

Micah H. Weber, et al.

CARRYON

(or, The Power Plant)



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...a poem, collage, & travelogue.

00:09:44:13

“Is this a speaking voice,
or is this a singing voice?”



/
...a sphinx in the clouds
waiting, doing nothing.



Time Considered on the Basis of Death

Friday, January 23, 1976

Death is the reversal of appearing [*l'apparaître*]. Contrary to what appears, death is like a return of being in itself, where that which beckoned turns back into itself, and can no longer respond. It is a movement opposed to phenomenology. But is death itself to be thought of as an end, the end of being in the absolute sense of its annihilation, the end of its manifestation? Or should it be thought of as a question with no positive determination, a question in which nothing refers to a *doxa* of any sort, a *doxa* of which the question would be a modification?

Death is the phenomenon of the end, all the while being the end of the phenomenon. It strikes our thought and makes it precisely a questioning, whether this be in its future (if we privilege our own death as in Heidegger) or in the present. As a phenomenon of the end, death concerns our thought; it concerns our life, which is thought, that is, our life as manifestation manifesting itself to itself, a temporal or diachronic manifestation.

The problem consists in asking ourselves what this end is for the temporality of manifestation, what death is for time. What is the very mortality of life? Such is the true problem of our inquiry, the meaning of death for time.

For Heidegger, death signifies *my* death in the sense of my *annihilation*. For him, the inquiry into the relationship between death and time is motivated by the effort to assure oneself that, in the

50

Time on the Basis of Death

51

analytic of *Dasein* in which being is in question, being-there is grasped and described in its authenticity or its integrity. Because death marks from the start the end of being-there, it is through death itself that being-there—or man, who, in the form of a being, is the event of that being-there—is the totality of what it is, or is properly there.

Starting from there, Heidegger shows that dying is not what marks some final instant of *Dasein* but what characterizes the very way in which man is his being. From there comes the notion of being-toward-death, which signifies being in regard to the possibility of no-longer-being-there, this being-in-regard-to indicating not some contemplation of the end adding itself to the being that I am. To-be-for-death is to relate to death by the very being that I am.

Therein lies an existential relationship to the possibility of dying. An irreducible or privileged relationship, which Heidegger describes on the basis of the privileged character of this possibility of dying as a possibility for our power, a possibility to seize. This possibility is:

- the most proper, or ownmost possibility; a possibility in which the proper as such is produced;
- an untransferable possibility; a possibility that consequently is "me" [*moi*], or ipseity;
- an isolating possibility, since it is a possibility that, as my ownmost, cuts all my ties with other men;
- an extreme possibility that surpasses all others and next to which all the others grow pale; a possibility by which *Dasein* sets itself off from all other possibilities, which then become insignificant.

The power that is capable of such a possibility reunites the structures of *Dasein*, made explicit as *care*. To-be-out-ahead-of-oneself is precisely to-be-projected-toward-this-possibility-of-no-longer-being-in-the-world. But on the other hand, care is facticity; it is the fact of being-already-in-the-world without having chosen this. Finally, this being-to-death is already a fall, already being-alongside-of-things in everydayness where there is consolation and diversion from death, where death is viewed as an event coming to pass within the world (as the death of the other).

52

DEATH AND TIME

It is on the basis of this avoidance that Heidegger conducts a new approach in order to clarify another trait of being-toward-the-end [*l'être-à-la-fin*]: the certainty of death. This certainty is described from the everydayness that avoids the certainty.

Among the modes of everyday being there is above all chitchat, idle talk. This idle talk sums up the attitude in regard to death: one dies, sometime, but not just now. There is thus indeed a certainty of death, but it is as if calmed in its gravity by that adjournment. Such is the ambiguity of idle talk, in which certainty is not the authentic certainty of death. For certainty is a mode of truth that is itself a discovery, a disclosure, wherein the disclosed is not authentically disclosed unless *Dasein* is open to itself. Now in everyday life, *Dasein* is precisely not open to itself. Certainty signifies first a certain comportment of *Dasein*. Everyday *Dasein* covers up its ownmost possibility—it is therefore in nontruth. Its certainty of death is inadequate; it is covered up. Death is an event in the world; the certainty relative to it comes out of experience; it coincides with the fact that the others pass away.

