

HEIDEGGER AND HEGEL: THE TIME OF LIFE & THE TIME OF LIFE-PHILOSOPHY

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In this paper I analyze Hegel's concept of life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Heidegger's critical comments regarding this concept of life in his 1930/31 Lecture Course on *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. I claim that Heidegger's lecture course shows his continued fascination with life, despite his official distance to Dilthey and the then contemporary life-philosophy. I argue that one of the fundamental tenets of life-philosophy, the opposition of "life" to "reason," still motivates Heidegger's critique of Hegel's supposedly logocentric concept of life. I begin the paper with a brief review of Heidegger's life-philosophical starting point after World War One (Section I) and, drawing on Hans Jonas, suggest some meta-reflections on the reasons behind the renewed interest in "life" in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century (Section II). After a sketch of Hegel's concept of life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Section III), I then turn to Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1930/31 (Section IV), in particular Hegel's conception of the correlation of life and time.

I

Much of modern life-philosophy¹ addresses the polarity between life and reason. Nietzsche and Bergson are powerful examples that come to mind. Even the less iconoclastic and more academic life-philosophers Dilthey and Scheler, as well as Simmel, entertain a very similar perspective. Life-philosophy of this sort is primarily *protest philosophy*. It contests the predominance of instrumental rationality; it challenges the crippling confines of theoretism; and it rejects the reduction of the concept of being to what is scientifically measured and/or useful as raw material. The life-philosophical charge is that for all the gains in terms of scientific and technological dominance over nature, life at the centre has been lost sight of. The rational world has become

an “iron cage” which threatens the very life it was meant to sustain. The life-philosophical sentiment is nicely summed up by Tolstoy in *War and Peace*: “If we allow that human life can be ruled by reason, the possibility of life is destroyed.”²

But “life” is not only a “principle” that is opposed to the logocentric obsession with reason. For some life-philosophers at least, “life” is also the object of a fierce and tragic love affair. Just before his so-called “Other Dancing Song” Zarathustra has a mysterious encounter with “Life.” Having looked straight into Life’s “golden night-eyes,” Zarathustra confesses “then life was dearer to me than all my wisdom ever was.”³ We find the same passion for life, albeit in a very different, i.e., Christian, idiom in Tolstoy. Having seen the gruesome scenes in burnt-down Moscow, Pierre exclaims:

Life is everything. Life is God. Everything changes and moves and that movement is God. And while there is life there is joy in consciousness of the divine. To love life is to love God. Harder and more blessed than all else is to love this life in one’s suffering, in innocent sufferings.⁴

This enthusiasm for life, however tampered by human humility, whether theistically colored or not, constitutes the background sentiment for much of life-philosophy in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Bergson’s “*élan vital*” is perhaps one of the great philosophical manifestations of this fascination with the pulse of life in the early twentieth century. The mystical longing “to be one with the generative force of life” by way of the return to the original wellspring of life in the inner self in pure duration—nothing less than the flow of time itself—governs Bergson’s entire work.⁵

We can see some of this fascination with life even in early Heidegger, who, in his correspondence with Elizabeth Blochmann towards the end of World War One, in unmistakably Bergsonian fashion, admires her “true *élan vital*” and dreams of overcoming the rationally flattened-out world in the evidence of “total intuition,” and, in a letter from “the battlefield,” amidst the senseless production of death, confesses his “lust for life.”⁶ Heidegger’s postwar attempts at a “science of life”⁷ or “life research” [“*Lebensforschung*”]⁸ are really attempts to put this experience into words and philosophical concepts. When in 1919 he stipulates: “The aim of phenomenology” is “the investigation of life as such,”⁹ he consciously marries phenomenology (and its reduction of objectivity to the subjectivity of life and lived experience) with Dilthey’s hermeneutics of life.¹⁰ The life of lived experience as the original ground of everything is the intersection that allows Heidegger to merge the projects of Dilthey and Husserl in a new philosophy of life. Dilthey famously writes that life is a basic fact behind which we cannot go.

Life is the basic fact which must fashion the point of departure for philosophy. It is that which is known from within, that behind which it is impossible to go. Life cannot be summoned before the tribunal of reason.¹¹

We find almost exactly the same position in early Heidegger’s stipulation of the “primacy” of life, which he opposes to the neo-Kantian “primacy of theory.” Heidegger writes:

Primacy of factual life.

Factual life in its facticity, its wealth of relation, is what is closest to us: we are it.

