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**ON BEGINNING AND THE QUESTION OF BEING:  
PLAYS OF BEGINNING AT THE END OF METAPHYSICS**

A Thesis in

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by

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## ABSTRACT

My dissertation explores the role of phenomenological beginnings in Heidegger's formulation of the question of being. I show (1) that the relation between beginning and being is already present in Heidegger's early work, specifically *Being and Time*, (2) that this relationship leads Heidegger to conceive of being as a far more concrete, finite, and historical phenomenon than he has previously been credited with, and (3) that this renewed sense of concreteness forces a radical reinterpretation of the relation between being and beings. My central insight is that the formulation of the question of being in terms of beginning leads Heidegger to rethink this question in light of the indispensable and necessary role played by beings. By way of beginning, the turn to being and the turn to beings occur together as inseparable movements.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is a constant refrain of the critical literature that Heidegger's philosophy lacks concreteness, that it neglects beings in the broadest sense and thus, neglects the rich and varied texture of our embodiment. At least provisionally, it must be admitted that the critique has merit. It cannot simply be dismissed out of hand. After all, Heidegger is quite explicit that being (spelled with the archaic 'Seyn') "can no longer be thought of in the perspective of beings," but rather, it must be "enacted in thought from within beyng *itself*."<sup>1</sup> The task of thinking beyng sanctions the rejection of beings in any metaphysical sense. It opens up a gap between the everyday understanding of beings and being as such. Indeed, Heidegger's reversion to the archaic *Seyn* only serves to reinforce this gap, to widen the fissure between beings and being. This separation appears to leave little room for any claim that the forcibly abstract notion of 'beyng' can serve to address the concreteness of beings in their immediate weight and vitality.

Of course, it might be argued that while this is certainly true of the later Heidegger, i.e. of that Heidegger for whom *Ereignis* is the "guiding word," it cannot be true of the early Heidegger evident in *Being and Time*. The very methodology of that text is precisely to proceed *by way of beings*. Dasein is thus uniquely suited for this method insofar as it is that being which, in its being, is concerned for its being. The understanding of being in the ontological sense requires an attestation among beings in the ontic sense. Dasein's concern for its being thus proves inseparable from its relation to

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie: Vom Ereignis*. GA 65. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 7. Trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, *Contributions to Philosophy: From Enowning* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 5. Pagination will refer first to the German edition and then the English edition.

beings. The being of Dasein is not simply separate from beings, but rather Dasein understands its being precisely by way of its comportment towards beings – a comportment that is to be understood as concrete in the extreme.

Yet even in *Being and Time* (and perhaps especially there), where Heidegger is explicitly concerned with beings – and not simply being – such a concern, it is argued, bears only the most tenuous connection to concreteness. Herbert Marcuse, initially attracted to the concrete possibilities of *Dasein*, comes later to the realization that “Heidegger’s concreteness was to a great extent a phony, a false concreteness...”<sup>2</sup> The locus of this reversal on Marcuse’s part is revealing. Appealing to the very structures that appear to lend concreteness to the analyses of *Being and Time* (i.e. *Dasein*, *das Man*, *Seiendes*, *Existenz*), Marcuse remarks that “they are “bad” abstracts in the sense that they are not conceptual vehicles to comprehend the real concreteness in the apparent one. They lead away.”<sup>3</sup> Far from granting to Heidegger an attention to the concrete structure of our embodiment, Marcuse reads him as the worst sort of speculative philosopher. Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein does not return us to the concreteness of a lively world, but rather obliterates every trace of it. The abstractness inherent in Dasein is not only a denial of concreteness, but equally for Marcuse a “derogation of joy, of sensuousness, fulfilment.”<sup>4</sup>

It is the separation of Dasein from its ‘human’ relations, the distance it takes from its hungers, desires, joys, and pains, that points to how serious the charge is against Heidegger. At issue is not merely the neglect of concreteness, but in a sense, the neglect

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<sup>2</sup> Olafson, Frederick, “Heidegger’s Politics: An Interview with Herbert Marcuse.” *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia* (Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1988), 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 85

of the very real, and very human, drives that are a part of any embodied creature. If it is true that Dasein leads away from concreteness, then one cannot help but notice that such a turn away results in the severest form of isolation from everything about Dasein that would make it a being in any meaningful sense. Hannah Arendt, in her critique of Heidegger, identifies this isolation as perhaps the most striking failure of the “self” that Dasein is, noting that “the concept of Self is a concept of man that leaves the individual existing independent of humanity and representative of no one but himself – of nothing but his own nothingness.”<sup>5</sup> In Dasein’s freedom for its possibility – a possibility at the very limit of the “actual” being that Dasein is – Arendt sees also a dangerous freedom from the world of human concerns. If I am concerned for my own potentiality of being, for that potentiality that I am outside of all factual concreteness, then with this concern, “I have the opportunity to devote myself exclusively to being-a-Self...to free myself once and for all from the world that entangles me.”<sup>6</sup> It is hard to miss the force of such a critique, and Arendt states the point with characteristic bluntness: “The self...has taken the place of humanity, and being-a-Self has taken the place of being human.”<sup>7</sup>

For Marcuse and Arendt, there is something dramatically ‘inhuman’ about Dasein, a sterility and isolation that strips Dasein of its humanity in the very movement by which Dasein would secure its ownmost, and most authentic, possibility. It is a mistake, however, to read these critiques as a merely humanistic challenge. Neither Arendt nor Marcuse are concerned with inserting a weak anthropology into the midst of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. The aim of the criticism is much more direct. It

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<sup>5</sup> Hannah Arendt, “What is Existential Philosophy?” in *Essays in Understanding: 1930-1954* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1994), 181.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

wants to argue that the manifest lack of concreteness, the sterility and isolation of Dasein from its embodied commitments betrays an incapacity within the project of fundamental ontology to address real and worldly concerns. The turn of Dasein towards its potentiality of being is at once the loss of any connection to beings. The open space of Dasein's disclosiveness, its truth, as it were, rests always beyond and outside any relation to the joy, sensuousness, and fulfillment of worldly life. Echoing Arendt, Dasein is its possibility, but always at the expense of its humanity.

It is impossible to deny the presence of a certain neutrality in the project of fundamental ontology. Heidegger's own words appear to condemn him. He explicitly rejects the anthropomorphic "man" in favor of the "neutral term" Dasein. Indeed, Heidegger is emphatic that such neutrality is necessary, arguing that "the peculiar *neutrality* of the term "Dasein" is essential, because the interpretation of this being must be carried out prior to every factual concretion."<sup>8</sup> It cannot be denied that there is a release from concreteness in this account, that the neutral character of Dasein's possibility frees it, to some extent, from factual entanglements. Must we therefore accept the harsh critique sustained by Marcuse and Arendt? Are we constrained by this neutrality to view Heidegger's philosophy, in Marcuse's words, as "a very powerful devaluation of life"? Or is there not in such neutrality a renewed possibility for concreteness, an engagement at the level of finite embodiment such that the question concerning being is not simply stripped of its concreteness, and thus, of its 'humanity'?

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<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*. Trans. Michael Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 136.

In his discussion of the neutrality of Dasein, it is precisely this possibility that Heidegger opens up.<sup>9</sup> Disputing that Dasein is “the indifferent nobody and everybody,” Heidegger argues that “neutrality is not the voidness of an abstraction, but precisely the potency of the *origin*, which bears in itself the intrinsic possibility of every concrete factual humanity.”<sup>10</sup> Here, then, is a first answer to the critique: the turn away from beings, the turn that opens up the neutrality of Dasein’s disclosive there, is not a merely one-dimensional withdrawal from factual, concrete life. It is rather a turn towards that which first makes such concreteness possible, a turn to that open for concreteness that is always already there in every factual dispersion. The disclosiveness of Dasein’s potentiality for being is the condition of possibility for its concrete situatedness in the world.

This disclosiveness, however, is not to be understood as somehow distinct from concreteness. As origin, the neutral ‘there’ of Dasein *is there* in every factual situation. There is no opposition at work for Heidegger between the open of Dasein and the facticity of Dasein. More importantly, there is no derogation of one at the expense of the other. The turn away from concreteness towards the open is equally the turn of the open towards concreteness. Freed from a merely ontic facticity, Dasein is freed precisely for its facticity in a more authentic and originary way. Heidegger says “The metaphysical neutrality of the human being, inmost isolated as Dasein, is not an empty abstraction from

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<sup>9</sup> McNeill draws attention to this possibility, suggesting that Heidegger’s thinking demands “a neutrality of embodiment.” (“On the Concreteness of Heidegger’s Thinking.” *Philosophy Today* Spr. (1990): 85.) Thus, McNeill proposes that what is at issue in concreteness is a certain suspension of embodiment, a way of holding embodiment in reserve that would lean towards a reading of concreteness that is situated against the background of Dasein’s radical possibility. While I think such an approach is fundamentally correct, and indeed McNeill’s insight prepares the way for what I wish to argue, I nevertheless wish to suggest that the relationship between possibility and facticity is much closer than McNeill would allow, and the access towards this relation is not neutrality *per se*, but the sense of origin and beginning inherent within this neutrality.

