics that suggests a possible transcendence of spacetime due to its relative 'trans-spatial and trans-temporal nature' (*CW*, 8, § 813, p. 413) confirmed through parapsychological experience such as telepathic phenomena and synchronicity. Jung (1934) writes:

The fact that we are totally unable to imagine a form of existence without space and time by no means proves that such an existence is in itself impossible. And therefore, just as we cannot draw, from an appearance of space-timelessness, any absolute conclusion about a space-timeless form of existence, so we are not entitled to conclude from the apparent space-time quality of our perception that there is no form of existence *without* space and time. It is not only permissible to doubt the absolute validity of space-time perception; it is, in view of the available facts, even imperative to do so. The hypothetical possibility that the

psyche touches on a form of existence outside space and time presents a scientific question-mark that merits serious consideration for a long time to come.

(*CW*, 8, § 814, p. 414, emphasis in original)

Here Jung is careful to acknowledge our empirical experience of perception and the reality of the external world, only that we cannot make absolute or definitive claims that *that's all there is*. Here he employs an epistemological scepticism or hermeneutics of suspicion towards absolute claims to truth and knowledge *as such*. A scientific worldview, on the contrary, is confined by its observations and the need to confirm, verify and/or disqualify hypotheses based on refutation of conjectures, which is constrained, by definition, in its methodology of analysing appearances of the world. That which does not appear falls outside of its purview, notwithstanding contemporary developments in particle physics and field theory not known during Jung's time that the universe remains largely hidden as dark matter-energy, itself a problematic conjecture. Jung continues:

The nature of the psyche reaches into obscurities far beyond the scope of our understanding . . . If, therefore, from the needs of his own heart or in accordance with the ancient lessons of human wisdom, or out of respect for the psychological fact that 'telepathic' perceptions occur, anyone should draw the conclusion that the psyche, in its deepest reaches, participates in a form of existence beyond space and time, and thus partakes of what is inadequately and symbolically described as 'eternity.'

(*CW*, 8, § 815, p. 414)

Just as Freud proclaimed the unconscious to be 'timeless,' hence eternal, and as an assemblage of archaic or ancestral 'inheritance of memory'-traces of what our forefathers experienced, quite independently of direct communication and of the influence of education,' where he further echoes Jung's thesis that 'the content of the unconscious is collective, a general possession of mankind' (Freud, 1939, pp. 127, 170), Jung believes the amalgam of experiences from collective humanity existing universally and from time immemorial speak to another dimension of reality or form of existence based on paranormal encounters and intuitions of the psyche. And yet he inserts a clever disclaimer: Whether we can know if these hypotheses are absolute truths or not can never be determined, for they are epistemically occluded.

In an interview with the English journalist Gordon Young (1960) just before Jung's 85th birthday, Jung states, 'it is just as legitimate to believe in life after death as it is to doubt it' (p. 448). Jung sometimes referred to the land of the dead as possibly being the unconscious and that the 'beyond is the unconscious' (*CW*, 10 § 698, p. 368). Elsewhere he refers to death as 'beyond consciousness' (*CW*, 7 § 302, p. 191). In analysing dreams of his patients, Jung also interpreted death dreams and symbolism as premonitions, collective dominants or archetypes, synchronistic phenomena, and once described a patient who died two years after having a comidic

vision, which Jung applied to 'death as a final realization of wholeness' (*CW*, 10 § 698, p. 369).

The fear of death is a form of unconscious communication, of an impending event that is to come, where 'the conscious separates from the unconscious altogether' (*CW*, 18, § 239, p. 107). But Jung often intimated an immortality the soul tries to achieve. In a memorial for Jerome Schloss that he gave in 1927 at the Analytical Psychology Club of New York, Jung tells us:

When we penetrate the depths of the soul and when we try to understand its mysterious life, we shall discern that death is not a meaningless end, the mere vanishing into nothingness – it is an accomplishment, a ripe fruit on the tree of life. Nor is death an abrupt extinction, but a goal that has been unconsciously lived and worked for during half a lifetime.

(*CW*, 18 § 1706, p. 757)

Here Jung amplifies on Horace where death is the ultimate goal of things (*mors ultima linea rerum est*) and culmination of a lived life, that goal being 'a state of rest' (*CW*, 8, § 798, p. 405). But his equally interesting and valid insight is that death has been unconsciously prepared in the latter half of a person's life (also see *CW*, 13 § 68, p. 46). In other words, the psyche unconsciously prepares for death: anyone who has witnessed a dying person who has not contemplated their own end becomes distraught and fights having to die. Those who have, more easily grow into its acceptance, inevitability and desire for peace. There also is a making peace with one's life in dying, an easing into, a celebration or gratitude for what one was fortunate to have had and experienced.

