

Death as a Concept for Hegel and Heidegger: Between the Context of Phenomenology of Spirit and Being and Time

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Abstract. This article analyses the concept of death as presented in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Heidegger's *Being and Time*. For the introduction of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the author explores the interconnectedness of death and life. Additionally, in the section on *Self-Consciousness*, the author explains the logical process of the relationship between dominance and subservience. It becomes evident that death plays a significant role in shaping life, and it is through this relationship that spirit emerges. In Heidegger's book, authenticity is a result of death, which holds great importance in Dasein's life process, as it helps man overcome a state of stagnation in ordinary experiences. This essay aims to clarify the existential states and emotions experienced by Dasein that are closely intertwined with the concept of death. Below, three sections will be presented: Cognition of death, Emotions related to death, and the Authenticity that Dasein achieves through confronting death. This essay aims to offer a comprehensive perspective on the significant impact of death on the fundamental nature of life, as well as the strong correlation between death and life as discussed in the works of Hegel and Heidegger. The article seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the existential importance of death in these two philosophical progresses.

Keywords: Dasein; Death; Heidegger; Hegel.

1. Introduction

Death is one of the key concepts in the history of Philosophy. It is occupying a place in Hegel's and Heidegger's philosophical system, which is revealed in *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Being and Time*. In Hegel's book, death involves a typical concept that has been discussed through the development of Philosophy, which is Potentiality and actuality [1]. The concept of potentiality should be traced back to Aristotle's system. In his theory, there are two types of potentialities, the first potentiality of matter, which is the base of the development of existence [2]. For instance, potentiality of seed is to be flower; but this potentiality is still a possibility, seed need to take nutrition and water to turn it into actuality, which is flower. The second means the potentiality in form, which is the potentiality of spirit. Spirit is the motivational power and essence of life, which makes the life have the ability to move and act. Sensation, thought, willing, and actions are all related to potentiality of spirit. There is a concept must be explained explicitly, which is the adequacy of actualization of potentiality. The complete actualization means to fully develop every aspect of the spirit. However, it is in ideal state, most of the existence can only be partially actualized, which is insufficient actualized. For instance, a normal man may unable to actualize its potentiality of vision due to watching TV too much and causing myopic eye. By self-developing, education, and other ways to do self-improvement, the existence can reach its own goodness and well-being.

In Kant's philosophy, potentiality means the ability of free will. People can achieve the actuality through their rational choosing and actions. This ability of free will is the basement of human's morality and ethics [3]. However, his potentiality is the potentiality of the subject, rather than mere entity in Aristotle's philosophy. Hegel extended the process of how potentiality transfers into actuality. The non-actuality which is introduced by him demonstrates that potentiality is not only the state which is not achieved by existence, but also the contradiction and incompleteness of existence. Non-actuality is part of Potentiality, and existence need to solve these contradictions and conflict to reach factuality. In his portion, the content will be separated into two parts. The first part will discuss

the dialectic relation of life and death from the introduction of *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The second part will expound the dialectic of Master-slave dialectics, which illustrates the effect of death in the interrelationship of consciousness.

From another perspective, in *Being and Time*, death is also need to be understood in relation to existence. Dasein, the state of existence of human, has an ontological structure that is ahead-of-itself, which means there is something that is always ahead of Dasein, and Dasein is continuously chasing it. Death is structured based on the concept of end point of Dasein and the thing that ahead of it. In Heidegger's portion, the first part will discuss the death as absolute negation, inevitability, and possibility of impossibility. The second part will be Everydayness, Falling, and Anxiety, which are the key concept of Dasein in which how Dasein relates itself to death. The third part will be the Authenticity which Dasein gains from the death.

2. Death in *Phenomenology of Spirit*

2.1. The Dialectic relation of Death and Life

By its famous passage calling death as non-actuality yet sustaining itself, the introduction of *Phenomenology of Spirit* reveals the dialectic relation of life and death [4]. They are internally and mutually containing each other rather than repelling each other, which forms a structure like Mobius strip. The strength of life is not destroying death and being the absolute life, which can preserve in the world forever. Alternatively, the way it demonstrates its strength by maintaining itself in death, the absolute power of negation. Beauty powerless as it will be destroyed in the invasion of death. For, instance, flower, one of the matters which contains beauty, will fade and losing its attraction during the procedure of life and happening of death. Flower's life can keep itself exist in the world, but the beauty will vanish quickly.

