

BOOK REVIEWS

ISTVÁN KIRÁLY V., *Death and History* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015)

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“...For, only because he dwells mortally, therefore does man dwell, and must dwell questioningly, and historically in his freedom – that is, in being, bringing to life history itself as a new dimension of being.”
István Király V.

Soliloquium and prolegomena. The prominent Transylvanian Hungarian philosopher István KIRÁLY V.'s most recent English-language volume *Death and History* (illustrated with the Romanian artist Teodora Cosman's paintings) published in 2015 – in the edition of Lambert Academic Publishing House in Saarbrücken, situated next to the French border in the south-west region of Germany –, the eleventh monograph in his book series, in many respects also occupies an important place in his lifework. This time, the author provides an overview bringing his whole philosophical oeuvre in motion, he systematizes long years' researches along some questions that concern the present situation of our historical destiny from the perspectives of both historical ontology and political philosophy. Of course, based on the author's former self-interpretation, to this day it is valid that, as an author dealing with the act of thinking, he writes in fact “one” text,¹ as well as that by means of continuations, his question-posing always “stands in a new light or newly sheds light on something that remained in the shadow so far”.² Therefore, even the shorter or longer trains of thought, the sections already known are not mere reiterations or repetitions of the sentences, but they fulfil an operative function, so to speak, they reflect an organizing principle, and thereby tectonic movements or re-alignments proceed in the path of the author's thinking.

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¹ István, Király V., *Kérdés-pontok a történelemhez, a halálhoz és a szabadsághoz* (Question-points to history, death and freedom) (Cluj: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2008), 5.

² István, Király V., *Filozófia és Itt-Lét* (Philosophy and Dasein) (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Híradó, 1999), 5.

In the present case, it is no longer about recording the current nascent thoughts (in the form of a *working paper*, or *Forschungsmanuscript*), where the author still writes a *soliloquium* (a thorough hard confrontation of the soul with the very self) but the idea of being open to the questioning man in the light of profound and carefully reviewed thoughts. Although the genre of his book is not indicated, it can be understood as a *Prolegomena* in a Kantian sense to an entirely new way of “philosophy of history”, or in the author’s words: to the possibility of an ontology of history which integrates Király’s whole lifework into a unified approach. The Greek word *prolegein*, if we literally translate it into English, is equivalent to “preface”, “introduction” or “preliminary study”, however the book goes far beyond this. Similarly to Kant’s *Prolegomena* in 1783, this is not a completely separated corpus, but a reference to the previous *textus* of his oeuvre, even if it has been produced (later) as a further thinking on the formers, it is not an epilogue that would be the completion or the closing of one of his work periods. Rather, as a *Prolegomena*, it opens toward going even deeper in its analysis. In this sense, Kant wanted his *Prolegomena* to be a “preparatory exercise” or a “finger exercise” for approaching an entirely new science and a new dimension of being. To practise ourselves in it implies a process that is still before us, at the same time, the primary task is not to give an introduction for beginners, but a scientific enlargement on the subject, an overview or a systematization which – in Kant’s formulation, “are not for the use of apprentices, but of future teachers”,³ namely for teachers who are already practised in and very familiar with the preparatory way that has been philosophically applied until now (above all in the first *Critique*). It was Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) the leading representative of the German critical edition of Kant and the Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism according to whose interpretation – in his handbook on *Kant’s Leben und Lehre* (Kant’s Life and Thought) – Kant could not only once again fully expound for the readers the complex network of his work, but also face his completed lifework in the position of being critical in order to pick out the main threads that held the questions together as a whole.⁴ The *Prolegomena* as a genre –this very exacting way of thinking, practised at the same time by scholars in terms of lowliness –in this sense means a *post factum* explanation, an embraceable “plan”,⁵ or a sort of first “draft”. However, there is its further characteristic represented by Kant, namely that the *Prolegomena* is marked by an exposition according to the analytic method (disclosing the well-known thematic in a new way) in contrast with the whole (life)work, whereas the path of thinking had to be composed according to the synthetic method so that all of its articulation might be presented to us, guiding by the innermost structural organization of the human faculty of cognition and experience. Cassirer formulated that through the *Prolegomena*, Kant had inaugurated an authentic, new form of truly philosophical popularity which of course had nothing to do with the vulgar (the ordinary and

³ Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics Which Can Come Forth As Science*, ed. and trans. Gary Hatfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5.