To charge it as burdened by presuppositions runs counter to its real meaning, as this charge is possible only on the basis of a *standpoint*. However, one takes up a standpoint from out of life, its facticity.¹²

Heidegger’s absolute reference point here is *factual* life, not just life. This indicates that, unlike Dilthey, he is unwilling to consider “life” an “object” for scientific generalization, as if it were available from a standpoint outside “life.” Nevertheless, like Dilthey, Heidegger is quite clear that the unsurpassable starting point in life requires philosophy to articulate, before all else, what life is, “how” it is lived, and “who” lives it. There is no reference to some free-floating absolute reason above and beyond life.¹³ Nor is there, on the other hand, an

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appeal to the “mystery” of life or some vague “feelings” of the ineffable. Instead, Heidegger wants to find and understand the language and the concepts in which life expresses itself.

If one, phenomenologically and intuitively, takes up a position in life as such, life’s motivations and tendencies, then there is the possibility to understand life as such. Then, too, appears the *absolute intelligibility* of life as such. Life is *not* irrational. (This has got nothing to do with rationalism!!) Phenomenological intuition as lived experience of lived experience, the understanding of life, is hermeneutical intuition (as rendering intelligible, bestowing sense). The immanent historicity of life as such constitutes the hermeneutical intuition.¹⁴

Thus there can be no question that after World War One Heidegger started out as a life-philosopher, intent on articulating the lived reality of life as a basis for all philosophizing. But it is important to specify where exactly Heidegger stands within the burgeoning field of life philosophy. He rejects the view that “life” is irrational and not amenable to philosophical and conceptual clarification, resisting the glorification or search of a mystical union with life (Nietzsche, Bergson). Instead, following in the footsteps of Dilthey and Simmel, Heidegger attempts a conceptual, albeit not an objectivist or naturalist, philosophy of life, with the intention to lift life into the light of full intelligibility. Heidegger pursues this within Husserl’s phenomenological reduction of objectivity to its source in “lived experience,” which is, of course, another word for life.

II

Although early Heidegger throws himself with characteristic verve into life-philosophy, trying to shape it in terms of the Diltheyan-Husserlian strategy of a “hermeneutical phenomenology,” he never stops to reflect on the particular hermeneutical situation where all of a sudden “life” is such a prominent concept, despite the fact that, with few exceptions, it was apparently overlooked in the long tradition of Western philosophy. We can find a possible hint in Hans Jonas, who studied under Heidegger in the 1920s. Jonas has suggested that in the beginning of human self-understanding death was not intelligible at all and that “being” was “the same as being alive.”¹⁵ Teeming with life, the entire world was seen as alive itself. In this context, the experience of death was the paradox which gave rise to ancestor-worship and religion. Death was the unintelligible exception to the abundance and ubiquity of life; it did not fit in the apparently living cosmos. This changed with the Renaissance. Jonas writes: “Modern thought, beginning with the Renaissance, finds itself in the exact opposite theoretical situation: The natural and intelligible is death, problematic is life.”¹⁶ Matter is lifeless, and matter is that which is knowable to the highest degree. Thus, the lifeless becomes the cornerstone of modern self-interpretation of being as such. As Jonas puts it, “not only with respect to relative quantity, but also in regard to ontological truth, non-life becomes the rule, life the enigmatic exception in physical being.”¹⁷ Since the Renaissance, then, the “ontology of death” ruled supreme in modern self-understanding.¹⁸ The subjective turn in Descartes and the discovery of “the mind” did not fundamentally change this situation. Quite to the contrary, with the ascendancy of ontological dualism, “life” was not only expelled from “matter” or “extension,” but it also failed to find its home in the cogito. In fact, the cogito only intends life as something other than itself, as an object to be thought, not as something that is lived from within, and least of all as something which consciousness itself *is*. In short, the expropriation of life in the natural sciences has its complement in the expulsion of life from the cogito. As Jonas puts it, “pure consciousness is just as little alive as pure matter, which stands over against consciousness.”¹⁹

I would suggest that life-philosophy stems from the instinctive unwillingness to accept the modern paradigm that makes the lifeless the foundation of everything. Life-philosophy in this sense *protests* the supremacy of the “ontology of death” that dominates the self-understanding in philosophy and science since the Renaissance. Life becomes the un-thought and un-thinkable, falling through the cracks of scientific and philosophical concepts, while in truth only “life” supports any intelligibility whatsoever. Thus modern life-philosophy is not only an intellectual protest, but also a rescue operation, trying to rescue “life” itself, to call life back to itself. It is likely that the catastrophic production of violent death by means of modern technology during World