Does *Dasein* escape the certainty of death in the mode of the fall? Does its discourse allow it to escape certainty? It avoids death—and it is this fact of avoiding that is the true relation to death. It is to the degree that it is compelled to flee death that it attests to the certainty of death. *It is its flight before death that is an attestation of death.*

It is thus that we come to a complete characterization of death. Death is certain, and that means that it is always possible, possible at each moment, but in this way its "when" is indeterminate. Such will be the complete concept of death: the most proper possibility, an unsurpassable possibility, isolating, certain, indeterminate.

What remains to be shown is the authentic way to be-for-death. It must be shown that the power or capacity for the possibility of death is not a banal power, or a power like the others, in that it realizes nothing. What does the relation to such a possibility signify? It is a matter of maintaining this possibility *as* a possibility; one must maintain it without transforming it into a reality. The relation with every other possibility is characterized by the realization

Time on the Basis of Death

53

of this possibility. The relation with this exceptional possibility is characterized by *Vorlaufen*, by anticipation. The anticipation of this imminence consists in maintaining this possibility. The possibility of dying is not realized (and it realizes nothing). Death is not the moment of death but the fact of relating to the possible as possible. This is a privileged relation to the possible that does not end in its realization; this unique possibility of relating to the possible as possible is being-toward-death. "Death, as a possibility, gives nothing to *Dasein* to 'realize,' nor anything that it could itself *be* as actual."¹

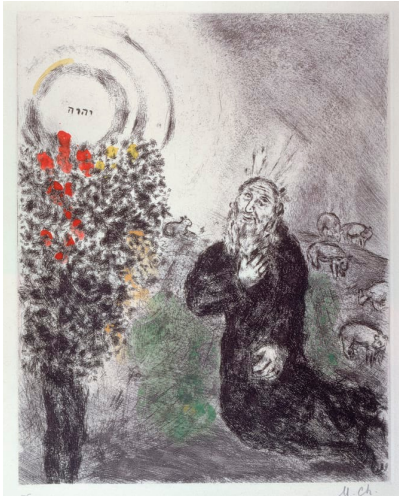
If existence is a comportment with regard to the possibility of existence, and if it is total in its existence with regard to this possibility, then it cannot but be toward- or for-death. If being is to-be, being is being-toward-death.² To-be-out-ahead-of-oneself is precisely to-be-toward-death (if being-toward-death is abolished, then being-out-ahead-of-oneself is suppressed at the same time, and *Dasein* is no longer a totality). This, then, is how man is considered in his totality, how *Dasein* is at every moment whole: in its relationship to death.

In this description we see how time was, throughout these analyses, deduced from its length of time—within measurable and measured time. We see how measurable time is not the original time, how there is a priority of the relationship with the future as a relationship with a possibility and not as a reality: the concrete manner in which such an idea is thought is therefore the analysis of death. It is through death that there is time and there is *Dasein*.

Franz Kafka
The Hunter Gracchus

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②

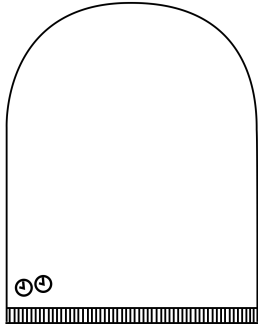


Two boys were sitting on the wall by the jetty playing dice. A man was reading a newspaper on the steps of a monument in the shadow of a hero wielding a sabre. A young girl was filling her tub with water at a fountain. A fruit seller was lying close to his produce and looking out to sea. Through the empty openings of the door and window of a bar two men could be seen drinking wine in the back. The landlord was sitting at a table in the front dozing. A small boat glided lightly into the small harbour, as if it were being carried over the water. A man in a blue jacket climbed out onto land and pulled the ropes through the rings. Behind the man from the boat, two other men in dark coats with silver buttons carried a bier, on which, under a large silk scarf with a floral pattern and fringe, a person was obviously lying. No one bothered with the newcomers on the jetty, even when they set the bier down to wait for their helmsman, who was still working with the ropes. No one came up to them, no one asked them any questions, no one took a closer look at them.

