

“Virtually Leaving Hell”? About the Status and the Necessity of Philosophy

Paola-Ludovika Coriando (University of Innsbruck)

Abstract

Traditionally, philosophy has always been considered as the most elevated human activity and the culmination of human thinking. However, what accounts for its “necessity”? Could philosophy, perhaps, help human being “escape from hell,” from finitude, and death? And, if yes, in what way? By negating finitude and transforming it metaphysically, or just indicating its place? If classical philosophy, understood as metaphysics, considers the human being as “residing in two worlds,” the postmetaphysical experience concentrates on finitude as such. In this essay, the author examines several positions within metaphysical and postmetaphysical thinking, attempting to delimitate a space for their possible meeting.

I. Introduction

Besides the indisputable presence of several philosophical (especially ethical) topics in the contemporary media, nowadays philosophy as such seems to be a matter only for a few scholars. Even those who are willing to recognize the dignity of philosophical thought, and who do not share the truism that philosophy as such is simply “useless,” are usually not willing to see philosophy as a *necessity* or even an *inevitability*. In light of the (apparent but also factual) detachment from “real life” of numerous philosophical questions, that certainly doesn’t happen without a reason. In addition, since the end of the modern age at the latest, “philosophy” contains a broad variety of different, even contrary ways to assess its objectives and to reach results.

Philosophers do not share those views. The traditional written records, in particular, have repeatedly emphasized not only the *dignity*, but also the *necessity* of philosophy. The fragment of Aristotle’s *Protreptikos*, which was chosen as the motto for this volume, impressively highlights this self-

assessment: “If you ought to philosophize you ought to philosophize; and if you ought not to philosophize you ought to philosophize: therefore, in any case you ought to philosophize.”¹ Nevertheless, the argument which is made here and which tries to justify the *inevitability* of philosophy for all human beings—and not only for a few scholars—does not necessarily seem to be imperative and compelling. If this sentence claims that humans are *in fact* unable to avoid philosophy, it could be argued that concrete life-experience teaches us that most humans are *in fact* very well able to avoid philosophy. Philosophy is (and *in fact* remains), no matter whether legitimately or not, a matter of a few interested individuals, who have either turned philosophy into their profession or who possess the necessary “repose,” but also the necessary intellectual and cultural background, in order to deal with philosophical topics and questions.

Even in light of the philosophical tradition, the almost sophistic-seeming argument of *Protreptikos* seems to be of secondary importance compared to the emphasis that philosophy is the *highest form* and the *highest implementation* of human life. Whether philosophy is practiced by everybody or stays as such a matter of a few, privileged people, this fragment documents notably and clearly an approach, which at least *tends to* inhere in the philosophical self-concept proper.

In the following deliberation, I will initially try to follow this philosophical self-concept, especially the metaphysics of the occidental tradition. Afterwards, I would like to draw attention to the realignment of metaphysics by Immanuel Kant and Martin Heidegger’s concept of the “history of being.” The primary idea of the following sections is to show how the *necessity* and inevitability of philosophy have been justified and how we can still pursue a discourse about the necessity of philosophy in present times.

II. The Necessity of Philosophy in Metaphysics

Since the beginning of philosophical thought in ancient Greece, until modern times, to philosophize counted as the highest implementation of human life. The *bios theoeretikos* was seen as the ideal that accomplishes human life and finds its own destination. This self-concept

¹ *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2:2416–17.

of philosophy may seem more than strange at first sight. Arguably hardly any painter, poet or musician would have claimed this concept for his or her own art or proper vocation. No matter how much they were touched by their own destination. However, starting with Plato philosophers constantly do so. It could simply be concluded that philosophy and modesty are not destined to walk hand in hand through history. This self-concept of philosophy, however, really expresses a lot about the process of philosophizing as such, or at least about the *requirements* of classical philosophizing.

Classical occidental philosophy consistently portrays itself as a rational diffusion of ultimate truths, including the existence of a higher principle, which was identified as god—“the god of the philosophers.” Only from a retro-perspective, does this god seem to be the religiously worshiped god. From that point of view, the immodesty of philosophers is in fact the immodesty of (human) *ratio*, which forced everything into the pattern of its subduing, causative, and finally always well-calculated approach. If *ratio* is understood to be the distinctive characteristic of the human being as an *animal rationale* and if *ratio* possesses the inherent ability to understand “ultimate truths,” it is only logical to claim that being human climaxes in the philosophical application to reality, which aims for highest truths.

