

whom one holds, just as he holds us, hostage. In this regard, one could extend beyond the limits that he ascribes to it, namely, a discourse on “primitives,” a remark of Valéry that I recently came upon in his Preface to Sir James Frazer’s *La Crainte des morts* (Paris, 1934). Speaking of “the ancient belief that the dead are not dead, or are not quite dead,” Valéry defines Frazer’s project in the following manner: “to represent for us, with numerous examples, what one could call the Politics of the Primitives in their relations with the spirits of the dead.” These fascinating “numerous examples” always describe a crossing of borders: of the border that separates the world of the living from that of the dead, of course, but as soon as the crossing goes in both directions, hin and fro, the same border is more or less than one, and more or less than one from one culture to another.

I am, here, now, reaching the end. If possible.

The concept of *possibility* will allow me, legitimately or not, to weave a certain number of motifs into the existential analysis of death, as it is carried out in *Being and Time*. The only rule would be that of a title and what accompanies it (*Aporias*, Dying—awaiting (one another at) “the limits of truth” [*S’attendre aux ‘limites de la vérité’*]) at the point where it subscribes to the contract of this conference.

A certain thinking of the *possible* is at the heart of the existential analysis of death. (For Heidegger, moreover, it is never very far from the thinking of the heart.) This possibility of the possible brings together on the one hand the sense of the virtuality or of the imminence of the future, of the “that can always happen at any instant,” one must expect it, *I am expecting it, we are expecting it, and on the other hand*, the sense of ability, of the possible as that of which I am capable, that for which I have the power, the ability, or the potentiality. These two meanings of possibility co-exist in *die Möglichkeit*. At the end of this “*Abgrenzung* (of the Existential Analysis of Death with Respect to Possible Other Interpretations)” (§49), hence with respect to what we have called the other prob-

lematic closures, Heidegger suggests a sort of diagnosis. Remarking upon the insufficiency of all these problematics, this diagnosis therefore traces a general line of delimitation. These problematics neglect, forget, and misrecognize the essence of *Dasein*. *Dasein* is not an entity that is here in front of me or that I can put my hands on, like a substantial object, *als Vorhandenes*. Instead, the essence of *Dasein* as entity is precisely the *possibility*, the being-possible (*das Mögliche*). In other words, because they exclude or do not recognize this strange dimension of the possible, all these problematic closures lock *Dasein* into an ontological determination that is not its own, that of the *Vorhandensein*. And if they lock it up, that is already in order to give in to a confusion between death and an end leveled by the average, mediocre, and leveling everydayness of *Dasein*. This confusion leads to speaking nonsense; it leads all these bio- or thanato-anthropo-theological problematics toward arbitrariness. In order to avoid this arbitrariness, one must come back to an ontological determination of the kind of being that *Dasein* is and to an ontological determination of the limit that separates *Dasein* from *Vorhandensein* and from *Zubandensein*. In this way, to put it in a word and all too quickly, if the limit that passes between these three types of entity, *Dasein*, *Zubandensein*, and *Vorhandensein*, was not guaranteed (as I have tried elsewhere to suggest is the case, particularly in “The Hand of Heidegger”), then this whole discourse on death would risk losing something of its fundamentality (but I leave this argument aside for the moment because it relates to our subject in too mediated a way).

If being-possible is the being proper to *Dasein*, then the existential analysis of the death of *Dasein* will have to make of this *possibility* its theme. Like an example, the analysis of death is submitted to the ontological law that rules the being of *Dasein*, whose name is “possibility.” But death is possibility par excellence. Death exemplarily guides the existential analysis. And this is precisely what happens in the pages that immediately follow the delimitation (*die Abgrenzung*).

It is therefore necessary to isolate two typical series of ontological

statements concerning possibility. They are articulated with each other; they supplement and engender each other, like the two moments of a single aporetic sentence.

