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I. Introduction

Some authors cherish portraying Alexandre Kojève in the robes of a benevolent liberal presiding over the peaceful global order which he contributed to create from his position as a high-ranking official in the French ministry of economic affairs. But this approach often comes together with a questionable treatment of the role that his political philosophy assigns to revolutionary terror and political violence. Francis Fukuyama's interpretation of Kojève's thought in his famous *The End of History and The Last Man* is a case in point. Not only does Fukuyama laud a particular passage in Kojève's seminar on Hegel, where Kojève discusses the "democratization of imperial Germany (by way of Hitlerism)"[1] and the "Sino-Soviet actualization of Robespierrian Bonapartism,"[2] but he also, perhaps somewhat discomforted by the implications of his praise, emphatically states later in his book that a modern-day Hegelian suggesting Hitler was necessary to bring democracy to Germany after 1945 "would

[1] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History, and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992), 67.
[2] Ibid., 67.

deserve ridicule."[3] But this is precisely what his philosophical mentor, Kojève, claims in the passage in question

The key message to convey here is that Kojève's emphasis on *Robespierrian Bonapartism*, or, in simpler terms, on the use of terror as a potent tool to mold individuals within a specific society towards a particular direction, seems far from being a whimsical notion "deserving of ridicule." Instead, it aligns with a consistent pattern that can be viewed as a defining feature of Kojève's work. This underlying theme can be traced back as early as his 1917-1923 *Diary of a Philosopher*, where Kojève identifies himself as the proponent of "bolshevism in philosophy." [4] This trajectory might also be linked to his assertion in 1957 that the Russian people would be prepared to endure a second phase of "Stalinist austerity" if its likely defeat in the Cold War were to lead to a "recognition of the USA's political hegemony." [5]

Moreover, Kojève's exploration of political terror does not solely rely on the institutional mechanisms of violence by which society, in its entirety, legally enforces itself, as he elaborates in his essay *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*. It also takes into account the individual will of society's members, who can be seen as both instigators and recipients of what we might term 'self-inflicted terror.'

In this context, a notable entry in his journal, dated 16/08/1920, stands out. In it, Kojève contrasts Dostoyevsky's advocacy for the harmonization of society and the free individual with Nietzsche's emphasis on individual will, juxtaposing these ideas against Tolstoy's insistence on the preeminence of society. Kojève further contends that Dostoievsky's Raskolnikov "only understood his own legality before himself when he was sentenced to forced labor for his crime." [6]

Nearly nine years later, on 9/03/1929, Kojève authored an article titled *Philosophy and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* in response to an invitation from Lev Karvasin, a Russian philosopher, and the editor of the journal *Eurasia*. In this article, Kojève not only suggests elevating Hegel to the status of the official philosopher of the USSR while prohibiting the instruction of other philosophical ideologies, but he also regards the stringent measures of terror implemented by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union — aimed at eradicating philosophies challenging the dominance of the "new philosophy, necessarily Hegelian"— as "inevitable and beneficial." [7] Lev Karsavin, a scholar who lived outside of Russia in the mid-1920s and received a ten-year sentence of forced labor from the Soviet Ministry of State Security in 1950 eventually dying of tuberculosis in a special camp in 1952, seems to aptly capture the essence of Kojève's philosophical message at the time when, in the next issue of his *Eurasia* journal, he comments, "Thought develops and attains freedom when subjected to repression and persecution. I believe that residing in a relatively free country, as opposed to Russia, is disadvantageous for my philosophy (though not necessarily for my well-being)." [8]

While Karvasin's assertion that terror is a prerequisite for freedom of thought might align with Kojève's philosophical standpoint, linking Karvasin's death under Stalinist terror to Kojève's idea of "mastering and overcoming Hegel" [9] in a universal and homogeneous state is more problematic. Nevertheless, Karvasin's tragic fate could fit into Kojève's mental

[3] Ibid., 128.
[4] Alexandre Kojève, *Tagebuch eines Philosophen* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2015), 119.
[5] Alexandre Kojève, "Moscou : Août 1957," *Commentaire* 2/62 (1993) : 277.
All translations from the original French and German to English in this article are my own.
[6] Alexandre Kojève, *Tagebuch eines Philosophen* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2015), 70-72.
[7] Dimitri Tokarev, "Les Auditeurs Russes "Inaperçus" (Gordin, Tarr, Poplavskij) du séminaire hégélien d'Alexandre Kojève à l'École Pratique des Hautes Études," *Revue des études slaves* 88/3 (2017): 502.
[8] Quoted in ibid., 502.
[9] Ibid., 500.

framework if one takes into account the distinction Kojève makes between "sick" or "discontent" individuals and "healthy" or "content" ones in a letter to Leo Strauss.[10] Moreover, this distinction can be placed within a process of self-improvement affecting society in a post-revolutionary end of history. Kojève describes this process in his lectures on Hegel, as hinging upon what he refers to as a slander that states the truth[11]. Accordingly, a false accusation (slander) becomes true upon the final state sorting its subjects into two categories. The first category consists of those whose health renders them apt to be managed, thereby enhancing the truth of the whole. The second category includes those categorized as sick who deserve to be "locked up,"[12] conveying truth to the slander.

Additionally, relying on the notion of authority that Kojève puts forth in his 1942 book on the subject,[13] one might argue that to "strengthen the truth of the post-revolutionary society,"[14] those rated as sick must freely acquiesce to their sickness if requested by the state's authority, as this authority relies on the subject's recognition, sparing it the exertion of unnecessary force. As Kojève also suggests in his Hegel lectures, advancing a distinction that is anything but negligible, in a post-revolutionary society slander may fall upon both the slanderers of society and the slandered alike, with the former being the revolutionaries who are now willing to commit suicide while sticking to their criminal reputation.[15]

Indeed, it is debatable whether Karvasin's keenness on terror as the trigger for free thought might have led him to voluntarily stay in Lithuania even after it was taken over by Soviet Russia, thereby exposing himself to such a perilous time for his physical existence, especially considering that the Bolsheviks had already expelled him from Russia in 1922. However, Karvasin's apparent self-denial might contain a riddle that renders this connection plausible enough.

Between the years spanning from his journal entry dated August 16, 1920, to his 1957 article *Moscou: Août 1957* and beyond, Kojève developed many of the ideas that we have just observed in action. However, there is one specific work in which Kojève connects the notions of 'interaction,' 'free individual,' and 'terror' in a particularly far-reaching manner. We are referring to his 1931 book *Atheism*, a work that may be interpreted as the "attempt at a philosophy of religion"[16] Kojève alluded to at the end of the aforementioned journal entry.

Instead of downplaying the significance of these notions and depicting Kojève solely as the optimistic forerunner of a peaceful global order, this article aims to explore and trace the full implications of Kojève's *Robespierrian Bonapartism*.