War One greatly facilitated renewed interest into the strange forgetfulness of “life” at the heart of science and philosophy since the Renaissance.²⁰

While early Heidegger clearly embraces something of this general life-philosophical sentiment and indeed steadfastly defends the aspirations of life-philosophy against the criticism of the neo-Kantians,²¹ he nevertheless eventually cuts his former ties to life-philosophy by the time he writes *Being and Time*. The concepts of being and *Dasein* become paramount, pushing aside the earlier concerns with “life.”²² The forgetfulness of being becomes more important than the forgetfulness of life. However, in his 1930/31 lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Heidegger returns to the concept of life again. A brief recapitulation of Hegel’s concept of life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is necessary to understand Heidegger’s interpretation.

III

Having run through the shapes of sense-certainty, perception, and the understanding of force, all of which are forms of unreflective object-consciousness, Hegel argues that consciousness finally grasps itself as that for which things appear and thus becomes self-consciousness. With that, Hegel comments, we have “entered into the native realm of truth.”²³ Self-consciousness comes about as a reflection “out of the being of the sensuous and perceived world and is essentially the return from out of *otherness*.”²⁴ That does not mean that otherness is ignored. “The whole breadth of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time only as related to [...] the unity of self-consciousness with itself.”²⁵ In other words, consciousness becomes self-consciousness vis-à-vis appearances, which, however, have no being outside their appearing to self-consciousness. What is opposed to self-consciousness as other, the *appearing* thing, has no independent being, as all *being* is vested in self-consciousness alone.

Next, Hegel argues that self-consciousness relates itself to the opposed appearance by way of appropriating it, or, what is the same, by desire, *Begierde*. Hegel writes: “But this opposition between its appearance [what appears to it] and its truth [as appearing for self-consciousness] has only this truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, self-consciousness is *desire* itself.”²⁶ What is opposed to self-consciousness is there to be desired, consumed, and appropriated by self-consciousness. Thus self-consciousness establishes itself as the truth of the appearing thing. Already in the section on sense-certainty Hegel noted that animals, much better than empiricist or analytic philosophers, demonstrate the truth about sensuous things, namely by devouring them. Hegel writes:

They [the animals] prove themselves to be the most deeply initiated in such wisdom, for they do not stand still in the face of sensuous things, as if those things existed in themselves. Despairing of the reality of those things, and in the total certainty of the nullity of those things, they, without any further ado, simply help themselves to them and devour them. Just like the animals, all of nature celebrates these revealed mysteries which teach the truth about sensuous things.²⁷

Desire is the conscious act of self-consciousness by which it takes possession of the apparent reality around it. Desire is just the first step of the transcendence of consciousness in which it goes beyond itself towards objects and takes them *as* objects for *its* projects. Desire is already practical consciousness. But it is also precisely marked as life. As life knowing itself, desire is related to life not knowing itself. Put differently, as living *organism*, self-consciousness opposes itself to the environment and organic and inorganic nature, from which it lives. By taking nourishment it gains satisfaction from what appears to it. Desirous and self-conscious, life encounters not lifeless matter, a present-at-hand thing, least of all some brute extended something, but something living in its environment, something alive, which sustains its life.

What self-consciousness distinguishes from itself *as existing* [...] has in it, insofar as it is posited as existing, not merely the modes of sense-certainty and perception. It is being which is reflected into itself, and the object of immediate desire is something *living*.²⁸

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It goes without saying that the object of desire is not something over which self-consciousness has simply control, despite the fact that it exists as appearance for self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is not creative. Hegel notes:

As self-sufficient as consciousness is, its object is *in-itself* equally self-sufficient. Self-consciousness, which is utterly *for itself* and which immediately marks its object with the character of the negative, that is, which is initially *desire*, will thus learn even more so from experience about this object's self-sufficiency.²⁹

Nevertheless, as self-consciousness the world is no longer an ensemble of objects, merely present-at-hand and silent. Nor is there an immutable essence to things which theoretical understanding could grasp. As Terry Pinkard puts it, as self-consciousness “we classify, describe, and explain the world in terms of what best makes sense to us given what it is we want to do and accomplish.”³⁰ That is to say, self-consciousness assumes its place at home, in a world shaped by it according to its design for a living, and not for the purpose of gaining some a priori knowledge, abstracted from the purposes of living. Or, in the words of Jean Hyppolite, the world that is revealed by self-consciousness is “the human world as a whole and the surrounding world as a human world.”³¹ That is to say, when self-consciousness recognizes that the only desire by which it can find *itself* in the *other* is the desire to be acknowledged by other self-consciousness, it eventually enters the *ethical* life within the historical world shared by other self-consciousness. Put differently, “self-consciousness” situates itself “within a determinate historical community with its standards for what counts as authoritative for belief and action.”³²

