

**THE EXISTENTIAL EXPERIENCE OF ONE'S OWN DEATH  
OR THE 'DISPUTE' OF M. HEIDEGGER AND E. LEVINAS  
IN THE EYES OF EVERYMAN**

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BUDRIŪNAITĖ, A. : The Existential Experience of One's Own Death or The 'Dispute' of M. Heidegger and E. Levinas in the Eyes of Everyman  
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The aim of the article is to investigate the relationship between the consciousness of one's own death, of the death of others, as well as the mode of existence which is commonly called *authentic* in the existential philosophy. The core of the investigation is the 'dispute' of Martin Heidegger and Emanuel Levinas concerning death, which is complemented by the insights of other philosophers and psychologists. The attention is paid to common people's attitudes towards death and mortality rather than to pure theoretical considerations. Everyman is understood as that side of all of us, which does not aim at an intense cogitation and self-reflection. The questions of personal and impersonal attitudes towards death, the fear of death, the otherness of death and the others are the topics discussed in the article together with non-physical aspect of death.

**Preface. Death as the Fact of Life.** Death and decay is an inherent part of nature. The consciousness of death is exceptionally a human characteristic, however. There is a hypothesis that some species of animals (for example elephants, monkeys, dolphins, bears, wolfs) experience the forthcoming death and it is more than pure instincts. But only a man *knows* his fate. This is not only an experiential knowing: 'Others died, I will die too'. It is a complete consciousness of death as a dialectical principle of the existential process. Therefore the awareness and consciousness of death are probably the oldest and most important questions of Western philosophy. Socrates said to this purpose that the aim of philosophy is to learn how to die<sup>1</sup>.

A possibility to know anything about one's own death was a matter of dispute among Antique philosophers. Of course, Epicurus was right: empirically death as a fact of my being cannot be present at the same time as I am. I cannot experience my death, so I cannot describe it. But in my opinion the philosophical analysis of death shouldn't try to reveal what it means to be dead or to investigate a separate fact of death. The awareness and consciousness of one's own mortality and death could be worth calling the existential experience of death. Martin Heidegger spent a lot of time discussing the possibility of awareness of one's own death and analysing the existential values of this awareness.

The aim of this article is to investigate the relationship between the consciousness of my death, death of others and the mode of existence that is commonly called *authentic* in the existential philosophy. The core of the investigation is the 'dispute' of Martin Hei-

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<sup>1</sup> See Platonas *Faidonas, arba Apie sielą* [Plato *Phaidon*; In Lithuanian]. (Vilnius: Aidai, 1999), p. 31.

degger and Emanuel Levinas about death, which is also complemented with the insights of other philosophers and psychologists. Some words should be said about the 'dispute' of M. Heidegger and E. Levinas. The question of awareness of death is the meeting point of philosophies of both philosophers. However, the philosophical manner and the focus of attention of these authors are quite different. We should also have in mind the difference if not opposition of their fates, ideologies, religiousness and way of life. Furthermore, Levinas' philosophy of death was composed partially as the criticism of Heidegger's works already written. Even the philosophical method and the start point of their analysis of death in their writings are different. E. Levinas asserts that his analysis is dialectical ontological rather than anthropological (such is the philosophy of M. Heidegger, as E. Levinas thinks)<sup>2</sup>.

Anyway their theories set two poles of the philosophical dispute about the awareness of death and its meaning for human life and relationship with others. Nevertheless, it is true that any theoretical philosophical discussion remains far from (maybe because it is too deep in) the existence of a simple common man or at least from his consciousness. In this article the main attention is paid to Everyman's attitude towards death and mortality rather than to a pure theoretical consideration. Everyman is an 'ordinary', 'common' person that you can meet in the street, at work, or even at home. Everyman is a part of all of us when we do not float into an intense cogitation and self-reflection. Some insights are based on the psychological aspects of the human thinking therefore.

**Death as an 'Impersonal' Fact.** First of all we shall notice that 'a fact' is always impersonal for we think it is an objective event of life. However, some facts *become personal* for us through their personal significance. Other facts stay impersonal, i.e. far from us, and we remain existentially indifferent to them (for example, the fact of four thousand newborns per year in a town and the fact of a newborn in a family). Thinking about death as an 'impersonal' fact of life can be called a *latent consciousness of death*. It is so common in these days. A lot of people think that life is 'good' and seek to prolong and to consolidate it. Death is 'bad' and people try to avoid it and to forget it, i.e. expel it from consciousness. One could say *vice versa*. Life is 'bad' and death is the only good thing left, so one seeks it by the means of a suicide or looks forward with yearning for it. Anyway evil is not life as such but a painful and hopeless situation. And death never looks like a good thing for us.