II. Robespierrian Bonapartism

In addition to its potential origins in the youthful 'bolshevism' of his diaries, Kojève's *Robespierrian Bonapartism* finds its distinct expression in certain segments of his lectures on Hegel, particularly when he evaluates Napoleon's personality. Napoleon, to Kojève, epitomizes a singular consciousness — an individual — whose ability to transform his aspirations into tangible reality elevates him to the status of "God appearing" or "God manifested" in the world. Not only did Kojève believe that Hegel revealed Napoleon's divine

[10] Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny. Corrected and expanded Edition. Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence*, ed. Victor Gourevitch & Michael Roth, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 255.
[11] Alexandre Kojève, Introduction à la lecture de Hegel, (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 137.
[12] Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 255.
[13] Alexandre Kojève, *La Notion de l'Autorité* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), 56-65.
[14] Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel* (Paris : Gallimard, 1962), 137.
[15] Ibid., 136-137.
[16] Alexandre Kojève, *Tagebuch eines Philosophen*, 72.

essence — "Der erscheinende Gott"[17] — in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, but he also identified this divine essence supposedly revealed by Hegel in Napoleon's capacity to universalize his unique vanity — his quest for recognition — through successful action.

Furthermore, Kojève contrasts Napoleon's effective and all-encompassing achievements with what he perceives as a deceptive realm consisting of empty universal declarations and political rhetoric, particularly within the context of romantic liberalism. At most, this bourgeois world is a post-revolutionary facade — Hegel's "moral spirit"[18] — where the ultimate implications of Napoleonic action remain incompletely addressed. Within this setting, Kant's reason, the most cunning expression of that world, judged Napoleonic action as "guilty"[19] and criminal. Similarly, the liberal and tolerant romantics of the 19th century condemned that action as a betrayal of the revolution. Only Hegel accorded it proper recognition by "absolving" its crimes, citing its intrinsic alignment with the world due to its universal success.

At the heart of this Kojevean understanding of action lies the reclamation of the world from the hands of God. Kojève's ardent reclamation later leads him to revise even Kant's categorical framework and to interpret "History" as the schematic category through which the interplay of "freedom" and worldly "interactions" concludes in the final identification of the *particular* and the *universal*. [20] "Freedom" and "Interactions" further contribute to dispelling what Kojève terms the "mana-soul" — an element that religion infuses into every human through certain magic rituals, in utter disregard of one's worldly actions. Also, Kojève deems this element as fundamentally opposing the living individual, much like how "the afterworld stands in opposition to the present moment, regardless of its nature." [21]

At first sight, Kojève's idea of reclaiming the world from God involves the disenchantment of the former by letting individuals freely interact among themselves. However, this reclamation equally implies an interaction concept that extends beyond the immediate presence of the world. To delve deeper into this concept, it is valuable to revisit Kojève's approach to it in his 1931 essay, *Atheism*.

III. Familiar Interactions

At its core lies the Heideggerian notion of 'man-in-the-world' ('In-der Welt-Sein'), extensively elaborated upon by Kojève in that essay. 'Man-in-the-world' depicts the interaction of humans with the world, forming a harmonious unity with it, notably a "global homogeneous interaction."[22] It also implies a distinct way of self-understanding. Kojève describes this self-understanding as the act through which 'man-in-the-world' gives itself to itself in a certain mode. This *self-givenness* can occur in various modes, with 'man-in-the-world' being one of them. As a mode that prioritizes action, the *self-givenness* proper to 'man-in-the-world' encompasses not only "the action of man upon the world" but also "the action of the world upon man,"[23] with the former action representing that of the self and the latter representing that of the non-self. Self and non-self stand on the same homogeneous level. Kojève further observes that the goal of his entire philosophical system is to provide a comprehensive depiction of 'man-in-the-world.'[24]

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[18] Ibid., 72.
[19] Ibid., 72.
[20] Alexandre Kojève, *Kant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 169.
[21] Ibid, 44.
[22] Alexandre Kojève, *L'Athéisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), n.56, 219.
[23] Ibid., 105.
[24] Ibid., 164.

The profound implications of Kojeve's interpretation of *self-givenness* cannot be ignored. His 1931 assertion that "The giving to man of anything whatsoever is one of the forms of interaction between him and what is given to him."[25] might even resonate in his 1957 concept of 'giving colonialism' and in his own economic undertakings during his long-standing tenure in the French Ministry of Economic Affairs.

The mode of *self-givenness* as 'man-in-the-world' initially manifests itself in a particular *tonus*. Kojève characterizes this *tonus* as a "quiet familiar intimacy." [26] It arises in response to the agent's awareness of the distinction between his own self and the world as a non-self with which he interacts. The serene and familiar *tonus* that governs these interactions corresponds to the homogeneous unity that the human agent and the world form.

As outlined by Kojève, 'Man-in-the-world' primarily gives itself to itself through action upon the world. "It stands prepared for action, becomes tense, and turns its focus inward."[27]

Its presence is shaped by the inherent directionality of from-towards / self -non-self (world), which is an integral aspect of the active vector giving rise to these interactions.

All things considered; 'man-in-the-world' can be equated with the 'man-of-action.' Sharing the same spatial-temporal characteristics as the given,[28] both figures may equally be linked to 'everyday life' in which Heidegger's 'Man' inauthentically understands itself.[29]

Still, the tension[30] propelling the active vector in Kojève's 'man-in-the-world' causes its consciousness to rely on more than a mere serene self-assertion. Kojève notes that the *self-givenness* of 'man-in-the-world' emerges from its opposition to the world,[31] its consciousness emerges from within, from the boundless internal tension generated by the homogeneous differentiation between its two inherent poles: the self and the world.

Following this, Kojève refines the serene *tonus* of man-in-the-world's *self-givenness* complementing it with an "uneasy certainty."[32] He associates this uneasiness with the way in which the self confronts the world, emphasizing its inner tension in the face of it while simultaneously disregarding the contrast between self and non-self with 'non-being' or 'nothingness.'

As a likely by-product of this disregard, 'man-in-the-world,' propelled by countless interactions, initially excludes nothingness from its worldly calculations, depriving itself, according to Kojève, of a concrete individual existence. It is within this exclusion of "nothingness" that contemporary atheist science also finds its origin.

IV. Unfamiliar Interactions

Beyond the internal tension in which he grounds man-in-the-world's homogeneous interactions, Kojève discerns another type of interactions. This second type further shapes 'man-in-the-world' by bringing the realm of the heterogeneous to the forefront. The heterogeneous corresponds to everything that defies classification as either 'self' or 'world.' Kojève refers to it, in the terms of the German philosopher Rudolf Otto, as "the wholly other."[33] This *other* eludes the familiarity of worldly interactions either in the form of 'calm

[25] Ibid., 115.
[26] Ibid., 110.
[27] Ibid., 106.
[28] Ibid., n.59, 220.
[29] Hannah Arendt, " Philosophie und Soziologie. Anlässlich Karl Mannheim Ideologie und Utopie," *Die Gesellschaft. Internationale Revue für Sozialismus und Politik* 7 (1930) : 166.
[30] Kojève, *L´Athéisme*, 142.
[31] Ibid., n99, 229.
[32] Ibid., 142.
[33] Ibid., 125.

assurance' or 'uneasy certainty.' Such heterogeneity can only be hinted at by 'man-in-the-world' if its *self-givenness* adopts an entirely different mode, namely, one inherent to 'man-outside-of -the-world.'

