

Being-towards-suicide (Sein-zum-Suizid)

*'There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.'*¹

Albert Camus' opening sentence to his work 'The Myth of Sisyphus', unmistakably emphasising the eminence of the topic at hand, is a fitting start to the thoughts and considerations to follow. For this sentence, concisely as it may deliver its underlying message, imbues the reader with an ethical dilemma: it confines suicide to the philosophical realm, thereby negating manifold alternate reasons which necessitate its rumination. How does one decide how to act if one's reasoning is philosophically incoherent yet psychologically lucid? Or philosophically incoherent yet circumstantially logical? In this essay I seek to trace the lines of suicide through small excerpts of literature from the past century which grasp the *zeitgeist* of post-war peace; a century in which individualism, elsewhere favourably labelled self-determinism, has been reproachfully dismissed as the crude fetish of several generations. Finally, in assembling the loose ends, I will seek to rethink suicide in times of technological advancement, consequently liberating it, (indeed) as an autonomous act by a self-determined agent, from philosophical, moral and medical chains of restraint. Herein I will come to a different conclusion to Camus, and ultimately reject his call to refuse suicide² on the basis of revolt: an individual's perpetual confrontation with their own absurdity, which is in essence an eternal, futile search for clarity and worldly meaning of the human condition.³

*'Consciousness and revolt, these rejections are the contrary of renunciation. Everything that is indomitable and passionate in a human heart quickens them, on the contrary, with its own life. It is essential to die unreconciled and not of one's own free will. Suicide is a repudiation. The absurd man can only drain everything to the bitter end, and deplete himself. The absurd is his extreme tension which he maintains constantly by solitary effort, for he knows that in that consciousness and in that day-to-day revolt he gives proof of his only truth which is defiance [...] One of the only coherent philosophical positions is thus revolt [...] Thus I draw from the absurd three consequences which are my revolt, my freedom and my passion. By the mere activity of consciousness I transform into a rule of life what was an invitation to death — and I refuse suicide.'*⁴

Contemporary discussions on suicide are often limited to assisted suicide or euthanasia: (assisting in) ending the life of an individual suffering from a terminal somatic illness. It is commonly accepted that such a somatic illness liberates the individual from upholding the aforementioned responsibility — what difference do a few more weeks make? Envisioning a bedridden person gasping for breath and wincing with discomfort, I believe many will be able to identify with the words of Wolfgang Herrndorf, a German author diagnosed with glioblastoma (a very aggressive, incurable brain tumour) in 2010. He documented his last years on a blog:

'What I need is an exit strategy. With Cornelius I had already begun, but that was in times of mania, where I was completely sure that it could only be a weapon [...] to be able to put it behind me not in a moment of desperation, but euphoria — and without problems. The condition was that no more than a tenth of a second could lie between decision and execution. Even a hand grenade wouldn't have been possible. The fear of that three-second delay would have killed me. Likewise pills, with their protracted procedure of swallowing and waiting. For at no point did I want to die, nor do I want to die now. But the assurance of having it in my own hands was an essential part of my mental hygiene from the start. I find googling unspeakably difficult, a practical know-how nowhere to be found. Friends be informed: in case anyone knows of ways and means or is in possession of such things — the first MRI is on 21st June. By then I need something here. Whether I have the discipline to actually go through with it at the end is a different question entirely. But as I said, it is a matter of mental hygiene. I need to know that I am the master in my own house. Nothing more.