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger, *Metaphysical Foundations*, 137.

the ontic, a neither-nor; it is rather the *authentic concreteness* of the origin, the not-yet of factual dispersion.”<sup>11</sup> It is not the case that the origin is somehow removed and separated from concreteness. On the contrary, it is precisely the origin that is itself the most concrete. It is that which as origin plays out precisely *in* the concrete factual structures that it originates. The open disclosiveness of Dasein finds its opening only within and through the facticity which the open itself makes possible.

The peculiar possibility that Heidegger suggests is tied to a radical understanding of origin, of what Heidegger will later call simply beginning. As origin, neutrality is not a “bad” abstract. It does not lead away from the concrete. It is rather that which first lets the concrete be as such. It situates every factual, concrete dispersion within the open ‘there’ that all such dispersions bring with them. Neutrality not only originates concreteness, it lets concreteness be originary for the first time. To this extent, the origin ushers in a renewal of the concrete factual situatedness of Dasein. In the appropriation of its potentiality of being, Dasein lays claim authentically and primordially to that concrete situation in which Dasein always already is. Thus, in its neutrality, “Dasein’s essence already contains a primordial *bestrewal*, which is in a quite definite respect, a *dissemination*.”<sup>12</sup> The originary neutrality of Dasein, its origin as such, is not distinct from its factual entanglement, but is instead strewn precisely *as* that entanglement. Revising Arendt, we might then say that Dasein is its possibility, but always and only with its ‘humanity.’

What allows Heidegger to respond to both Marcuse and Arendt is his recognition of this extraordinary play at work in the sense of origin. On the one hand, origin points to

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. [italics mine]

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 138

the turn of Dasein towards its potentiality of being, towards that measureless possibility which always already exceeds every merely ontic actuality. On the other hand, such a turn frees Dasein for the very concreteness of factual embodiment that Dasein would ostensibly leave behind. It lets Dasein be precisely in its facticity. Origin thus points to the way in which Dasein plays out the openness of its potentiality of being precisely *in* the concrete dispersal of its factual, concrete thrownness. The one-dimensional account of the retreat from concreteness becomes, through this sense of origin, a renewal of the concrete as such.

It is precisely within this striking play of origin, of beginning, that I locate the project of my dissertation. There are two aspects to this play of beginning that frame my project. First, Heidegger situates a sense of beginning at the very heart of the project of fundamental ontology. The question of beginning arises along with the question of being as such. The priority of origin announced in the neutrality of Dasein thus raises the possibility that one may read Heidegger's *Seinsfrage*, the question of the meaning of being, as an enactment of beginning, as a question carried out precisely through a certain interrogation of the beginning as such. Second, the priority of beginning compels us to attend to the concrete nature of the question of being. Beginning names not only the potentiality of being, but equally the way in which that potentiality plays out in the factual embodiment of Dasein as the being that it is. Thus, the inquiry into being is not a sterile and abstract consideration removed from every factual claim. Rather, it points to the *enactment* of being, its *historical* eventuation and unfolding. In light of beginning, the question of being gains a specifically historical character.

Given these considerations, the question that my dissertation seeks to answer can be formulated in two parts: (1) In what way, and to what extent, does Heidegger understand the question concerning the meaning of being – his “one and only question” – as an enactment of beginning? (2) How does this understanding contribute to a renewed inquiry not only into being, but into beings as well, i.e. into the concretely historical character of being in its eventuation?

In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger provides a direct, though highly complex, answer to the first question: “Beginning is beyng itself.”<sup>13</sup> The question of the meaning of being, what Heidegger comes increasingly to understand as beyng in the work of the thirties, is nothing other than beginning. Beyng and beginning are to be understood together. Heidegger thus announces in the starkest possible terms the priority of beginning for any inquiry into the meaning of being.

Yet, despite its apparent simplicity, this answer remains difficult in the extreme. Beyng, spelled archaically, is to be distinguished from being, that is, from every metaphysical sense of being. Beyng does not point to a ground for beings. It is not the self-identical basis for the determination of beings as such. Rather, it is that which is always already outside of every such determination. Beyng is not encompassed within the metaphysical understanding of being and beings, but rests in some sense even beyond being. If we remain within a certain metaphysical way of speaking, it could be said that beyng is the condition of possibility for the metaphysical understanding of being. It is that which already holds sway in the differentiation of beings and being and first lets beings be in their being.

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<sup>13</sup> GA 65: 58/41

However, this metaphysical way of speaking about beyng stands in service to a decidedly non-metaphysical event. Beyng is not of the order of being, and it is not a ground (as being is), but rather an abyss. As Heidegger notes repeatedly, there is no path that leads directly from the being of beings to beyng. Rather, beyng is to be thought solely from itself, and this means, only in and through a certain leap away from the metaphysical circuit that passes from beings to being and back again.

Any attempt to think the relation between beyng and beginning must orient itself within the space of this leap. Heidegger's claim that beginning is beyng itself is not an assertion of identity. We cannot simply ground beyng in beginning or vice versa. Beginning is the leap into beyng – a leap that opens up an abyss in the very ground of metaphysics itself. Insofar as it is beyng itself, beginning “happens only in the leap.”<sup>14</sup> In its relation to leaping, the sense of beginning is thus severed from any notion that it is a mere starting-point. It is not a primitive or rudimentary origin that only later comes to its fulfillment. Rather, beginning removes itself from every mere ‘start.’ As leap, it is always already outside of what it originates. Thus, beginning never comes *at the beginning*, but always and only at the end, i.e. at the very limit of that which is begun through the beginning.

Within the context of metaphysics, beginning thus names the end of metaphysics. Beginning comes into play at precisely that point in which metaphysics, exhausted in its possibilities, becomes impossible, i.e. becomes exposed to its limit. The return to beginning, the turn that opens beyng itself, is a return to the end, to the limit of metaphysics that opens upon that which metaphysics could never accommodate. The turn towards beginning is thus not a continuation of metaphysics. It is not the attempt to

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<sup>14</sup> GA 65: 229/162

reveal a hidden, but nonetheless present, basis for metaphysics. Rather, beginning marks that which is carried as concealed within the metaphysical tradition, a “not-happening” that unfolds in its concealment in the very unfolding of metaphysics itself.

What is striking in this determination of beginning, however, is the *play* of beginning at work in this account. On the one hand, beginning enacts a leap away from metaphysics. It withdraws and conceals itself at the very limit of metaphysics, and thus as being itself, can never be a ground for being or beings, but remains always already an abyss. Yet on the other hand, this concealment and withdrawal does not play out in some separate space. It is not merely the abstraction of beginning from that which it begins. On the contrary, beginning “is” concealed precisely within the very tradition of metaphysics from which it withdraws. It is *in* the unfolding of metaphysics – *in* its exhaustion and running out -- that beginning plays forth in its withdrawal and removal. Beginning never simply “is,” but rather beginning plays.

It is precisely this sense of play that demonstrates the uniqueness of beginning in relation to being, and opens up new possibilities for understanding the enactment and eventuation of being itself. Broadly understood, the play of beginning points to the way in which certain orders of origination come into relation with that which is not under the regulation of those orders. In their enactment, these orders give rise to a site of appearing and happening that they cannot authorize – a site that exceeds their own structure. Yet, such a site proves indispensable precisely for the orders that cannot accommodate it. It is that which, to use Heidegger’s language, lets them first be as the orders that they are. It begins them, as it were, but in such a way that the understanding and approach to this

beginning is not reducible to the structures of what is begun, while yet occurring only with and in these very structures themselves.