This other mode of *self-givenness* ceases to involve a *self-givenness* from within through countless interactions; instead, it implies an external source. This primarily means that the homogeneous tension between 'Self' and 'world' recedes into the background, thereby removing the familiar *tonus* of worldly interactions.

Likewise, the boundlessness that the internal tension of this-worldly interactions brought about dramatically contrasts with the finitude characteristic of this new *self-givenness* stemming from without. By highlighting the essential finitude of 'man-in-the-world,' *self-givenness* in its new form causes the opposition of the 'Self' before the 'world' to retreat, bringing the contrast between 'man-in-the-world' and 'non-being' to the limelight. In its aftermath, the *tonus* presiding over this mode of *self-givenness* shifts to one of "despair and terror in the face of the darkness of non-being."[34]

This *tonus* is not immediately discernible in the ordinary course of 'man-in-the-world' and its affairs. Instead, it is something that disrupts that course serving as both the genesis of philosophy and a force that may also arise in moments of mortal danger. [35]

Still, Kojève manages to incorporate this disruption into the worldly interactions that constitute 'man-in-the-world.' He does this partly by interpreting the internal tension driving these interactions as capable of reaching a climax, beyond which the entire construct of 'Self before the world' begins to dissolve. It is precisely at this peak that the Self, fixed in a state of terror, gives itself to itself from the outside, comprehending itself as a "living dead"[36] or maybe even as "death living a human life,"[37] as Kojève later elaborates in his courses on Hegel.

Yet, Kojève seems to find the removal of boundlessness and the concurrent attainment of finitude more plausible if they originate from an external source rather than from interactions rooted only in internal tension. Furthermore, it is from such an external source that one should expect that despair and terror arise in their fullest form, and, through these, 'man-in-the-world' transforms into a fully realized individual.

However, this *self-givenness* from without cannot occur immediately. At best, it can only happen indirectly. In effect, 'Man-in-the-world' needs to be mirrored by a 'man-outside-of-the-world' capable of interacting with the heterogeneous. This heterogeneous with which 'man-outside-of-the-world' interacts is no other than God. Kojève likens the theistic interaction to the way in which 'man-in-the-world' perceives the things he encounters within the world, namely, as things or objects, as something from which God itself would be indistinguishable even if it belongs to another world.[38] But, far from being exclusive to the theist, interactions with the heterogeneous are equally accessible to 'man-in-the-world' understood as a non-theist who may also be mirrored by 'man-outside-of-the-world.'

Next, we will outline the points that Kojève identifies as common ground between the theist and that nontheist, as well as the aspects on which they differ.

[34] Ibid., 143.
[35] Ibid., 143.
[36] Ibid., 144-155.
[37] Kojève, *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel*, 555.
[38] Kojève, *L´Athéisme*, n.182, 265.

V. Theistic Interactions: Suicide, Fetishism, Animism, Secularization

A. Being vs. "Being-Other": Theistic Suicide and Immortal Soul

As stated, 'heterogeneous' signifies that which is entirely foreign to 'man-in-the-world.' For the theist, this foreignness is embodied by God, who stands as radically distinct from 'man-in-the-world' due to its unique nature. This uniqueness is so pronounced that when 'man-in-the-world' is associated with it, the *self-givenness* of the theist takes the form of "man in God." [39] One's *self-givenness* as 'man in God' entails sharing in the heterogeneity of God as well as 'giving oneself to oneself' as an otherworldly entity, as 'man-outside-of-the-world.'

However, a paradox lies within the heterogeneity of such theistic *self-givenness*. Even when mirrored by 'man outside of the world,' the Self reflecting itself remains substantially 'man in the world.' Indeed, it cannot avoid perceiving itself stubbornly identical (homogeneous) to its own worldly existence. In the last resort, no one within the world can claim to be outside of it. Thus, one's *self-givenness* as 'man in God' tends to conceive God as a reified figure simply overshadowing one's own *self-givenness* as 'man in the world.'[40]

Hence, the mirror-like duplication of 'man-in-the-world' as 'man in God' implies an overlap of two distinct layers. While the worldly layer, ensconced in 'calm assurance' or somewhat unsettled by an "uneasy certainty,"[41] remains unaware of the otherworldly one, the otherworldly layer makes its presence known in the world through the *tonus* attached to the mode of its *self-givenness* namely, that of a "frightening unknown" or "anxious lostness."[42] For those who perceive God as the heterogeneous, fear diminishes primarily due to their apprehension of God as a familiar thing. This apprehension grants 'man-in-the-world' as 'man in God' a degree of relief, dulling its dread before the finitude heralded by the heterogeneous. Therefore, *giving itself to itself* as something heterogeneous becomes more bearable when it takes on the appearance of a divine thing. This is particularly relevant when we consider that Kojève ultimately equates one's *self-givenness* as God or 'man-in-God' with one's *self-givenness* as a dead thing.

Hence, to Kojève, theists appear to strike a compromise between the familiar intimacy with the world distinct to 'man-in-the-world,' on the one hand, and the dread associated with the "despair and terror before the darkness of non-being"[43]that the atheist confronts when contemplating his own death, on the other. The *tonus* presiding over this theistic compromise is marked by an "unfamiliar remoteness."[44] Through it, the dread stemming from the theist's apprehension of his own disappearance as an object from the world is alleviated by the pursuit of his existence as a divine thing or object in the afterlife. Additionally, 'unfamiliar remoteness' is attributable to the theist's belief that his condition in the afterlife will be entirely distinct from his previous one in the world. This enables the theist to give himself to himself as a mortal being, signifying that he envisions himself as a lifeless thing coming to terms with his "transition to something else." [45]

For Kojève, this transition involves a shift from "being" to "being-other."[46] It transcends both the homogeneous distinction between man and the world that govern the interactions

[39] Ibid., 115.
[40] Ibid., 116.
[41] Ibid., 142.
[42] Ibid., 120. "*Unruhige Verlorenheit*" is the term that Kojève borrows from Heidegger in the original German.
[43] Ibid., 143.
[44] Ibid., 175.
[45] Ibid., 140.
[46] Ibid., 169,180.

of man-in-the-world, and the contrast between *being* and non-*being* that shapes the atheist's perspective.

Moreover, that transition entails the establishment of a frontier between 'being' or 'man-in-the-world,' on the one hand, and 'being-other' or 'man-outside-of-the-world,' on the other. The significance of this frontier is far from negligible as it provides the basis for the theistic consciousness of man's finitude while rendering the theist unfree. This is because, filtered by theism, 'man-in-the-world' depends henceforward upon a 'being-other' *or* heterogeneous realm *existing* in a world that remains forever unknowable to him.