⁴ Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Kant’s Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden (New Haven and London: Yale University press, 1981), 221.

⁵ Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics*, 12 f.

the undemanding) style. Rather, it is related to 'redressing/remedying the obscurity'⁶ and ensuring a kind of clarity and keenness unrivalled among the writings. It is not unimportant that other thinkers in the 20th century have also written *prolegomena*, like Husserl with the title *Prolegomena to Pure Logic* (Prolegomena zur reinen Logik) or Heidegger with *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena* (Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs),⁷ who attributed great importance to it. While this discourse has little relevance for real sciences, in philosophy it is not only of external-propedeutic significance, but it belongs to the matter in question and it is the crucial way of approaching the "thing".⁸ Király's volume – although he has only used this term within his book chapter, but there twice as well – can be named in the above outlined respect, *prolegomena*, whose description or translation hardly offers itself any further equivalent word in other languages.

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*Flowing into the happening*⁹: *Death and history*. From a philological perspective, this volume consists of four major chapters and one supplementary *Appendix* that have recently been published as selected papers (a total of 12) from the achievements of the research work of the last 15 years. The majority of them have already been published in Hungarian or in international forums (of some Romanian, Slovakian and English journals and essay collections), at the same time, the volume was first published in the here composed and revised form (with supplementary annotations and abbreviations), accompanied by updated bibliographical documentation. These studies are organically connected with three previous monumental volumes – among his ten already published monographs, which form a part of the prominent philosophical literature of Central Europe –: namely his 1999 *Philosophy and Dasein*, as well as his 2007 *Mortally dwells man in his freedom* and his 2008 *Questioning-points to history, death and freedom*. His major themes are: historicity, history, life, death, temporality (i. e. the not-passing past and the future), freedom, secret and terrorism which, if we were to go in concentric circles, are deeply interconnected through the main motif of the title. The volume as a whole is nothing other than questioning our being – a situation that changed in the age of globalization, in other words: turning towards something that is happening to us, then getting into this occurrence, and really thinking about the horizon which remains unthinkable in everyday use of the words, but not through statements or responses (*assertion*), but placed in the modality of questioning, enquiry, call for thinking and inspiring us to think (*interrogation*).

⁶ Kant, *Prolegomena To Any Future Metaphysics*, 11.; See also Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, 221.

⁷ See Edmund Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen. Erster Band. Prolegomena zur reinen Logik*, Husserliana Bd. 18. 7. Aufl. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993). Martin Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, Gesamtausgabe Bd. 20., ed. Petra Jaeger (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979).

⁸ It is important that all *prolegomena* also have a critical side, the *Prolegomena* by Kant can be read as a response to the contemporary reviews devoted to the examination of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, then the *Prolegomena* includes a critique on psychologism in Husserl's case, and a profound critical analysis of the Husserlian phenomenology in Heidegger's case. However, it is not worth to overemphasize this aspect of *Prolegomena*, because by its nature, it is not a pamphlet.

⁹ In other words, we may say: "Thrown in the event" or "Getting into the occurrence".

Real understanding and openness related to the truth have a question-nature in these texts, namely they are present in a way that we are getting ever closer to unsettling questions and philosophically yet unexplored fields of experience. In doing so, we ourselves are clearly at stake, that is, whether we will one day understand or lose our own humanity.