Death here is the inorganic structure, and life is the organic structure. Life builds itself upon the inorganic structure. In human body, bones must be the most obvious inorganic structure of our body, and it constitutes the overall arrangement of our body, which allows the organic structure such as different organs to work on this foundation. These organs need to sublimate other objects to hold its presence, and the basis of the activity are the representations of death. Life needs to maintain its existence in other's death on the basis of death, and death needs to present itself according to the actions of life. Life and death are these paradoxical things, which wholly desired to destroy each other. However, the reason they can exist and being distinguished is due to the conflicts between them. During the process of rival, their strains of structure can be extended.

To life, death is the absolute negation of it, and this negation makes consciousness to sublimate others as well as itself to complete the internal transcendence of itself, which should be distinguished from the outer one such as the power of God or fate. This transcendence is spirit which leads consciousness to truth. However, the path leads to the truth is full of despair and suffering, as the power of death is tremendous, life will be engulfed by it. The appearance of loss of life is Depression; the patient is facing the death directly, without the intermediate of the life, so they will not generate desire to the objective world, and fall into the embracing of death.

If the consciousness transfers into spirit with the unity of death, it will become a general being; as an abstract logic being it is at a higher place in the process of dialectics, and it is not the existence of a specific one, but rather the being of a whole category, which is universal. Lastly, death opens the true questioning into consciousness, which makes the subjective idealism impossible; also, this sheer negation forces consciousness to question the objective world and establishes the foundation of the modern philosophy. "I think therefore I am." This famous quote from Descartes illustrates that even we can negate the outer world, we still can not question the existence of thinking subject, which reveals the dialectic unity of death and life.

2.2. The Master-Slave Dialectic

As consciousness can only obtain satisfaction in another consciousness, they will compete and confront with each other to gain the approval. In this situation, master is the one who overcomes the fear of death and win the recognition of others. Therefore, master is the being-for-itself, as it doesn't need to exist by depending on others. It is independent and self-sufficient. Slave is the one who submits to the fear of death, who need to depend on a consciousness of other. It is not being approved by other, so it is incomplete and thrive for its completeness during the action. However, the essence of this dialectic is that master will transform to slave, and slave will gain its mastery status in laboring. As master wins the recognition of others, he doesn't need to work by himself to maintain his life, therefore, his relation to other objects is mediated by slave. In this relation, although the mater owns the independent and whole consciousness, he still need slave to hold the existence of himself. "The master likewise relates himself to the thing mediately through the servant."

Here, the master is abstract and complete; this wholeness provides the independence and truthfulness to master, however, it also cuts down the path which connect things and this subject. Thus, master is not directedly connecting to the things, and it is less important compared to the slave, as it cannot influence the object world immediately. Slave reveres his master, as he owns the acceptance and approvals from other, so he cancels his initiatives, believing that his true consciousness is coming from the master; therefore, it becomes the existence who depends on the master.

The instability of life is obtained by slave in his incomplete, empty, and rootless life, as the death from master may fall in any time, just like the sword of Damocles. This fear forces slave to actively project his actions, which introduces the wisdom to slave. The incompleteness of slave provides the motivations for him to pursue the truth, and master is unable to act this way, as his consciousness is already getting the wholeness. Master here becomes stationary, as he loses the power to move, so it transforms to a thing, which is parasitic on slave, and slave becomes the master who can dominate the life of the original master.

Originally, slave becomes the accessory of the master due to his fear of death, however, during the process of laboring with things and struggling for surviving, he realizes the instability of life which is generated from death. In his realization, death is included in life in the way of fear, which motivates him to autonomically project his actions that establishes his future. Therefore, death is internally contained by life, which drives slave converting from being-in-itself to being-for-itself. In this procedure of interacting with things, slave gains his independence and changes from master's tool into an authentic, separated consciousness.