The “immodesty” of philosophy is based upon the immodesty of (human) *ratio*. Those led towards a constant confidence, which was not able to see and to tolerate a rupture between rationality and reality. If a human being is understood to be an *animal rationale*, and as the high-point of life between “life” and “being” without a fracture/rupture, but involving a constant compatibility with and *rational accessibility* of “ultimate reasons,” it is only a consequence that the philosophical implementation of *ratio* is understood as the highest destination of humankind: as the ultimate completion of *ratio*, which *in fact* can be practiced by all human being, but is *ideally* “necessary,” in order that one live up to the fullest characteristics of human being.

That humankind is not only rational was not unknown to classical philosophers, even though human moods and feelings were not regarded as phenomena on their own—including a concept of universal dignity—

in the classical self-interpretation of human beings.² But the knowledge of the “other” of the *ratio* often comes up in classical philosophical designs, even though it is often reduced to a simple companion, or even an obstacle towards the straightforward way of understanding. In *Protreptikos* and in the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle, philosophy is also linked with luck. Purely staying in the dimension of the first principles is a special, in fact the highest, form of *hedonism*, which is not comparable to any terrestrial luck.

This initially Platonic, then Aristotelian attitude is typical for all occidental historical traditions and is based upon a socio-historical development, which is neither self-evident nor without problems. The primacy of “theoretical” rationality as opposed to “practical” rationality, and the primacy of rationality and reasoning as such, has not only formed the history of European philosophy, but the self-image of occidental people, having an impact in paving the way for European and planetary history. If not only the “dignity” and the “actual destiny” of mankind is embedded in *theory*, but also the “highest happiness” of humankind is included in philosophical-theoretical reflection, a certain view of humankind is established, which is bound to characterize the hierarchy of human goals and necessities for centuries and millenniums.

The question of the necessity, of the dignity, of the status of philosophy, cannot be isolated from the question of what philosophy actually means according to its traditional self-concept as the highest implementation of human *ratio*. Let us firstly deal with this question, in order to verify why and under which circumstances it has managed to keep the status of the highest activity of the human mind for centuries.

In occidental written records, philosophy is primarily identified with *metaphysics*. Metaphysics with its status as *prima philosophia* is identified as the first and fundamental implementation of *ratio*, which grounds to all further strands and disciplines of philosophical reflection. But what is the ambition of metaphysics, what are its goals?

Since its beginning in the era of Plato, and thematically since the beginning of modern times, metaphysics is divided into *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*. Both forms of metaphysics are

² See by the same author Paola-Ludovika Coriando, *Affektenlehre und Phänomenologie der Stimmungen. Wege einer Deutung des Emotionalen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2001).

founded upon the ambition to come up with a distinctive and absolute characteristic, which is accessible through rationality. Metaphysics has a dimension of “true” being, which is divided by an ontological gap from actual reality. At the same time it can be characterized as a “bridge” towards rationality.

Metaphysica generalis or ontology poses the basic question of being as such and entities, and climaxes in the question of substance, which tries to examine and describe the ultimate basis of reality. Several terms were created and used by metaphysics for being and entities—*idea* (Platon), *ousia* (Aristotle), *substantia* (Thomas von Aquin), *res cogitans* and *res extensa* (Descartes), *Monade* (Leibniz)—only to name the most striking. All of those are attempts to understand the reality, which we are facing, and (which is more crucial) to grasp this reality with all its characteristics of perishability and infirmity, and *founded upon* a higher reality, *in contrast to* empirical reality. The ambition of all metaphysics is the attempt to intellectually reach and name a distinctive basis for human being, including the potentially destabilizing experiences of finiteness and perishability.

That is the basis from which *metaphysica specialis* aims to try to answer basic questions of human existence, above all the three basic questions of the existence of god, the immortality of the human soul and human freedom. While the basic ontological questions of the *metaphysica generalis* may indeed seem as a purely theoretical occupation of a few scholars, the *metaphysica specialis* touches upon topics and areas, which actually concern or at least potentially concern every human being as a human being as such. In its “special” kind of questions, metaphysics becomes *existentially* important. Even though metaphysics as such suppresses this existential level of questions in favor of a purely “rational” (that is, according to its own perception independent from sentiments) way of answering those questions.