M. Heidegger notably emphasises such tendency of thinking (the latent consciousness of death) investigating the inauthentic attitude towards death. The inauthentic *Dasein* understands the fact of death as an impersonal dying of other people. 'Everybody dies' means 'somebody somewhere dies, but not me', 'I will die some day, but not now'. Such way of thinking is running away from the true meaning of death and from the very es-

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<sup>2</sup> See E. Levinas, 'Vremia i Drugoje' [Le Temps et l'autre; in Russian], in *Patrologia, philosophia, hermeneutika* [Patrology, philosophy, hermeneutics; in Russian]. (Sankt-Peterburg: Trudy VRFSh, 1992), pp. 91-92.

In his other work, however, E. Levinas says that for 'Heidegger, the problem of anthropology is not primordial. Heidegger is not interested in the signification of human existing for itself. [...] Man is a modality of being' (E. Levinas, "'Dasein" and Death' in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 33-34.)

sence of existence<sup>3</sup>. According to Heidegger's 'inauthenticity of *Dasein*' E. Levinas speaks about *indolence* and *fatigue* as the fundamental states of refusal to be, i.e. of impersonal and inauthentic existence. The indolence is 'the inability to begin' or even 'the negation of the beginning'. The fatigue is 'the impotent joyless rejection' of the very being as a burden<sup>4</sup>. In E. Levinas writings the refusal to be does not mean a flight into death but rather a rejection of death as well as life. The same could be said about the indolence. The inability to begin could suggest the inability to finish as well. This attitude and moreover the Heideggerian conception of death as my death could be seen as inauthentic one with reference to the philosophy of E. Levinas for he states that the main condition of inauthenticity is ignorance of the death of the other. As he says, 'one becomes oneself through this untransferable, undelegatable responsibility. It is for the death of the other that I am responsible to the point of including myself in his death'<sup>5</sup>. This idea creates the opposition between E. Levinas and M. Heidegger and will be more evident in the chapter 'Death and the Other'.

The ignorance of death in Western societies may be caused by the Epicurean conviction that it is impossible to experience and to cognise one's own death. Everyman can say: 'Why should I think about something what will happen when I don't exist any more?' B. Wilshire maintains that such thought is simplistic, it regards existence as a mathematic sum of moments and denies the possibility to feel the future and to fear about it<sup>6</sup>.

We should add that future is not the main aspect in the falseness of the latent consciousness of death. Death is an integral part of life. We can think about life without death only as an object detached from our existence. Accordingly, then we think about ourselves as about objects detached from our existence. In his famous book *La Mort* V. Jankelevitch, a French philosopher and psychologist, calls the latent consciousness of death 'a perception of death in the third person' that is an anonymous, conceptual, abstract and impersonal idea. The nature of an object influences the nature of a subject: the person becomes as impersonal and anonymous as his understanding of death, as V. Jankelevitch says<sup>7</sup>. It is not so difficult to realize that most of the time we are thinking about *our* death in such a way, i.e. not thinking about it at all.

On the other part people do pry about circumstances and various trivial matters of death to no purpose. M. Heidegger calls such an insensible look at death and life 'a prying' (*Neugier*)<sup>8</sup>. One may surmise that people behave in this way trying to feel a kind of satisfaction: 'The other died and I am alive for I can think about the death of the other'. Horror stories as well as death images in mass media, the Internet and everyday talks serve the same purpose – to increase the amount of adrenalin in blood quite safely. It can

<sup>3</sup> See M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), pp. 254-257.

<sup>4</sup> E. Levinas, 'Ot sushchestvovaniya k sushchestvujushchemy' [De l'existence à l'existant; in Russian], in *Izbranoje. Totalnost i beskonechnoje* [Selected Writings. Totality and Infinity; in Russian]. (Moskva-Sankt-Peterburg: Universitetskaja kniga, 2000), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> E. Levinas, 'Being-Toward-Death as the Origin of Time' in Levinas E. *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> See B. Wilshire, 'Life, death and self-deception' in *Crosscurrents in Phenomenology*. Ed by Bruzina R., Wilshire B. (Hague/Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), p. 298.