[...] Meanwhile, the solved exit strategy has such a resoundingly calming effect on me that it is unclear why my health insurance doesn't pay for it. Globulins yes, bazooka no. Idiots.' (tr. MR)⁵

Three years later Herrndorf decided to act upon this exit strategy. The epilogue to his blog was concluded with the following:

'Wolfgang Herrndorf did it how it should be done. At around 23:15 on Monday 26th August (2013) he shot himself in the head with a revolver on the bank of the Hohenzollern canal. He aimed at the brain stem through his mouth. The weapon's calibre was 9 mm. Herrndorf's personality had not changed as a result of the illness, but his coordination and spatial orientation were impaired towards the end. It was probably one of the last days on which he was capable of the act.' (tr. MR)⁶

Suicide as a means to ending chronic suffering due to terminal somatic illness merely scratches at the surface of the discourse to follow. Yet even here, in the shallow waters of debate, public outcry against suicide is not uncommon. Arguments range from fears for the social climate — in that the acceptance of suicide initiates a 'slippery slope' for greater pressure on those *not* seeking to end their life, despite individual circumstances which may be deemed unworthy of continued life by others — to a cardinal opposition to anything besides natural, non-induced death. The latter can be traced back to the Christian doctrine of life as something that is given, *datum*, 'over which we have the right of use, *usus*, but not governance, *dominion*'.⁷ These tensions shine a different light on Herrndorf's plight. Do the arguments against suicide in the case of a terminal somatic illness such as glioblastoma constitute a universal philosophical, if not moral opposition to his act?⁸

An act which did not just alleviate his suffering in the final instance, but served as a pivotal aspect of his mental hygiene in his final years of life? And Herrndorf's case leads to another consideration: No matter how one may judge his decision, what about those suffering from an equally chronic and incurable, yet by no means terminal somatic illness? Or an illness not primarily somatic, but psychological? Or, extending the argument to the other extreme, an individual not suffering from an illness at all, but merely voicing a wish to die; a wish to be in control of oneself as a self-determined agent? There are no simple, universal answers to these questions. To inhabit this void the immanent nature of suicide requires reflection. Consider this passage from Hermann Hesse's 'Der Steppenwolf':

*'As every strength may become a weakness (and under some circumstances must) so, on the contrary, may the typical suicidal person find a strength and support in his apparent weakness; indeed, does so extraordinarily often. The case of Harry, the Steppenwolf, is one of these. As thousands of his kind do he found consolation and support, and not merely the melancholy play of juvenile fantasy, in the idea that the path to death was always open to him. It is true, as with all men of his kind, that every shock, every pain, every unfavourable predicament at once gave rise in him the wish to withdraw himself through death. Out of this tendency, however, he gradually fashioned himself a philosophy that was actually conducive to life. He gained strength from the idea's familiarity that the emergency exit stood always open; it made him curious to savour his suffering and dire circumstances, and if he felt miserable he would sometimes experience, with a grim, malicious pleasure: "I am curious to see all the same just how much a person can endure! If the limit of what is bearable is reached, I have only to open the door to escape." There are many suicidal people onto whom this thought imparts an exceptional strength.'*⁹

Hesse's protagonist inverts the negative connotation habitually associated with suicidality. In doing so, he liberates it from a long-standing societal taboo. Proceeding along these lines: is it not the very capacity for suicide that makes us human? Building upon ideas of Jean Améry, Edouard Levé and E. M. Cioran, Simon Critchley highlights the following:

*'To be human is to have the capacity, at each and every moment, of killing oneself. Incarceration, humiliation, disappointment, disease — the world can do all of this to us, but it cannot remove the possibility of suicide. For as long as we keep this power in our hands, then we are, in some minimal but real sense, free.'*¹⁰

This capacity, this freedom, of autonomy's jurisdiction to extend to the outermost seconds of life, namely death, is an innate part of humanity and thus consciousness. At this point it seems instructive to divert from a discussion solely on suicide as an inducer of death, to likewise consider death as such. In his seminal work 'Sein und Zeit', Martin Heidegger reflects on *Dasein* as *Being-*

towards-death (the lengthy quote is included for the sake of completion, for those interested in following Heidegger's line of argumentation; Heidegger's conclusion and the exploration thereafter suffice to understand the point I am making):

'But Being towards this possibility, as Being-towards-death, is so to comport ourselves towards death that in this Being, and for it, death reveals itself as a possibility. Our terminology for such Being towards this possibility is "anticipation" of this possibility [...] Death is Dasein's ownmost possibility. Being towards this possibility discloses to Dasein its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, in which its very Being is the issue. Here it can become manifest to Dasein that in this distinctive possibility of its own self, it has been wrenched away from the "they". This means that in anticipation any Dasein can have wrenched itself away from the "they" already. But when one understands that this is something which Dasein 'can' have done, this only reveals its factual lostness in the everydayness of the they-self.