Jung continues to acknowledge this 'secret work' the soul unconsciously undertakes to prepare for death, which may be said to be the preoccupation of all religions, cults and mystical traditions exemplified by the customs, rituals and as annotated in the wisdom literature that has been passed down over the aeons in, as we may call, 'getting ready for the departure' (*CW*, 18 § 1707, p. 757). He evokes the image of the four-pedalled flower – the four seasons of a man's life – as a symbol of 'immortal light.' Even if we are unaware of its unconscious operations, the psyche nevertheless does its own underground death-work towards preparation and purification. Of course, Jung was aware of Freud's (1920) celebrated text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where the aim of all life is a return to origins, where death-work is an unconscious preparation for endings only on the condition that it is achieved through circuitous means. But Jung is reaching for immortality, or at least an afterlife of some kind he thinks the psyche strives to achieve. He tells us: 'As a doctor, I make every effort to strengthen the belief in immortality, especially with older patients when such questions come threateningly close. For, seen in correct psychological perspective, death is not an end but a goal' (*CW*, 13 § 68, p. 46). The unconscious spoke to Schloss, who, Jung describes, 'beheld the vision of his own sarcoophagus from which his living soul arose' (*CW*, 18 § 1708, p. 757). Here death becomes the sublation – hence, transcendence – of soul.

In Jung's (1934) essay 'The Soul and Death,' he takes up Freud's observations that life is an 'initial disturbance of a perpetual state of rest which forever attempts to re-establish itself' (*CW*, 8, § 798, p. 406). Following Aristotle's notion of teleology, Jung views the soul awaking as life that was disrupted from its initial quiet nature of rest, which arises and then returns to its original condition of repose. The notion of the soul awakening from its initial slumber as rupture is also the very developmental scheme Hegel (1978, *EG* §§ 391–411) uses when describing how the psyche first manifests itself as embodied desire that is constellated in the form of its immediate sentient nature dialectically mediated from its original unconscious unity (Mills, 2000, 2010). And once psyche erupts into life, it must follow its natural course of being predisposed to reach its goal and to satisfy its aim, the fulfillment of its own becoming.

In youth we are oriented toward the future, and in old age we must embrace our destiny as life careens and merges with death. And for Jung, as we grow older, we remain vitally alive only on the condition that we die with life (*CW*, 8, § 800, p. 407). This is why the neurotic fear of life is in the service of avoiding death, and the neurotic fear of death is to refuse to accept the fulfillment of life. Clinging to the past eviscerates the present as a repudiation to live evocatively towards the horizon of death, which is incumbent upon us to accept meaningfully and with dignity in actualizing its truth. Hence the goal of death is to live a fulfilled and meaningful life that reaches its pinnacle as the complete unfolding of our uniquely subjective natures as existential providence, the aim and purpose of individuation. But Jung asks us a profound question: 'What is attained with death?'

It goes without saying that the psyche pines for and seeks reassurance in a continuity beyond the confines of our material embodiment, for we as humanity would never have invented the greatest living religions as complicated systems for the preparation of death where 'the meaning of existence is contemplated in its end' (*CW*, 8, § 804, p. 408). In Jung's signature use of typical epistemological and metaphysical stipulations that we can never know if anything lies after the end, and hence we have no rational grounds to posit an afterlife, he does turn towards the collective unconscious as the reservoir and revelation of archetypal symbols that arise from the same unconscious 'spirit' (*Geist*) that informs the phylogenesis of humankind. His argument shifts to the psychological language of the psyche as being in soul (*esse in anima*) that has the potentiality to be atemporal and aspatial in so far as collective or universal mind is not experientially bound to the confines of finite individual existence. Here is where the collective psyche adds currency to the hypothesis of a continuity of psychic existence that informs the ontological undergirding of a transpersonal unconscious cosmos that becomes the ground of all psychic manifestations, hence a world soul (*anima mundi*).