For the theist, freedom, if anything, is contained within that frontier itself. [47] Accordingly, the double-pronged difference 'being' vs. 'being-other' / 'man-in-the-world' vs. 'man-outside-of-the world' is constitutive of a free God who, by running his kingdom appropriately, shapes in his image and likeness its creatures. It thus follows that 'man-outside-of-the-world' can be equated with the soul, and that man as a divine creature is but an "animated man."[48] This "animated man" possesses freedom, but only to the extent that he possesses an immortal soul, which he receives from an external divine source — essentially borrowing that freedom from God. Therefore, in Kojève's interpretation of the theistic perspective, human finitude assumes immortality as its foundation, the passing of 'man-in-the-world' merely leading to its reunion with its immortal part after death.

Furthermore, man's soul as 'being-other' is in a position to autonomously determine the being or non-being of its bearer, all the more so as the theist regards it as his most unique and irreplaceable attribute. Thus, even if for the theist suicide may be a form of murder, it is also committed by an entity both foreign and intimate to the one who commits it — namely, his soul or 'other-me.' However, this *self-givenness* that superposes a 'man in God' over 'man-in-the world' relies on the latter if only to free-ride upon it.[49]

Indeed, in the act of taking one's own life as 'man-in-the-world,' the theist gives himself to himself as a suicide victim — someone who assumes the responsibility of carrying out the irrevocable choice of the soul specifically assigned to him. As a potential suicide, the theist gains access to the freedom embedded in that decision provided only he remains an animated being, that is, only if he sees himself throughout as part of a divine wholeness. Two key points deserve attention here: first, the 'other-me' of the theist as a potential suicide can only be granted to him as "man (soul) in God"[50]; second, in the eyes of 'man (soul) in God,' there is no relevant difference other than that between 'man-in-the world' and God.

Theistic *self-givenness* implies that this difference can only be blurred by one's specific death as 'man-in-the-world.' Accordingly, for the theist, soul's immortality can only be preserved at the expense of one's identity as 'man-in-the-world.' The theistic preservation of the soul erases, thus, the earthly Self together with the difference between 'being' / 'man-in-the world' and 'being – other'/ 'man-in- God' but to do so it establishes a realm that lies beyond the knowledge of the Self. Therefore, one's theistic annihilation as man-in-the-world is only plausible if, after suicide, there exists an enduring 'unity and identity' between the Self and its 'other-me' or soul.

So, the theistic encounter with the heterogeneous posits the ultimate unity in God of the 'animated man' after death. This unity is the result of a specific process that entails the unfolding of 'other-me' or 'soul' within the life of 'man-in-the-world' gearing it towards a 'transition to something else.' While the theistic animation of 'man-in-the-world' — its *self-givenness* as a soul — makes it capable of envisioning itself as a dead thing, it prevents it from

[47] Ibid., 166.
[48] Ibid., 166.
[49] Ibid., 168.
[50] Ibid., n.146, 245.

seeing itself as liable to die or be killed at any moment. Even if it proves ultimately deceitful this theistic perspective paves the way for the emergence of an individual committing suicide at any time.

Thus, suicide becomes a plausible option for the atheistic 'man-in-the-world' himself, largely thanks to the conditions pre-established by the theistic 'animated man.' What is relevant for the Kojevean determination of the theistic stage, however, is not so much the actual act of suicide, but the soul's capacity to determine the being or nonbeing of 'man-in-the-world.' [51] This capacity is the foundation upon which the aforementioned "transition to something else"[52] rests, culminating in the perception of the soul as the "concept"[53] that encompasses everything that has ever existed.

However, before such a culmination can even be conceived, the theistic "transition to something else" requires that the theist gives himself to himself as a dead man condensed in the form of a soul. This occurs at the expense of his own Self as 'man-in-the-world,' since engaging in unfamiliar interactions with God is a matter that exclusively concerns the soul. As these interactions are grounded in the homogeneity between God and the future dead man embodied by his soul, the theist's *self-givenness* is tantamount to a *self-givenness* as God.

Indeed, theistic *self-givenness* as 'man-in-God' is based on a disregard for 'man-in-the-world' implying the religious belief in a realm that the theist views as "that which remains if the world is destroyed."[54] According to Kojève, spatial conceptions of this realm, such as heaven, would be more common in an early stage of religion. However, a proper understanding of religion as a phenomenon would require first comprehending its evolved stages and only then its embryonic ones. In fact, for Kojève, a developed religion is grounded in a three-tiered *self-givenness* comprising finitude, immortality, and God. Among these, the second, immortality, plays a crucial role in forming a "well-stablished theistic conception."[55]

B. Fetishism, Animism, and a "Well- Established Theistic Conception"

Kojève considers that a "well-established theistic conception" evolves from two primitive religious stages: fetishism and animism. These stages do not necessarily involve the idea of an afterworld. On the contrary, a world below not yet secularized and, in this sense, still utterly foreign to 'man-in-the world' can serve as the proper dwelling for a primitive religious concept of the soul. The non-secularized stage of religion represented by fetishism rests upon a fundamental dualism. In a fetishist stage, while a given object in the world is endowed with a divine soul and thus transformed into a fetish, another object of the same kind that is situated nearby may remain entirely devoid of one and, thus, inanimate. What is noteworthy here is that the exceptional nature of the object invested with a soul coexists with the commonplace nature of the object that lacks one.

Furthermore, its material aspect, on the one hand, and the distinct, divine otherness of the object, on the other, are indistinguishable for the fetishist. For him, a worldly object acquires the magical powers of a fetish just as easily as it loses them. Similarly, the magician or fetishist can lose his abilities to divinize the fetish-object from one instant to the next,

[51] Ibid., 170.
[52] Ibid., 140.
[53] "Maybe, in animism, the soul is nothing but that which remains after the destruction of everything - that is, its concept, namely, itself minus its being (its existence). This could open up an intriguing historical perspective." *L´Athéisme*, n.150, 247.
[54] Ibid, n.154, 248.
[55] Ibid, 182.

thereby returning to his commonplace condition as 'man-in-the-world,' deprived of his supernatural powers to provide the object with a 'being-other.'

In stark contrast, the animist believer distinguishes between the material aspect and the distinct otherness in the object upon which he bestows a soul. For the animist, there is a co-presence of materiality and a divine 'being-other' within a single space, occupied by the same consecrated object, corresponding to the simultaneous presence of the ordinary and the extraordinary within the object. However, not everyone has access to this distinction; rather, it is confined, though permanently linked, to a specific category of 'man-in-the world.' Nevertheless, just as it happened with fetishism, but for the opposite reason, the non-dualist co-presence of divine and non-divine elements in the same object continues to blur the distinction between the soul "to whom God is given" — which is true — from God "to whom the soul surrenders" [56] — and which is an illusion.