*The ownmost possibility is non-relational. Anticipation allows Dasein to understand that that potentiality-for-being in which its ownmost Being is an issue, must be taken over by Dasein alone. Death does not just 'belong' to one's own Dasein in an undifferentiated way; death lays claim to it as an individual Dasein. The non-relational character of death, as understood in anticipation, individualizes Dasein down to itself. This individualizing is a way in which the 'there' is disclosed for existence. It makes manifest that all Being-alongside the things with which we concern ourselves, and all Being-with Others, will fail us when our ownmost potentiality-for-Being is the issue. Dasein can be authentically itself only if it makes this possible for itself of its own accord. But if concern and solicitude fail us, this does not signify at all that these ways of Dasein have been cut off from its authentically Being-its-Self. As structures essential to Dasein's constitution, these have a share in conditioning the possibility of any existence whatsoever. Dasein is authentically itself only to the extent that, as concerned Being-alongside and solicitous Being-with, it projects itself upon its ownmost potentiality-for-Being rather than upon the possibility of the they-self. The entity which anticipates its non-relational possibility, is thus forced by that very anticipation into the possibility of taking over from itself its ownmost Being, and doing so of its own accord [...] We may now summarize our characterization of authentic Being-towards-death as we have projected it existentially: anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death — a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the "they", and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.'*¹¹

Thus Heidegger comes to the following conclusion:

*'The more authentically Dasein resolves — and this means that in anticipating death it understands itself unambiguously in terms of its ownmost distinctive possibility — the more unequivocally does it choose and find the possibility of its existence, and the less does it do so by accident. Only by the anticipation of death is every accidental and 'provisional' possibility driven out. Only Being-free for death, gives Dasein its goal outright and pushes existence into its finitude. Once one has grasped the finitude of one's existence, it snatches one back from the endless multiplicity of possibilities which offer themselves as closest to one — those of comfortableness, shirking, and taking things lightly — and brings Dasein into the simplicity of its fate [...] If Dasein, by anticipation, lets death become powerful in itself, then, as free for death, Dasein understands itself in its own superior power, the power of its finite freedom, so that in this freedom, which 'is' only in its having chosen to make such a choice, it can take over the powerlessness of abandonment to its having done so, and can thus come to have a clear vision for the accidents of the Situation that has been disclosed.'*¹²

Heidegger's understanding of death brings the discussion of suicide as an inducer of death full circle.¹³ Accepting death as a possibility for *Dasein's* impossibility (non-existence) embraces the finitude of our existence. Thus Heidegger propagates a way of living in relation to the conscious prospect of the certainty of death, while simultaneously accepting an indefiniteness of its time point. Herein lies the meaning of the phrase *anticipation of death*. The value of this is highlighted by Heidegger's use of the term *ownmost possibility*: In anticipating and ultimately accepting indefinite death, and thereafter, in light of this prospect, *Being-towards-death*, the integrity of an individual's life is initially tangible. Death is the one aspect of life that cannot be delegated. For the same reason, it is the one aspect of life in which the totality of all of my possibilities and consequent undertakings can be given a finitude of meaning by myself; it is the one aspect in which I may appropriate the public meanings of all of my actions in an integrated and coherent way.¹⁴ This one aspect of life cannot be delegated to another individual. Consequently, as Heidegger claims, death individualises *Dasein*.