The helmsman was further held up a little by a woman with disheveled hair, who now appeared on deck with a child at her breast. Then he moved on, pointing to a yellowish, two-story house which rose close by, directly on the left near the water. The bearers took up their load and carried it through the low door furnished with slender columns. A small boy opened a window, noticed immediately how the group was disappearing into the house, and quickly shut the window again. The door now closed, as well. It had been fashioned with care out of black oak wood. A flock of doves, which up to this point had been flying around the bell tower, came down in front of the house. The doves gathered before the door, as if their food was stored inside the house. One flew right up to the first floor and pecked at the window pane. They were brightly coloured, well cared for, lively animals. With a large sweep of her hand the woman threw some seeds towards them from the boat. They ate them up and then flew over to the woman.

A man in a top hat with a mourning ribbon came down one of the small, narrow, steeply descending lanes which led to the harbour. He looked around him attentively. Everything upset him. He winced at the sight of some garbage in a corner. There were fruit peels on the steps of the monument. As he went by, he pushed them off with his cane. He knocked on the door of the parlour, while at the same time taking off his top hat with his black-gloved right hand. It was opened immediately, and about fifty small boys, lined up in two rows in a long corridor, bowed to him.

The helmsman came down the stairs, welcomed the gentleman, and led him upstairs. On the first floor he accompanied him around the slight, delicately built balcony surrounding the courtyard, and, as the boys crowded behind them at a respectful distance, both men stepped into a large cool room at the back of the house. From it one could not see a facing house, only a bare gray-black rock wall. Those who had carried the bier were busy setting up and lighting some long candles at its head. But these provided no light. They only made the previously still shadows positively jump and flicker across the walls. The shawl was pulled back off the bier. On it



lay a man with wildly unkempt hair and beard and a brown skin—he looked rather like a hunter. He lay there motionless, apparently without breathing, his eyes closed, although his surroundings were the only thing indicating that it could be a corpse.

The gentleman stepped over to the bier, laid a hand on the forehead of the man lying there, then knelt down and prayed. The helmsman gave a sign to the bearers to leave the room. They went out, drove away the boys who had gathered outside, and shut the door. The gentleman, however, was apparently still not satisfied with this stillness. He looked at the helmsman. The latter understood and went through a side door into the next room. The man on the bier immediately opened his eyes, turned his face with a painful smile towards the gentleman, and said, “Who are you?” Without any surprise, the gentleman got up from his kneeling position and answered, “The burgomaster of Riva.” The man on the bier nodded, pointed to a chair by stretching his arm out feebly, and then, after the burgomaster had accepted his invitation, said, “Yes, I knew that, Burgomaster, but in the first moments I’ve always forgotten it all—everything is going in circles around me, and it’s better for me to ask, even when I know everything. You also presumably know that I am the hunter Gracchus.”

“Of course,” said the burgomaster. “I received the news today, during the night. We had been sleeping for some time. Then around midnight my wife called, ‘Salvatore’—that’s my name—‘look at the dove at the window!’ It was really a dove, but as large as a rooster. It flew up to my ear and said, ‘Tomorrow the dead hunter Gracchus is coming. Welcome him in the name of the city.’”

The hunter nodded and pushed the tip of his tongue between his lips. “Yes, the doves fly here before me. But do you believe, Burgomaster, that I am to remain in Riva?”

“That I cannot yet say,” answered the burgomaster. “Are you dead?”

“Yes,” said the hunter, “as you see. Many years ago—it must have been a great many years ago—I fell from a rock in the Black Forest—that’s in Germany—as I was tracking a chamois. Since then I’ve been dead.”