The first statements are assertions and characterize death as *Dasein's* most proper possibility. Being-possible is proper to *Dasein* as entity, and death is the most proper possibility of this possibility. This typical statement distributes itself, modulates itself, and is argued in many ways, but its recurrence gives its rhythm to the entire ending of the chapter; that is, the four long paragraphs or subchapters (§§50–53). This possibility of being is not a simple characteristic to be noted or described. In its essential and constant imminence, it must be *assumed*; one can and one must testify to it; and the testimony is not a mere constative report: the statements of the existential analysis are originally prescriptive or normative. More precisely, they analyze an irreducible prescriptivity, which itself stems from being as being-possible, but they do so in the mode of phenomenological attestation (this is the considerable problem of *Bezeugung* that I signaled too quickly above): “Death is a possibility-of-being that *Dasein* itself has to take over [*zu übernehmen*] in every case. With death, *Dasein* awaits itself [*s’at-tend lui-même, steht sich . . . bevor*, “stands before” in Macquarrie and Robinson] in its ownmost potentiality-for-being” (p. 250).

What am I translating here, in a slightly strange way, by “awaits itself” [*s’at-tend*]? In the French grammatical construction *s’at-tend*, where the untranslatability of the idiom can produce effects of shibboleth, several transitivities intersect and proliferate. One, not very common, seems to be a reflexive construction with no object properly speaking, with no other object toward which to tend than oneself. (One simply awaits oneself [*on s’attend soi-même*]: I await myself, and nothing else; I myself await myself in myself; and this is the most identifiable and most identifying self-relation, i.e., the ego’s memory or promise of itself.) The other syntax of transitivity relates to [à] something, indeed, to something completely other: one is expecting [on s’attend à]—and my subtitle (*Mourir—s’attendre aux “limites de la vérité”*) leaves this instability in movement: to expect the limits [*s’attendre aux limites*], to expect

meeting the limits [*s’attendre à rencontrer les limites*] and to await oneself at the limits [*s’attendre soi-même aux limites*], to have a meeting with oneself in this place, in these parts [*parages*] that one calls the “limits of truth,” in the vicinity of these limits. But this instability can even lead us elsewhere, and in truth can lead us to the limits from which the instability itself proceeds, at the very origin of the destabilizing movement.

How? First, let us summarize. One thus can: (1) Await oneself, await oneself in oneself. (2) As long as the waiting can only be directed toward some other and toward some *arrivant*, one can and must wait for something else, hence expect some other—as when one is said to expect *that* something will happen or that some other will arrive. In both cases the *awaiting oneself* [*le s’attendre soi-même*] and the *expecting* [*le s’attendre-à*] or the *expecting-that* [*le s’attendre-que*] can have a notable relation to death, to what is called—death (it is there, and maybe only there, that one ultimately *awaits oneself* or *expects*, that one *expects that*; and it is only here that the *awaiting oneself* may be no other than the *expecting the other*, or *that* the other may arrive). (3) But there is a third and maybe first possibility in this grammatical structure: we can wait for each other [*s’attendre l’un l’autre, l’une l’autre*], and not only is the reflexive construction of the absolute awaiting *each other* [*s’attendre*] not incompatible, but in fact, it is immediately consonant with the most heterological reference to the completely other. This reference is more heterological than ever—others would say as close as ever to the limits of truth—when the waiting for *each other* is related to death, to the borders of death, where we wait for each other knowing *a priori*, and absolutely undeniably, that, life always being too short, the one is waiting for the other there, for the one and the other never arrive there together, at this rendezvous (death is ultimately the name of impossible simultaneity and of an impossibility that we know simultaneously, at which we await each other, at the same time, *ama* as one says in Greek: at the same time, simultaneously; we are expecting this anachronism and this contretemps). Both the one and the other never arrive together at this rendezvous, and the one who waits for the other there, at this

border, is not he who arrives there first or she who gets there first. In order to wait for the other at this meeting place, one must, on the contrary, arrive there late, not early. Taking into consideration the anachronism of the waiting for each other in this countertemps of mourning would certainly change the commonly and hastily assumed premises of the triangular debate that we assigned to Freud, Heidegger, and Levinas: with respect to death, the death of oneself, and the death of the other.