<sup>7</sup> V. Jankelevitch, *Smert* [La Mort; in Russian]. (Moskva: Literaturnyj institut A. M. Gorkovo, 1999), pp. 27-28.

<sup>8</sup> Heidegger, op. cit., pp. 170-172.

seem paradoxical but such emphasising and permanent mentioning of death help to create its anonymity. Talking about such attitude towards death Robert C. Solomon calls it 'the fetishism of death'. According to him the glorification of death experience, the increased interest in everything what is concerned with death and the perverted heroic attitude towards death (for example, in the war films or thrillers) are pointed at the 'abolition of a *personal* death'.<sup>9</sup>

**Death as a 'Personal Fact'.** What does it mean to 'experience' my own death existentially, i.e. to be aware and to be conscious of it? We can say, death does not mean the essential part of *my existence* when I perceive it as anonymous death of 'others' or think about it as an abstract concept or an exotic experience in the distant future. The personal consciousness of death is characterized as an existential experience and outliving of one's own mortality rather than an objective reflection of death. V. Jankelevitch calls it 'a perception of death in the first person'. It is the perception of myself that could be hardly called 'a perception' at all. It means the absence of any perspective or distance and the experience of one's own death while the object of consciousness is coincident with the subject of 'dying'.<sup>10</sup>

Such 'perception of death in the first person' is essential for M. Heidegger. He handles the problem of death looking through the eyes of a separate individual (*Dasein*). The personal consciousness of death (consciousness of *my death*) as qualification and precondition of authentic existence is substantial for M. Heidegger. According to him only being in the presence of one's own death is the authentic being. It requires the awareness of human temporality and fragility. Thus death individualizes a man and defines him as *being-here* (*Da-sein*). The death of the other does not help to reveal a secret of my death as well as an authentic life of the other does not make my life authentic. According to M. Heidegger death is always mine. As he says, 'death in its very essence and in any case is mine as long it is overall'.<sup>11</sup> *Being-towards-death* as the most personal and own (*eigens-te*) possibility of *Dasein* opens a general potency of existence. This potency of existence is not relative to other people: it should be realized by the person.

Everyman could blame M. Heidegger for such an egoistic view from the first sight. The concentration to the one's own death forgetting all other people is a pure egoism so it can not be a part of the authentic existence. A self-murderer focuses all his attention to his death too. I would not dare to say that M. Heidegger would have called a suicide or a granny thinking only about her funeral the authentic *Dasein*. P. Tillich put into words the meaningful, though paradoxical balance between the attention to me and to others, between the attention to my death and the death of the other: 'to live despite death'. The word 'despite' means here neither 'discounting anything and anybody' nor 'making death a purpose'. The *being-with* and *being-towards-death* are more than contiguous in the philosophy of M. Heidegger. The recognition of our death does not separate us from each other but forms the basis for the authentic relationship.

Another reproach could be from the perspective of Freudian psychology and its be-

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<sup>9</sup> Robert C. Solomon, *The Joy of Philosophy: Thinking Thin versus the Passionate Life*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 157.

<sup>10</sup> See Jankelevitch, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> Heidegger, op. cit., p. 240.

lievers. S. Freud asserts that nobody can imagine his death. The father of psychoanalysis associates the attitude of a modern man towards his death directly with the conception of death of primitive cultures. The instincts have not changed but the expressions of instincts did change, according to him. A primitive man acknowledged death only when it was the death of a stranger, i.e. enemy. He yearned for such kind of death.<sup>12</sup> The death of the other was understood as a part of natural order but my death *was not understandable*. From the other side S. Freud states that life without a thought about my death is comparable to an American flirt – without charming intrigue and hazard. The variety and plenitude of life return only facing the tangibility of ‘real’ death of one’s own or that of one’s relatives, he said.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore the Freudian position is rather sustaining the conception of M. Heidegger than raising doubts about it. Anyway the ‘first death’ here is my death. E. Levinas proposes quite opposite attitude towards death. The death of the other is the essential death for him: ‘the death of the other: therein lies the first death’<sup>14</sup>.

**Death and the Other.** E. Levinas concentrated the whole attention to the death of the other contrary to the conception of M. Heidegger. The total view of death reveals itself only by coming into contact with the death of the other or thinking about it. ‘We encounter death in the face of the other’<sup>15</sup>, as E. Levinas says. In E. Levinas philosophy the death of the other is the most important one and moreover thinking about the death of the other is the only authentic way to think about death as such: ‘In the guiltiness of the survivor, the death of the other [*l’autre*] is my affair. My death is my *part* in the death of other, and in my death I die the death that is my fault’<sup>16</sup>.