One of the great merits of the volume, one that cannot be underestimated, lies in the fact that it is not moving within the horizon of the traditional philosophy of history, but is asking for that basis. The author tries to make it thematic what the historiographical researches rather only presuppose or carry in themselves, but they never formulate thematically. It is about the fact that, through its nature, all historical researches deal with - death, insofar as the events of the past and the dead people become the matter of history, therefore death counts as a "constant" of history. But the ontological significance of this basic context usually remains hidden. Essentially, the interconnectedness between death and history started to be thematized primarily by famous French historians such as for example Philippe Aries, Michel Vovelle, Louis-Vincent Thomas or Pierre Chaunu during the 1960s–1970s. However, the conjunction and interference of *Death and History* do not simply mean here that it is about any kind of "problematization" of death through historiography, whereas something like death can be historically accessed, or that death also has its history. Rather the main reason of this primacy of death and that of the privileged understanding and research of death may actually be that without death it cannot be conceived how history and historicity belong to us in an existential-ontological respect. It is the fundamental question or the the author's most important *interrogation* (basis for question) – why and whereby does man have history at all? Why do we all exist as historical beings? Generally, what does it mean for us to get back to the roots and genesis of history?

Investigating the *Leviathan* of Thomas Hobbes and Heidegger's early works (among others the *Natorp-essay* of 1922 and *Being and Time* as well), and discovering the possibility of new inter-crossings, the two kinds of traditions which seem to be far apart, the first chapter (*Human Finitude and History – Prolegomena to the Possibility of a "Philosophy of History" and Ontology of History*, 3–66.) focuses solely on history from "its beginning" to "its end". For Hobbes, it is the fear of death inseparably connected to self-reservation that proves itself to be a dynamic factor of human history (war and peace) in the fields of state, law and morals, while for Heidegger, it is the authentic human being-toward-death (our temporal finitude) that utterly lays the hidden foundations of our historical being and thus human history itself. The guiding idea, which is articulated in the shadows of these two aforementioned thinkers, can be summarised so that without our mortality and its awareness "probably there would be no society, nor history, nor future or hope" (*Marius Rotar*). (7.) Why not? Because in the life of an "immortal being", nothing can happen, therefore it is inevitable that such a life cannot have a history (past or future), nor have a destiny. Philosophy can first of all give an insight into what we still know nothing about – transcendence and the dignity of death. A metaphysics of immortality in fact does not ask for the real stake of our human being. This stake lies in the fact that through his nature, man will only become a "mortal" and a truly historical being through his being-toward-death (some awareness of death). If we, however, do not exist as historical

beings, then naturally, we can very well create and imagine a wide variety of metaphysics of immortality, an idea that turned the question towards epistemology... But this is not the solution. In fact, we must face that this is not a problem to be solved, but a problem to be sublimed.¹⁰ Heidegger also rather gives a high priority to that: how are we historical? How are we to be authentically or non-authentically as a historical being? Kant has already made it clear, about concepts such as “God”, “immortality” and “freedom”, which extend over all our occurring experiences and are not objects of our *sensuous intuition*, we can only have abstract ideas that are useful as “regulative principles”, that is to say, they give a guidance to our will and morality. If anybody wants to empirically verify their validity through experience – in the manner of historical knowledge – we may say that he has not really understood what it is all about. Instead of these ways of escape, it rather becomes a decisive question whether we have clearly understood our mortality or what makes us historical. It raises the question whether we should not first become mortal if we were to live in the “faith of immortality”.

“So in order to understand hope, first we must [...] understand death.”¹¹ (Cf. 141.) Király also points out that no matter how strange it may sound, biological birth does not make us “mortal” human beings, and thereby it does not make us historical either. It is a mistake to think that we would originally be “mortal” or “immortal”. It is neither one, nor the other with any one of us. Such a view would be a passive understanding – without freedom – of human existence. My mortal human existence itself (*Selbst*), the one I am looking for, is not from the beginning, in the beginning I am not really myself but the potentiality to be my own Self-being, only if the voice of conscience gives me to understand in calling and I listen to its voice, by following it, then I will find myself as a mortal. This direction of question may be regarded as a sign of protest against the practice of therapeutic philosophizing (consolation). Király’s intention is to finally get out of that currently prevailing insufficient schematism of conception of history, which – according to the theologian Karl Löwith – is characteristic to an inevitable impossibility to free oneself from the theological “scheme” (32.). He calls attention to the fact that during “the age of terror” in the very centre of discourse of globalization, the notions of immortality are no longer *pharmakon* (medicine), but poison. In fact, death does not mean a pure loss of perspective, a mere passage or a simple termination of life, which would be an existential failure or irretrievable medical malpractice, but it is what “can directly give vision to life”.¹² (15.) It is the awareness of our mortality that allows us to live a more humane life, while