The *s'attendre* that I have used in order to translate Heidegger's sentence involves imminence, indeed, the anxious anticipation of something, but also the double or rather triple transitivity (non-reflexive and reflexive) of the expecting, the waiting for *something* that will happen as the completely other than oneself, but of waiting (for each other) by awaiting oneself also [*s'attendre en s'attendant du même coup soi-même*], by preceding oneself as if one had a meeting with a oneself that one is but does not know. The German sentence says, "Mir dem Tod streht sich das Dasein selbst in seinem eigensten Sein können bevor." Martineau translates *steht bevor* by *se précède* [precedes itself] ("Avec la mort, le Dasein se précède lui-même en son pouvoir-être le plus propre"; with death Dasein precedes itself in its most proper being-able). Vezzen translates *steht bevor* by a *rendez-vous*, has a rendezvous ("Avec la mort le Dasein a rendez-vous avec lui-même dans son pouvoir être le plus propre"; with death Dasein has a rendezvous with itself in its most proper being-able). Macquarrie and Robinson remind us of another connotation of being-before-itself when they translate it more literally by "stands before itself" ("With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality for being"). With death, *Dasein* is indeed *in front of itself, before itself (bevor)*, both as before a mirror and as before the future: it awaits itself [*s'attend*], it precedes itself [*se précède*], it has a rendezvous with itself. *Dasein* stretches [*se tend*], bends toward [*se tend vers*] its most proper being-able, offers to itself [*se tend*] its most proper being-able; it offers it to itself [*se le tend*] as much as it bends toward it [*tend vers lui*], as soon as the latter is nothing other than itself. What is most important is this *in seinem eigensten Sein können*—and Heidegger

underlines the *eigensten*, the most proper. Further on, he repeats the same expression, and he underlines it again a little later, near the word *Beworstand*, which echoes *steht bevor*: "So enthüllt sich der Tod als die *eigenste, unbezügliche, unüberholbare* Möglichkeit. Als solche ist er eine *ausgezeichneter* Beworstand"; "Thus death unveils itself as the most proper, absolute (absolutely non-relational), possibility, a possibility that is not to be outstripped. As such, death is something *distinctively* impending [*l'imminence insigne du s'attendre*]" (pp. 250–51). The self-unveiling (*So enthüllt sich der Tod*) bespeaks a truth of death, indeed a truth as truth of death whose internal limit we shall return to soon. The definition of death as the most proper possibility comes back insistently and in the same terms in §51 (p. 255) and in §52 (pp. 259–60), in order to describe both the anxiety that must be related to this most proper possibility and the fear that keeps the everyday "one" from having the courage or the heart (*Mut*) to approach or confront (*aufkommen*) this anxiety before death. A frightened escape makes one misrecognize the type of nonempirical certainty that guarantees one from death. *Dasein*, then, takes refuge in gossip (*Gerüde*), in tranquilization, in dissimulation, in avoiding demise, and in the race toward the anonymity of "one dies," far from the *Unheimlichkeit*—indeed, all these are structural and not accidental modalities of the *Verfallen*. The values of certainty and truth are essential for this analysis. Without being able to get into it here, let us just note that the certainty of death is described as heterogeneous to any other certainty (apodictic, theoretical, or empirical, that is to say, derived or induced—for example, from the spectacle of the other's demise). As for inauthentic existence, which evades the proper possibility of death, Heidegger defines it as untruth (*Unwahrheit*), both in this context and in others (§§44, 222). When one speaks of dying, everything thus happens at the limits of truth and untruth. In order to approach this limit further, we must move to the second series of statements, which we described above as the aporetic supplement of the first series.