'*Sein und Zeit*' was published almost a century ago in 1927. In this past century humankind has been obsessed with the overarching aim of technological advance. As a result we are now the first biological (organic) species that populates the face of the earth capable of creating a technological (inorganic) civilisation — and appear determined to do so.¹⁵ Regardless whether this postulate is realistic or far-fetched, whether it arouses fear or excitement of the unknown; the constituents and conditions for life, and in particular death, are changing, with unprecedented consequences for suicide. Yuval Noah Harari briefly foreshadows this development in 'Sapiens':

'[According to the myth] when the gods created man, Gilgamesh had learned, they set death as man's inevitable destiny, and man must learn to live with it [...] Disciples of progress do not share this defeatist attitude. For men of science, death is not an inevitable destiny, but

merely a technical problem. People die not because the gods decreed it, but due to various technical failures — a heart attack, cancer, an infection. And every technical problem has a technical solution [...] True, at present we cannot solve all technical problems. But we are working on them. Our best minds are not wasting their time trying to give meaning to death. Instead, they are busy investigating the physiological, hormonal and genetic systems responsible for disease and old age. They are developing new medicines, revolutionary treatments and artificial organs that will lengthen our lives and might one day vanquish [death...] The leading project of the Scientific Revolution is to give humankind eternal life [...] How long will the quest for immortality take to complete? A hundred years? Five hundred years? A thousand years? [...] Nanotechnology experts are developing a bionic immune system composed of millions of nano-robots, who would inhabit our bodies, open blocked blood vessels, fight viruses and bacteria, eliminate cancerous cells and even reverse ageing processes. A few serious scholars suggest that by 2050, some humans will become a-mortal (not immortal, because they could still die of some accident, but a-mortal, meaning that in the absence of fatal trauma their lives could be extended indefinitely).’¹⁶

Widening our perspective by merit of the premise introduced through Harari’s discussion of the quest for eternal life engenders a paradigm shift with a bleak outlook: What if we are heading towards a future in which we must all choose the time and place for our own death? A future in which Camus’ demands ironically require infinite revolt *ad absurdum*; a future in which the Heideggerian *anticipation of death* is no longer innate, and thus fails to serve as a liberator from *the ‘they’*¹⁷ in favour of the eminent possibility of oneself as an individual — of one’s ownmost being. Hence, a future in which suicide is the only path to the ‘natural’ end¹⁸ of life, that has remained as the limiting constant for all of humanity’s biological past thus far, and is only now, in the potential wake of a technological civilisation, conceivably blocked. Must we oppose suicide? Or rather embrace it as our final freedom; as the last inducer of death?

The title of this essay is hereby acknowledged. If death’s certainty as a ‘naturally’ attainable end disintegrates, then an individual is no longer *Being-towards-death*. Yet if death remains the desirable, natural end to life, then this may only be reached for an individual *Being-towards-suicide*.

To conclude, the argument being made is not one which holds only if the premise of a-mortality is perceivable. Rather, it is the deliberation which this premise necessitates that is primarily of use, for it rescinds the aforementioned *anticipation of death*. By consequently distancing ourselves from the obsession around *naturalis* — as death pertaining to nature — as the only point of reference for a legitimate inducer of the natural end to life, self-determination shifts into focus. Thus it is not a matter of finding a philosophically or otherwise coherent answer to the fundamental question of whether life is or is not worth living. It is another question that must be answered: Does the state have a right to override an individual’s basic convictions about the meaning and facticity of

life and death? I believe that the only point of relevance is the personal and autonomous wish to accept or else induce death at any given time. I sympathise with Herrndorf's desideratum for mental hygiene and the *Steppenwolf's* utilisation of suicide as a personal aide imparting strength. Further, I agree with Critchley's belief that the capacity for suicide is inherently human. This does not make suicide a necessity, for one is always free to choose, but legitimises it as an individual recourse. For any remaining doubt, let me conclude with this comment by Ronald Dworkin:

*'Making someone die in a way that others approve, but he believes a horrifying contradiction of his life, is a devastating, odious form of tyranny.'*¹⁹

¹ Albert Camus — *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Penguin Modern Classics, 2000, translation by Justin O'Brien, p. 5)

² Camus distinguishes between physical suicide, i.e., clinical death, and philosophical suicide, i.e., a 'leap of faith' embracing religious or other metaphysical ideas and hopes. I am referring to both forms here

³ This is a stark simplification of Camus' ideas, sufficing for the purposes of this essay. For a more detailed exposition I recommend both *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel* as primary literature, or David E. Cooper — *Existentialism: A Reconstruction* (2nd Edition, Blackwell Publishing, 1999, pp. 139-144) and *Introduction to Camus: The Absurd, Revolt, and Rebellion* (<https://academyofideas.com/2016/04/introduction-to-camus-the-absurd-revolt-and-rebellion/>) as secondary literature

⁴ Albert Camus — *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Penguin Modern Classics, 2000, translation by Justin O'Brien, pp. 40-48)

⁵ Wolfgang Herrndorf — *Arbeit und Struktur* (Rowohlt Berlin, 2013, pp. 50, 79). The original German reads: 'Was ich brauche, ist eine Exitstrategie. Ich hatte Cornelius gegenüber schon mal angefangen, aber das war noch zu Zeiten der Manie, und da war ich noch vollkommen sicher, daß es nur eine Waffe sein könne. Aus dem einfachen Grund, daß ich herumging und mich prüfte und spürte, die Sache nicht in einem Moment der Verzweiflung, sondern der Euphorie hinter mich bringen zu können, und ohne Probleme. Voraussetzung dafür war, daß zwischen Entschluß und Ausführung nicht mehr als eine Zehntelsekunde liegen dürfe. Schon eine Handgranate wäre nicht gegangen. Die Angst vor den drei Sekunden Verzögerung hätte mich umgebracht. Medikamente mit dem langwierigen Vorgang des Schluckens und Wartens sowieso. Weil ich wollte ja nicht sterben, zu keinem Zeitpunkt, und ich will es auch jetzt nicht. Aber die Gewißheit, es selbst in der Hand zu haben, war von Anfang an notwendiger Bestandteil meiner Psychohygiene. Googeln fällt mir unsagbar schwer, ein praktikables How-to nicht auffindbar. Freunde informiert: Falls jemand von Mitteln und Wegen weiß oder im Besitz davon ist – am 21. Juni ist das erste MRT. Bis dahin brauche ich was hier. Ob ich die Disziplin habe, es am Ende auch zu tun, ist noch eine ganz andere Frage. Aber es geht, wie gesagt, um Psychohygiene. Ich muß wissen, daß ich Herr im eigenen Haus bin. Weiter nichts [...] Die mittlerweile gelöste Exitstrategie hat eine so durchschlagend beruhigende Wirkung auf mich, daß unklar ist, warum das nicht die Krankenkasse zahlt. Globuli ja, Bazooka nein. Schwachköpfe.'

⁶ Wolfgang Herrndorf — *Arbeit und Struktur* (Rowohlt Berlin, 2013, p. 445). The original German reads: 'Wolfgang Herrndorf hat es gemacht, wie es zu machen ist. Am Montag, den 26. August (2013) gegen 23:15 schoss er sich am Ufer des Hohenzollernkanals mit einem Revolver in den Kopf. Er zielte durch den Mund auf das Stammhirn. Das Kaliber der Waffe entsprach 9mm. Herrndorfs Persönlichkeit hatte sich durch die Krankheit nicht verändert, aber seine Koordination und räumliche Orientierung waren gegen Ende beeinträchtigt. Es dürfte einer der letzten Tage gewesen sein, an denen er noch zu der Tat imstande war.'