As a result, both fetishism and animism are dualist in that they regard the divinized dead man as a pure soul without a body.

Kojève discerns a more developed religious stage when 'man-in-the world' is ready to identify the soul with its own life, thereby contrasting it with its body conceived as a corpse or equivalently, as a body abandoned by its soul. It is at this point that the idea of an afterlife begins to take shape, foreshadowing the existence of a divine realm situated beyond the world. In this regard, Kojève associates the advancement of secularization not only with the decline of animism but also with the emergence of the religious idea that the most suitable abode for the afterlife is what he terms "the land of the dead."[57] This land, devoid of spatiality and located outside the world, appears as a prerequisite for a "well-established theistic conception"[58] as well as for its potential convergence with a certain type of science, such as Meyerson's law of causality. [59]

In summary, theistic interactions with the heterogeneous entail not only the inextricability of one's *self-givenness* as 'man-in-God' from one's *self-givenness* as a dead thing, but also the belief in the religious immortality of one´s soul. Additionally, a 'non-animist, non-atheist' type of religious believer overcomes the fetishist stage leading to more advanced theistic stages. He represents "a well-established theistic conception," where natural death, or murder, indistinctly, are inseparable from a transition to another world meant to preserve man's divine soul from mortality.

VI. Terror and the Atheistic Realization of the Finite Nature of Interactions

The atheist shares with the theist what Kojève calls "the pathway to God."[60] Both transcend 'man-in-the-world,' confined to the interactions between the Self and the world, experiencing its 'familiar intimacy' within the realm of being. In contrast to this worldly familiarity, the 'pathway to God' relates to 'man-outside-of-the world,' and it is at the frontier where 'being' faces 'nonbeing' that genuine freedom gradually surfaces. While for 'man-in-the-world,' the only relevant difference is that which exits between the Self and the world (the non-Self), embedded within a limitless network of familiar and homogeneous interactions stemming from an internal source, the theist and the atheist deal with the heterogeneous difference that opposes 'being' to 'nonbeing,' originating from an external source. Assuming this external

[56] Ibid., n.170, 255.
[57] Ibid., n.178, 259.
[58] Ibid., 182.
[59] Ibid., n.178, 262.
[60] Ibid., 103.

difference as a starting point implies parting ways with the "familiar intimacy"[61] of daily interactions to confront an unsettling distress ranging from an "unfamiliar remoteness"[62] to "despair and terror before the darkness of nonbeing."[63]

Although the theistic and atheistic conception alike revolve around the dread that death, as the manifestation of non-being, provokes in 'man-in-the-world,' the former conception helps its proponents to mitigate the destructiveness to which such mortal fear responds. The theist can achieve this for one reason: Despite its heterogeneity, God is for him something, a thing with which it is possible to interact. The most accomplished version of these interactions are the prayers addressed to God, into which the theist transforms his initial screams of terror.[64] By means of this transformation, the theist establishes a realm where death is systematically turned into immortality. It is precisely at this point that the theist and the atheist part ways. Indeed, the radically divergent understanding of the common pathway they have thus far shared becomes particularly evident in two significant and closely related issues: the question of individual freedom and that of suicide.

As mentioned earlier, for the theist, man is free to the extent that he is an 'animated being' — meaning bearing a soul that decides over his 'being' or 'nonbeing.' However, this decision is not his own because it depends upon God. Thus, the soul's autonomous capacity to potentially end its bearer's life is clearly limited.

A. Being vs. Non-Being and the Effective Re-Appropriation of a Borrowed Freedom

The atheistic attitude reverses this situation. It seeks self-destruction through suicide and thereby a reappropriation of man-in-the-world's *borrowed* freedom. This attitude ultimately rests on a double rejection, namely that of God and of the soul as the guarantor of immortality.

This means that the heterogeneous aspect presenting itself to 'man-in-the-world' through its *self-givenness* as 'man-outside-of-the world' no longer appears embodied in a soul that anticipates one's irreplaceable death (i.e., oneself as a dead man, as a lifeless thing). Instead, the lethal distinctiveness lying therein manifests itself now as pure nothingness and anonymous non-being, marking thereby a significant turning point in the theistic 'pathway to God.'

Much like the theist, the atheist's double rejection redirects the awareness of 'man-in-the-world' towards the distinction between 'being' and 'nonbeing.' This newfound awareness causes the internal tension upon which the interactions of 'man-in-the-world' rested to diminish, replaced by a specific external source that highlights the Self's finitude against the backdrop of pure nothingness

Still, the world and its interactions are not entirely absent from the atheistic attitude. This is particularly important because, as Kojève observes, the Self of 'man-in-the world' influences the world as much as it is itself influenced by it. The influence of the world can even go as far as causing the death of the Self. In this light, living-in-the-world does not seem to be merely a matter of homogeneous interactions between the Self and the world within a *tonus* of 'calm assurance'; rather, it appears to be a more complex issue that includes the possibility of mutual killing and destruction. Indeed, Kojève labels this possibility as murderous.

[61] Ibid., 110,120,186.
[62] Ibid, 175,178,198, n158,248-249.
[63] Ibid., 143.
[64] Ibid., 182.

It further follows that, since "only individuals can be killed,"[65] murder and suicide are inseparable from an atheistic definition of individuality that Kojève derives from the individual's ability to kill oneself, murder another individual, or cease to exist due to a natural cause. In all three cases the continuity of the individual's spatiotemporal existence is suppressed and brought to a halt.

Natural death, murder, and suicide, which Kojève equates in this context, should, in any case, be distinguished from the earthly process of becoming. This process is understood as the worldly manifestation of a progressive biological extinction of the Self. The task of distinguishing oneself as an individual identical to itself within a living sequence bound to end biologically bears little resemblance to Kojève's atheistic understanding of death. Instead, it is the capacity to halt any further living sequence through death, thus preempting a theistic transition to an otherworldly "land of the dead,"[66] that characterizes the atheistic individual. In this regard, what the atheistic individual envisions is nothing other than "a simple and absolute destruction," regardless of whether that which is destroyed is a thing, a living organism, or a human being. [67] Moreover, the aim of this 'absolute destruction,' as portrayed by Kojève, is the potential eradication of 'man-in-the-world.' This eradication necessitates the previous *self-givenness* of 'man-in-the-world' as a free individual, meaning someone for whom suicide remains a free option throughout his life.

For the Kojevean individual to bring about the termination of the interactions he is initially engaged in as 'man-in-the-world,' these interactions must either change their nature or cease altogether. This change may occur each time the interactions escalate into mortal conflict, allowing for the killing of one of the individuals involved. Kojève defines this mortal conflict as "the realization of the finitude of interaction."[68] However, Kojève further clarifies that the destruction resulting from this realization may be either potential or actual.