The history of metaphysics is for Heidegger just such a play. Beginning happens as that which is not under the regulation of the metaphysical circulation between beings and being. Rather, as being itself, beginning remains concealed in the circuit of metaphysics. It remains unthought, and unthinkable, within the metaphysical tradition. Yet at the same time, this unthought within metaphysics is that which also gives metaphysics to begin. It is the open for that clearing through which and in which beings and being can arise at all. According to this play, then, the return to beginning is at once a return to metaphysics, a repetition of metaphysics such that metaphysics is drawn into its end, and this means, drawn into its beginning. The eventuation of beginning, of being itself, orients itself within this repetition. It is in the repetition of metaphysics that beginning opens up as that clearing which is not under the regulation of metaphysics itself. Yet, metaphysics comes to be only in the very movement of its repetition. It is first granted as metaphysics in its exposure to the limit of its beginning. This repetition does not simply imitate the metaphysical tradition. It does not merely repeat what has come before. Rather, it first lets metaphysics be in its encounter with its own unthought, and unthinkable, lineage.

What possibilities then open up as a result of this play of beginning? How does beginning prepare, by way of this play, a renewed engagement with beings, and not simply being? In the most immediate sense, the play of beginning prepares this engagement to the extent that it situates being within an historical enactment. While it is true that being turns away from beings in the metaphysical sense – turns away, even,

from metaphysics itself – this withdrawal and concealment of beyng happens only in a certain repetition of metaphysics. Of course, we must be cautious: beyng is not metaphysical, and it does not become metaphysical. Rather, in its withdrawal, beyng plays out precisely *in* the repetition of metaphysics itself. The play of beginning is the history of beyng. It names a happening, a history, that is enacted insofar as metaphysics plays forth beyng, and beyng plays out in the repetition of metaphysics.

As we have said, however, this play is itself non-metaphysical. Metaphysics does not gain a new ground, and beyng is not identical with beingness. Rather, what is at issue in this play is the overcoming of metaphysics, one that compels a redetermination both of beyng and of its history. Yet, if there is to be an opening for beyng, a happening that is thought solely from out of beyng itself, this cannot occur without a subsequent redetermination of beings, as well. While beyng is not to be thought by way of beings (as in the tradition of metaphysics), this does not at all mean that beings are simply abandoned. Beyng, in its history and play, retains a relation to beings, albeit one that persists wholly outside of the metaphysical sense of this relation.

This renewed relation to beings occurs for Heidegger by way of *Ereignis* and sheltering. *Ereignis* expresses a certain “simultaneity” between beyng and beings, a happening by which each plays forth the other. This simultaneity is not to be equated, however, with the metaphysical claim by which beings are secured in their being. Indeed, Heidegger is adamant that *Ereignis* attempts to leave metaphysics behind, or at least, to leave it to itself. As opposed to opening up the being of beings (i.e. metaphysics), *Ereignis* opens up the beyngs of beyng. As with beyng, the archaic spelling of beyngs here serves to denote their difference from beings in any metaphysical sense.

By way of *Ereignis*, beyngs are not grounded in beyng, but rather, beyngs shelter beyng, and in such sheltering give beyng to happen. Linked to the simultaneity of *Ereignis*, sheltering carries a twofold sense. First, it points to the way in which beyngs grant the happening of beyng, that happening by which beyng comes forth precisely as concealed in the open sheltering of beyngs. Second, it points to the way in which the happening of beyng grants beyngs. Beyngs 'are' beyngs precisely insofar as they shelter the happening of beyng. There is no sense of beyngs outside of this sheltering, and thus beyngs name simultaneously the concealed happening of beyng. Taken together, beyngs and beyng happen in a sheltering that bears each to the other, that lets them be in their eventuation precisely by way of their simultaneity.

Thus, if beginning is beyng itself, this must mean equally that beginning is beyngs themselves. The play of beginning is not such as to remove beyng from beyngs. Rather, it serves to situate beyng with respect to beyngs, to renew the play by which beyng happens always with and in the historical eventuation of beyngs. The turn away from metaphysics toward beyng is not a denial of beings. It is not the empty sterility of a bad abstract. Rather, it is precisely in such a turn that a more original and inceptual relation to beyngs can be found. The move towards beyng is at once the redetermination of the very relation between beyng and beyngs.

The play of beginning reveals the necessity of beyngs in the happening of beyng. Beyngs (and beyng) begin in the simultaneity of a happening that is reducible to neither. Beginning calls us, not to the empty abstraction of an inhumane 'beyng,' but to the rich vitality of beyngs in their event. To attend to the happening of beyng calls us at once to the happening of beyngs, to their eventuation and play. Moreover, we are not called to

beyngs as to something that merely and simply is. We are called to them insofar as they begin, and this means, insofar as they open and secure possibilities beyond and outside the beings that they are – possibilities, that is, that they perhaps would not authorize. There is something unsettling, something vitally disruptive, in this inceptual sense of beyngs. Though technical in the extreme, and difficult without question, the claim of beyngs as shelter for beyng expresses perhaps more than anything else a sense of extreme possibility – a space of beginning that opens an irreducible promise in the midst of our most ordinary and unexceptional experiences.

In the narrowest sense, this is a dissertation about the impact of beginning on Heidegger's question concerning the meaning of beyng and the possibilities this generates regarding a renewed engagement with beyngs. In the broadest sense, however, it is an attempt to encounter our most common orders of beings, our most everyday experiences, in light of a disruptive space of possibility that is neither reducible to those beings themselves, nor exhausted in their regulation. It seeks a vitality and possibility in beyngs that compels us always to begin again.

## I. BEGINNING WITHIN TIME: HISTORY AND BEGINNING IN *BEING AND TIME*

### Introduction

In *Being and Time*, the question of history returns to the question of the whole of Dasein's being. If, however, this return to the question of wholeness is all that is meant with the question of history, then it seems destined to fail in advance insofar as there is nothing to return to – the wholeness of Dasein appears not to be in question at all. Indeed, Heidegger suggests that this question has not only been raised but also answered in the elaboration of Dasein as *care*, i.e. as thrown being to death. Seemingly, there is nothing more to add to the question of the whole of Dasein: the progress of the existential analytic reveals the being of Dasein in the unity of care as that being disclosed (cleared) in the thrown project towards its own death. Yet death presents the wholeness of Dasein only within a structure that exists “forward,” leaving behind all that Dasein has been (*das Gewesene*). The account of Dasein is thus “one-sided” insofar as death “is just *one* of the ends that embraces the totality of Dasein.”<sup>15</sup> Nothing is said of Dasein's other “end”: “birth” or “beginning.” More importantly, nothing is said of the “between” that stretches between these ends, of the unity of Dasein situated within and toward these ends. In the existential analytic, “[n]ot only did being-toward-the-beginning [*Sein zum Anfang*] remain unnoticed, but above all, the way Dasein *stretches along between* birth and death.”<sup>16</sup> The question of Dasein's being as a whole, then, entails correcting this neglect;

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<sup>15</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993) Henceforth, SZ. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, *Being and Time* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 373/342.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

it requires that history attend to Dasein's other end, "beginning," in order to mark Dasein's happening as a between stretching itself along. "Only the being "between" birth and death presents the whole we are looking for."<sup>17</sup>

The proper account of history will return to the neglected question of beginning. Historicity situates itself within this return to beginning, and gives birth in the return to a unity of ends that stretches Dasein into its happening. History is at the very outset already a matter of repetition, a repetition through which Dasein is first disclosed in the wholeness of its beginning and end. This should not be understood to mean that we are here engaged in a mere recovery. The historical return to the neglected question of beginning is not the simple repetition of an already given possibility: of a previous or "past" event. Rather, it is a repetition in and through which Dasein's beginning becomes an issue for the first time. Dasein's beginning comes into a happening, a history, only insofar as that happening is traversed in the return to beginning, and moreover, it is the return that first makes manifest to Dasein that happening which Dasein always already *is* in its history.<sup>18</sup>

The account of Dasein's history is thus inseparable from an account that returns Dasein to its beginning. This can also be stated in the reverse: the account that returns Dasein to its beginning is precisely that which opens Dasein in its history, i.e. in the "connection" and unity of its ends. This means that the repetition of the question of Dasein's wholeness can occur only in light of its beginning, only with reference to that

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> SZ 386/353: "Repetition first makes manifest to Dasein its own history."

beginning that must be taken up into Dasein's wholeness and made manifest in its unity with Dasein's end.<sup>19</sup>

As a question of the wholeness of Dasein, of the "between" that stretches itself along its ends, history (*Geschichte*) is essentially distinct from the merely historiographical (*Historie*).<sup>20</sup> History, in the sense of *Geschichte*, elaborates a happening that "already *lies in the being* of Dasein."<sup>21</sup> Thus, history is necessarily related to the constitution of Dasein's being as care, and more importantly, to the ground of that being in temporality. History names the very happening (*Geschehen*) of Dasein's being in its temporal ground, and indeed, Heidegger notes that the interpretation of Dasein's history is "basically just a more concrete development of temporality."<sup>22</sup> The connection that Heidegger makes between history and the happening of Dasein plays on the connection between the word for history (*Geschichte*) and its verbal root, *Geschehen*: "to happen," or "to occur." The goal of this connection is to situate Dasein within the movement of its temporal passage. It is precisely in this movement that Dasein "has" its history and bears

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<sup>19</sup> To this extent, I disagree with William Richardson's claim that the history of Dasein is "no more than an explicitation and further elaboration of what is already implied in the study of temporality." *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 90. Certainly, Heidegger notes that the account of history is "just a more concrete development of temporality." (SZ 350/382). However, Heidegger's reference to beginning, and to the lack of any developed unity for Dasein's historical stretch, points to gaps in the temporal account. They point to problems that as we shall see prove difficult precisely for temporality as such. Under the relation of beginning and history, temporality finds itself fundamentally and radically in question.