S. Freud could contradict E. Levinas’ view that nobody can imagine the death of beloved people as well as one’s own death. According to S. Freud every beloved person is perceived as a part of me.<sup>17</sup> Remembering what is said above we can identify two kinds of death of others according to S. Freud: the death of enemies and strangers and the death of the beloved. V. Jankelevitch names thinking about one’s own death through the death of the other ‘the perception of death in the second person’. He seems to express the thought of E. Levinas in more psychological language: ‘I and Thou never, even in the love relationship, interflow to one whole, yet the death of beloved people is always my death as well. [...] We mourn somebody’s death as our own but the nearness never becomes an

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<sup>12</sup> See S. Freud, ‘My i smert’ [Wir und der Tod; in Russian] in Riazancev, S. *Tanatologia. Uchenije o smerti*. [Tanatology. The science of death; in Russian]. (Sankt-Peterburg: Vostochno-Evropskiy Institut Psichoanaliza, 1994), p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> See Freud, op. cit., pp. 15–16. It is not a ‘backward-looking’ psychoanalytic attitude. I. Yalom, the famous existential psychiatrist, asserts the same: “The life becomes narrow when the death is denied” (Irvin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*. (New York: basic Books, 1980), p. 31).

<sup>14</sup> E. Levinas, ‘Being-Toward-Death as the Origin of Time’ in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 43.

<sup>15</sup> E. Levinas, ‘A Reading of Bloch: Toward a Conclusion’ in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 105.

<sup>16</sup> E. Levinas, ‘The Death and Totality of ‘Dasein’’ in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> See Freud, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

identity and allows reflect on this death as on a strange one'.<sup>18</sup>

Of course we should remember that E. Levinas does not reflect on death from a psychological or anthropological but rather from an ontological perspective. Therefore he looks at the phenomenon of death through the relationship with *other* man and moreover sees death as the essential and one of the most important manifestations of the *totally Other*.<sup>19</sup> We can try to know it only through knowing the other manifestations of the Other – the otherness of another person, his mortality and his death<sup>20</sup>. This ontological perspective is the least understandable for Everyman. He thinks (very likely) more about his death and life or about death and life of his relatives than about Being, Nothingness, Absolute, Death or Other.

Everyman could ask: 'How can I accept and perceive death as *my death* if it is totally Other, i.e. unknowable?' E. Levinas himself asserts after all that there is neither subject nor object left in the death. There is no control in it. There is always an abyss stretching in death between the subject and the event<sup>21</sup>. If there is no subject, no object, is there no perception then? Of course, the death of other people may wake up thoughts about my death but this is not the perspective of E. Levinas. On the other part the concentration of attention to the death of the other can be a feature of an inauthentic existence, nevertheless. Death becomes impersonal and meaningless when forgetting my own death and my own mortality as S. Freud, Ph. Aries, E. Kübler-Ross, E. Becker, M. Heidegger and others put in remembrance<sup>22</sup>.

Who is then right in the Everyman's estimation – E. Levinas or M. Heidegger? Is there any controversy between the attitudes of M. Heidegger and E. Levinas at all? It looks like watching and realizing the death of others should be the first step to authenticity following the thought of M. Heidegger. *Dasein* is the *being-with* others as *being-in-the-world*. Could we say that being among temporal and mortal people is the right way to experience one's own temporality and mortality? M. Heidegger says that such mindset stays within limits of re-presentation, making death a simple empirical fact and disassociating from its essence<sup>23</sup>.

A similar view is expressed by Robert C. Solomon but it is closer to the opinion of E. Levinas (though Robert C. Solomon does not talk about it) than to that one of M. Heidegger. According to Robert C. Solomon 'death is what individuates us only insofar as it targets the vulnerability of intimate and significant relationships'. Though, 'in itself, death is nothing and dying is nothing worth celebration [...] but it surely can be made into something, a noble death, a death not just "one's own" but with others in mind and for the

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<sup>18</sup> Jankelevitch, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

<sup>19</sup> See E. Levinas, 'Vremia i Drugoje' [Le Temps et l'autre; in Russian], in *Patrologia, philosophia, hermeneutika* [Patrology, philosophy, hermeneutics; in Russian]. (Sankt-Peterburg: Trudy VRFSH, 1992), pp. 113-115.