3. Death in Being and Time

Death is one of the most important topics in Heidegger's works [5]. In his statement, death is the key to helping Dasein to get "Authenticity" from "Everydayness". It is crucial to elucidate the different emotional states of Dasein, which reveals and introduces death into Dasein. Therefore, this part can be divided into three main parts. The first part is the cognition of death which discusses death itself as absolute negation, inevitability, and the possibility of impossibility. The second part is Everydayness, Falling, and Anxiety, which are the three vital concepts of Dasein that relate to death. The third part is the explanation of Authenticity itself.

3.1. Inevitability and Possibility

Nevertheless, before delving into the main body, there is a fundamental argument about Dasein itself that Dasein is incomplete: "As long as Dasein is as an entity, it has never reached its 'wholeness' [6]." Something is always staying outside of Dasein, keeping itself in its potentiality-for-being or ability-to-be, in another word, this "something" is continuously ahead-of-itself, which means Dasein left a part of itself in the world and Dasein is trying to reach it in all time. The ahead-of-itself directs Dasein to its ownmost possibility-Death, which is the fundamental function of Dasein. Therefore, Dasein is impossible to experience wholeness as "Dasein". Death is the condition for our ontological totality

and wholeness. Dasein is a unique entity that is different from other kinds of entities. In death, Dasein changes into a different entity which is like presence-at-hand, therefore, death is the absolute negation of Dasein.

Dasein has always existed for itself, in other words, Dasein is aware of its “Mineness”, which can be distinguished from other kinds of entities. This mineness is the anchor point of Dasein, which helps Dasein to engage in the world and gain the ontological structure which is being-in-the-world. Mineness is destroyed in death, it is impossible for us to have consciousness in death. However, Dasein obtains its wholeness in death, and it will change from Dasein into “no-longer-Dasein”. Death is the end of Dasein, and it is also the beginning of “no-longer-Dasein”, which is like presence-at-hand, as it only has a spatio-temporal extension, causal power, and capacities such as other physical matter. However, it is more than just presence-at-hand as it is transformed from Dasein, which means at the part of the determinateness, it has more than just presence-at-hand which is the loss of life of Dasein. However, this change and death are unable to be experienced by Dasein itself.

To Dasein, death is inevitable, but also a kind of possibility, which is the possibility of impossibility; also, death is private to Dasein. Death is most determined things in Dasein’s life: “Dying is something that every Dasein itself must take upon itself at the time [6].” It must be explicit that dying and death are two completely different concepts in Heidegger’s theory. Dying means that Dasein is facing its ownmost possibility-death; in this situation, dying is a state of Dasein, and Dasein must take death as its most important responsibility.

Furthermore, death is a unique thing. Dasein adapts to represent a thing by using simile and metaphor. However, death is a phenomenon that is unrepresentative. Falling, being drowned, and shooting, are all the ways that lead Dasein to death, but not the representations of death. Thus, death is the unique thing that is alone in the world. Dasein is the possibility of impossibility. Death is possible as Dasein does not know when itself will die. When Dasein gets older and older, the possibility of death is continuously increasing. Death makes Dasein impossible, since Dasein is unable to do anything when it changes to no-longer-Dasein. Therefore, death is the ownmost question of Dasein, as Dasein is incapable of outstripping it.

3.2. Everydayness, Falling and Anxiety

Everydayness is one of the key states of Dasein in daily life. In Everydayness, the subject in the sentence is changed. The “I” is changed to “They”; its individual selfness and own characteristic is dissolved within a group. “They” are always trying to cover up death, and their death is only possibility, which becomes the cases of death. At the moment, death is just possible for them, as they will not die currently, therefore, they can enjoy its illusion of immortality. Even when a Dasein is dead in this group, this Dasein can be reduced to “One”. This “One” is dead, but it is not myself, and “I” am “They”, thus, there is nobody die. Death is easy to cover due to the ambiguity of certainty of death. In the modern industrial society, death seems avoidable; improving medical conditions, increasing necessities supply and better living condition makes the average life expectancy improving. Therefore, it is reasonable for Dasein to question the unavoidability of death, which shows the thrownness that limits Dasein.