<sup>20</sup> I follow here Stambaugh's practice of translating *Geschichte* as 'history' and *Historie* as the 'historiographical.' It is important to note, however, that this distinction as it appears in *Being and Time* remains within the existential analytic of Dasein, and thus within the "horizon" of Dasein's temporality. Thus, this distinction will itself need to be rethought within the fuller context of history that arises in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*. Specifically, it will need to be rethought with reference to the passage of history in crossing from the first to the other beginning.

<sup>21</sup> SZ: 374/343

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 382/350

that history in the event of its happening. As the “stretched out, stretching itself along,” Dasein is the “happening” of its own history in the concrete passage of its temporality.<sup>23</sup>

Dasein’s happening is thus ontologically distinct from its merely “historical” (*historisches*) occurrence as a possible object of history. Just as history does not name the object of an historical discipline, of a “science” of history, Dasein also is not a determinate and objective presence within history. Dasein is not simply present “in time” as though its being were that of a merely objective entity externally related to its history. Rather than placing Dasein in its own time and history, such an interpretation would leave Dasein stranded with regards to its temporality. It would neglect, as Heidegger points out, the very provenance of its own possibility:

The analysis of the historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*) of Dasein attempted to show that this being is not “temporal,” because it “is in history,” but because, on the contrary, it exists and can exist historically only because it is temporal in the ground of its being.<sup>24</sup>

The temporal happening of Dasein, in the movement of its passage, first grounds and opens up the possibility of taking Dasein as a merely historical being within the thematic approach of a historiography. Only by way of an account of the “connectedness” of Dasein does it become possible to treat Dasein in an everyday way as a being “in time” and “in history.” History (*Geschichte*) is thus more primordial than the historiographical (*Historie*). It grounds the possibility of the historiographical, but more importantly, it first opens Dasein to its own temporal passage such that there can be anything like history at all.

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<sup>23</sup> I favor translating *Geschehen* as ‘happening’ over Stambaugh’s translation as ‘occurrence.’ Occurrence carries the suggestion of an “act” or “action” in relation to something that is possible or realizable. Thus, happening is better suited to suggest an eventuation that occurs beyond the circuit of possibility and actuality.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 376/345 [Italics removed]

The ontological problem of Dasein's happening, as opposed to the ontical question of its historiography, lies in understanding the unity of ends that gives Dasein to stretch itself along in its temporal passage. According to Heidegger, it is "in the *unity* [*einheit*] of thrownness and the fleeting or else anticipatory being-to-death," that "birth and death "are connected" in the way appropriate to Dasein."<sup>25</sup> Initially, this unity does not present a problem; it is nothing other than the totality of the being of Dasein as anticipatory resoluteness [*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*]. Hence, the relation between thrownness and being-to-death orients itself within the disclosure of Dasein as thrown projection. Projecting itself upon its own most essential possibility of being, Dasein finds itself as thrown precisely into this project. Disclosed in its deathliness, Dasein is at one and the same time disclosed within the factual possibilities according to which it is always already determined as the being that it is. Dasein is disclosed in the whole of its possibilities insofar as it runs ahead towards its own death. At the same time, from out of its being-to-death, Dasein holds itself open resolutely for the whole of its factual possibilities. This relationship between thrownness and being-to-death points to the way in which Dasein is disclosed precisely *in* its factual possibilities insofar as it runs ahead of those possibilities in running toward its own death: "Resolute, Dasein is revealed to itself in its actual factual potentiality-of-being in such a way that it itself *is* this revealing and being revealed."<sup>26</sup>

It is not yet clear, however, the extent to which this relationship between thrownness and being-to-death constitutes a unity. Certainly, the wholeness of Dasein outlined here expresses their connection, but it does so only as a "modalization of

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<sup>25</sup> SZ: 374/343 [Italics mine]

<sup>26</sup> SZ: 307/284

resoluteness by anticipation.”<sup>27</sup> The question of the unity of thrownness and being-to-death remains a problem.

However, the “modalization” of resoluteness, i.e. anticipatory resoluteness, does at least offer a path for thinking this unity. In Dasein’s resoluteness with regards to the whole of its possibilities, Dasein must also appropriate its disclosure precisely as a whole. Not only is this wholeness held open in Dasein, but more importantly, it is held open for authentic and explicit appropriation. Dasein *is* the revealing and being-revealed of its own disclosive possibility only insofar as it explicitly takes itself over as this revealing: “It *gives* itself the actual factual situation and *brings* itself into that situation.”<sup>28</sup> Holding itself open for its possibilities, Dasein is thereby free for taking itself back precisely as the disclosive and open space of its own possibilities. This, says Heidegger, is “the authentic resoluteness to repeat itself.”<sup>29</sup>

It is in the repetition by which Dasein takes itself back that a possible unity of thrownness and being-to-death becomes apparent. There is a unity only insofar as the movement by which Dasein runs ahead towards its death is *at one and the same time* the taking back and taking over of its own thrownness. More precisely, coming towards its death, Dasein comes back to the open of those factual possibilities given in thrownness. Only if Dasein is at once “thrower” and “thrown” can there be a unity of thrownness and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 309/286

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 307/284

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 308/284. Whereas Stambaugh tends to translate *Wiederholung* as ‘retrieve,’ I have chosen in every case to remain with the more usual ‘repetition.’ In the end, neither option is completely satisfactory, and Heidegger gives the word to resonate in a way that defies easy translation. The use of ‘repetition’ to translate *Wiederholung* underscores the importance of the *passage* of Dasein towards and back from its end in the movement of anticipatory resoluteness. I find ‘retrieve’ unsatisfactory in this context insofar as it carries the suggestion that there is ‘something’ to be retrieved that lies somehow ‘behind’ Dasein.

being-to-death.<sup>30</sup> This is not however, a unity between two objective and external phenomena. It is not as if death, as a movement forward, and thrownness as a movement backward are simply paired together in a summary motion. To interpret the unity in this way would not only isolate death and thrownness as objective “ends” of Dasein, but would also separate them from the very being of Dasein. Moreover, Dasein is not a merely extant being whose presence somehow fills up the space between these ends. Rather, “both “ends” and their “between” are as long as Dasein factually exists...”<sup>31</sup> It is the unity of death and thrownness that makes manifest the unity of Dasein’s ends, and it does this precisely according to that unity, i.e. in the coming towards and back of Dasein that first reveals Dasein as the between of its own unitary ends. Stretched along its ends, it is also this stretch that first discloses those ends to Dasein, and indeed, discloses Dasein in the span of their between.

The unity of death and thrownness therefore reveals a unity of ends. As a unity, Dasein is the between of its ends. Yet, these ends are not laid out in advance. They are not given prior to the between, but rather they come to be in their own unity only with the stretch of Dasein’s happening. This precludes any suggestion that one might simply assign thrownness and death to the ‘beginning’ and ‘end’ of Dasein, respectively. Such an assignment neglects Heidegger’s most basic claim that beginning is not opposed to end, but rather, it is itself an end, just as death is. More decisively, thrownness and death

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<sup>30</sup> Posing the unity in this way, such that Dasein is at once “thrower” and “thrown,” allows the displacement of any substantial sense of identity in the throw. In order to think this unity, it is therefore necessary to think the way in which this unity is not the overriding self-identity of a metaphysical subject, but is rather the displacement and de-centering of every such identity. To this extent, the historical dimension of thrownness is essential for it leaves Dasein solely within the eventuation of its thrown happening. As Charles Scott notes in this regard, “The metaphor of “thrown” harbors no trace of a thrower or of an origin other than Dasein’s own history. Dasein seems to be fully and completely – wholly – its own thrownness.” *The Language of Difference* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1989), 77.