“But you are also alive,” said the burgomaster.

“To a certain extent,” said the hunter, “to a certain extent I am also alive. My death boat lost its way—a wrong turn of the helm, a moment when the helmsman was not paying attention, a diversion through my wonderful homeland—I don’t know what it was. I only know that I remain on the earth and that since that time my boat has journeyed over earthly waters. So I—who only wanted to live in my own mountains—travel on after my death through all the countries of the earth.”

“And have you no share in the world beyond?” asked the burgomaster wrinkling his brow.

The hunter answered, “I am always on the immense staircase leading up to it. I roam around on this infinitely wide flight of steps, sometimes up, sometimes down, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left, always in motion. From being a hunter I’ve become a butterfly. Don’t laugh.”

“I’m not laughing,” protested the burgomaster.

“That’s very considerate of you,” said the hunter. “I am always moving. But when I go through the greatest upward motion and the door is already shining right above me, I wake



The cloud, not a sign, not an image.

no above and below, no earlier or later, but only relations: distortions, displacements, and shifts, as well as delays, additions, anticipations; in short, a circular suspension of time. Retrospect constitutes what was previously neither visible nor audible. The space of Moses is both founded and opened through the recursive decision to hear a voice in the noise from the burning bush.

The cloud proves to be a reciprocal structure to the burning bush. In no way should it become a sign, like Aron wished for, “a signal to the people” (act II, bar 108g); it must, as Moses demands, remain in the recursive openness of the meteorological, thermodynamic temporality of becoming, beyond the image, as in the desert. Then comes the double traverse: cut and distortion. “L’idée de Moïse, c’est que la traversée du désert est sans fin. C’est l’idée du nomadisme, tout simplement.”<sup>109</sup>

109 Straub/Huillet, “Conversation,” p. 8.

1  
00:00:47,291 --> 00:00:49,833  
[The storyteller.]

2  
00:01:08,541 --> 00:01:11,208  
[Listen.]

3  
00:01:26,583 --> 00:01:29,250  
It went like this —

4  
00:02:02,541 --> 00:02:06,041  
I had wanted this to be a narrative;

5  
00:02:08,791 --> 00:02:11,125  
an anti-apocalypse.

6  
00:03:01,708 --> 00:03:08,250  
The moment that could have saved  
has already been missed.

7  
00:06:42,083 --> 00:06:44,750  
It went like this —

8  
00:06:52,708 --> 00:06:54,916  
A moment —

9  
00:06:55,208 --> 00:06:58,916  
along a fixed point —  
in an ongoing continuum —

10  
00:06:59,791 --> 00:07:03,375  
of decoys, territories — and violence.

11  
00:07:12,000 --> 00:07:15,666  
... I missed the chance to notice —

12  
00:07:15,958 --> 00:07:20,375  
how looking with imagination and longing —

13  
00:07:21,375 --> 00:07:25,541  
at an unremarkable gesture in time —

up on my old boat, still drearily stranded in some earthly stretch of water. The basic mistake of my earlier death smirks at me in my cabin. Julia, the wife of the helmsman, knocks and brings to me on the bier the morning drink of the country whose coast we are sailing by at the time. I lie on a wooden plank bed, wearing—I'm no delight to look at—a filthy shroud, my hair and beard, black and gray, are inextricably intertwined, my legs covered by a large silk women's scarf, with a floral pattern and long fringes. At my head stands a church candle which illuminates me. On the wall opposite me is a small picture, evidently of a bushman aiming his spear at me and concealing himself as much as possible behind a splendidly painted shield. On board ship one comes across many stupid pictures, but this is one of the stupidest. Beyond that my wooden cage is completely empty. Through a hole in the side wall the warm air of the southern nights comes in, and I hear the water lapping against the old boat.

"I have been lying here since the time when I—the still living hunter Gracchus— was pursuing a chamois to its home in the Black Forest and fell. Everything took place as it should. I followed, fell down, bled to death in a ravine, was dead, and this boat was supposed to carry me to the other side. I still remember how happily I stretched myself out here on the planking for the first time. The mountains have never heard me singing the way these four still shadowy walls did then.