In this regard, death is successfully concealed by the reduction which makes Dasein losing itself in “They”. “They” tempted to cover Dasein’s essential ontological structure which is the being-towards-death; in this situation, the anxiety (which will be explained below) is state that forces “They” to get away from fake tranquility. Falling illustrates the absorption of the world. Idle talking and ambiguity are the two movements of “Falling”. These two movements provide a varied world and tranquility for “They” to engage in.

However, this falling brings Dasein into alienation. It will happen when Dasein sink into the diverse and complex world, knowing and exploring everything except its ownmost possibility. This full world provides a complete, whole possibility: “...all the possibilities of its Being will be secure, genuine, and full.” This full possibility is fake as there is no other choice other than to receive the possibility.

There is no second-order possibility that provides for first-order possibility in this full word. Death provides this second-order possibility for Dasein as it can choose to turn to impossibility.

Anxiety is one of the most important ontological structures of Dasein, which provides the phenomenological basis for grasping the primitive totality of being. Anxiety is an opened state-of-mind which means its object or it is facing the nothing or emptiness: "...anxiety does not 'see' any definite 'here' or 'yonder' from which it comes. It's nothing and nowhere." Death fits the standard of the object of anxiety, which has not got any content in its form. Therefore, when Dasein faces death, the anxiety will devour it.

After facing anxiety, Dasein will be isolated, and individualized from the world; the readiness-to-hand is blocked from Dasein, and Dasein is no longer being-in-the-world as it cannot interact with the world; when Dasein faces death, it seems meaningless to do anything that can prevent it, therefore, anxiety forces Dasein to project its possibility, to develop what is truly meaningful to itself. Thus, the state makes Dasein distinguish Authenticity and inauthenticity from the world. Lastly, Fear is established upon anxiety. It is inauthentic as it pulls back the Dasein into the world, letting it be lost in the numerous experiences. Anxiety is different, which makes Dasein start to actively project its possibility rather than rely on others.

3.3. Authenticity: Resoluteness and Anticipatory

Anticipation and resoluteness are the two profound conditions of authenticity of Dasein. It will liberate Dasein from its ultimate possibility which is death. Resoluteness means to plan one's possibility upon one's being-guilty. Dasein has Being-guilty is due to its tendency of Wanting-to-have-a-conscience, which is contained in the resoluteness. In the ontological structure of Being-guilty, Dasein is always feeling anxious and worrying about its state of being, which is treated as constant or eternal. This eternal means that it will not disappear only if Dasein reaches its impossibility.

Due to this recognition, Dasein will be disclosed to find out whether it is truly constant and eternal in ability-for-being. Therefore, Dasein is being-at-an-end, which means Dasein is projecting its possibilities and finding out whether it is always guilty; in this case, it will consider all possibilities in its lifetime. This projecting makes being-at-an-end becoming Being-toward-end, and this projecting is anticipating.

In anticipating, resoluteness becomes authentic, as Dasein is taking responsibility which means it is planning and projecting in the regard of death; this anticipating means living-toward-death. During anticipating death, Dasein will get rid of everydayness, and its first-person pronoun will change back from "They" to "I", which means Dasein gains its being in anticipatory resoluteness, and making itself aware the authenticity which is actively projecting its future and being responsible for it. The absolute transcendence will be obtained through anticipating, and Dasein's state will transform into Being-towards-death.

4. Conclusion

The target of this article is to clarify the concept of death in *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Being and Time*. It is explicit that in both texts, the death is the influential factor which is internally included in the life. In the first book, life is developed on the foundation of death, as it introduces the questioning and wisdom into life. The mastery and servitude are progressed based on the fear of death. Slave transforms into the real master due to their fear and laboring; master becomes the dependent being from the independent one, as it doesn't directly contact with the things, therefore, it need slave to generate the thing it demands. In this process, it changes to the thing which relies on slave. For Heidegger, death reveals one of the most important ontological structures of Dasein, which is authenticity. In this state, Dasein starts to actively project its future rather than just passively receive it fate and responsibilities. The various states and emotions are the intermediary agent between Dasein and death. Anxiety helps Dasein to break through the everydayness and falling in the state that Dasein

can no longer connect to the world, which means it has nothing to do and can only do anticipatory resoluteness.

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