The potential aspect of that destruction relates to the homogeneity of the parties interacting with the world. Conversely, Kojève connects the actuality of the destruction to those parties interacting with heterogeneity. Death and murder lead to the finitude of "being in its entirety"[69] only if they stem from atheistic premises rooted in an external source. In this regard, the escalation of an interaction into mortal conflict, resulting in the killing of one of the parties, allows 'nonbeing' to emerge from without and permeate 'being.' This permeation, in turn, causes 'nonbeing' to manifest in the world as an absence that envelops and limits 'being.'

Kojève grapples with the lingering question of whether 'nonbeing' effectively imposes limitations on 'being' or renders it boundless instead. In reality, the permeation by 'nonbeing' originating from an external source serves to limit the individual, whose 'being' is essentially boundless. This is because 'being' as such is not individual, and the end of a particular individual does not affect its continuity.[70]

B. Suicidal Self- Givenness: the Concrete Individual, and the Emergence of Reflexivity. A Fulfilled Life

Paradoxically, there is the pivotal fact that 'being,' distinct from 'nothingness,' cannot extend beyond the individual. The atheistic pursuit for an absolute cessation of 'man-in-the-world'

[65] Ibid., 144.
[66] Ibid, n.178, 259-260.
[67] Ibid., 146.
[68] Ibid., 147.
[69] Ibid., 148-149.
[70] Ibid., 149.

as an individual appears, thus, to target the finite existence of a present individual involved in an interaction that has the potential to escalate into mortal conflict. Indeed, Kojève argues that the death of this individual signifies the manifestation of its finitude not only potentially but also in actuality, suggesting that it is not merely the end of an individual, but rather the termination of individuality itself, as a manifestation of 'being,' that the cessation of 'man-in-the-world' seeks.[71]

To reinforce this argument Kojève presents a far-reaching distinction between two conceptual sets. On the one hand, there is the set consisting of:

1. *Self-givenness* of `man-in-the-world´ from within
2. Potentiality
3.-Boundlessness
4. Non-deadly interactions
5. *Tonus* of familiar intimacy

On the other hand, there is the set comprising:

1. Self-givenness of `man-in-the-world´ from without
2. Actuality
3. Finitude
4. Deadly interactions
5. *Tonus* of despair and terror.

It appears that, when viewed from the internal perspective of the interaction itself, the death of an individual participating in an interaction imposes only a limited constraint on 'being.' In this sense, "being in its entirety" lies outside of the reach of the death associated with such a perspective, thereby demonstrating infinitude. The crucial point here is that, as "the individual does not exhaust all being,"[72] 'being' — as an inexhaustible source of itself — remains indifferent to that individual. However, this indifference proves illusory because finite 'being' can only exist individually as it is something mortal exposed to death or destruction in the form of an individual.[73]

In addressing the discrepancy between finite individual death and the infinity of "being in its entirety," Kojève seems to detach the infinity toward which "being in its entirety" tends from a purposeless boundlessness, connecting that infinity to the "infinity of individuals who die."[74] To achieve this, he converges the two aforementioned conceptual sets, envisioning a being whose finitude arises both from an external source and from "within itself." In this latter case, Kojève associates individual finitude, which continuously renews itself through the repeated deaths of individuals, with an essential unreliability that governs the interactions of "man-in-the-world."[75]

Moreover, Kojève distinguishes between a "cognitive attitude" [76] wherein "being in its entirety" is presented in the *tonus* of 'calm assurance,' and an 'active attitude,' wherein individuals are presented in a *tonus* of 'uneasy certainty,' engaged in interactions increasingly pervaded with uncertainty. Consequently, the interactions of 'man-in-the-world' occur in a

[71] Ibid., 150; n.116, 234.
[72] Ibid., 150.
[73] Ibid., 144; n.105, 231.
[74] Ibid., 150.
[75] Ibid., 151.
[76] Ibid., n.118, 235

world where death and murder set the tone.[77] The finitude of this world rests no longer on envisioning one's future final death embedded in one's individual soul, as the theistic stance suggests, but on the realization of one's present individual finitude — that is, the possibility of being killed at any moment, whether by nature, oneself or a stranger. This is a world only livable in a *tonus* of fear and anguish.

Still, the puzzle posed by an understanding of the finitude of being exclusively at an individual level relates precisely to the fact that it is confined to that level. Ironically, the scope of an atheistic 'realization of the finitude of interactions' extends beyond all individual apprehensions of finitude. For this realization to occur, the world, which already includes death and murder, and provokes anguish and fear in its citizens, must undergo a further transformation—namely, a refinement into "a world of terror." [78] It is within this transformation that Kojève places the decisive shift from a theistic 'pathway to God' towards an atheistic 'pathway to nothingness' where "the end of man is the end (for him) of the world, the end of interaction, the end of man in the world."[79]

Both pathways, in any case, stem from an externality or 'outsidedness' that transcends the boundless nature of worldly interactions between man and the world. On the one hand, by invoking the finitude of 'man-in-the-world,' externality elevates 'man-in-the-world' beyond mere presence. On the other, by thoroughly permeating being with 'non-being,' the atheistic perspective specifically blurs the 'frontier' between external and internal interactions.

Kojève synthesizes the two aforementioned set of concepts following the transformation of the 'pathway to God' into a 'pathway to nothingness' thus ushering in a 'world of terror.' Moreover, he associates this world with the emergence of what he calls the "concrete individual." This is not the non-limited abstract individual upon which conventional science rests. The latter is the coronation of the theistic attitude. To describe the concrete individual, Kojève uses the Buddhist term "Dharma," [80] encompassing "being + nonbeing + the difference between them."[81] The question of Dharma, or concrete individual, ignites "the problem of individuality," [82] which is central to Kojève´s atheistic approach to the free individual.

As previously noted, to the theist, it is the soul that freely decides on the question of the 'being' or 'nonbeing' of its bearer, with this decision borrowing its freedom from God. Kojève's atheism, however, emphasizes the role that the "fulfilled life" [83] of the free concrete individual plays in such a decision. Two closely intertwined notions emerge here: that of the 'free individual' and that of a 'fulfilled life.' To ensure clarity, it is beneficial to analyze them separately.

The *self-givenness* of 'man-in-the-world' originates from another source beyond the mortal danger arising from external interactions exposing it to be killed. Kojève updates the concept of *self-givenness* suggesting that it lies not so much in the fact that 'man-in-the-world' can be killed, but rather in its free choice to kill itself at any moment. In this connection, Kojève highlights the distinction between natural and violent death, on the one hand, and suicide, on the other. This distinction merits discussion as it introduces a duplication in the *self-givenness* of 'man-in-the-world.'

[77] Ibid., 152.
[78] Ibid., 154.
[79] Ibid., n.124, 236.
[80] Ibid., n.127, 237-238.
[81] Ibid., n.91, 227.
[82] Ibid, n.105, 231; n134, 239.
[83] Ibid., n.216, 279; n.218, 279; n.221, 279.