This second series is an aporetic supplement because it is in the same sentence, in the interrupted unity of the same propositional

syntax in a way, that the impossibility adds an impossible complement, a complement of impossibility to possibility. Insofar as it is its most proper possibility, and precisely as such, death is also for *Dasein*, Heidegger ultimately says, the possibility of an impossibility. There are several modalized occurrences of this nuclear proposition. It is often cited. However, its gripping paradox is hardly noted, and the importance of all the successive explosions that it holds in reserve, in the underground of the existential analysis, is probably not measured. It is best to cite several of these occurrences. They will force us to ask ourselves the following questions: Is this an aporia? Where do we situate it? In the impossibility or in the possibility of an impossibility (which is not necessarily the same thing)? What can the possibility of an impossibility be? How can we *think* that? How can we *say* it while respecting logic and meaning? How can we approach that, live, or *exist* it? How does one *testify* to it?

The first occurrence immediately follows the allusion to the *sättend*, to the imminence of the *bevorstehen*, by which *Dasein* stands before death [*sättend*] as its most proper possibility: "This is a possibility in which," Heidegger abruptly adds, "the issue is nothing less than *Dasein's* being-in-the-world [*in-der-Welt-Sein*]. Its death is the possibility of being-able-no-longer-to-be-there [*die Möglichkeit des Nicht-mehr-dasein-könnens*]" (p. 250). Heidegger does not say "the possibility of no longer being able to be *Dasein*" but "the possibility of being able no longer to be there" or "of no longer being able to be there." This is indeed the possibility of a being-able-not-to or of a no-longer-being-able-to, but by no means the impossibility of a being-able-to. The nuance is thin, but its very fragility is what seems to me both decisive and significant, and it probably is most essential in Heidegger's view. Death, the most proper possibility of *Dasein*, is the possibility of a being-able-no-longer-to-be-there or of a no-longer-being-able-to-be there as *Dasein*. And of that *Dasein* is absolutely certain; it can testify to it as to a unique truth that is not comparable to any other. *Dasein* can escape from this truth inauthentically (improperly) or approach it authentically, properly awaiting it [*s'y attendant*] in anxiety and in

freedom. Awaiting it, that is to say, expecting and waiting for death [*s'attendant à la mort*] and waiting for itself there [*s'y attendant lui-même*]. As Heidegger adds: "As potentiality-for-being, *Dasein* cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of *Dasein*" (§50, p. 250).

Although I cannot do it here, it would be necessary to reconstruct a number of steps taken by Heidegger, particularly the one that concerns the modes of waiting or of anticipating and the "not yet" [*pas encore*] that are proper to *Dasein*. From an ontological point of view, this "not yet" is not the anticipation of a completion or accomplishment. It must be distinguished from what Heidegger calls the *Ausstehen* of the *Ausstand*, a term that is very difficult to translate: it partrakes at the same time of the "delay," the remainder (*Rest*), which indeed is an example of it, the "remaining in waiting" (*restant en attente*, *Vezi*'s translation), the "excess" (*excédent*, *Mar-tineau's* translation), and the "still outstanding" (*Macquarrie* and *Robinson*). This "remaining," this "lack as remaining" (*das Fehlen als Ausstand*), remains, in sum, to be lived, like the piece of a set with which it is homogeneous, the part that is still absent from a whole to be completed, a "sum" in sum. By this token, and insofar as it still belongs to *Zuhandenheit*, what one can wait for, count on, expect as a remainder to be lived, is of a wholly other order than the "not yet" of *Dasein*. In the "not yet" that bends us toward death, the expecting and waiting [*le sättend*] is absolutely incalculable; it is without measure, and out of proportion with the time of what is left for us to live. One no longer reckons with this "not yet," and the sigh that it calls forth does not bespeak the measurable but instead the nonmeasurable: whether it lasts a second or a century, how short will life have been. Through an entirely interior path, which Heidegger does not signal, one then necessarily passes from the ontological "not yet" (*Nach-nicht*), insofar as it says what is, in the indicative, to the "not yet" of prayer and of desire, the murmured exclamation, the subjunctionivity of the sigh: that death not come, *not yet!*