Arguably—as an outstanding example—the numerous “proofs” of the continuing existence of the human soul after death may seem to be artificially constructed, but the actual end of human life is an experience which affects every human being. This is irrespective of whether the individual human being is looking for, and possibly finds, a religious answer to this question or if the individual hides behind the superficial indifference, which more and more characterizes our contemporary times.

Let us stay with those questions for a short while and let us exam-

ine their content, in order to verify why philosophy came up with the ambition, which was also due to those types of question, to be the highest implementation of human life.

If a common denominator of all human existence, throughout all cultures and traditions, is to be found, there could be different answers to the question of human *finiteness*, based upon the experience of *narrowness* and *time limits*, which people have come up with in fields such as philosophy, religion, poetry or art. It is noteworthy that the answer to this question does not necessarily have to be a “theoretical” answer.

The Italian sculptor, alpinist and writer Mauro Corona often quoted Antonin Artaud, with a phrase that better describes the experience of human finiteness in all its varieties—the unrest which characterizes human existence—than all existing philosophical and anthropological discourses altogether: “Nessuno ha maiscritto, dipinto, scolpito, fattomusica o quant'altro, se non per uscire di fattodall'inferno.” (“Nobody has ever written, painted, sculpted, made music or did anything else without the desire to actually ascend from hell.”³). To ascend from hell, to leave hell, to “actually” escape from hell, even if only for a few moments, to forget and to transfigure hell: that is according to Artaud and Corona the ultimate reason for all human creation, for all art and extraordinary activities of mankind. Is that not also true for philosophy and, if so, in a very explicit way? Because I hold the opinion that this is true, it is worth further examining the meaning of this “ascent” from and this “leaving” of hell.

If we understand the phrase “the ascent from hell” only from an on-

³ Artaud writes: “Nobody has ever written or painted, graved or modelled, constructed or invented anything, if not, to escape from hell.” (Antonin Artaud, *Van Gogh le suicidé de la société* (Editions Gallimard, 1974)) Mauro Corona, quotes this phrase, slightly modified, among others in Mauro Corona, *Confessioni Ultime* (Mailand: Chiarelettere, 2013). See also Mauro Corona in *Corriere della Sera*, 21 luglio 2009, 21: “Antonin Artaud disse: «Nessuno ha mai scritto, dipinto, scolpito, fatto musica o quant' altro, se non per uscire di fatto dall' inferno». Aggiungerei altre cose per uscire dall' inferno ma ne basta una: salire montagne. Si va sulla vetta di un monte non per pompare i muscoli bensì per alzarci dal pantano, sollevarci un poco, uscire fuori con la testa come talpe a primavera. E da lì respirare, annusare l' aria, guardare in alto più vicini a quell' alto. E poi, proprio come talpe, tornare nelle tenebre.”

tic-existential point of view, or even only psychologically, we will only be able to grasp a superficial meaning, of what it actually expresses. An ontic-existential or psychological interpretation of this phrase might be as follows: through art or other extraordinary activities man is searching for the sense of his *own existence*. The individual “departs from hell,” by overcoming oneself, by proving oneself by transfiguring reality through art. In this ontic meaning “hell” is not more than a subjective state, which might be found in unfortunate circumstances, of a certain biography, in a concrete pain, in negative experiences of human existence, by which some people are more deeply affected than others.

But we can also understand this phrase in a different way. Maybe “hell” is not referring to biographical occurrences, but to human being as such. If that’s the case, then, the “ascent” from hell, which is mentioned in this phrase, the “escaping” from hell, would need to be understood not in an ontic-existential way, but in a fundamental way.

A lot of arguments can be brought up in favor of this interpretation of the phrase. Even the “happiest,” the most “successful” and most fulfilled human existence will be confronted with the actual end of life—with the *knowledge* of the proper and foreign death, with the carrying out and the bearing of that knowledge and that experience. The “hell” which Artaud and Corona are talking about is not limited to a few negative experiences, which man may or may not have. In the face of death, life as such is “hell”: *hell means to be aware of the finite nature of human existence*.