<sup>20</sup> See Levinas, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> See Levinas loc. cit., p. 115.

<sup>22</sup> See Freud, op. cit., pp. 15-16.; Ph. Aries, *Mirties supratimas Vakaru kultūros istorijoje* [Essais sur l'histoire la mort en Occident: du Moyen Age a nos jours; in Lithuanian] (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1993), pp. 39; 276; E. Kübler-Ross, *On death and dying* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 8-9; E. Becker, *The denial of death*. (New York: The Free Press, 1973), pp. 11-24; Heidegger, op. cit., pp. 254-257.

<sup>23</sup> See Heidegger, op. cit., pp. 237-238.

sake of others'<sup>24</sup>. Such consciousness of death may be seen as 'inauthentic' according to M. Heidegger. It could be regarded as a way far from death fetishism, morbid solipsism and nihilism too.

**The Fear of Death.** In consideration of the 'dispute' the main expression of death in the philosophy of M. Heidegger is the fear of my death and the terror in the face of possibility of death. The fear of death of the other is more important for E. Levinas. According to him, a general fear of death masks the fear that someone's friend or relative will die. It 'is not my nonbeing that causes anxiety, but that of the loved one or of the other, more beloved than my being. What we call, by somewhat corrupted term, love, is par excellence the fact that the death of the other is the emotion of the other's death. It is my receiving the other – and not the anxiety of death awaiting me – that is the reference to death'<sup>25</sup>.

E. Levinas asserts that the fear of death of the other is prior to the fear of my own death even ontologically. The fear of Nothingness could be realised only after realising Being that is always concerned with others and always raises horror not just fear<sup>26</sup>. That means, there can be no fear of death at all without existence. And the main fear is a fear of Being not a fear of death. According to E. Levinas, existence as such is tragic regardless of its transience and 'death can not tackle this tragedy'<sup>27</sup>.

For M. Heidegger, however, death is not something that 'tackles' the tragedy of existence. It is rather something that embodies it. The awareness of one's mortality *can help* to live authentically, yet *does not guarantee* this. Feeling a total impotence towards his death and life Everyman can try 'to overmaster' his death by choosing to die right now. This is the only way to influence the time and place of one's own death though there is no assurance. It is the one-way possible action. I can choose a suicide, euthanasia, alcoholism or another faster or slower way to die but I can not choose to live when my time is up. So this is the true tragedy – to live further towards death continually experiencing anxiety.

M. Heidegger makes clear distinction between the fear of something or for something (*Furcht*) and the underlying anxiety originating from the awareness of one's own mortality (*Angst*)<sup>28</sup>. The existential anxiety (*Angst*) is the fundamental state of the being-towards-death. It signifies the essential turn from the observation of the death of the other or one's own death as an impersonal fact to the existential awareness of one's own death.

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<sup>24</sup> Solomon, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>25</sup> E. Levinas, 'A Reading of Bloch: Toward a Conclusion' in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 105. The same attitude of mind is expressed in other Levinas' writing (See E. Levinas, *Apie Dievą, ateinantį į mūsų* [De Dieu qui vient à l'idée; in Lithuanian]. (Vilnius: Aidai, 2001), p. 138.)

<sup>26</sup> See E. Levinas, 'Ot sushchestvovaniya k sushchestvujushchemy' [De l'existence à l'existant; in Russian], in *Izbranoje. Totalnost i beskonechnoje* [Selected Writings. Totality and Infinity; in Russian]. (Moskva-Sankt-Peterburg: Universitetskaja kniga, 2000), p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> See Levinas, loc. cit., p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> M. Heidegger spent some time to explain these terms of German language and their usage in his philosophy. Anyway difficulties still arise while translating 'Furcht' and 'Angst' in other languages and trying to interpret them. M. Heidegger himself tells that the fear is the anxiety, only inauthentic one and comments this question in several parts of *Sein und Zeit* (Heidegger, op. cit., pp. 190, 251, 342-343). In this paper the concepts are used according to the common tradition of English translations.

So the fear of one's own death and moreover of the death of the other should be understood as a sign of an inauthentic existence.