A moment's reflection shows that the world described here, as mediated by self-consciousness, is not so different from what Husserl and Heidegger describe as the *life-world* or *surrounding world*. But in contrast to these philosophers, Hegel's “life-world” is indeed the world of a *life*, namely the world of the living self-conscious *organism*, i.e., self-consciousness as desirous, as *needing* the world in which it lives. This life is inconceivable without the world “in” which it lives, that is, without an environment in which and from which it lives. In Hegel, self-consciousness is very clearly modelled on organic life (and its insertion within a world that maintains it). The structure of self-consciousness repeats what is characteristic of organic life on a higher level.³³ Now, the question could be raised whether Heidegger's concept of “being-in” is at bottom a close relative to Hegel's living self-consciousness—and beyond that to organic life as the key for *Dasein*. Of course, Heidegger would be wary of the latter view for fear of creeping biologism and/or naturalism. Regarding the first point, however, it stands to reason that Heidegger's conception of “being in” is *de facto* analogous to Hegel's conception of self-consciousness as desire within a world. Furthermore, just as Hegel rejects Kant's wordless, disembodied transcendental ego as the starting point for philosophy, so early Heidegger rejects the neo-Kantian attempts to ground “theoretical knowledge” by recourse to the “theory of knowledge” or epistemology.³⁴ Like Hegel, Heidegger thinks that “theory” can only be explicated from the basis of life, the embodied mind in the world “in” which it exists, or what Heidegger calls the “experience of the enviroing world,” namely “within” it.³⁵ Life without world does not make any sense whatsoever.³⁶

But to resume our outline of Hegel's concept of life, it is important to note that Hegel operates with two basic characteristics: (1) life is an infinite, continuous process or cycle, and (2) generative life “exists” by way of finite shapes or individual members only; they constitute the discrete or self-sufficient way stations by which alone life has its, in each case, individual finite reality and thus opposes itself to the continuity of life, precisely in the service of that continuity. Hegel holds that life cannot be subsumed under a generic concept of being or existence. Life confronts us with a new meaning of being altogether.

The meaning of “Being” is no longer that of the *abstraction of being*, nor is it that of their [the members] pure essentiality, the *abstraction of universality*; rather, their being is that simple fluid substance of the pure movement within itself. However, the *distinction* among these members *with respect to each other* consists, *as distinction*, in no other *determinateness* at all other than that of the determinateness of the moments of infinity, that is, of the pure movement itself.³⁷

There is no life above and beyond the real, individual, discrete organism, the particular, *factual* articulation of life if you will, and there is no particular organism or articulation apart from the continuity of generative life from which the organism arises and into which it sinks back at death. The birth of the child is the death of her parents. Already in the Preface to the *Phenomenology* Hegel writes: “The life of spirit is not a life afraid of death and austere saving itself from ruin; rather, it bears death calmly, and in death, it sustains itself.”³⁸ Obviously, this is predicated on the infinite continuity of life, sustained by the coming and going of individual and particular forms of life. Death is part of life. Life is predicated on death.

According to Hegel, the continuous movement of generative life by way of the never-ending line of finite, individual shapes is nothing other than time. The being-sense of life as the sequence of successive individuals, the ongoing self-differentiation of life, is time.

Its [life’s] cycle resolves itself into the following moments. The *essence* is infinity as the *sublation* of all distinctions, the pure movement rotating on its own axis, its own being at rest as absolutely restless infinity. It is to be characterized as *self-sufficiency* itself, into which the distinctions of the movement have been dissolved. Moreover, it is to be characterized as the simple essence of time.³⁹

Time, then, is the genuine being-sense of life. It is interesting to note that Georg Simmel, in his 1918 book, entitled *Lebensanschauung*, in which he closely follows Hegel’s outline of life (in particular, the thesis of the continuity of life by way of the finite, temporary forms of life, without, however, mentioning Hegel once), also takes “time” as “the point of departure” for the explication of “life.”⁴⁰