¹⁰ Cf. István Fehér M. “Sorseseemény és narratív identitás” (Fate event and narrative identity), *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle* 4 (2015): 11–46., here: 21 f: At this place, I applied Fehér’s argumentation. He points out in another context that for Heidegger, Self-identity (Dilthey, Ricoeur) is a problem to be sublimed (as well as the justification of the existence of an external world) rather than a problem to be solved.

¹¹ István Király V., *Halandóan lakozik szabadságában az ember* (Mortally dwells man in his freedom) (Pozsony [Bratislava]: Kalligram, 2007), 307.

¹² Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation”, *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* ed. Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan, no. 9 (2009): 144–182, here: 158.

its denial gives birth to illusions and utopias, it can lead to world wars – as we have already seen so often in history.

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History and Memory - Historia vitae magistra. The second chapter (“*Had-been-ness*” and *Past – History and Memory*, 67–108.) – in the frame of applied philosophical-hermeneutical dialogue with Heidegger – explores the questions of history and memory about our (problematic) relations with the past. The author’s thesis is that the psychological and literary techniques, the methods in historical sciences, even more, based on time-analysis in Saint Augustine’s *Confessions*, in the 20th century the philosophical approaches of Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre fail to understand the past. These points of view will no longer provide us with sufficient grounds for answering the most serious issues of the recent past. Today – after the world wars of the 20th century, after the events at Auschwitz and the experience of inhumanity – in the “age of terrorism” and that of contingency we need the renewal of our question-posing and the reinterpretation of our modes of perception about the past. The past hides rather than reveals itself to us. There is something essential we do not know about, and about the way we should relate to it. In the heart of the problem, however, what is primarily hidden is not epistemological but existential-ontological thematics. For the author, the main problem lies in the fact that we failed to overcome the tendency to “represent” the past and cancel the temporal distance, with the help of memory; but in this way we never access the being in the depths of the past, but only for the issue of the time, namely within the frame of an approach that Derrida justly called the *metaphysics of presence* (*metaphisique de la présence*).

We cannot completely understand the past, without being involved in special problems of no-longer-existence, “no-longer-now” and the “never” connected to it, in sum: without thinking about Nothing. From the direction of Nothing, what becomes visible is that even the power of God cannot alter the past and consider it cancelled or do something that “had-not-happened”. The second chapter opens the horizon – through Heidegger’s exposition of the “phenomenon of guilt (*Schuld*)” in § 58 of *Being and Time* – for two ways of the recent understanding of the past: this is the *Had-been-ness* and the *Past*. According to the author’s warning: on the one hand, in order for what was once in the past to truly become past, it is not enough to merely remember the past, or to regularly speak of it, to know about it and to represent what had passed, but rather the “had been” must be made to pass, we must make it past – in an ontological view, all other alternatives lead us astray. On the other hand, the Past is not given to us immediately and it is impossible to simply contemplate that what had been, because the “Had-been-ness” does not automatically become the “Past” and it does not pass by itself. Saving the past is something that only happens through a truly passing of the past and making it past; this is an enormous task before which we must see the possibility of making it past at all, without which it remains an un-passing past that may dominate the present as well, not simply so that our past is still lasting – but it is in a somewhat special way that the past haunts, it does not pass, on the contrary: it does so even deeper. It is one of the foundations of the critical revisions of psychoanalysis that the un-passing past, which the author named a mere “Had-been-ness”, still dominates us as a macabre or dangerous “past”. “To make

something that Had-Been pass, is an existential human task and philosophy must open horizons for it." (90.) The historical knowledge of the past is of course required, but it is not enough, because this seems to be only a necessary precondition for understanding the past.