Such a view of M. Heidegger can be understood by Everyman as a kind of egoism again. Should I try to get at the existential anxiety and think about my death any time when I worry about the death of my beloved, so that in order to live authentically? The doctor of psychology Ignace Lepp, looking from the psychological perspective and appealing to his practice notices that the '[f]ear of death of others can be perfectly normal', it can be a sincere and 'pure' fear of the death of the other without the additive of egoism<sup>29</sup>. He mentions, however, that the fear of somebody's death often masks the fear of *my* death or other danger to *my* existence.

Robert C. Solomon complements the thought of I. Lepp. He states that the fear of my death when it appears as a part of the solicitude for others ('My fellow-men will be in reduced circumstances without me') may be connected to the fear to lose my importance more than it seems. The thought 'Someone else will take care of them' inspires another thought 'Someone else will take my place' and finishes in the awful realisation 'They will eventually forget about me'<sup>30</sup>.

Are the fear of my death and the fear of the death of the other totally incompatible? Alphonso Lingis, another 'philosopher of death', says that the consciousness of my mortality and of the mortality of the other is coherent to each other and tries to reconcile the two opposite attitudes. According to him, the fear of my death may evoke the fear of the death of somebody else when it turns to me with the existential imperative as opposed to the fatalism. On the other part the way of the other to his death points my own and the most important tasks in the world<sup>31</sup>.

So the fear of death (my death or the death of the other) can be the sign of an authentic as well as an inauthentic existence. The determinant thing here is my attitude not towards death as such but towards life and towards others in my life. Of course one can say that a relationship with others is possible only in life but not in death where I stay totally alone. The question of loneliness is another important problem in the philosophy of death.

**The Loneliness and Death.** The problem of loneliness is common to both M. Heidegger and E. Levinas though in different interpretations. For the first author loneliness in the face of death is inevitable, whereas for the second it is impossible. In the philosophy of M. Heidegger death is the ownmost and non-relational possibility what makes it the ground and the cause of the existential loneliness<sup>32</sup>.

E. Levinas criticizes M. Heidegger because of this. He agrees that relationship with other is in the ontological structure of *Dasein* in the philosophy of M. Heidegger, but suspects that this relationship plays any significant role neither in the drama of Being nor in the existential analysis. According to E. Levinas, in *Sein und Zeit* any analysis is directed towards everyday impersonal being or towards lonely *Dasein*. E. Levinas asks:

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<sup>29</sup> I. Lepp, *Death and its mysteries*, trans. by B. Murchland (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), p. 59.

<sup>30</sup> See Solomon, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>31</sup> See A. Lingis, *Nieko bendra neturinčių bendrija* [*The Community of Those who have Nothing in Common*] (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1997), pp. 148-149.

<sup>32</sup> See Heidegger, op. cit., pp. 264-267.



‘Where does this tragic loneliness come from –Nothingness or rather from absence of others accented by death?’<sup>33</sup> For E. Levinas death is something what overthrows loneliness. Death is always Other and a man in this polarity I-Other never stays alone. Death is Other not temporal and overwhelming. The very essence of death is in being Other. ‘Therefore death does not confirm my loneliness but breaks it’, as E. Levinas says<sup>34</sup>.

Here we should remember again that E. Levinas speaks about ontological conception of loneliness. The otherness of other person, from the psychological point of view, is one of determining factors of the existential loneliness. The other person is always Other – we can not fully reach him or her with the means of sensations, rational thinking, emotional relationship, belief or anything else. No one could deny that we will die alone in some sense. Nobody can accompany us in to the other side of dying (except of some mythological personages, a shaman or an extrasense so popular in these days). Nevertheless, it is very important to feel a human being aside when dying. Doctor Irvin Yalom asserts that the majority of the dying patients had a dread not of death itself but of dying alone. The strength of other person to stay together to the very end helps to overcome the anxiety and not to feel alone even in the face of death<sup>35</sup>. It is true that other person who stays aside can help to think more clear about coming death. The close friend or relative near the deathbed makes the dying person believe that he will meet a fellow-man on the other side of death. The other-side-ness is an inescapable theme while talking about death.

**This and Other Side of Death.** We can see only ‘this’, ‘worldly’ side of death. If death as such is an unachievable Other how can we talk or think about it would it be my death or the death of the other?