The *metaphysica specialis* tries to provide an answer to this fundamental human experience—an answer that exceeds an individual’s scheme of life, an answer that in its specific embodiment was meant to be a matter of “a few scholars,” which is however subliminally tied to the basic experience of Christian religion and has therefore shaped the self-concept of occidental humanity until the beginning of modern times.

If occidental humanity, just like humans originating from other eras and cultures, do actually know “hell” from their own life-experience, the human being has “always” been able to leave hell thanks to the *ratio* and its cognitive abilities, which enable the human mind to reason. This is not only true from an existential perspective, but also from a rational-ontological point of view. For occidental classical philosophy, *ratio* is the liberating force, which releases humans from the “hell” of finiteness and the experience of death. That is the case because

ratio leads the human being—in fact all human beings no matter if they know it or not—to a different reality where death has already been overcome, not only in a religious way but beforehand and universally, in fact *apriori*, because death is rationally transcended and defeated.

Could philosophy be accredited with a higher honor, a higher necessity, than the capacity to let man rise from hell *ontologically*, in a more universal and more fundamental way than all kinds of art and even faith?

III. The Necessity of Philosophy in Kant's Critique of Metaphysics and the Consequences for the Human Self-Concept

The above mentioned self-concept of *ratio* was not meant to be taken as accompanying humankind through all chapters of human history. As is widely known, the first rupture of this human self-concept, coincides with the attempt to give up the primacy of theoretical reasoning, in favor of a shift from the basic questions of *metaphysica specialis* to practical philosophy. Kant's concept of a realignment of metaphysics initiates the end of *metaphysica specialis*. The "transcendental dialectic" may simply seem as an educated discourse with a certain conveyed line of arguments. The truth, however, is that it justifies an attitude which will reach up to Nietzsche's anti-metaphysics. Kant writes in *The Critique of Pure Reason*:

But now this kind of cognition is in a certain also to be regarded as given, and metaphysics is actual, if not as a science yet as a natural predisposition (*metaphysica naturalis*). For human reason, without being moved by the mere vanity of knowing it all, inexorably pushes on, driven by its own need to such questions that cannot be answered by any experiential use of reason and of principles borrowed from such a use; and thus a certain sort of metaphysics has actually been present in all human beings as soon as reason has extended itself to speculation in them, and it will also always remain there. And now about this too the question is: How is metaphysics as a natural pre-disposition possible? i.e., how do the questions that pure reason raises, and which it is driven by its own need to answer as well as it can, arise from the nature of universal human reason.⁴

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 147 (B21-2). The the original quote reads as follows: "Nun ist aber diese *Art von*

Since Kant, the dilemma of human reasoning stems from the fact that it brings up a bulk of questions, which reach beyond its abilities. This is because Kant limits the “abilities” of reasoning (concerning the answering of questions), but not its posing of questions. In this manner, Kant launches a disruption, which will play an important role for a new human self-concept.⁵ According to Kant the essence of the human being as such, but also the essence of philosophizing is to be found in this rupture. Philosophy, its essence, its necessity is based upon the rupture between (human) tasks and the limits of the (human) ability of theoretical reasoning, which is not able to fulfill certain tasks.

Kant doesn’t determine philosophy as such, but metaphysics as naturally given. This does not only indicate that every individual as a human being possesses the ability to philosophize, but it also determines the necessity

Erkenntnis in gewissem Sinne doch auch als gegeben anzusehen, und Metaphysik ist, wenngleich nicht als Wissenschaft, doch als Naturanlage (metaphysicanaturalis) wirklich. Denn die menschliche Vernunft geht unaufhaltsam, ohne daß bloße Eitelkeit des Vielwissens sie dazu bewegt, durch eigenes Bedürfnis getrieben bis zu solchen Fragen fort, die durch keinen Erfahrungsgebrauch der Vernunft und daher entlehnte Prinzipien beantwortet werden können, und so ist wirklich in allen Menschen, sobald Vernunft sich in ihnen bis zur Spekulation erweitert, irgendeine Metaphysik zu aller Zeit gewesen, und wird auch immer darin bleiben. Und nun ist auch von dieser die Frage: *Wie ist Metaphysik als Naturanlage möglich?* d. i. wie entspringen die Fragen, welche reine Vernunft sich aufwirft, und die sie, so gut als sie kann, zu beantworten durch ihr eigenes Bedürfnis getrieben wird, aus der Natur der allgemeinen Menschenvernunft?”