⁷ Simon Critchley — *Notes on Suicide* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, London, 2015, p. 21)

⁸ In addition to the legal formalities which make a dignified suicide very difficult

⁹ Hermann Hesse — *Der Steppenwolf* (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt a. M., 1975, pp. 53-56). Note: the translation by Basil Creighton and Joseph Mileck has been used as a template here, although I have slightly altered certain parts for better readability. The original German reads: 'Wie jede Kraft auch zu einer Schwäche werden kann (ja unter Umständen werden muss), so kann umgekehrt der typische Selbstmörder aus seiner anscheinenden Schwäche oft eine Kraft und eine Stütze machen, ja er tut dies außerordentlich häufig. Zu diesen Fällen gehört auch der Harrys, des Steppenwolfes. Wie Tausende von seinesgleichen, machte er es aus der Vorstellung, dass ihm zu jeder Stunde der Weg in den Tod offen stehe, nicht bloß ein jugendlich-melancholisches Phantasiespiel, sondern baute sich aus ebendiesem Gedanken einen Trost und eine Stütze. Zwar rief in ihm, wie in allen Menschen seiner Art, jede Erschütterung, jeder Schmerz, jede üble Lebenslage sofort den Wunsch wach, sich durch den Tod zu entziehen. Allmählich aber schuf er sich aus dieser Neigung gerade eine dem Leben dienliche Philosophie. Die Vertrautheit mit dem Gedanken, dass jener Notausgang beständig offen stehe, gab ihm Kraft, machte ihn neugierig auf das Auskosten von Schmerzen und üblen Zuständen, und wenn es ihm recht elend ging, konnte er zuweilen mit grimmiger Freude, einer Art Schadenfreude, empfinden: „Ich bin doch neugierig zu sehen, wie viel eigentlich ein Mensch auszuhalten vermag! Ist die Grenze des noch Erträglichen erreicht, dann brauche ich ja bloß die Tür zu öffnen und bin entronnen.“ Es gibt sehr viele Selbstmörder, denen aus diesem Gedanken ungewöhnliche Kräfte kommen.'

¹⁰ Simon Critchley — *Notes on Suicide* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, London, 2015, p. 72)

¹¹ Martin Heidegger — *Sein und Zeit* (Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 2006, pp. 262-266). Note: the english translation by J. Macquarrie and J. Robinson has been used here (Blackwell, 1962). The original German reads: 'Das Sein zur Möglichkeit als Sein zum Tode soll aber zu ihm sich so verhalten, daß er sich in diesem Sein und für es als Möglichkeit enthüllt. Solches Sein zur Möglichkeit fassen wir terminologisch als *Vorlaufen in die Möglichkeit* [...] Der Tod ist *eigenste* Möglichkeit des Daseins. Das Sein zu ihr erschließt dem Dasein sein *eigenstes* Seinkönnen, darin es um das Sein des Daseins schlechthin geht. Darin kann dem Dasein offenbar werden, daß es in der ausgezeichneten Möglichkeit seiner selbst dem Man entrissen bleibt, das heißt vorlaufend sich je schon ihm entreißen kann. Das Verstehen dieses 'Könnens' enthüllt aber erst die faktische Verlorenheit in die Alltäglichkeit des Man-selbst.// Die *eigenste* Möglichkeit ist *unbezügliche*. Das Vorlaufen läßt das Dasein verstehen, daß es das Seinkönnen, darin es schlechthin um sein eigenstes Sein geht, einzig von ihm selbst her zu übernehmen hat. Der Tod 'gehört' nicht indifferent nur dem eigenen Dasein zu, sondern er *beansprucht* dieses als *einzelnes*. Die im Vorlaufen verstandenen Unbezüglichkeit des Todes vereinzelt das Dasein auf es selbst. Diese Vereinzeltung ist eine Weise des Erschließens des 'Da' für die Existenz. Sie macht offenbar, daß alles Sein bei dem Besorgten und jedes Mitsein mit Anderen versagt, wenn es um das eigenste Seinkönnen geht. Dasein kann nur dann *eigentlich es selbst* sein, wenn es sich von ihm selbst her dazu ermöglicht. Das versagen des Besorgens und der Fürsorge bedeutet jedoch keineswegs ein Abschnürung dieser Weisen des Daseins vom eigentlichen Selbstsein. Als wesenhafte Strukturen der Daseinsverfassung gehören sie mit zur Bedingung der Möglichkeit von Existenz überhaupt. Das Dasein ist eigentlich es selbst nur, sofern es sich als besorgendes Sein bei... und fürsorgendes Sein mit... primär auf sein eigenstes Seinkönnen, nicht aber auf die Möglichkeit des Man-selbst entwirft. Das Vorlaufen in die unbezügliche Möglichkeit zwingt das vorlaufende Seiende in die Möglichkeit, sein eigenstes Sein von ihm selbst her aus ihm selbst zu übernehmen [...] Die Charakteristik des existenzial entworfenen eigentlichen Seins zum Tode läßt sich dergestalt zusammenfassen: Das Vorlaufen enthüllt dem Dasein die Verlorenheit in das Man-selbst und bringt es vor die Möglichkeit, auf die besorgende Fürsorge primär ungestützt, es selbst zu sein, selbst aber in der leidenschaftlichen, von den Illusionen des Man gelösten faktischen, ihrer selbst gewissen und sich ängstenden Freiheit zum Tode.'