But this argument rests on the conviction that the collective or objective psyche takes precedence over the subjective souls of individuals that is conditioned by and gives rise to personal subjectivity. So, we may merge with or return to a collective cosmos – the *unus mundus*, but there is no guarantee this is particularized or constellated in any way on the concrete level of lived psychological experience, only

merely an empty formalism, the parameters of which we do not need to critique here (cf. Mills, 2019). While this does not mean that death is simply a 'meaningless cessation,' it also affords us no guarantee or solace that there is anything that lies after the end. But it does hold an aporic message: If death is the fulfilment of life's goal that renders it meaningful in the truest sense, this means that we *have* to die in order to give life its truest meaning. This is why preparing for death is an existential necessity no one can escape in good faith, for it entails the reflective self-consciousness to *act*, that is, of agentically actualizing and truly living a good life in relation to our being towards death.

Being towards death

In Division Two of *Being and Time*, Heidegger sets out to investigate what is generally considered to be one of the most philosophically nuanced analyses of death. Heidegger (1927) initially asks whether we can obtain an ontologically adequate conception of death as being in the world. As Being-at-an-end (*Zu-Ende-sein*) in death (§ 45, 234, p. 277), we must face the existentiell nature of our lived experience as a particular understanding of ourselves. The peculiar relation we have is only as Being towards death (*Sein zum Tode*), which is a form of authentic relatedness to one's inexistence that is to come. Because existence by definition is incomplete, only the actuality of death may be complete, hence total, final or whole. But any gain in becoming whole comes at the loss of Being. This is why we are condemned to lack.

Heidegger tells us that 'Dasein must, as itself, *become* – that is to say, *be* – what it is not yet' (§ 48, 243, p. 287, emphasis in original). Because the denial of death underlies an unconscious anxiety we'd rather not focus on, the demands of living an authentic life beckons the brute need to ponder and reflect on death as a value that informs our concrete existence that will come to an end; and this aspect of our ontological thrownness should become a moral impetus to improve our lives through genuine comportment, what Heidegger calls the still inner voice of conscience. It is worth noting that Freud (1916) also reflected on the nature of transience as giving life more beauty and worth long before Heidegger's reflections, a value that prioritizes the nature of temporal lived experience. Unlike Jung, the value of life therefore lies in the realization that it is temporary, which summons our own-most authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole as the very meaning of its Being as care, a caring that extends to all of our activities. To care is that something matters now. In other words, to be is to care as a primordial relation to temporality. Death is the end of time, the end of agency, hence no longer Being-there (*Nicht-mehr-da-sein*) as Dasein.

Death looms as the impending 'not-yet' we are thrown towards as part of our existential condition, the ontology of the not – where negation suffuses the very fabric of our essential Being. Ending, stopping, perishing, exiting, being used-up, passing-over-into, finishing, expiring, demising – all are euphemisms and signifiers

of the *no more*. Death as the phenomenon of life is the privative relation to our lived encounters even though we don't know what death is like: epistemic erasure (*kenōn*)! No! – the barring of subjectivity, the foreclosure of Being.

For Heidegger, 'Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is' (§ 48, 245, p. 289). Here death becomes a negative totality with a positive valence, for nonbeing is predisposed in any discourse on living. This finishedness, this disappearing we face, that which is outstanding, becomes a basic state of being human, which saturates the fundamental characteristics of our Being in the world: (1) *existence* as Being 'ahead-of-itself,' (2) *facticity* as 'Being-already-in' and (3) *falling* as 'Being-alongside' everyday entities within the world (§ 50, 250, p. 293). Being towards the end as the phenomenology of the not-yet is a basic comportment of who we are as that which is distinctively impending, stands before, and is there-with-us. The question therefore becomes: How do we live and understand our impending death? It is only in our own-most potentiality for Being as a solitary mode of authentic self-relatedness that we can ever come to offer an adequate answer, the task of individuation.

The Omega principle

Heidegger (1927) insists that 'the topic of a "metaphysic of death" lies outside the domain of an existential analysis of death' (§ 49, 248, p. 292), but I must demur. Can we posit a destructive element to the collective or universal psyche – that which we all participate in based on a common essence relegated to human nature – that mirrors the destructive forces we observe in the physical world on a cosmic plane or a transpersonal netherworld? I have something more in mind than Freud's concept of the death drive or Jung's notion of a universal Shadow. What if everything revolves around Endings? The end is recapitulation, eternal repetition, an infinite finitude reimposed on a metaphysical level that saturates all Being. From nonconsciousness (nothingness) we emerge only to unconsciously resume, hence restore as reappearance of our nascent beginning. Nothingness saturates existence in order for nothing to exist forever. In other words, Nothingness conditions Being.