⁵ The whole body of metaphysics is anthropocentric. We do not know if other living creatures besides us humans experience the finiteness of life and are able to put this experience into thoughts—maybe in a way that’s hidden from us. That animals may have “human like” experiences concerning their own finiteness was alien to the horizon of metaphysics, but also to Kant’s way of thinking; and still today we know way too little about non-human animals, in order to claim of ourselves that we are able to give an answer to this question—whether one way or another. We can solely talk about ourselves—about our own situation: Philosophy essentially is always anthropology in the way that it is occupied with the analysis of the character of the human being. *Philosophie ist im Wesentlichen immer Anthropologie im Sinne einer Wesenserörterung des Seins des Menschen.* That’s how it shall stay in this essay as well.

of philosophy as a means to consider those ideas of pure reasoning, containing subject matters that can never be theoretically determined.

The shift of the responses of *metaphysica specialis* to the field of *practical* reasoning seems to be a refusal of the ambition of the “logos” to answer the basic questions of human existence purely based on rational reasoning. On the other hand, however, Kant explicitly links those questions to the essence of humankind, in such a way that being human is unimaginable without any theoretical or practical link to those basic questions.

The further development of occidental philosophy—at the latest since Nietzsche—bans the basic questions of the *metaphysica specialis* from the process of thinking and even classifies them as “erroneous.” This constitutes a fundamental disruption in the self-concept of humankind. The outcome of this development is still effective today, even in an intensified manner.

Starting with Nietzsche, this reflection upon the character of the human being, does not only lead to a new definition of human character. It furthermore opens the view on the *historicity* of humankind, but possibly also towards a way of *renouncement*.

It is the renouncement of the all-embracing *ratio*, the renouncement of a former conception of the human being’s character, the renouncement of the all-encompassing confidence, which has for more than 2000 years, with all (and not only positive) outcomes, helped to shape the self-image of occidental people (and also planetary history, due to the planetary extension of occidental influence).

After Nietzsche, it is especially Heidegger’s “history of being” that tries to conceptualize the essence of humankind and of being, but also the essence and the necessity of philosophy in an epoch-making way. Therefore, it is worth to follow further our question about the self-image of philosophy and the necessity of philosophical thought from the form of thinking associated with the “history of being.”

IV. The Human Being and its History—the “Differently Beginning” Necessity of Philosophy

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger examines the basic characteristics of human existence with a focus on individual mine-ness. In the thirties of the last century, however, the groundbreaking “event-based” thinking, leads to a plurality of human self-interpretations, which are all based upon the history of being as such, in its eras, devotion to oneself or in

withdrawing from oneself. The self-interpretation of the human being as an *animal rationale* (together with its metaphysical implications, which were still effective in Kant’s reasoning), does not, from the point of view of the “history of being,” constitute (à la Nietzsche) a misapprehension that needs to be overcome. Instead, it signifies a certain form of *withdrawal of being*. Its outcome determines the occidental way of thinking and occidental history since Plato and increasingly since early modern age. But also this way of thinking and really particularly this way of thinking—and that brings us back to our initial question—considers the necessity of philosophy. It is a genuinely different necessity, which is concerned here, especially a genuinely different philosophical constitution. The necessity of philosophical thought, however, is also compelling in the “history of being” way of thinking, just like in the classical tradition. Here as well, this necessity depends upon the character of the human being, the “character,” however, is approached from a *historical* point of view.

A lot of evidence could be brought to bear for Heidegger’s reestablishment of the “necessity” of philosophy. In order to do so, the whole body of his hermeneutical phenomenology would need to be discussed, including the “immanent change,” which has been drawing the “history of being” towards the center of consciousness since the thirties of the last century. Due to the fact that this is not possible in this discussion, we are opting for a direct proof, which allows us to immediately enter the thematic complex with which we are dealing.

In the *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, which is considered to be his main input to the way of thinking, which is determined by the “history of being,” Heidegger writes as follows:

17. The necessity of philosophy

All necessity is rooted in hardship. As the first and utmost mindfulness of the truth of be-ing and of the be-ing of truth, philosophy lies in the first and utmost hardship.

This hardship is what drives man round among beings and brings him first of all in front of beings in the whole and into the midpoint of beings, thus bringing man to himself—and thus in each case letting history begin or founder.