The opposition of clarity and mystery is another straight difference in the philosophies of M. Heidegger and E. Levinas. According to E. Levinas, death is incognizable because it is absolutely Other than I am. Consequently I can not unfold or overmaster it. Death just happens. There is neither subject nor object left in death. Nevertheless E. Levinas states that a man remains ‘his own’ in death without ruling it<sup>36</sup>. He says that the incognizability of death is not given to us like Nothingness but it is closely connected with impossibility to retreat from Being into Nothingness. It does not mean that death is the zone from which nobody returns and which remains incognizable accordingly. It means that the relationship with death happens ‘not in the light’. The subject enters the relationship with something that does not emanate from him. He ‘gets in touch with mystery’ as E. Levinas says<sup>37</sup>. So death for E. Levinas is a mystery, an enigma while for M. Heidegger it is something that changes *Dasein* towards clarity. The acceptance of death can help an existence and world to become transparent (*durchsichtig*)<sup>38</sup>.

We should notice that the discussion is about ‘this’ side of death so far, i.e. about our

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<sup>33</sup> E. Levinas, ‘Vremia i Drugoje’ [Le Temps et l'autre; in Russian], in *Patrologia, philosophia, hermeneutika* [Patrology, philosophy, hermeneutics; in Russian]. (Sankt-Peterburg: Trudy VRFSh, 1992), p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> Levinas, loc. cit., p. 114.

<sup>35</sup> See Irvin D. Yalom, *Love's Executioner & Other Tales of Psychotherapy*. (New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers, 1989), p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> See Levinas, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>37</sup> See Levinas, loc. cit., pp. 110-111.

<sup>38</sup> Heidegger, op. cit., pp. 146, 298.

ability to think about death and the conditions of such kind of thinking. Though the philosophy of E. Levinas is shot through with other-side-ness. 'The question that the nothingness of death raises is a pure question mark. [...] The possibility of posing a question to oneself, the famous dialogue of the soul with itself, would never be possible unless the relationship with the Other [*Autrui*] and the question mark of his face had come about'<sup>39</sup>. E. Levinas speaks directly about Godhead and about the Other which is always nearby but on the other side of our consciousness almost in all his writings. The other-side-ness never uncloses, never enters the present and we cannot possess or control it. Nevertheless, it appears continually as mystery. Death is one of the 'clearest' signs of other-side-ness in the philosophy of E. Levinas. According to him, we cannot perceive death not because our flight from it or because our absent-mindedness in dying hour. We simply cannot grasp this inscrutable mystery.<sup>40</sup>

What are the conditions of these and other differences of the two tendencies to think about death? What would Everyman think about the clarity and mystery of death? Maybe the distinctions between the philosophies of M. Heidegger and E. Levinas are not opposite but complementary. M. Heidegger speaks about the consciousness of *mortality* in his *Sein und Zeit*, while E. Levinas is concerned with the consciousness of *death*. That could be the reason for E. Levinas' criticism of M. Heidegger's death analysis. E. Levinas blames him for the pointed this-side-ness and forgotten other-side-ness. He writes: 'For Heidegger, death signifies *my* death in the sense of my *annihilation*'<sup>41</sup> or 'In *Being and Time*, Heidegger considers death as certitude *par excellence*, as a certain possibility, and he limits its meaning to annihilation'<sup>42</sup>.

Of course, E. Levinas is right. Death is always a border and belongs to this side as well as to the other. But the *Sein und Zeit* is dedicated to philosophy of human being as being-in-the-world. So it *should be* concerned with this side of being that ends *completely* after death<sup>43</sup>. In that case all reproofs should be assigned to the idea of work not to its content. It is clear that M. Heidegger does not ignore another side of Being. He sees death (mortality) as inseparable from deity (immortality) when he is talking about death in a broader context<sup>44</sup>.

One could say that E. Levinas speaks about death while M. Heidegger refers to the mortality. Nevertheless, it is not the main distinction between them. E. Levinas speaks about the mortality as well. The mortality in his philosophy, however, is the possibility

<sup>39</sup> E. Levinas, 'To Conclude: Questioning Again' in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 113-114.

<sup>40</sup> See E. Levinas, 'Vremia i Drugoje' [Le Temps et l'autre; in Russian], in *Patrologia, philosophia, hermeneutika* [Patrology, philosophy, hermeneutics; in Russian]. (Sankt-Peterburg: Trudy VRFSH, 1992), p. 112.