<sup>31</sup> SZ 374/343

as a simple correspondence of beginning and end neglects the happening of the between in which these ends are constituted in their own essential unity; it overlooks the necessity that directs us to consider the taking over of death in thrownness and likewise, the taking back of thrownness in death. If we are to think this stretch, it is perhaps more accurate to say that thrownness is the end of Dasein and death its beginning. The point here is that the unity of thrownness and death *happens* as the between of a unity of ends, as the span and stretch of that unity. If thrownness is beginning, then it is also end. And if death is end, then it is necessarily also beginning.

The task of thinking this unity therefore lies in understanding that sense of end that is also beginning – understanding the end precisely as beginning. Only within this understanding is it possible to think the happening [*Geschehen*] of Dasein towards its ends and in its unity. This means that if history, as the very happening of Dasein, is the return to the question of beginning, then it can be this return only by way of that end which is the proper end of Dasein. It can be this return only insofar as being-to-death is at one and the same time, being-to-the-beginning.

### **The Unity of Death and Beginning**

The fullest and most authentic presentation of Dasein's end occurs in Dasein's being-to-death. Indeed, as Heidegger states, "*death is* in the being of this being-toward-its-end."<sup>32</sup> Of course it hardly needs to be mentioned that death as the end of Dasein is not a static endpoint. It does not represent the simple demise of Dasein, nor does it represent the "final end" that waits only on Dasein's actualization of it. In fact, death is not something to be actualized at all, but rather *is* only in being towards it as a

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<sup>32</sup> SZ: 259/239

possibility.<sup>33</sup> As possibility, however, death is not simply one among a number of possibilities nearby. More to the point, it is not a possibility at all in the sense of that possibility which awaits actualization. Death, in its possibility, exceeds the circuit of possibility and actuality that defines my everyday engagement with things and objects. In the world of concern, Dasein constantly engages objects according to their possibilities: it manages them with a view to their ends, utilizes them according to purposes not yet fulfilled, or prepares them against possible occurrences. Yet in none of these ways is Dasein towards the possible precisely in its possibility. In the world of circumspective concern, Dasein is not in fact towards these possibilities at all. Rather, within the circuit of possibility and actuality, Dasein turns away from the possible as possible and looks only towards what it is possible for, i.e. towards its actualization and not its possibility.<sup>34</sup>

In being towards its possibility in death, Dasein is towards the possible precisely in its possibility. Far from giving Dasein a “footing” in the real, the possible as purely possible gives Dasein to *leap away* from the real in the sense of the “actual”: “The nearest nearness of being-toward-death as possibility is as far removed as possible from anything real.”<sup>35</sup> Exceeding the circuit of possibility and actuality, being-to-death reveals to Dasein “the possibility of the impossibility of existence in general.”<sup>36</sup> Death as this possibility of Dasein interrupts the movement by which Dasein would look beyond the possible to its actual realization. Death gives Dasein nothing to actualize, no real possibility that Dasein could be in being-towards-death. The nearer one comes to death in

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 261/241: “First of all, we must characterize being-toward-death as a being *toward a possibility*, toward an eminent possibility of Dasein itself.”

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 262/242

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

the sense of being towards it, the more death, as the possible impossibility of Dasein, exceeds the measure of the possible, and thereby “reveals itself as something which knows no measure at all.”<sup>37</sup>

Death does not open some possibility of Dasein’s for its later actualization. Rather, it opens Dasein to itself precisely as possibility; it situates Dasein within the open of its possibility. Death opens Dasein to itself in such a way that Dasein can be that potentiality of being that is its most extreme possibility. This disclosure of Dasein to itself happens in its being-toward-death, i.e. in its anticipation of death. Anticipation, of course, is not the same as a mere expecting of a possibility. Rather, anticipation is differentiated from expectation precisely insofar as expectation applies to the actualization of a possibility, that is, insofar as it abides within the circuit of possibility and actuality. Anticipation, on the other hand, abides only in being towards that possibility whose very possibility is such as to exceed the circuit, to give way to the measureless possibility of the impossibility of Dasein’s existence. In anticipation, death is disclosed precisely in its possibility (i.e. as the pure possibility of the possible). Yet, anticipation accomplishes this disclosure only by *making* this possibility *possible* and that means, by disclosing Dasein in the possibility of its ownmost potentiality of being.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> SZ 262/242: “As anticipation of possibility, being-toward-death first *makes* this possibility *possible* and sets it free as possibility.” The verb *ermöglichen* (“to make possible”) in this passage is an especially important one. The sense of the verb in Heidegger’s usage suggests a possibility that is made possible in the very *possibilizing* of the possibility, i.e. in being-towards the possibility. The suggestion of this movement becomes important later insofar as this ‘possibilizing’ of Dasein’s possibility in being towards it is at once a coming back to Dasein’s possibility – yet in such a way that the authentic unity of this movement characterizes Dasein’s happening. Even more importantly, it is this verb that characterizes the exposure of the “upon-which” [*Woraufhin*] of a projection, i.e. the meaning of a projection. Thus, the movement of the “making possible” in the extremity of meaning suggests an alternative to the understanding of meaning as ‘condition of possibility.’ Conditions of possibility are made possible in the movement of Dasein’s towards and back. Yet insofar as this is nothing other than Dasein’s happening in its history, the making-possible that *possibilizes* reveals the finite and historical character even of those *existentials* that characterize the structure of disclosure.

The structure of anticipation is therefore twofold. On the one hand, Dasein comes toward death in such a way that death is disclosed in its measureless possibility; it is disclosed as the end that Dasein is and can be. Yet in coming towards death, Dasein comes towards itself in the sense of coming towards its ownmost potentiality of being; it comes towards itself as that being that Dasein *is* in its being. Anticipation unites this twofold structure: Dasein's coming towards death *is* its coming to itself in its own most extreme possibility.

Death therefore figures a limit of Dasein. It is a limit in the sense that Dasein comes (back) towards itself in coming towards its end. The end that death unfolds in this regard becomes Dasein's end only insofar as Dasein *is* towards it in coming back towards itself. As limit, death is this coming towards and back to itself of Dasein in the open space of its disclosive passage; it is essentially nothing other than Dasein itself in the play of its passage towards and back. A limit, therefore, and also a play of limit insofar as it is opened in the press of Dasein's possible impossibility. In the opening up of the very closure of Dasein's possibility, Dasein finds itself exposed to its limit, and indeed, exposed to the play of its limit precisely as itself. It is in this sense that death is the limit of Dasein, or more precisely Dasein, in coming towards its end, is its limit in the open of its ownmost potentiality of being – a limit that presses towards and is pressed by the closure of possibility in the open of Dasein's most extreme possibility. Dasein *is* the playing out of its limit.

In a preliminary way, it is now possible to outline the unity of end and beginning, of being towards both death and beginning in their unity. As the play of limit, Dasein's coming towards its death also brings Dasein back to itself in its ownmost potentiality of

being. In the first instance, this means that Dasein draws itself back from out of its dispersion in the “they.” [*das Man*] Concerned in anticipation precisely about its ownmost potentiality of being, Dasein perdures in that possibility in such a way that “it is torn away from the they...”<sup>39</sup> Thus, coming back to itself means that Dasein is pulled back from its lostness within the world of everyday concern. This can be seen already in the possibility that death *is* in being towards it. As the possibility of Dasein’s impossibility, death is at once “the impossibility of every mode of behavior toward..., of every way of existing.”<sup>40</sup> In an everyday sense, Dasein draws its possibilities from those nearest to Dasein, i.e. those of the they. As such, Dasein finds itself unfolded according to those possibilities and in their possible actualization. Dasein thus discloses itself in its inauthentic commerce with the world of everyday concern and circumspection. Dasein is always towards possibilities, and it is disclosed in being towards them, yet its disclosure is wholly caught within the lostness of the they in which those possibilities (and their actualization) have already been decided in advance. Being towards those possibilities nearest at hand, Dasein is precisely turned away from its ownmost possibility, and exists in the mode of fleeing from death, covering over in its flight the pure possibility of the possible that death is.<sup>41</sup> Being-toward-death thus discloses to Dasein the impossibility of taking its possibilities from those nearest at hand. In the open of its ownmost potentiality of being, Dasein finds itself unable to hold to its disclosure in the everydayness of the “they.” In being-towards-death, Heidegger notes, “[a]nticipation discloses to existence

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<sup>39</sup> SZ: 263/243

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 262/242

<sup>41</sup> SZ: 252/233: “For factual existing is not only generally and without further differentiation a thrown potentiality-for-being-in-the-world, but it is always already absorbed in the “world” taken care of. In this entangled being together with..., the flight from uncanniness makes itself known, that is, the flight *from* its ownmost being-toward-death.”

that its extreme inmost possibility lies in giving itself up and thus shatters all one's clinging to whatever existence one has reached."<sup>42</sup> In the opening up of its ownmost potentiality of being, Dasein can no longer cling to its inauthentic disclosure; it is pulled back from the they, and given over to itself as that being that Dasein authentically is: coming towards itself is coming back from the everyday lostness of the they.