What drives man round is his thrownness into beings, a thrownness which determines him as the thrower of being (of the truth of be-ing)...

The necessity of philosophy consists in the fact that as mindfulness it does

not have to eliminate that hardship but rather must persevere in it and ground it, i.e., make it the ground of man's history.⁶

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⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*. Translated by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega - Neu, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 2012, p.p. 61. Published in German as Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe 65: Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, edited by F.-W. Herrmann. Klostermann, Frankfurt a. M. 1989, p. 45; the original text reads as follows „17. Die Notwendigkeit der Philosophie
Alle Notwendigkeit wurzelt in einer Not. Die Philosophie als die erste und äußerste Besinnung auf die Wahrheit des Seyns und das Seyn der Wahrheit hat ihre Notwendigkeit in der ersten und äußersten Not.
Diese Not ist Jenes, was den Menschen im Seienden umtreibt und ihn zuerst vor das Seiende im Ganzen und in die Mitte des Seienden und so zu sich selbst bringt und damit jeweils Geschichte anfangen oder untergehen läßt.
Dieses Umtreibende ist die Geworfenheit des Menschen in das Seiende, die ihn zum Werfer des Seins (der Wahrheit des Seyns) bestimmt. [...] Die Notwendigkeit der Philosophie besteht darin, daß sie als Besinnung jene Not nicht beseitigen, sondern ausstehen und begründen, zum Grund der Geschichte des Menschen machen muß.“

⁷ See Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989), 32; translation modified. For the original text, see Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*. Gesamtausgabe Band 65. Ed. by F.-W. by Herrmann (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1989), 45: “17. Die Notwendigkeit der Philosophie. Alle Notwendigkeit wurzelt in einer Not. Die Philosophie als die erste und äußerste Besinnung auf die Wahrheit des Seyns und das Seyn der Wahrheit hat ihre Notwendigkeit in der ersten und äußersten Not.
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Dieses Umtreibende ist die Geworfenheit des Menschen in das Seiende, die ihn zum Werfer des Seins (der Wahrheit des Seyns) bestimmt. [...]“

The hardship (“*Not*”), which is mentioned here, was not unknown to classical philosophy or more precisely phrased: a *shape* of this hardship was not unknown to classical philosophy and metaphysics. Because the above mentioned hardship is first of all, and generally speaking, the hardship that bothers every man as a human being. Heidegger himself describes this hardship which characterizes the “thrownness” of man into the “essent” and at the same time the hardship, which destines man as the “thrower of the essent.” The “unrest” of being human stems from the fact that man exists as an intermediate link between thrownness and conception. The factuality of life experience (to be born and to die) and the necessity to compose a “world” out of this factuality, no matter if this world is existential-individual or historical, is the basic experience of being human. Every era of being human, no matter if explicitly aware of that fact or not, is shaped by this basic experience of the existence: the human being finds himself in his world as factual existence and “designs himself” out of his thrownness. His life succeeds or fails in the tension between what is “given along” (the factual conditions of his existence) and the “given up” (the adopting of and carrying on with factuality).

This structure, which Heidegger described, has never been *explicitly* considered in classical philosophy, because classical philosophy is guided by the human being as an *animal rationale* and doesn’t know the dimension of what Heidegger calls “being-there” (Dasein). Nevertheless, classical philosophy does possess a knowledge about the “thrownness” of the human being in terms of its finiteness and actual dependency upon its world. Elements of this experience even trace back to Plato. However, Platonism, and afterwards the whole of occidental philosophy, have always tried to elevate the experience of finiteness. Classical philosophy has tried to do so by coming up with the concept of a “true world,” where this experience could *rest* and could be *appeased* as the human being detaches and releases himself from encapsulation in actual lived experience and finds his destiny.

However, the hardship which is described in the way of thinking rooted in the history of being is a *different* hardship. It is a hardship that cannot be eliminated. It is a hardship, which, above all, *should not* be

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eliminated. A hardship, which endured and carried out, ought to become *the reason for history*. It is *this particular* hardship and not in the defeat of finiteness, which lays the foundation for necessity of philosophy according to “history of being.”

Philosophy is not anymore necessary in order to help man to overcome its finiteness, but to explicitly guide him towards this finiteness. This guiding into, or better phrased this *shouting into*, finiteness could rescue man from his abandonment of being.