¹² Martin Heidegger — *Sein und Zeit* (Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 2006, p. 384). Note: the english translation by J. Macquarrie and J. Robinson has been used here (Blackwell, 1962). The original German reads: 'Je eigentlicher das Dasein entschließt, das heißt unzweideutig aus seiner eigensten, ausgezeichneten Möglichkeit im Vorlaufen in den Tod sich versteht, um so eindeutiger und unzufälliger ist das wählende Finden der Möglichkeit seiner Existenz. Nur das vorlaufen in den Tod treibt jeder zufällige und 'vorläufige' Möglichkeit aus. Nur das Freisein für den Tod gibt dem Dasein das Ziel schlechthin und stößt die Existenz in ihre Endlichkeit. Die ergriffene Endlichkeit der Existenz reißt aus der endlosen Mannigfaltigkeit der sich anbietenden nächsten Möglichkeiten des Behagens, Leichtnehmens, Sichdrückens zurück und bringt das Dasein in die Einfachheit seines *Schicksals* [...] Wenn das Dasein vorlaufend den Tod in sich mächtig werden läßt, versteht es sich, frei für ihn, in der eigenen *Übermacht* seiner endlichen Freiheit, um in dieser, die je nur 'ist' im Gewährhaben der Wahl, die *Ohnmacht* der Überlassenheit an es selbst zu übernehmen und für die Zufälle der erschlossenen Situation hellsehtig zu werden.'

¹³ For a detailed discussion of these concepts see David E. Cooper — *Existentialism: A Reconstruction* (2nd Edition, Blackwell Publishing, 1999, pp. 112-116 and 133-139)

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 137-138. Here Cooper also quotes from Charles Guignon

¹⁵ I discuss this in an earlier entry on *isolatarium.org* (1/2018 — 'On the perils of an artificial superintelligent species')

¹⁶ Yuval Noah Harari — *Sapiens* (Vintage, London, 2015, pp. 297-302)

¹⁷ The 'they': anonymous, communal character of society; the political and social conditions, the ready-made, widespread schemes of beliefs and values prevailing in societies, exerting power over an individual. See David E. Cooper — *Existentialism: A Reconstruction* (2nd Edition, Blackwell Publishing, 1999, pp. 109-116)

¹⁸ Disregarding the primarily religious discussion on the possibility of afterlife for this essay

¹⁹ Ronald Dworkin — *Life's Dominion: an argument about abortion, euthanasia, and individual freedom* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1993, p. 217)