"I had been happy to be alive and was happy to be dead. Before I came on board, I gladly threw away my rag-tag collection of guns and bags, and the hunting rifle which I had always carried proudly, and slipped into the shroud like a young girl into her wedding dress. Here I lay down and waited. Then the accident happened."

"A nasty fate," said the burgomaster, raising his hand in a gesture of depreciation, "and you are not to blame for it in any way?"

"No," said the hunter. "I was a hunter. Is there any blame in that? I was raised to be a hunter in the Black Forest, where at that time there were still wolves. I lay in wait, shot, hit the target, removed the skin—is there any blame in that? My work was blessed. 'The great hunter of the Black Forest'—that's what they called me. Is that something bad?"

"It not up to me to decide that," said the burgomaster, "but it seems to me as well that there's no blame there. But then who is to blame?"

"The boatswain," said the hunter. "No one will read what I write here, no one will come to help me. If people were assigned the task of helping me, all the doors of all the houses would remain closed, all the windows would be shut, they would all lie in bed, with sheets thrown over their heads, the entire earth would be a hostel for the night. And that makes good sense, for no one knows of me, and if he did, he would have no idea of where I was staying, and if he knew that, he would still not know how to keep me there, and so he would not know how to help me. The thought of wanting to help me is a sickness and has to be cured with bed rest.

"I know that, and so I do not cry out to summon help, even if at moments—as I have no self-control, for example, right now—I do think about that very seriously. But to get rid of such ideas I need only look around and recall where I am and where—and this I can assert with full confidence—I have lived for centuries." "That's extraordinary," said the

14  
00:07:28,916 --> 00:07:33,875  
would reveal a refuge of imagelessness

15  
00:07:34,250 --> 00:07:38,583  
— and a resonance between  
transformation and death.

16  
00:07:52,708 --> 00:07:55,375  
I had wanted this to be a narrative;

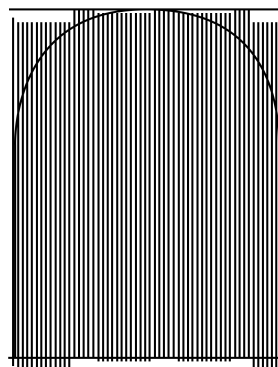
17  
00:07:56,291 --> 00:07:58,875  
an archipelago of resistance.

burgomaster, “extraordinary. And now are you intending to remain with us in Riva?”

“I have no intentions,” said the hunter with a smile and, to make up for his mocking tone, laid a hand on the burgomaster’s knee. “I am here. I don’t know any more than that. There’s nothing more I can do. My boat is without a helm—it journeys with the wind which blows in the deepest regions of death.”

(Kafka, Franz, and Nahum N. Glatzer. *The Complete Stories*. Schocken Books, 1971.)

- ① Levinas, Emmanuel. *God, Death, and Time*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000. 50-53. Web. 8 Apr. 2016.
- ② Marc Chagall, *The Burning Bush* (from the Bible Series), 1958.
- ③ Holl, Ute. *The Moses Complex: Freud, Schoenberg, Straub/Huillet*. Diaphanes, 2017.
- ④ John Denver, transcribed by Becky Weber. *Today* (Lyrics/Music by - Randy Sparks) RCA Records (New York City NY), 1974.



1-6-11

Today

Today while the bloom  
still clings to the vine, I'll  
taste your strawberries I'll drink  
your sweet wine... A million  
tomorrows will all pass away  
ere I forget all the joy that  
is mine today...

I'll be dandy and I'll be a  
raver, you'll know who I'm  
by the songs that I sing..

I'll feast at your table..  
I'll sleep in your lover's..

Who cares what the marrow shall  
bring.

I can't be contented with  
yesterdays glory. I can't live  
on promises winter thru

spring.. Today is my moment

Now is my story..

I'll laugh, I'll  
laugh and I'll cry  
and I sing