Without going into the texture of “contributions to philosophy,” which is traced back by history of being in a “sixfold texture” (the resonance, the pass, the jump, the foundation, the future ones, the last god). Let us try to understand how the thinking shaped by the “history of being”—this radical denial of the primacy of the *ratio*—is even more radical than, for instance, Nietzsche’s emphasis and justification of the necessity of philosophy.

In the paragraph quoted above it says: “The necessity of philosophy consists in the fact that as mindfulness it does not have to eliminate that hardship but rather must persevere in it and ground it, i.e., make it the ground of man’s history.” Kantian philosophy as well came to the conclusion that man is no longer *able* to “eliminate” and elevate this hardship—in this context understood as the experience of human finiteness—by coming up with a true, rationally accessible reality. Kantian philosophy, however, searched for the answer through a practical approach towards the last questions—the “postulates of pure reason,” which it rated higher than the insights of theory-determined philosophy. Heidegger, on the other hand, says that hardship ought to be “endured” and “justified” through philosophy. It (hardship) ought to become “the reason for human history” and that implies the necessity of philosophy. That means first of all a radical affirmation of human finiteness. In the first instance, that means that philosophy cannot and should not be used to find an exit from “hell”—whether theoretically or practically. On the contrary, it rather ought to point out “hell” and to interpret “hell”: nothing more, but nothing less is demanded from philosophy. Finiteness does not seem to be the boundary anymore, but the proper human destiny.

But “enduring and justifying hardship” tells us even more. It is more than a radical affirmation of actual human finiteness. It names a hardship, which exceeds the individual, actual hardship of facing death and finiteness. It is the historical—history of being—hardship of our

times, which Heidegger tries to think through, through the concept of “abandonment of being.” On the other hand, abandonment of being is a hardship, which has a lot, if not everything, to do with classical metaphysics and the traditional human self-concept guided by ratio, which tried to eliminate the “hardship of finiteness” and to transcend it into a higher reality.

According to Heidegger, “abandonment of being” is not made by humans, just like the possible exit from this hardship. That is why no effort and no “voluntary return” to his “mortality,” as a lost item that was historically neglected by the human being, is demanded from him. On the other hand, neither abandonment of being nor the possible “alternate beginning,” which could establish a new essence of the human being and of being as such, are according to Heidegger, a blind faith that rules over the human being. Moreover the human being as being-there is the in-between, in which history takes place as an event between the occurring-enowning throw of being and the occurring design of the human being.⁸ From that point of view, nothing happens “without” the human being, even though nothing happens “through” the human being and solely through his free will.

The event occurs through everything that the human being stands for and that the human being executes through being-there. But Heidegger also sees philosophy as an *excellent* way to execute the event. Because philosophy has the task to “explicitly” elaborate on the essence of human being and of being as such. Philosophy *opens* the ways in which “history” takes place. The *necessity of philosophy* in the “history of being” focused manner of thought is not limited to enduring and debating human finiteness. It consists among other things in the fact that only philosophy is able to “destruct” the history of the classical human self-concept of being, in order to bring to light the hidden layers of and reasons for this self-concept, which are to be understood in terms of the history of being-like and epoch-making. The necessity to philosophize consists in the elaboration of the transition between the “first” metaphysical and the “other” beginning of human history: an elaboration which aims to be more than a pure “diagnostic” discussion about man and his his-

⁸ See Friedrich-Wilhelm v. Herrmann, *Wege ins Ereignis. Zu Heideggers “Beiträgen zur Philosophie”* (Frankfurt a. M., 1994).

tory, but—literary and more radical—an approach to the place where the essence of the human being and possibly his future destiny are decided.

V. Does Philosophy Save us from Hell?

Historically there exists broad understandings and interpretations of philosophy: in classical-metaphysical thought, as the highest execution of human *ratio*; in Kantian thought, as the division between theoretical and determining interpretation of reality; in Heideggerian thought, as practical-postulating accessing “last questions” in the “history of being,” which led Heidegger to interpret thinking as the transition from the abandonment of being to “other beginning”—just to name three positions, which were briefly discussed above. In all those positions, philosophy seems to be a “necessary” access to questions that worry the human being. In all positions that were discussed earlier lays the reason for this necessity and it is also evidenced in its initial setting.