What *is* is always in relation to what it is *not*. Negation governs the ontological structure of being and becoming, for the ceasing to be or become is its ontological inverse, the recapitulation of its original essence as a return to nothing, the erasure of Being itself. We have no real permanence, no comfort or ontological security, for everything is transient and decays – from dust to dust. We have our moments of lived experience, such as pleasure, satisfaction and enjoyment (*jouissance*), as we do suffer (*pathos*), but it all comes to an end in our finite lives. This depressing antidote is fraught by the defensive (hence wishful) posit of a futurity without ending – an afterlife or eternal life, the seduction of immortality as a transcendental illusion that provides some reprieve from the austerity of the hopelessness of eluding death. We do not want to face this predetermined ontological throwness – the certainty of nonbeing we are destined to embrace with or without consent. That is why psychic activity is in the service of displacement: we all want

to escape from death even if by suicide. By replacing inexistence through allusion to some other extant object or realm, substituting or transferring it onto something else, as it were, we are constantly reinforcing the primacy of the negative.

But can we go further? What if nothingness is existence? That Being is literally No-Thing? Everything is timeless (eternal) process within a sea of beings (or entities) that are temporally curtailed in their being. The cosmological One, the Whole, the Absolute is really a series of *perisings* (of objects and subjects) merging with its origins as nonconsciousness, nonbeing or nothingness. We know nothing of where we come from, only that we find ourselves here and will expire. This is not the same question as the empirical biological explanation of birth from a reproductive organism. It is about the equiprimordiality of existence born/e from the *via negativa*, the ontology of the *no!*.

The end is ontologically imbued from the start, what we might call the *omega principle*, the spiral that begins and ends as a return to itself as interiorized negativity. We are governed by it the moment we are born and are causally destined to return to nothingness. Unlike Parmenides and Lucretius who say that from nothing comes nothing (οὐδὲν ἐξ οὐδενός), because everything is teleologically oriented to die, to perish, to be expunged from existence, and yet this is the cycle of existence, this places nothingness at the centre of being. 'I am nothing, I have no self, I have no permanence, I am merely a mirage of attachments to perceptions and ideas that are temporary and ephemeral' says the Buddhist sage, referring to the illusion of being: the *void* – nothing – is the absolute ontological principle. Here I am merely a facsimile or hologram of existence, not a real entity, but rather an epiphenomenon of the pervasive inter-dispersment of the negative. In effect, I will return to where I come. It is only this flickering moment that will soon fade into nonbeing.

Bioscience confirms that we are dying the minute we are born, that cells are deteriorating as we grow and that we are all headed for a gurney with a toe-tag. Here death saturates life. It telegraphs the inevitable when we cast eyes on an old person, when we look at ourselves in the mirror. When we encounter death for the first time as a child, we are told that person is no longer alive and hence no longer exists. They simply vanished. And we know intuitively in our interior that the end is causally determined and it's just a matter of time before it's my turn. This produces such existential anxiety for the masses that we have the need to invent God (Mills, 2017), to mollify the worries of small children with transcendental promises of heaven, and placate social collectives through the advent of religion. But we die all the same. Even an imbecile knows there is a brute terminus imposed upon us against our will.

The omega principle acts within the organism as negative interiority, within our social collectives as privation, aggression and destructiveness, is embedded within the concept of world as deterioration and regeneration, and in the cosmos itself as the ontological necessity of entropy. Why? Because reality is process and is never static, an eternal series of passing away out of and returning to nothingness. And because we lack – the primal presence of absence that can never be satiated or fulfilled, we are always metaphysically emersed in nonbeing.

Being and nothing are the same

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel (1812/1831/1969) traces the logical progression of cognition as pure reason, as pure thought thinking about itself and its operations as the coming into being of pure self-consciousness. What Hegel does is unlike no other philosopher: he makes thinking as objective logic the proper domain of metaphysics (see *SL*, p. 63; *Encyclopaedic Logic*, A. §§ 26–36), a self-governing formal system of the dialectical unfolding of truth as the ontology of pure interiority. As the science of thinking in general, logic confronts its inner forms as ‘the formal conditions of genuine cognition,’ the realm of truth ‘as it is without veil, self-contained and complete in-itself (*an und für sich selbst*)’ (*SL*, pp. 44, 50). In other words, Logic is the truth unveiled, the science of encountering and mediating contradictions and reasoning a unity through oppositions. At first ‘unconscious of the antithesis of thinking within and against itself’ (Hegel, 1817/1827/1830/1991, *EL* § 26, p. 65), it is through the force of the negative as pure interiority that we come to realize the dialectic in all its shapes.