The ownmost potentiality of being that Dasein comes back to from out of the they is precisely its own potentiality. In coming back to itself in coming towards death, Dasein is revealed in the non-relationality of its ownmost possibility. "Anticipation lets Dasein understand that it has to take over solely from itself the potentiality-of-being in which it is concerned absolutely about its ownmost being."<sup>43</sup> Thus coming back from the they is at once coming towards itself in the being that Dasein is in its "there." [Da] As Heidegger describes it, death "lays claim" to Dasein in its individuality. Of course, individuality here does not point to the 'identity' of Dasein in a metaphysical sense. Dasein is not presented in this instance as a determinate subjectivity or as an "I" whose agential power reverberates in the world and in consciousness. On the contrary, death gives Dasein to lay claim to itself precisely in and as the open of its own 'there.' Once again, this can be traced out within the possible impossibility opened up in death. When pulled back from the they, Dasein's normal and everyday relations are closed – not in the sense that they *are* no longer, but rather in the sense that, at death's limit, Dasein's own being becomes an issue for it. Dasein is concerned absolutely about its own being, and this means that Dasein can no longer orient its disclosure within those possibilities nearest to it. Rather, Dasein is disclosed only in the 'there' of its disclosure; it is its own

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 264/244

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 263/243

disclosive 'there' as the being that Dasein *can be*. Thus, with the closure of its relations in coming back to itself, there is a failure of "any being-together-with what is taken care of and any being-with the others..."<sup>44</sup> a failure of any relation that would turn Dasein away from its own potentiality of being; Dasein is concerned wholly with itself. Anticipating death, Dasein is thus "forced" into the possibility of taking itself over in its 'there,' i.e. in the open of its ownmost potentiality of being, as opposed to taking itself over only in the circuit of possibilities that operate within the they.

Death therefore frees Dasein for the possibility of taking itself back. In being-toward-death, Dasein comes toward itself in its ownmost potentiality of being: Dasein is held open for being its 'there' in the disclosive passage (back) towards death. To the extent that death is the limit of Dasein, i.e. insofar as Dasein *is* its limit, the movement of Dasein towards and back from its end frees Dasein *to* and *for* the open possibility of being its there. This play of the limit that holds Dasein open for its 'there' articulates Heidegger's characterization of death as the "ownmost nonrelational, certain, and as such, indefinite and not to be bypassed possibility of Dasein."<sup>45</sup> This characterization is elaborated in summary form according to the structure of anticipation:

Anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility to be itself, primarily unsupported by concern taking care of things, but to be itself in passionate anxious **freedom toward death** which is free of the illusions of the they, factual, and certain of itself.<sup>46</sup>

Dasein's freedom toward death is its freedom in the play of its limit – the play of that limit that Dasein *is* in its being. In its limit, i.e. in its disclosive passage, Dasein is free for itself in the open and extreme possibility of being its 'there.' Holding itself open,

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<sup>44</sup> SZ: 263/243

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 258-59/239

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 266/245 [Italics removed]

Dasein is held open for the possibility of taking itself over precisely as that possibility. Dasein's potentiality of being is disclosed in the authentic possibility of being its own being – of disclosing itself only in that possibility.

Yet, this play of the limit in which Dasein *can be* its being also opens up the play of death and beginning, of death precisely as beginning. It holds open the 'there' in which Dasein, played towards its death, is played likewise towards its beginning. If, however, beginning opens up in the play of Dasein's coming back towards itself, then this means that beginning is not to be understood as a determinate starting point that somehow 'is' no longer. Just as death is not an end in the sense of the 'not yet,' so too, beginning is not an end in the sense of the 'no longer.' The beginning is not something that was and is now past, or more precisely, it is not an objective point of origin that Dasein has left behind. Instead, beginning is to be thought only in the play of its unity with death. It is therefore, an end in the way that death is and one that Dasein *is* in being towards it.

In its essential unity with death, beginning suggests the manner in which Dasein, running furthest ahead towards its own death, also reaches furthest behind itself.<sup>47</sup> Coming towards its ownmost potentiality of being, Dasein comes towards that which is always already in play in its possibilities, whether authentic or inauthentic. It comes

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<sup>47</sup> This formulation of beginning comes from a lecture course that Heidegger gave in Winter 1937-1938, contemporaneous with the writing of the *Contributions to Philosophy*: "The future is the origin of history. What is most futural, however, is the great beginning, that which – withdrawing itself constantly – reaches back the farthest and at the same time reaches forward the farthest." *Grundfragen der Philosophie: ausgewählte "Probleme" der "Logik."* GA 45. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), 40. Trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected "Problems" of "Logic"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 38. While this is a formulation of beginning that has in some sense already moved beyond the Dasein analytic, it is nevertheless applicable for that analytic. My reading of history in *Being and Time* also places *Being and Time* within a history of reading. Just as one reads *Being and Time* forward into a work like *Contributions*, one must also read back again into what is opened up. This is not an argument for the linear progression of thought. On the contrary, such a history of reading appeals to the happening of the "matter" always already at issue in the task of thinking.

towards that possibility which, in being made possible through anticipation, is the very basis of those authentic or inauthentic possibilities in which Dasein is disclosed. Dasein can be disclosed in its possibilities insofar as Dasein always already *is* the ‘there’ of its possible disclosure, i.e. insofar as Dasein is disclosure as such. Inceptually understood, Dasein is towards its beginning in being towards its own disclosive happening in the openness of its potentiality of being.

Being towards the beginning first lets the beginning *be there* for Dasein. Stating this in parallel with Dasein’s being-toward-its-end, it could also be said that Dasein *is* its beginning only in being towards it. Being towards the beginning means being towards the ‘there’ of disclosure that Dasein always already is whether authentically or inauthentically. Yet, being towards the beginning must also mean that Dasein takes up its beginning. Dasein must take over *being* its there as the being that Dasein always already is. Taking over its ‘there’ means that Dasein must take itself back in(to) the disclosiveness of its ownmost potentiality of being. It is only in this way that Dasein comes to be in the unity of its beginning and end.

Death reveals Dasein in its freedom *for* this possibility of taking itself back; it is not yet itself this taking back. In being free for its potentiality of being, Dasein holds itself open for its own most extreme possibility. In order, however, to accomplish this holding open, i.e. to be this possibility, Dasein must “hold to”<sup>48</sup> its open – it must hold itself open to its own disclosive event in that event, which is to say, in its disclosive passage and limit. Holding to the beginning Dasein holds at once to the end, and

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<sup>48</sup> “Holding-to” elaborates and plays on the German word for beginning, *Anfang*, in a way that places the movement of beginning within the holding open of Dasein’s disclosive event.

likewise, holding open the end happens in holding to the beginning. This is the proper unity of end and beginning.

### **Resolute Beginning**

It is now possible to gain a fuller sense of what it means to think the question of history in its relation to beginning. As a return to beginning, the task of thinking through Dasein's history is the task of thinking through the beginning up to its end. It is the task of showing how Dasein "holds to" the disclosiveness of its passage by taking itself over in its ownmost potentiality of being. This "holding-to" that articulates the beginning therefore articulates the "stretch" of Dasein in the unity of its birth and death. Explicitly stated, the happening of Dasein in its history is the play of the limit that Dasein is in being the 'there' of its potentiality of being.

In order to elaborate this connection between the happening of Dasein and the play of Dasein towards its ends, the unity of death and beginning must itself be played out into that unity which is proper to Dasein's happening: the unity of thrownness and being-to-death. There are not, however, two separate unities at work here. Indeed, it is hard to consider how this would even be possible. Rather, the unity of Dasein's ends is to be played into the happening of Dasein. But this is done in such a way that this unity of ends plays itself out in the unity of thrownness and being-to-death.

It was said earlier that the beginning, in running furthest ahead, also reaches furthest behind Dasein. In being-towards-the-beginning, then, Dasein is towards that potentiality of being that it always already *is* in its thrown factual possibilities, whether authentic or inauthentic. Dasein is towards the openness of its own 'there' which lies, in

a sense, already “behind” Dasein as the basis of its factual possibilities. Further, it was said that the beginning is accomplished insofar as Dasein “holds to” its disclosive ‘there’ precisely *in* its factual possibilities. Holding to the beginning means therefore that Dasein takes itself over in the being that Dasein always already is, i.e. in its thrown being to death.