According to Kojève, the essence of atheistic suicide does not primarily lie in the individual attainment of the finitude of being through an atheistic dread or a theistic fear. Similar to murder or natural death, suicidal *self-givenness* originates from an external source. However, unlike these, suicide directs *self-givenness* inward. In doing so it becomes the *self-givenness* of someone who discusses and decides on the question of one's own being or non-being outside the limits of the world.[84] Yet, this 'outsidedness' proves its nothingness as for the atheist there is nothing outside of the world.

Hence, 'Man-in-the-world' as a suicide, replicates, on a higher level, its *self-givenness* through worldly interactions, natural death, and murder. This replication allows it to simultaneously reclaim its worldliness from an external and internal source. In the first case 'Man-in-the-world' ´s self-givenness consists in giving itself as a finite being, in the second, it further gives itself to itself as 'man-in-the-world' freely deciding over its being, i.e., as mortal. It is precisely here where Kojève locates the birth of the concrete individual

The distinction between 'being' and 'nonbeing' becomes more intricate in this context. On the one hand, this distinction was ignored by 'man-in-the-world,' absorbed in his dealings with the world, and, on the other, reified by the theist, who interpreted it as an interaction between man's soul and a free God. Now, the atheist recognizes that addressing that difference in earnest implies transcending both the individual being and the world through the contemplation of the possibility of suicide. Subsequently, that difference transforms itself into something autonomous-namely reflexive and self-founding, [85] a difference gaining independence from its two components, being and nonbeing.

This independence enables 'man-in-the-world' to owe its existence — its 'difference' in relation to 'non-being' — solely to itself, with the freedom to eliminate this difference at any moment. *Self-givenness* at a suicidal level brings about a reflexive replication of the *self-givenness* proposed thus far, thereby transcending both worldly interactions and any religious or secularized allocation of souls. This transcendence results in a *fulfilled life* that surpasses the mere presence of 'man-in-the-world' leading to a newfound individual concreteness, which coalesces into man-in-the world's giving itself its "giving itself to itself from the outside."[86]

The free refusal of suicide upon which man's presence as a living being rests, also benefits from *self-givenness's* reflection on itself ("causa sui" [87]) inherent to a difference that independently hovers over its two components. Kojève further claims that this is the starting point of self-consciousness — which is "the giving of the difference" [88] — as distinct from mere "consciousness of being" — which is "the difference itself." [89] If individual self-consciousness corresponds to a free awareness of the consciousness of being through suicide and is the root of individual concreteness, consciousness of being, on its part, is marred by its abstract nature and lack of finitude. Put another way, Kojève associates consciousness of being with givenness as such, and self-consciousness with the *self-givenness* of such *givenness*. Based on freedom, suicidal *self-givennes* renders "being" possible as a concrete individual.

Once again, *self-givenness's* reflection on itself through the contemplation of the possibility of suicide transforms the difference between 'being' and 'non-being' into an independent realm that places the decision inherent to that difference into the free hands of individual self-

[84] Ibid., 158.
[85] Ibid., 160,161.
[86] Ibid., 162.
[87] Ibid.,161
[88] Ibid., 161.
[89] Ibid., 161.

consciousness. Kojève adds that by reducing man to homo economicus or homo sapiens, science deprives him of his freedom, thereby contributing to the denial of his personality. [90]

The notion of 'personality' relates to Kojève's ideas on questions of a *fulfilled life*, the role of philosophy, and truth.[91] Kojève initially connects the idea of a *fulfilled life* to that lived by a non-philosopher. Whether a theist or an atheist, this non-philosopher is anyone who interprets one's lived intuitions by adhering to a particular standpoint. In contrast, a philosopher is someone who seeks to describe these intuitions from a neutral standpoint. By emphasizing the "question of truth,"[92] the philosophical neutral standpoint often conflicts with the existential commitment that a *fulfilled life* requires.

In marked contrast, even without explicitly posing that question, the non-philosopher already provides an answer simply by coping with life's circumstances. Actually, it is his non-philosophical response that prompts the philosophical question of truth as such. Regardless of whether this response is theistic or atheistic, it brings forth an interpretation — a translation into the "language of action, of life"[93] — of raw intuition. Kojève argues further that this unelaborated intuition is also encompassed by the unique entirety that philosophy pursues when raising the question of truth. Throughout this pursuit, the authorship of different philosophical propositions is attributable to the philosophers' distinct selves, their singularities. Accordingly, Kojève sees philosophy as the history of the distinct philosophies, each tied to specific existential commitments. Conversely, if the philosophical pursuit of truth eventually ocercomes contradiction as well as the philosophical disputes occurring historically, it may culminate in a state of nothingness that Kojève likens to a Buddhist standpoint.[94]

In summary, according to Kojève, genuine philosophy should encompass the entirety of life, including philosophy itself, rather than merely focusing on truth or falsehood. Kojève underscores this while signaling the dichotomy between theism and atheism as constitutive of an "objective" or "absolute" life. [95]

Conclusion: Impact of *Atheism* on Kojève's oeuvre

Contrary to Francis Fukuyama's assessment in *The End of History and the Last Man*, Kojève's treatment of death does not appear to oppose Hegel's. [96] He does criticize Hegel on other grounds, and Kojève's critique in *Atheism* focuses on the abstraction undermining Hegel's deduction of being, [97] possibly hinting at the significant objections that he raises against him in his Parisian seminar and elsewhere in his work. However, as far as his interpretation of death goes, Kojève seems to adhere closely to the original, fully embracing the Hegelian dictum that "death is man's lord and master."[98]

In *Atheism*, this master takes the form of an independent *difference* comprising being and non-being, thereby shaping 'man-in-the-word' into a *concrete individual*. For Kojève, the emergence of this individual hinges on one's freedom to decide to end one's life or not. *To be or not to be* is a question that concerns particularly the atheist. However, the theistic pathway to God and the concomitant suicide of the theist as an exclusive competence of his soul may

[90] Ibid., n.140, 242.
[91] Ibid., n.141, 242.
[92] Ibid., n.141,242,243
[93] Ibid., n.141, 243.
[94] Ibid., n.141, 243.
[95] Ibid, n.141, 242.
[96] Fukuyama, *The End of History, and the Last Man*, 329.
[97] Kojève, *L´Athéisme*, n.151, 247-248 ; n.160, 249.
[98] Kojève, *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel*, 144.

well serve as a preparation of a specific atheistic way of dealing with heterogeneity. In this sense, Kojève's portrayal of the developed theist, envisioning himself as a dead man whose soul inhabits an afterworld "run"[99] by God, may be seen as the last rung of the ladder leading to a *land of the dead*, enabling descent into a disenchanted world wholly devoid of gods.

Still, the transition from a master-God freely deciding on the being or nonbeing of those animated by a soul, to a free individual endowed with concreteness, due to the horizon that self-inflicted death potentially opens, remains far from assured. Indeed, current worldly interactions characterized by homogeneity, 'calm assurance' and a quest for refuge from both death's grasp and the resulting self-consciousness may thwart it. However, these interactions may also undergo a transformation driven by the dread provoked by murder and suicide in a 'world of terror.'