The being-sense of life is time. This is true for Hegel, as well as Simmel, and with regard to *Dasein*’s sense of being Heidegger makes that claim in *Being and Time*. We know from Gadamer that Heidegger spoke “with admiration of the late writings of Georg Simmel,” and that Heidegger’s early life-philosophical attempts are much influenced by Simmel’s last book, *Lebensanschauung*.⁴¹ To the extent that Heidegger’s life-philosophical phase in 1920s is influenced by Simmel, it is fair to say that, however unacknowledged at that time, it also continues Hegelian motives.⁴²

IV

In his lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit* in Winter Semester 1930/31, Heidegger acknowledges that, in his chapter on life, Hegel attempts nothing other than the formulation of “a new meaning of being,”⁴³ this side of the positivist construal of existence as something merely present-at-hand.⁴⁴ In particular, Heidegger emphasizes Hegel’s attempt to describe the being of self-consciousness or life as manifesting a being-sense *sui generis*. Commenting on Hegel’s concept of life, Heidegger writes: “Life means the being which produces itself from out of itself and maintains itself in its movement.”⁴⁵ This is pretty close to what Heidegger in other writings calls *phusis*, which is, of course, Heidegger’s name for being. And it is in keeping with this that Heidegger, in his 1930/31 lecture course on Hegel, also refers to Aristotle’s concept of life as “self-nutrition and growth and decay” as the likely hermeneutical background for Hegel’s concept of life.⁴⁶ Moreover, Heidegger emphasizes that for Hegel “life” is the characteristic of true being; it is not a region of beings,⁴⁷ for it is through the life of self-consciousness that we have appearances to begin with—namely for life. So, “life” must not be confused with a biological category, especially when we talk about self-conscious life or the life of *Dasein*. Moreover, Heidegger does also acknowledge that for Hegel, time or temporality *is* the essence of self-conscious life.⁴⁸

Although Heidegger is by no means uncritically following Hegel—as we shall see in more detail below—the observant reader of the text can easily make out Heidegger’s great respect for Hegel’s conception of life as a being *sui generis*. There is even a sense as if Heidegger recalled his own earlier attempts at a life-philosophical foundation of philosophy in the early 1920s. It should also be noted that in his book *Hegel’s Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, Herbert Marcuse, who for some time in the late 1920s had worked together with Heidegger—the exact nature of that cooperation is still unclear—homes in on Hegel’s new orientation of

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the meaning of being gleaned from the “being-sense of life,” arguing in particular that the being-sense of life informs the concept of historicity in Hegel and even in Dilthey, and—by implication—even Heidegger.⁴⁹ Marcuse’s very positive appropriation of Hegel realizes a possibility that is actually quite close to early Heidegger’s own thought in the years after World War One.

For as we have seen above, the concept of life and its being-sense *sui generis* is the central point of Heidegger’s work in the immediate post-war period. As he puts it in the first post-war lecture, the “aim of phenomenology is: the investigation of life as such.”⁵⁰ Just as Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* focuses on life or living self-consciousness as the point of difference to the transcendentalism in Kant and in particular Fichte, so early Heidegger calls for an immersion in life and its world, prior to all objectification and theorization, in order to articulate the structures of life from within. Indeed, it is quite conspicuous that in his early lecture courses Heidegger goes out of his way to exempt Hegel from the charge of “panlogism” and construction,⁵¹ in effect suggesting that “the ultimate aspirations” of Hegel’s philosophy can be realized in “modern phenomenology” only.⁵² It is no wonder, then, that for early Heidegger, Hegel’s philosophy constitutes one of the “greatest manifestations” of the idea of philosophy, being a significant model for the future.⁵³ In fact, in his efforts to open up phenomenology to history—and that always means historical *life*—early Heidegger sees in Hegel a kind of ally.⁵⁴ Indeed, Heidegger once refers to Hegel’s early writings on Christianity as a breakthrough to historical life.⁵⁵ And yet early Heidegger never directly subjects Hegel’s concept of life, whether in the *Early Writings* or in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, or the *Logic* to a detailed criticism.

However, when in 1930/31 Heidegger does address Hegel’s concept of life in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he no longer needs Hegel as an ally to inject history into phenomenology or to rescue life from its philosophical detractors, because, first, Husserl had already excommunicated Heidegger from the church of phenomenology and Heidegger had given up attempts to re-define and shape the understanding of phenomenology in his own terms, and, secondly, since the publication of *Being and Time*, questions were raised about Heidegger’s proximity to Hegel, potentially threatening to undercut Heidegger’s claims to originality. Thus in 1930/31 Heidegger would no longer want to explore potential commonalities between his and Hegel’s project, let alone Husserl’s phenomenology. Instead, he attempts to distance himself from Hegel and Husserl, continuing a line of interpretation already begun in *Being and Time*.