<sup>41</sup> E. Levinas, 'Time Considered on the Basis of Death' in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> E. Levinas, 'What Do We Know of Death?' in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Tillich makes the similar remark talking about the modern existentialism and the existential anxiety. He says, that M. Heidegger is concerned not about immortality but about the meaning of anticipation of death for the human situation (See P. Tillich, *Drąsa būti* [Der Mut zum Sein; in Lithuanian]. (Vilnius: Vaga, 1999), p. 105).

<sup>44</sup> See Heidegger M. 'Einblick in das, was ist' in *Gesamtausgabe*, III. Abteilung. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), p. 18.

not of Nothingness but of Being: 'My mortality, my being condemned to death, my time at the point of death, and my death are not the possibility of impossibility but a pure being seized'<sup>45</sup>. Levinas' viewpoint is conditioned by his emphasis on the other-side-ness for he is the philosopher of religion. The most important conception is the totally Other, God but not time, possibility or death that serves the direct or indirect reference to the Other.

E. Levinas emphasizes relationship to other-side-ness, that is probably not so important to M. Heidegger's *Dasein*, but relevant to every human being. Probably it is not so important if we call death the *impossibility of possibility* or the *possibility of impossibility*. Both definitions complement one another. We cannot define death in the conceptions of time, but the event of death (dying) is our unquestionable future. It overwhelms us totally, to the very depth as our mortality and lurks only in the future as the event and the outcrop of the mystery. The mortality as *the face* of death is always the present. Namely through awareness of one's mortality and temporality a person can experience death existentially as here and now present reality and live authentically.

**Looking Inside of Death or Conclusions.** Everyman is not necessarily a philosopher that puts his thoughts in the form of a theory. His questions and doubts may seem naïve and not well-founded. Anyway the insights as well as life of Everyman could be the same authentic or inauthentic as the insights or life of a scientist. Everyman takes the question of death usually 'from the outside'. His position is so called existentially inauthentic one, i.e. Everyman avoids the thoughts about death, fears for the temporality of life and its projects and so on. The latent consciousness of death is influenced by the differentiation of conception of death as the end of life and as a part of life. Death as the end of life is a fact. It is beyond striking distance from the person as the event of future. On the other hand, there are some moments in the life of everybody, when one can (if he resolves) to cognise one's own death actually and authentically. Then death is seen as constantly present, as an inbuilt part of human being that influences whole person's existence. Therefore death as a part of life is a continual process. Remembering the words of Epicurus we can say, that my death is never the present for me as an event, but it *is* present as far as I bestow meaning to it, and cognise that it will become the event of my life one day.

After such a discussion Everyman would agree that one can see one's own death from the perspective of one's own mortality and the death of the other is absolutely relevant for this. But if we would look into the very essence of death through the eyes of Everyman we would see some aspects of death not highlighted by M. Heidegger and E. Levinas. It is death without dying first of all. We come more often into contact not with the physical aspects of death in the everyday life. A parting with beloved one is the most common face of death. The potentiality of non-being consists in every form of life and in every relationship. Not only social and psychological roles are 'dead' after the separation but the very relationship and more over the significant part of me that was created during this relationship.

Another non-physical aspect of death is forgetfulness. Everybody can easily remember some old friends that are 'dead' for us and we are 'dead' for them. Eventually other

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<sup>45</sup> E. Levinas, 'To Conclude: Questioning Again' in E. Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*. Transl. by Bettina Bergo. (Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 117.

person (as well as we ourselves) can change, 'die' as he or she was formerly. The change is one of the most important features of death. To die means something completely different than to live. It could be said *vice versa*: death is one of the most important aspects of any change. The old state dies and the new one is born. The mystics and the investigators of the mysticism call the spiritual death the primal condition of the mystical experience. Namely in the case of the mystical death it is possible to experience one's own death, to 'outlive' it. Such a conception of death does not challenge the main idea of M. Heidegger's philosophy of death, i.e. the transformation towards authenticity. The result of the mystical experience is that what is called an authentic life when one's own mortality is seen as an inherent part of existence but death is not a value *per se*. The conception of spiritual death does not contradict the ontological conception of death as the Other of E. Levinas. There is no division in to subject and object left in the mystical experience. There is no Ego in it but some kind of personality remains. These thoughts guide to the other theme that could be the basis for other essay about mysticism. Maybe it could be the solution of the 'dispute' of M. Heidegger and E. Levinas about death. The spiritual death means the existential consciousness of one's mortality and the transformation of the everyday life as well as the recognition of being of the Other and the development of the authentic relationship with others.

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