In stating this, we have already entered the realm of philosophy. As Kojève presents it, philosophy is closely intertwined with the mortal danger that 'man-in-the-world' must confront in order to achieve individual self-consciousness. This confrontation contrasts with Heidegger's concept of 'Man,' who, like Kojève's 'man-in-the-world,' clings to a dull self-assurance derived from routine interactions. The most effective means of imbuing these interactions with a philosophical scope —paradoxically aiming towards their cessation — is the free possibility of suicide and the type of individual associated with it. The latter's self-consciousness internalizes death's heterogeneous externality in a manner inaccessible to both the internal tensions propelling man-in-the-world's interactions and the reification of heterogeneity in a religious afterworld.

The convergence of externality within the overarching framework of a free, self-conscious inner self, as expounded in *Atheism,* is consistent with other convergences of opposing poles that persist as prominent themes throughout Kojève's oeuvre. These may include:

1. Unbounded terror and the birth of the finite post-revolutionary citizen
2. Unfolding of increasing interactions over time and their subsequent termination
3. The divine and the human realm
4. Existential commitments and the philosophical pursuit of truth.

The first convergence is evident in Kojève's analysis of revolutionary terror in his lectures on Hegel. *Robespierreian Bonapartism* represents the means by which 'man-in-the-world' attains finitude, shedding its soul as a theistic and disposable burden from its empirical body. This aligns further with Kojève's interpretation of Kant in those lectures as the proponent of "the ideology of absolute freedom" culminating in "the suicide of society itself," and the advent of the universal and homogeneous state. As he did in the 1920's, Kojève promotes Hegel as the intellectual architect of this ultimate State, built upon the prior elimination of the biological reality of its subjects and the extermination of all members of society in a phase of terror.[100] The "world of terror" that Kojève envisions in *Atheism* seems to find its historical counterpart here.

Secondly, in his *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, Kojève guides interactions toward their eventual termination at the end of the evolution of right. He further associates the interactions stemming from bourgeois right with the emergence of introspective self-consciousness. Born out of the terror felt before the master to whom the bourgeois owes its life, this self-consciousness is based on calculation and emulation. Another convergence-laden contention

[99] Kojève, *Kant*, 46.
[100] Kojève, *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel*, 143.

in that essay is that bourgeois interactions, manifested in the form of contracts, pave the way for their own obsolescence within a perfectly equal State, ultimately rendering them redundant. [101] Atheism's realization of the finitude of interaction may find an alternative expression in this juridical context.

The dichotomy between the divine and the world, concurrent with that between theism and atheism (as outlined in *Atheism*) does not exclude the possibility of a mutual convergence. As we have seen, the anticipation of one's own death in the form of a soul produces such worldly interactions as prayers addressed to God. These theistic interactions appear alongside others in which 'man-in-the-world' is already engaged. In parallel, the atheistic approach presupposes not only the potential scalation of interactions towards mortal conflict, but also a decisive turn towards suicide, attesting to freedom and the emergence of the concrete individual or Dharma. The fulfilled life of the latter reflects the convergence between being and non-being. These two are subsumed into a self-givenness that reflects upon itself, thereby enveloping from within any theistic givenness of boundless being stemming from without. On the one hand, this perspective seems consistent with Kojève's interpretation of Kantian thought in his 1953 work where he portrays Kant's philosophy as making up the summit of Christian thought and the cornerstone of bourgeois society while at the same time viewing it bursting with "revolutionary negativity"[102] as he had already exposed in his lectures on Hegel. On the other hand, the turning point that the suicidal reflection of self-givenness on itself signals is, in a way, reminiscent of the reflexive definition that, in his final work published during his lifetime, Kojève gives of Kantian philosophy as "The (coherent) set of (coherent) discourses that talk about everything (or anything) while also talking about themselves."[103]

Additionally, commencing just three years after his 1931 *Atheism*, Kojève's Hegel lectures do more than just take notice of the connection between a-discursive theism and discursive atheism by highlighting the transformation of theology into Hegelian anthropology as the logical consequence of "God's self-suppression." [104]

Finally, Kojève's approach in *Atheism* to the true nature of philosophy, transcending both the notions of truth and falsehood and the dichotomy between atheism and theism, portrays the history of philosophy as a meta-philosophy converging towards universal singularity and Buddhist nothingness. Therefore, it appears plausible to connect this all-encompassing singularity to the "universal Self" [105] as expounded in his seminars on Hegel. Indeed, if this Self closely mirrors [106] the social whole within the earthly realm, then philosophy should be able to describe a unique intuition harmonizing theism and atheism within a comprehensive living point of view.[107]

Noteworthy are also some important watchwords reproduced almost verbatim in his lectures on Hegel such as "the non-being of being = concept of being = being minus the being of being" or "it is only because the thing is finite that its concept exists,"[108] not to mention "The struggle for pure prestige is, moreover, a suicide (with an uncertain outcome)," which so closely echoes the importance attached to suicide in *Atheism*.

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[101] Alexandre Kojève, *Esquisse d´une phénoménologie du droit*, (Paris : Gallimard, 2007), n.2, 571.
[102] Kojève, *Kant*, n.1, 99.
[103] Alexandre Kojève, *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne. I Les Présocratiques*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1968), 30.
[104] Ibid., 144.
[105] Ibid., 327.
[106] Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 156.
[107] Kojève, *L´Athéisme*, n.141, 242-244.
[108] Ibid., n.61, 220; n.105,23.

Likewise, Kojève's approach to science in *Atheism* shows deep similarities with his treatment of this subject elsewhere in his work, reinforcing *Atheism*'s seminal relevance in Kojève's oeuvre

We conclude by illustrating the Kojèvean convergence between the notion of 'actuality,' intrinsic to the permeation of 'being' by 'non-being' and the realization of the finitude of interactions, along with the concept of 'personality' as the embodiment of a 'fulfilled life.'

In so doing, we evoke Kojève's concept of love as presented in his *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*. Derived from Goethe's watchword that "We love someone not for what he does, but because of who he is," [109] Kojève argues that to be truly human is to admire these actions, not just loving for being's sake. However, past actions merge into man´s 'personality,' entering the realm of being. These raises the question: Are they worthy of love or admiration? Kojève concludes that 'personality' is the complete sequence of man´s actions over a lifetime requiring his death to emerge as a being worthy of love.[110] Thus, for Kojève love arrives too late since "even if the person is actually present before us, it is the memory of the person that we love."[111] A 'fulfilled life' that is no more — this is all humans can love.

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[109] Kojève, *Esquisse*, 228, 493; Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny: Corrected and Expanded Edition, Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 156.

[110] Compare this with *L´Athéisme,* 145: "We call the 'murder' of an individual the span of time in their history that implies (or more precisely that completes) their destruction as an individual."

[111] Kojève, *Esquisse,* n.1, 494-495.