First, in contrast to his earlier attempts to defend Hegel against the charge of “panlogism,” Heidegger now holds that Hegel simply takes over the traditional view that being is completely accessible to and fully revealed by *logos*.⁵⁶ In the end, being is related to knowledge and consciousness, or what Hegel calls the concept.⁵⁷ Moreover, being is “logical” in the sense that all one-sidedness and strife is “dialectically” overcome. For absolute knowledge, being itself is reconciled [*versöhnt*] or redeemed [*erlöst*].⁵⁸ Heidegger holds that it is in light of this redemption that Hegel understands the being of beings. The “logic” of being is “theo-logical” in this supposition of a final redemption. This is what Heidegger calls “the onto-theo-logy” or “the idealism” of Hegel’s doctrine of being.⁵⁹ Like Adorno and Horkheimer, Heidegger is highly allergic to philosophical attempts at what he considers sugar-coating the bad realities of life. (He doesn’t call it “ideology,” but the “One” or the “They.”)

Second, Heidegger claims that because Hegel understands “life”—the being of beings—in onto-theo-logical terms, the infinity (of time) attributed to life is the infinity of redeemed being, disclosed in absolute knowledge. According to Heidegger, Hegel’s concept of redemption or redeemed “being,” controls, as it were, “the essence of time,”⁶⁰ the time of life. Accordingly, time unfolds itself as infinite, in accordance with the infinity of being, such that time is derived from the prior onto-theo-logical concept of infinite being.⁶¹ That is to say, in Hegel, time is by no means “the original essence of being,” which is of course Heidegger’s own view in *Being and Time*.⁶² Thus Heidegger can draw the line between the onto-theo-logical tradition with Hegel as the last representative and his new “onto-chrony,” as he calls it, which understands being from out of the horizon of time, but not infinite time.⁶³

Third, underlying all this intellectual sparring is Heidegger's contestation that being (or life) is not infinite, but rather, finite. "Being is finitude" ["*Sein ist Endlichkeit*"].⁶⁴ This thesis marks the point where Heidegger breaks with the idealism and the redemptive onto-theo-logical conception of being (or life) in Hegel. This thesis of the finitude of being or life is meant to shake off the hold of logocentrism over time, liberating time or life to itself. As Heidegger is wont to point out, his main work is called "Being and Time," not "Being and Logos." Indeed, Heidegger suggests that if being is rooted in time, this side of logocentrism, the philosophy of being can then no longer be "science" or *Wissenschaft*.⁶⁵ Time devours everything. Nothing is immune to the passing of time. With this last point, however, we have come full circle with the earlier mentioned shape of protest life-philosophy in the nineteenth century, which defined itself in opposition to the perceived predominance of *ratio* or "reason" over "life." For although Heidegger discards his youthful enthusiasm for "life" as the basic phenomenon of philosophy, and goes "ontological" so to speak, he nevertheless keeps and reformulates the fundamentally life-philosophical opposition to reason and *ratio*. It is because of this that Heidegger rejects Hegel's idea of integrating life (and the life of self-consciousness) within the parameters of time-transcendent reason, absolute knowledge, or spirit.

Throughout the lecture course of 1930/31 Heidegger argues that if one rejects Hegelian logicism about the infinity of time (and the infinity of life), the only reasonable alternative is that of the "finitude" of time (and the finitude of life).⁶⁶ Heidegger makes the same point, incidentally again with reference to Hegel, in his 1929 Inaugural Lecture "What is Metaphysics," stating that "in its essence being itself is finite."⁶⁷ In the context of his Hegel interpretation, Heidegger's thesis of the "finitude" of life, *Dasein*, and being looks much more like a dogmatic reversal of Hegel than a carefully argued proposition. However, even if we take into account the much more elaborate account in *Being and Time*, there is the following fundamental problem. While one may reasonably hold that individual *Dasein* is finite, precisely because it is part of an encompassing whole relative to which it can be finite (having a beginning and ending relative to that which encompasses and transcends it), one wonders how one can establish conclusively that life or being *as such* is finite altogether. It is not even clear what it means to say that being (or life) is finite *as such*. Since absolute beginnings and endings are difficult to think, it seems to follow that we cannot even conceive of something as "finite" outside a reference to that which transcends it. For instance, Simmel, in his already mentioned book *Lebensanschauung*, observes that life is lived within its particular limits, but in such a way that self-conscious life is always transcending these limits. Bounded by the present moment, life transcends itself into the past and future. This self-transcendence or "transcendence in immanence" opens up the time for living.⁶⁸ As much as death is a limit, life *lives* this limit—by *transcending* it. In Simmel's formula: "life" as such is always "more life" and "more than life."⁶⁹ For Simmel, this formula refers to the vertical and horizontal transcendence of life. Self-conscious life accomplishes "more than life" through the fixation of (relative) time-transcendent meaning (cultural significations that transcend the "here and now"). By its very nature, meaning "overshoots" the momentary situation, even if meaning originates in it. Moreover, self-conscious life is always part of an overarching continuity of generative life, intrinsically related to past as well as future generations. But that means that the "finitude" of life is precisely integrated in that which also transcends it; that is, life is self-transcendence.