However, this “holding-to” of the beginning does not mean that Dasein somehow gets behind its thrownness. This is impossible insofar as thrownness reveals Dasein in the opacity of its beginning, the obscurity of its “whence and whither.” Disclosed in its thrownness, Dasein always already finds itself dependent upon a world of possibilities into which it is thrown as being-in-the-world. In thrownness, Dasein is delivered over to its there: “it is thrown in such a way that it is the there as being-in-the-world.”<sup>49</sup> “The expression thrownness,” says Heidegger, “is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over.*”<sup>50</sup> The ‘thatness’ of Dasein’s there, or more precisely, that Dasein is and has to be its there always already in being-in-the-world “stares at [Dasein] with the inexorability of an enigma.”<sup>51</sup> Thrownness points to the facticity of Dasein in which it finds itself always already thrown into a world of possibilities that Dasein is and has to be. Dasein cannot penetrate the enigma; it cannot clear it so as to make transparent to itself its own ground and provenance. *Already* in a world, Dasein finds itself to *always have been* in the world, dependent upon it and thrown into its factual possibilities.

It is not then a matter of getting behind thrownness, but rather, it is a matter of taking over the factual ‘there’ and holding it open (holding to its open) *in* Dasein’s

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<sup>49</sup> SZ: 135/127

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

thrown being-in-the-world.<sup>52</sup> In a preliminary way, this is worked out in resoluteness, and more precisely in that resoluteness in which Dasein is resolute “up to its end,” i.e. in anticipatory resoluteness. Just as death frees Dasein for its ownmost potentiality of being, resoluteness frees Dasein for its world.<sup>53</sup> As free for its ownmost potentiality of being, Dasein is free for taking itself over in its thrown possibility. As free for its world, Dasein lets itself be its thrown possibility according to that potentiality: “In resoluteness, Dasein is concerned with its ownmost potentiality-of-being that, as thrown, can project itself only upon definite, factual possibilities.”<sup>54</sup> When Dasein lets itself be its thrown possibility as thrown being-in-the-world this does not mean that Dasein passively accedes to the everyday demands of the they. On the contrary, Dasein’s “letting itself be” points to the way in which Dasein holds open its ‘there’ in the disclosure of its factual possibilities. Resolute, Dasein resolves upon itself in its disclosure as such; Dasein resolves to *be* its there. Far from a merely passive submission to the they, Dasein’s resolve for its own ‘there’ summons Dasein out from its lostness in the they.<sup>55</sup> Dasein does not, however, forego its possibilities in the they, nor does it somehow abolish them in being its there. Rather, Dasein lets those possibilities be in the open of Dasein’s

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<sup>52</sup> I take this account of resoluteness also to be the project at work in David Wood’s attempt to restore a “fidelity to the temporal.” (“Reiterating the Temporal: Toward a Rethinking of Heidegger on Time,” in *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, ed. John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 156.) Noting the necessity of a certain repetition of temporality, he wants to open the possibility that there are unavoidable “back-door entanglements” between the ontic and ontological that occur in this repetition. The playing out of temporality (and thus, of the radical potentiality of Dasein’s being) within the space of Dasein’s resolute facticity suggests for Wood that the thinking of the ontological is inseparable from a thinking of the ontic. Each is to some extent thought only with reference to the other. My analysis of resoluteness, however, suggests a possible ground for this entanglement. Resoluteness leads Dasein both towards its potentiality of being and towards its already given factual possibilities. The movement is in each case the same. To the extent that resoluteness figures into the unity of Dasein’s historical “stretch,” it lets Dasein be its facticity precisely in the turn of Dasein towards its ownmost possibility. This unity, the very unity of beginning, is then the necessary historical basis for every entanglement of the ontic and ontological.

<sup>53</sup> SZ: 298/274

<sup>54</sup> SZ: 299/275

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

authentic self-disclosure. Instead of understanding itself primarily from those possibilities nearest at hand, Dasein understands itself in the disclosiveness of its there. Resoluteness discloses to Dasein the ‘there’ which Dasein *is* in its being, and it does this precisely through the disclosure of Dasein in its factual, existing possibilities.

In this way, resoluteness brings Dasein to its situation, and in anticipatory resoluteness, Dasein is brought to its situation absolutely. The use of the term ‘situation’ points for Heidegger to “the there disclosed in resoluteness – as which the existing being is there.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, both an active and passive sense can be heard in this term. On the one hand, resoluteness situates Dasein’s factually existent possibilities within the open of Dasein’s ‘there.’ Accordingly, the situation is for Dasein the disclosure of the ‘there’ as such. On the other hand, the ‘there’ is itself situated in Dasein’s existing towards its factual possibilities: the ‘there’ is disclosed in the disclosure of Dasein’s factual possibility. Accordingly, Dasein is ‘there’ (i.e. is situated) insofar as Dasein is its possibilities, whether in the mode of turning towards or away from its ‘there.’

Dasein comes towards its situation absolutely when resoluteness is “modalized” by anticipation, i.e. in anticipatory resoluteness. Anticipating, Dasein comes back towards its there in such a way that Dasein seizes itself authentically and resolutely in the ‘there’ that it itself opens up:

Resolute, Dasein is revealed to itself in its actual factual potentiality-of-being in such a way that it itself *is* this revealing and being-revealed. To any truth, there belongs a corresponding holding-for-true. The explicit appropriation of what is disclosed or discovered is *being-certain*. The primordial truth of existence requires an equiprimordial being-certain in which one holds oneself in what resoluteness discloses. It *gives* itself the actual factual situation and *brings* itself into that situation.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 299/276

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 307/284

In anticipatory resoluteness, thrownness and being towards death find the ground of their possible unity. Coming towards death, Dasein discloses itself in its ownmost potentiality of being. In this disclosure, Dasein is concerned about its being absolutely. Dasein is not concerned about being this or that being in the everyday possibilities of the 'they.' Instead, the issue for Dasein is its own being as such, the being that Dasein is and can be in its being. Brought back from its dispersion in the they, Dasein comes towards the possibility of *being* its being authentically. Being towards its death, Dasein comes toward its most extreme possibility, i.e. towards itself in authentic self-disclosure, insofar as Dasein *is* that possibility in being towards it; death holds Dasein open for the possibility of being itself. Anticipation, however, revealed that Dasein can be held open only insofar as Dasein also comes back to the possibility that is held open. According to the play of the limit that death is, or more precisely, to the limit that Dasein *is* in the play of its death, death holds Dasein open for coming back to the 'there' of its disclosive passage. It frees Dasein for taking itself back into that which death opens up. This coming towards and back that Dasein is in making death possible is nothing other than the unity of death and beginning. Held open towards its ownmost potentiality of being, Dasein is freed for that potentiality of being in taking itself back, i.e. in being likewise towards that which Dasein always already is in its being.

Coming back to its there in making death possible, Dasein is freed for its authentic resoluteness for the situation in which Dasein can explicitly take itself over in its 'there.' Dasein resolves itself down to its 'there.' Whereas death holds Dasein open *for* taking itself back, resoluteness holds Dasein open *in* taking itself back. Coming towards itself, Dasein comes back to itself in the certainty of resoluteness that holds

Dasein open in the disclosive 'there' that is first opened up (freed) in being-towards-death. In accord with the situation of resoluteness, Dasein's taking itself back means in the first instance that Dasein summons itself from out of its lostness in the they. Dasein takes itself back from its inauthentic disclosure according to those possibilities that offer themselves nearest by in the circumspection of Dasein's concern. Thus summoned to its situation, Dasein is at the same time summoned to the 'there' of its possibilities. Resoluteness situates Dasein's possibilities within the open of the 'there' that is always already in play with those possibilities as such. In this sense, resoluteness as Dasein's taking itself back means that Dasein takes its factual possibilities back into the there of their situation. More precisely, Dasein *is* its factual possibilities in *being* the open 'there' of their occurrence. Being the there in which Dasein is its factual possibilities, however, points to the way in which Dasein takes itself back precisely by taking over its thrownness.

Thrownness discloses Dasein's facticity in such a way that it reveals Dasein as delivered over to its 'there' as being-in-the-world. However, the 'there' of Dasein revealed in thrownness is initially and for the most part covered over. In being thrown, Dasein is not toward its thrownness explicitly in such a way that Dasein could appropriate that thrownness in being 'there' with its factual possibilities. Rather, thrownness 'is there' for Dasein primarily in Dasein's turning away from it. Turned away from thrownness, Dasein is given over to its thrown 'there' as that which Dasein evades in the circumspect possibilities of its concern.