After these steps, Heidegger repeats two more times the proposition that I just cited. He does so according to a different linkage,

indeed, but without ever lending the least attention or the least thematic interest to the logical form of the contradiction or to what goes against meaning or common sense. In the persistence of this apparently logical contradiction (the most proper possibility as the possibility of an impossibility), he even seems to see a condition of the truth, the *condition of truth*, its very unveiling, where truth is no longer measured in terms of the logical form of judgment.

Before Heidegger repeats that death is *the most proper* possibility of Dasein (*eigense* is underlined and the expression *die eigense Möglichkeit* opens, in a slightly liturgical tone, a whole series of paragraphs in subchapter 53, which is devoted, as its title indicates, to the authentic [*eigentliche*] being-toward-death [*Sein zum Tode*]), he emphasizes: “The closest closeness [*die nächste Nähe*] that one may have in being toward death as a possibility, is as far as possible [*so fern als möglich*] from anything actual [*einen Wirklichen*]” (§33, p. 262).

This absolute proximity is the most proper property. But since it is also as far away as possible (*so fern als möglich*), and far from any actual reality, it is the possibility of an impossible, of a nonreal as impossible. Now, in the following sentence the figure of unveiling, that is, the *truth* of this syntax, makes the impossible be, in the genitive form, the complement of the noun or the aporetic supplement of the possible (possibility of the impossible), but also the manifestation of the possible as impossible, the “as” (*als*) becoming the enigmatic figure of this monstrous coupling:

The more unveiledly this possibility gets understood [*Je unverbüllter diese Möglichkeit verstanden wird*], the more purely [*um so reiner*] does the understanding penetrate into it [*advances into, dringt vor*] as the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all [*undelineated by Heidegger: als die der Unmöglichkeit der Existenz überhaupt*].

The *als* means that the possibility is both unveiled and penetrated as impossibility. It is not only the paradoxical possibility of a possibility of impossibility: it is possibility as impossibility. What is thus both unveiled (*unverbüllt*) and unveiled by, for, and during a penetrating advance (*vordringen*), is this possibility as impossibility,

this death as the most proper possibility of Dasein considered as its proper impossibility. The singular motion thus named, the penetrating advance, gives or pre-gives access to the meaning of dying. Thanks to it, Dasein is as if in accord with (*Verstehen*) its own death. This death is both its *most proper* possibility and this same (most proper) possibility as impossibility (hence, *the least proper*, I would say, but Heidegger never says it like that). The *als* (as, considered as) keeps in reserve the most unthinkable but it is not yet the *als solche* (as such): we will have to ask ourselves how a (most proper) possibility as impossibility can still appear *as such* without immediately disappearing, without the “as such” already sinking beforehand and without its essential disappearance making Dasein lose everything that distinguished it—both from other forms of entities and even from the living animal in general, from the animal [*bête*]. And without its *properly-dying* being originally contaminated and parasited by the *perishing* and the *demiing*.

For the moment, let us note that the *als* is translated or relayed by the genitive form of a complement of the noun. The text imperceptibly moves from the possibility *as possibility* of the impossibility to the simple possibility of impossibility.

There are at least two examples:

1. “Death, as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be ‘actualized’ [*nichts zu “Verwirklichendes”*], nothing that Dasein, considered as something actual, could be. It [Death] is the possibility of the impossibility [*die Möglichkeit der Unmöglichkeit*] of every way of . . . existing” (p. 262).