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The Future, Or, To Dwell Questioningly. In chapter three (*The Future, or, Questioningly Dwells the Mortal Man*, 109–132.) also outlined in dialogue with Heidegger, essential aspects of our relations to time and the future come to the fore such as the escaping future (that is nothing else than escaping death), the waiting, the Self-anticipation, the running forth towards the possibility, the planning, the hope, the prediction etc. The author briefly outlines, by making some references, the three directions of current researches: these are 1) a new scholarly discipline, the study of the future (futurology) in the social sciences; 2) the philosophical meaning and significance of desire (wishes, *desideratum* and *conatus* as an aspiration of life), which the French phenomenology started rediscovering and discussing along its psychological and moral functions; and 3) the salvation historical-eschatological horizon related to the future of religion, which tries to think of the human being from a point of view of immortality. In the meantime, a personal perspective of the author is also outlined, which is not satisfied with the result of the mentioned researches. The future becomes a hermeneutical and historical basic concept in the way that it does not refer to the facts, the modes of givenness or evidence and the certainty, but it opens up as a possibility of our being, what is more, directly as a "task" to be performed, and therefore it cannot be understood without the dimensions of the possibility of death, questioning and freedom. It is the ground thesis presented by the author, the meaning being first of all always interconnected with the future, even the meaning originating from tradition gains its importance and its meaningfulness with regard to the future as well. Therefore "the loss of meaning is always coupled with the loss of future, and the loss of future is always coupled with the loss of meaning. And together with this, or rather precisely because of this, there are always *possibilities of existence being lost.*" (136. f. in note 4.) The essence of the future as a primary and ultimate possibility of our being (summarised: the ends and the limits at the edges) "– for us people – is actually only opened up and exhibited by philosophy alone", (137.) not by science (which at most can determine and assess these), nor by technology (which fills these up and prolongs them), nor by politics (which settles or uses them), nor by art (which tunes and re-tunes the world) and nor by religion (which consoles us).

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Thanatological Sensitivity: Philosophy, Theology and "A-theism". Through further thinking these consequences, chapter four (*The Foundation of Philosophy and Atheism in Heidegger's Early Works*, 143–158.) attempts to sketch and explore the way in which the interrelation of "death and history" is concerned with the "foundations" of philosophy itself and the problem of its "Self-actualization" which Leibniz formulated as the principle of the sufficient reason (*principium rationis sufficientis*). As a starting point of these considerations appears the 'Introduction to Aristotle' of 1922 (the so-called 'Natorp essay') written by the young Heidegger, simultaneously submitted as a candidature for two posts of extraordinary professor, rejected by the University of Göttingen, but accepted at the University of Marburg due to the positive

reviews about this manuscript by Paul Natorp and Nicolai Hartmann, a study that Gadamer named “Heidegger’s theological early work (Heideggers ‘theologische’ Jugendschrift)”.¹³ Furthermore, the essay entitled *On the Essence of the Ground* in 1929 can be read as the continuation of this early meditation which reveals more originally and extensively the issue of the world, of transcendence and freedom, by means of the problem of ground. Even the young Heidegger had not conceived of the task of the “foundation” of philosophy by presenting it as a kind of original or primordial science (*Urwissenschaft*), but as a return into its factual, historical-existential origin and meaning of philosophizing, as being inside and between (*inter esse* in Latin). Philosophy as founding – in this sense – is questioning : why is philosophy at all? And what can be the sense of this human activity? Király renders a full radicality residing in Heidegger’s response: also our *mortal* being represents the foundation and origin of philosophy as well as ethics, deontology, legal systems or any kind of scientific research. These activities make sense only for us *mortals*, therefore it is a painful omission that the Greek Christian Tradition seeks the possibilities of self-interpretation through the metaphysics of immortality. This way, it can never be faced with the certainty of death, that is, this tradition conceives death without dying. By means of precluding the specifically Christian denominational contents, Heidegger’s purpose is certainly not to make philosophy unreligious- irreligious or to deprive one of piety, but to provide a deeper hermeneutics of the ground structures of life. I think it is worth highlighting that both in his 1920/21 lecture course series published with the title *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* (The Phenomenology of Religious Life) and in his ‘Aristotle Introduction’ of 1922, Heidegger regarded as a model the eschatological conception of time of the primal Christian life experience described by the Apostle Paul, i.e. the kairological experience of time (see Paul’s letter to the Galatians and his first and second letters to the Thessalonians). Starting from this, he picked out the most radical form of confronting death as well. After taking up Adolf von Harnack’s “theme of the calamitous Hellenization of Christian theology”,¹⁴ contrary to Christianity, Heidegger criticizes theology (first of all the system of Catholicism), since he considers it as a counterpoint of the primal Christian life experience in which the innermost core of faithful life has been pushed into the background. In the light of this critique of theology, philosophy can reach the headwaters region of its own questions only when freed from the pressure of theology, in other words: only if it is “essentially atheistic” (*grundsätzlich atheistisch ist*).¹⁵ (quoted: 155.) This atheism, however, is not related to the content, but it is of a “principle-based”, methodological