In Hegel’s famous treatment of the categories of Being and Nothingness, thought is first identical with itself as *pure being*, ‘without any further determination’ – it is merely an indeterminate immediacy as an undivided simple unity. It is pure emptiness or *nothingness*. Because there is no differentiation in itself, no determinateness, there is nothing to be found or intuited other than itself in its purity. There is no content, only the *isness* of vacuum, of absence, of lack. Being as the indeterminate immediate is therefore Nothing, ‘neither more nor less than *nothing*’ (*SL* § A. p. 82). Nothing is *pure nothing*, equal to itself, completely empty and devoid of any content or determinations, ‘undifferentiated in itself’ – the same formal emptiness as pure being. Hegel elaborates:

In so far as intuiting or thinking can be mentioned here, it counts as a distinction whether something or *nothing* is intuited or thought. To intuit or think nothing has, therefore, a meaning; both are distinguished and thus nothing *is* (exists) in our intuiting or thinking.

(*SL* § B. p. 82, italics in original)

Notice that when ‘nothing’ is thought, it exists. The concept confers a determinateness to reality we experience in actuality as the interiority of our being. Because the same determination is the absence of determination in pure being and pure nothing, this allows Hegel to make the claim that being and nothing ‘are the same.’ Being does not pass over into nothing, but has *passed* over, just like nothing has passed over into being. In this sense they are identical and undistinguished from one another yet paradoxically they are absolutely distinct categories that are inseparable and unseparated as each vanishes into its opposite. This immediate vanishing into each other then constitutes a greater movement of *becoming* other to itself, a movement in which both are distinguished, yet a difference that immediately resolves itself through mediating a unity through mutual opposition (*SL* § C. p. 82–83).

It is only when this unity of being as coming-to-be and nothing as ceasing-to-be unite within their mutual opposition as vanishing moments into each other do they find themselves as *becoming*. But as Hegel informs us, the distinction between being and nothing are self-contradictory: because the determinations of thought united within itself are opposed, the union between them remains destabilized yet fused as sublated or assimilated (*aufgehoben*) moments of the other. That is why Hegel says this unity between being and nothing as *moments* form a mediated oneness (SL § 3, p. 106). Hence, being and nothing come to be what they already are, the process of their own becoming expressed as the one-sided immediacy of differentially determined movements from and through their undifferentiated unity as pure relation. But this unity is not a static one: difference is merely a *transition* – hence transient – distinguished and maintained by reference to the process of thought itself.

If we think of nothingness as integral to being, as inseparable in its upmost abstract relation to existence that is still concretized, then being cannot exist without nothing. The omega principle is the beginning: Being comes from Nothing as nothing flows from being, the rotary motion of which all derives and returns. We can only posit ourselves in relation to what we are not. In the Sartrean formula: I am in the mode of being what I am not. The doubling of the negative is the ground of existence. Negation underlies everything that *is*. Here death becomes life.

Coda

Death has such a profound significance for and interdependence with life that we may conclude that the two forces embody an ontological dialectical unit that inform each other throughout our existence. If life involves a preparation for death, and death provides a sort of punctuation to and meaning for life, then the psychological implications of death and nothingness are imbricated in life itself. I personally see no overarching purpose or disambiguation we can assign to death other than the meanings we generate for ourselves. Just like our birth and our miraculous, astronomical throwness into a life-supporting universe, it merely happens. Having said that, we may nevertheless say that life is teleologically oriented to die.

Even if we grant death the final cause of existence, understanding does not take away from the human angst it generates. Here death should be respected as an incentive to live life while you can, as banal as that sounds, and this means to maximize the cultivation and incorporation of experience. In our being toward passing, namely, the here-and-now presence of our felt-relation to a future ending, comes the realization that our time here on earth is precious, for death is the end of becoming.

If the aim of all life is death, then we are all preparing for rest, a tensionless state where we no longer feel anxiety and suffer, the culmination and fulfillment of life. God was invented to extinguish our suffering. Here there is no difference: death is the terminus of pain. In other words, death is eternal peace, the end to all negativity and conflict, the cessation of our *pathos*. From nothingness we emerge, and into nothingness we return. Here we may say that death is becoming unconscious, or in Hesse's and Heidegger's words, 'falling' into that state of the timeless-eternal collective, *ab origine*.

Note
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