In fact, one may claim that this is exactly what Heidegger means by ecstatic temporality of *Dasein*. But this implies that we must think finitude and self-transcendence together. In fact, Heidegger's own account of the *Augenblick* makes it the transcendent moment or limit in which, through our action, we join together the past and future, not only giving them a direction and meaning, but also writing us into history (our own history as well as worldly history), thus leaving behind a trace and testimony that is (relative) time-transcendent, inasmuch as it is not restricted to the "here and now." Momentous decisions, which are taken in the *Augenblick* at crucial junctures, are fraught with so much weight precisely because they select one particular future trajectory that determines who we are and what kind of world we wish to live in—beyond the simple here and now. Hans Jonas speaks of the "time" that is held in "suspense" before the momentous decision or the decisive action is carried out.⁷⁰ It defines that single *Augenblick* between "eternity" and "time" where we decide our own fate, where we decide not only who we will be and how we will possibly fare, but also how we will be remembered in the future by subsequent generations.⁷¹ The *Augenblick* singularizes, concentrates, and finitizes—through the

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relation it established beyond itself.

Indeed, Heidegger himself sees the time-transcendent moment or *Augenblick* in relation to eternity.⁷² In his interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same, Heidegger holds that "the eternal" ["*die Ewigkeit*"] will "be decided only in your *moments* [*Augenblicken*] and there alone, namely on the basis of what you yourself hold concerning beings, and what sort of stance you take in their midst, and what you demand of yourself and what you can wish to accomplish."⁷³ This is not an isolated statement, for a few chapters later Heidegger explicitly states (unmistakably in his own voice): "To think eternity requires: to think the moment, that is to say, to transpose oneself into the moment lived in virtue of [fully] being oneself [*Augenblick des Selbstsein*]."⁷⁴ Through the decision taken in the *Augenblick* we take responsibility for the deeds and the world in which we live, and that implies a commitment far beyond the occurrent moment and the finite, factual here and now.

To conclude, in line with his rejection of Hegel's logocentric conception of absolute knowledge and the concomitant notion of the already logically comprehended infinity of time (redeemed and reconciled), Heidegger emphasizes the "finitude" of time, *Dasein*, and being itself. This latter notion, however, must not be conceived as if Heidegger wanted to suggest an absolute ending or beginning of time, as if "finite" time came to a halt at some point. The transcendent *Augenblick* which enables time to be is intrinsically part of the ecstatic temporality of *Dasein*; it is directed towards the always outstanding future (beyond the finite life-time of the individual *Dasein*).