¹³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Heideggers »theologische« Jugendschrift”, in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch* 6 (1989): 228–234.

¹⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Heideggers Wege”, in *Gesammelte Werke* 3. (Tübingen: J. C. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1987), 313. On this issue, see also István Fehér M., “Létmegértés és filozófia – hit és teológia” (Understanding of Being and Philosophy – Faith and Theology) *Teória és praxis között, avagy a filozófia gyakorlati arcáról* (Between Theory and Practice, or On the Practical Side of Philosophy), ed. Gergely Bakos (Budapest: L’Harmattan – Sapientia Szerzetesi Hittudományi Főiskola, 2011), 71–118. essentially: 99–116.

¹⁵ Heidegger, “Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation”, 161.

character where it can be abstracted from all the usual meanings of this expression. The *a-theism* is similar to the word combination of *a-létheia* (α-ληθεια as an unconcealment, *Unverborgenheit*), which does not represent the negation of truth, but with the help of an alpha privative (“α”), the opening up of a more original experience of truth so that this notion of truth goes far beyond the truth understood in the sense of *adaequatio rei* (as a *Satzwahrheit* or a statement corresponding to the thing or objective reality) and it can grasp the happening of truth as the truth of the being.

In this respect, the term *a-theos* (ἄθεος) means neither godlessness, nor unbelief, it has nothing to do with irreligiosity, but it is a constructive momentum within religiosity, a thinking behaviour through which the human existence remains open and one can avoid visions and ideological closing to any kind of movement or worldview. The “*a-theism*” of philosophy only means “raising its hand against God” in a way that it reminds us of the thought *Deus absconditus* (Isaiah 45, 15), the missing God or living in privation of God. To tune ourselves to the absence of God, however, is no more and no less than to be open and thereby it allows us to no longer want to speak about Him as a subject that is transcendent or to approach Him anthropologically, but we allow ourselves to be the transcendence of God: through His drawing back from the world, concealing Himself and His basic uncommunicableness. Consequently, the philosopher is the man who, similarly to Socrates, does not repress the most important questions and the search deriving from the condition of the mortal human being, because from the beginning he is aware of his ignorance (in the manner of *docta ignorantia*). The awareness of our mortality gives the importance back to the things and can offer a view on the present and the past, while the ideas of immortality intensify the falling tendencies of life, resulting in a metaphysical reassurance that is dangerous: leading to mere dreamy enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) or *wishful thinking* against which the young Kant had already struggled as well, and had regarded the critique of reason as the most effective antiserum.¹⁶

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The Age of Terrorism. In conclusion, a supplementary discussion is linked with the previous subjects (*Appendix. Life – Death – Secret – Terrorism*, 159–172.), which specifies one of the most topical problems concerning the future of Europe and life today: the question of terrorism. According to the author, in an interview made by Giovanna Borradori, after September 11, 2001, hardly accidentally, both Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida remind us that the war on terrorism “is waged against an actually unknown enemy”, that is to say, we do not really know what we are up against (160).¹⁷ All of this – based on the author’s train-of-thought– illustrates how incapable and unready contemporary philosophy is to really face the aforementioned problems of our present and future, while it continuously offers the so-called