2. And further: “In the anticipation of this possibility [in the anticipatory precursiveness, in the *tending oneself toward* (se-tend-ers) of the *awaiting* (*Sattende*), in some way, *in Vorlaufen*], it becomes ‘greater and greater’ [*immer größer*] in quotation marks; this is a strange notation: how can the possibility of death always grow greater, and what is here the measure? but the answer is probably precisely the without measure, the incalculable non-measure of truth against which this measure is measured], that is to say, the possibility reveals itself [*sich enthüllt*] as such, it reveals

itself to be such that it knows no measure at all, no more or less, but signifies the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence [*die Möglichkeit der maßlosen Unmöglichkeit der Existenz*]” (p. 262).

Further in the text (p. 265), reversing the order of presentation, Heidegger wonders how the simple impossibility of existence becomes possible, when the moment where this impossibility becomes possible remains both *absolutely certain* and *absolutely indeterminate*.

The end is approaching. Precipitation and prematuration make the law, even when the thing lasts too long. We must therefore interrupt, unjustly and arbitrarily, the patient and interminable reading that would still be required of *Being and Time* and of so many other texts, and we will rush without waiting toward some questions in the form of a provisional conclusion or of suggestions for discussion.

There are several ways of thinking the possibility of impossibility as *aporia*. Heidegger would certainly not accept making of this possibility of impossibility, that is, of dying, or of what I have called the “awaiting death” [*le sattendre à la mort*], one example among others, one of these cases in which a strange logical figure of contradiction would take the form of an aninomy or of an *aporia*, of a problem of language or of logic to be resolved. Death—to be expected [*à laquelle sattendre*]—is the unique occurrence of this possibility of impossibility. For it concerns the impossibility of existence itself and not merely the impossibility of this or that. Any other determined possibility or impossibility would take on meaning and would be defined within its limits in terms of this particular possibility of impossibility, *this* particular impossibility.

While taking into consideration this absolute uniqueness, from which every uniqueness is defined, particularly every *Jemeinigkeit* of *expecting death* [*du sattendre à la mort*], one can nevertheless retain the dynamic aspect of this question. Indeed, why not invoke the same exceptionality for the *aporia* of which we are speaking here (which is not just a language or logic game and which should

not be classified as such too quickly)? Can one not also ask: What is the place of this unique *aporia* in such an “expecting death” as “expecting” the only possibility of the impossible? Is the place of this nonpassage impossibility itself or the *possibility* of impossibility? Or is it that the impossible be possible? Is the *aporia* the impossible itself? Indeed, the *aporia* is said to be impossibility, impracticability, or nonpassage: here dying would be the *aporia*, the impossibility of being dead, the impossibility of living or rather “existing” one’s death, as well as the impossibility of existing once one is dead, or, in Heidegger’s terms, the impossibility for *Dasein* to be what it is, there where it is, there, *Dasein*. Or else, on the contrary (and is it the contrary?), is this *aporia* the fact that the impossibility would be possible and would appear *as such*, as impossible, as an impossibility that can nevertheless appear or announce itself *as such*, an impossibility whose appearing as such would be possible (to *Dasein* and not to the living animal), an impossibility that one can await or expect, an impossibility the limits of which one can expect or at whose limits one can wait [*aux limites de laquelle on peut sattendre*], these limits of the *as such* being, as we have seen, the limits of truth, but also of the possibility of truth? Truth and nontruth would be inseparable, and this couple would only be possible for *Dasein*. According to Heidegger, there is no nontruth for the animal, just as there is no death and no language. Truth is the truth of nontruth and vice versa. Later, after *Being and Time*, many of Heidegger’s statements will suggest this.

Everything thus lies in this enigma of the “as such” and of the appearing that *at once marks and erases* the three types of limits that we have described: (1) the (anthropologico-cultural) *borders*; (2) the delimitations of the *problematic closure*, and (3) the *conceptual demarcations* of this existential analysis. To mark and at the same time to erase these lines, which only happen by erasing themselves, which only succeed in erasing themselves [*narrivent qu’à s’effacer*], is to trace them as still possible while also introducing the very principle of their impossibility, the principle of ruin, which is also their chance and which promises the line while compromising it in parasitism [*parasitage*], grafting, and divisibility. This princi-