“Nobody has ever written, painted, sculptured, made music or did anything else without the desire to actually ascent from hell,” says Mauro Corona referring to Antonin Artaud. We pointed out the possibility that this phrase, which may figure as an exemplary guideline for our questions, is not to be understood ontic-existentially but fundamentally. If hell is equal to life in the face of death (the experience of finiteness and perishability), classical metaphysics—and in a different way Kant’s primacy of practical reasoning—has found its own way out of hell. The traditional metaphysical way, which started with Plato, leads from “hell” to finiteness, to a dimension existing above all concrete reality, where finiteness, death and pain are fundamentally ontically overcome. With the doctrine of the soul’s immortality and the rational recognizability of god, but first and foremost in the general fulfillment of a demand for an absolute differentiation, the “hell” of finiteness (the hardship which worries man) seemed to be overcome and defeated. The necessity of philosophy finally was based on the (fulfilled) demand to overcome and defeat finiteness.

All “post-metaphysical” philosophies share a common ground in declining the rational-intellectual claim of this “way out of hell,” whether as an arrogation or as a misapprehension or as an epoch-making shape of withdrawal of being. Heidegger emphasizes that philosophy ought not to eliminate the hardship, but to endure it and to come up with a reason for it (to establish a common ground). Even though the hard-

ship Heidegger talks about is not the hardship of finiteness, but the *abandonment of being*. But the “endurability” and the “establishing of a common ground” of the abandonment of being has a lot to do with “adoption of infinity.” This is because the abandonment of being itself is not a “human construct.” Rather, the reason for the abandonment of being is found in the negation (seemingly, because it is not bearing anything) and the overcoming of this hell, which characterizes human nature through “thrownness” and “reason for nullity.” The metaphysical negation of the “abyss” of infinity evokes the epochal “abyss” of abandonment of being.

That is why in the way of thinking advocated by the “history of being,” the endurability and justification of epochal hardship (of the abyss) includes radical reflection upon human finiteness and human mortality: man should become “the mortal” again.

Is reflection upon the history of being than a return to “hell,” to finiteness? Yes and no.

Yes, because this reflection neglects all efforts to overcome finiteness, in order to neglect it and to transcend it through the design of a different truth, which is portrayed not only existentially or psychologically, but ontologically. This is how it refers back to concrete life experience and is therefore a weakening of the abyss of human existence. To endure and to justify the abyss (the “hell”) therefore means firstly that philosophy should consider the “abyss” from a phenomenological point of view without hastily neglecting it or ignoring it.

The question posed above could as well be answered with a “No,” because the way philosophy is understood within the history of being and its proper necessity, are not (and ought not to be) a pure glancing towards finiteness, towards the abyss, towards “hell” in the human character. The thinking coined by the history of being rather advocates for an openness of mind, which *endures* finiteness phenomenological *without giving it an absolute meaning*. The phenomenological era, which denies the escape from a “thing itself” towards far away and phenomenal realities, is not to be understood as a limitation, but as an *opening*, where finiteness does not “compose” itself as the ultimate truth, but where it *endures itself* and *thereby* opens itself for the *unavailable* of a devotion of the “rescuing” (in the language of the late Heidegger the rescuing could be thought of as the flashing of the four-fold in the middle of the “positionality”).

The rescuing factor in hardship does not serve as a possible *subject* of a philosophical interpretation. Neither the composition of the rescuing factor, nor the probability or improbability of its appearance may be researched philosophically. The “rescuing” factor seems rather to be a gift of a moment of “free sight,” which withdraws itself from all means of verification. The finiteness, the abyss doesn’t rescue itself, least of all through “argumentative” philosophical deliberation.

But philosophy still seems to be necessary in the history of being approach to thinking. It even seems, to a certain degree, to be the turn of hardship. That is because philosophy has the task to refrain from interpreting “the rescuing factor itself,” but to deliberate upon the *open*, in which the rescuing factor may appear. The task of philosophy is to take a step back to the point where the *way* “out of hell” could become visible. Philosophy, however, is deprived of treading that path, at least if “treading” is understood in a way as if philosophy was able to ever completely acquire the rescuing way and to make it available.

The setting free of the sight of “the rescuing” into one with the renunciation of the acquisition of the possible appearance of “the rescuing” constitutes the necessity of philosophy, but also its indispensability and dignity.

Translated from German by Tim Graewert (University of Sofia)