¹⁶ Kant, *Prolegomena*, 134.: “Fanaticism, which cannot make headway in an enlightened age except by hiding behind a school metaphysics, under the protection of which it can venture, as it were, to rave rationally, will be driven by critical philosophy from this its final hiding place” See in detail István Fehér M., “Metafizika és észkritika” (Metaphysics and Critique of Reason), *Világosság* 10–11–12 (2004): 51.

¹⁷ On this question, see in more detail: Giovanna Borradori, ed., *Philosophy in the Time of Terror. Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2004).

social and political criticism. It becomes questionable whether it is really enough to analyse religion, nationalistic or political fanaticism in order to sketch and “understand” the terrorism operating in secret and by means of secrecy. Among other things, this well indicates that terrorism appears as a special form of dominion over death and life which can only exist by means of instrumentalizing denial of death. Furthermore, the essence of terror or terrifying is that it organizes itself by nature in the atmosphere and horizon of the secret (against the possibility of identificableness). Király points out that “people would at least more seldom blow up – and generally kill – one another and themselves if they understood that their single life is finite, in other words: uncontinuable and unrepeatable as well; if they did not deny death, their death”. (171.) It is worth to meditate with the purpose of further thinking upon the fact that “the war on terrorism (too) should / must widen into a ‘flight’ against the denial of death. A flight which should / must be fought (after all) not only and not exclusively [...] on the secret fields, but, on the contrary, in the depth and womb of history”, by means of transforming the present-day thinking on the human being.” (171.) However, the denial of death is not recent, what is more, this is surely the place of origin of the well known and never surpassed *contemptus mundi*: the contempt of the world, or the hatred of the “world”. It is something that we mortals could never allow ourselves. (138.) From both the writer’s and life historical perspectives, it is important that in this chapter, the essential relationship must be created between Király’s two fundamental topics, namely between the secret and the death which surfaced in his very first works from the early 1980s¹⁸ and then in his 1986 article.¹⁹ Because of the censorship in that time, the majority of his works concerning the research of secret was published only in the 1996 Hungarian essay volume *Határ – Hallgatás – Titok* (Limit – Silence – Secret),²⁰ and monographically in his 2001 Romanian doctoral dissertation *Fenomenologia existențială a secretului. Încercare de filosofie aplicată*. (The Existential Phenomenology of the Secret. Applied Philosophical Essay).²¹ In these complex works, various aspects become visible: 1) the phenomenological approaches of the secret related to the concealment and unconcealment of being; 2) the analysis of the categorial structure of secret in the direction that one is unable to die in metaphysical and religious tradition; and finally 3) the analysis of the secret as one of the possible key-concepts of social philosophy and history, whereby it may be disclosed that the secret is present not only in extreme cases, but one of the basic organizing principles of the operational mechanisms of societies. The latter will have a crucial significance for the most recent researches.

¹⁸ See e. g. István Király V., “A titokról” (On the Secret), in *A Bábel tornyán* (On the tower of Babel) (Bucharest: Kriterion, 1983) 181–190.

¹⁹ István Király V., “A titok és kategóriális szerkezete” (The Secret and Its Categorial Structure), *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle* 1–2 (1986): 76–85.

²⁰ István Király V., *Határ – Hallgatás – Titok* (Limit – Silence – Secret) (Kolozsvar [Cluj-Napoca]: Komp-Press Korunk Baráti Társaság, 1996).

²¹ István Király V., *Fenomenologia existențială a secretului Încercare de filosofie aplicată*. (The Existential Phenomenology of the Secret. Applied Philosophical Essay) (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2001).

In summary, based on the aforementioned topics, I heartily recommend Király's profound new book *Death and History*, which sheds light on the basic problems of current philosophical thinking of history, for both the research professionals and the wider reading public interested in history and philosophy.

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