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NOTES

1. There is of course the Romantic Life-Philosophy in the eighteenth century, and Hegel, Schelling, Hölderlin, and Novalis all knew a notion of “absolute life.” The “second wave” or “modern” life-philosophy in a pregnant sense includes post-Idealist philosophers such Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Bergson, Scheler, Dilthey, and Simmel, as well as early Heidegger (as we shall see below). More recently, Michel Henry has revived the interest in life-philosophy on a phenomenological basis. For an account of “life-philosophy” with a special interest in Greek and Medieval philosophy, see Eugene Thacker, *After Life*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 2010.
2. Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Norton Critical Edition. Trans. Maude. New York, Cornell University: 1996, 999.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York, Penguin Books: 1978, 227.
4. *War and Peace*, 941.
5. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. Lanham, University Press of America: 1983, 166.
6. Martin Heidegger, Elisabeth Blochmann: Briefwechsel. Ed. Joachim W. Störck. Marbach am Neckar, Deutsches Literaturarchiv: 1989, 14, 15, 12.
7. Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 58. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 1993, 55 and 79.
8. *Grundprobleme*, 160.
9. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 56/57. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 1999, 220.
10. For a very recent account of Dilthey’s life philosophy, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2011, 354–358.
11. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt*, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 7. Stuttgart, Teubner: 1927, 359.
12. *Grundprobleme*, 173.
13. Reason and science are embedded in “life.” This view still informs Heidegger’s position in *Being and Time*, where he holds that science must be seen as a particular practice of *Dasein*, sharing with *Dasein* the particular kind of being it has. See, *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 2. Frankfurt, Klostermann: 1977, 16.
14. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 219.
15. Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Leben: Ansätze zu einer philosophischen Biologie*. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp: 1977, 25.
16. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 28.
17. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 28.
18. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 35.
19. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 42.
20. For a more recent life-philosophical critique of modernity, see Michel Henry, *Barbarism*, Transl. Scott Davidson. London, Continuum: 2012.
21. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 59. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 2007, 164.
22. Heidegger writes: “Life is its own kind of being, but essentially only accessible by way of *Dasein*. The ontology of life is carried out by way of a privative interpretation which determines that which must exist in order that there can be also something like nothing-more-than life. Life is neither purely present-at-hand nor *Dasein*. And *Dasein* is not something that one can ontologically determine by grasping it as life—(somehow ontologically indeterminate) plus something else on top of this.” *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 2. Frankfurt, Klostermann: 1977, 67.
23. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Hamburg, Felix Meiner: 1952, 134.
24. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 134.
25. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 134.
26. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.
27. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 87.
28. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.
29. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.
30. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1994, 49.
31. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Samuel Chernek & John Heckman. Evanston, Northwestern University Press: 1974, 159/60.
32. *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 48.
33. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Edition. Trans. revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York, Continuum: 1994, 252.
34. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 96.
35. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 88.
36. Already in 1919/20 Heidegger states: “The manifold, then, which lies within the horizon of life, as it accompanies the

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continuously flowing life in each of us, [is this]: our *surrounding world*—the land, regions, cities, and deserts, our *with-world*—parents, siblings, acquaintances, superiors, teachers, pupils, civil servants, foreigners, the man there with his crutch, the lady over there with her elegant hat, the little girl with her doll, our *self-world*—inasmuch as all this is encountered by me, giving my life its personal rhythm. We live in this surrounding-, with-, and self-world (the world ‘about’ in general). Our life is our world—and rarely in such a way that we [merely] look onto it, but always, even if totally inconspicuous, and hidden, in such a fashion that we are ‘in on it,’ ‘captivated,’ ‘repelled,’ ‘enjoying it,’ ‘renouncing it.’ ‘We always are in on an encounter.’ Our life is the world in which we live [...]. And our life is *only* as life insofar as it lives in a world.” Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie (1919/20)*. Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 58. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 1993, 33/34.

37. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 169.

38. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 29.

39. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 136.

40. Georg Simmel, *Lebensanschauung: Vier metaphysische Kapitel*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 16. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp: 1999, 218.

41. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 242/43 (note 138).

42. One of the best accounts of Hegel and the early Heidegger can be found in Thomas Schwarz Wentzer, “Hegel’s Challenge to the Early Heidegger,” in *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation*, Eds. Dan Zahavi, Sara Heinämaa, and Hans Ruin. Dordrecht, Kluwer: 2003, 217–239. A useful discussion about the vast literature on Hegel and Heidegger can be found in Robert Sinnerbrink, “Sein und Geist: Heidegger’s Confrontation with Hegel’s Phenomenology,” in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 3:2-3 (2007, 132–152).

43. Martin Heidegger, *Hegel’s Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 32. Frankfurt, Klostermann: 1997, 198.

44. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 190. See also note 22 above.

45. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 198.

46. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 206.

47. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 207.

48. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 211.

49. Herbert Marcuse, *Hegel’s Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit*. Frankfurt, Vittorio Klostermann: 1968, 7, also see 363–368.

50. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 220.

51. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 135.

52. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 12.

53. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 1.

54. *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 246 and *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 134.

55. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 134.

56. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 141.

57. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 17.

58. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 141.

59. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 141 and 204.

60. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 209.

61. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 211 and 209.

62. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 211.

63. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 144.

64. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 145.

65. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 18.

66. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 106.

67. “Was ist Metaphysik?” in Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 9. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 2004, 120.

68. *Lebensanschauung*, 224.

69. *Lebensanschauung*, 229.

70. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 384.

71. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 385.

72. William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory*. Albany, State University of New York Press: 1999, 229/230.

73. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. I. Pfullingen, Neske: 1998, 356.

74. *Nietzsche*, 401.