In the resoluteness by which Dasein takes itself back, Dasein turns towards the there of its thrownness, i.e. it takes itself over as thrown. Rather than evading thrownness

by fleeing into its possibilities, Dasein turns towards its thrownness by taking over its factual possibilities in the 'there' of Dasein's situation. Resoluteness, in summoning Dasein out from the they, at once summons Dasein to its own 'there' in being thrown. Dasein's thrownness into its world is thus taken back into the disclosive 'there' that Dasein opens up insofar as Dasein appropriates its being-in-the-world precisely as thrown. Turned towards thrownness in resoluteness, Dasein brings its 'there' into play with those factual possibilities that Dasein is and has to be in being thrown.

In turning towards thrownness, however, Dasein does not necessarily turn towards its factual possibilities *as* factual, i.e. as those to which Dasein is delivered over. Resoluteness that anticipates turns Dasein towards thrownness in such a way that Dasein is thrown into the possibility of being itself. In the public everydayness of the they, Dasein finds itself dependent upon a world in which its possibilities have been decided in advance. Dispersed within the they, Dasein not only evades its thrownness, but equally, Dasein finds itself covered over in its own most extreme possibility. When summoned back from the they in resoluteness, Dasein is not therefore summoned back to its factual possibilities in their character as everyday possibilities upon which Dasein is dependent. On the contrary, in summoning back, anticipatory resoluteness summons Dasein towards its 'there' as the 'there' which Dasein is and has to be in its being-towards-death. Dasein is given over to the 'there' of its possibilities in such a way that Dasein has to be its there as its own potentiality of being; dasein is summoned to the possibility of being itself.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Yet, it cannot be stated emphatically enough: Dasein *does not lose its facticity or fail to affirm it* in the rejection of factual possibilities as everyday possibilities. Rather, the contrary is the case. Anticipatory resoluteness returns Dasein all the more thoroughly and concretely to those possibilities in which Dasein has grown up and upon which Dasein depends. This is precisely the difficulty of Heidegger's understanding of Dasein's resolute disclosedness: it does not, as de Beistegui argues, point merely to "the sheer power of occurrence which Dasein itself is." It points rather to the way in which every such occurrence plays out precisely in and through Dasein's concrete factual situation. The difficulty with de

Anticipatory resoluteness thus brings Dasein to the possibility of *explicitly* taking itself over. Anticipating, Dasein makes death possible in being towards it. Coming towards death means, however, that Dasein comes (back) towards itself in its factual ‘there.’ Resolute, Dasein takes itself back in its factual thrownness. Yet, in taking itself back, Dasein takes itself over authentically in its thrown being towards death. Resolute Dasein in anticipation takes *itself* over as the being that it has to be insofar as Dasein is factually thrown into its end. Thrown in authentic resoluteness, Dasein is thrown towards itself as that potentiality of being that Dasein always already factually is. In this way, Dasein “*gives* itself the actual factual situation and *brings* itself into that situation.”<sup>59</sup> Death holds Dasein open for taking itself back in its thrownness. Resoluteness takes Dasein back in such a way that Dasein is brought to the possibility of being itself. Giving itself its there in being-towards-death, Dasein has to be the there to which it is given over in resoluteness.

In taking itself over explicitly, Dasein plays itself into the unity of its thrownness and being-towards-death. However, this means also that Dasein plays itself out towards the unity of its end and beginning. In reaching furthest ahead towards its own most extreme possibility, Dasein at once reaches furthest behind towards that being which Dasein always already is in its thrown possibility. Coming towards its end, Dasein is at the same time coming towards its beginning. The unity of end and beginning composes itself in the play of that limit by which Dasein’s coming towards itself is equally a

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Beistegui’s claim is not that it is wrong. It is rather that it appears to separate the dispositive power of Dasein’s potentiality from the eventuation of that potentiality in Dasein’s facticity. For de Beistegui, resoluteness does not disclose Dasein within the factual concreteness of its thrown possibility, but rather in the sterile possibility of existence as such, “the existing of existence,” where “existence repeats only its own disclosedness as existence...” *Thinking with Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 35. Thus, de Beistegui misses the priority of thrownness in the sense of disclosure and with it the unity that persists between thrownness and being-to-death.

<sup>59</sup> SZ: 307/284

coming back to itself. The limit that Dasein is in coming back towards its own death plays Dasein into a passage to and from that limit – a passage by which Dasein is exposed to its limit precisely in *being itself* in its thrown being to death. Dasein is itself in the exposing play of its limit.

### **Beginning and the Happening of Dasein**

Playing itself towards its limit, Dasein brings itself to its history. The happening of Dasein as the “between” of its birth and death finds expression in this unity of Dasein’s thrownness and being-towards-death – a unity that plays Dasein towards the unity of its ends. With the possibility of explicitly taking itself over, Dasein comes to the very passage of its happening insofar as Dasein is “the stretched out stretching itself along.” [*das erstreckten Sicherstreckens*]<sup>60</sup> The precise manner of this stretching along has already been prepared in the analysis of anticipatory resoluteness. “In it, Dasein understands itself with regard to its potentiality-of-being in a way that confronts death in order to take over completely the being that it itself is in its thrownness.”<sup>61</sup> Confronting death, Dasein confronts the possibility of being itself completely in its ownmost potentiality of being. The unity of thrownness and being-towards-death holds Dasein free for taking itself back in the whole of its stretch. Yet, this possibility is there for Dasein only in the play of that limit by which Dasein is both its death and beginning. Only insofar as Dasein is always already stretched out towards its death can Dasein come

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<sup>60</sup> SZ: 375/344: While I have not altered the translation, a note about the phrase “*das erstreckten Sicherstreckens*” is called for. The German prefix *er-* conveys an element of passage in the phrase that it is impossible to represent in translation. It suggests the sense that the “stretched out stretching itself out” stretches, and is stretched, only in the very stretching itself. The point is that it is only in the happening of the stretch that there is and can be something like a “stretched out” and a “stretching itself out.”

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 382/350

back to the ‘there’ of its thrownness and take it over up to its end: dasein understands its own potentiality of being in taking over its thrownness all the way up to its death. In short, Dasein takes over being the disclosive ‘there’ of that being that only *Dasein* can be: it turns towards its thrown possibility as that which is always already turned out towards death.

Stretching along, Dasein takes itself over in the unity of that stretch that Dasein *is* in being towards it. However, this is only possible if Dasein “stretches *itself* along in such a way that its own being is constituted beforehand as this stretching along.”<sup>62</sup> Dasein can be its stretch only if the being of Dasein is itself already stretched out. Only if Dasein is disclosively open in its being, i.e. is disclosure as such, can Dasein authentically appropriate its disclosure in the open play of its unity. The claim that Dasein is itself already stretched out elaborates the movement of anticipatory resoluteness by which Dasein takes itself over “completely.” As stretched out, Dasein stretches back towards the possibility of wholly taking itself over in its stretch. Coming back towards itself in its thrown being-towards-death, Dasein’s appropriation of itself is “complete” only in taking over the unity of its stretching that Dasein always already is. Only if death and beginning are united in the being of Dasein can Dasein pass towards itself in the play of its limit.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 374/343

<sup>63</sup> Dasein’s appropriation of itself in its historical stretch is precisely that which Jean-Luc Nancy calls the very relation of sense itself. Nancy writes, “If, in Dasein, Being is at issue [*il s’agit de l’être*] (and if, without playing on words more than language itself does, Being is an action [*l’être est de l’agir*]), that is because Being, as the Being of Dasein, *is* what is at stake [*l’enjeu*] in its conduct, and its conduct is the bringing into play [*mise en jeu*] of Being.” (“Heidegger’s “Originary Ethics,”” in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, eds. Francois Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 67.) It is in the relation of Being to action that my analysis runs parallel to Nancy’s. Dasein *is* the enactment of the sense of the question of being; it is the very question itself. Yet, this means in the context of action that Dasein executes this question in its conduct – in its comportments – and these occur always within its factual,

This does not mean, however, that Dasein exists somehow “prior” to its stretch. To say that Dasein is stretched out “beforehand” does not suggest that the whole of Dasein is a prior possibility waiting only on Dasein’s actualization of it. Indeed, Dasein’s being towards death closes the circuit of possibility and actuality in which there could be something like a bare possibility that is only later brought to completion. Moreover, the claim of this “priority” of the stretch seems to suggest “a framework spanned “outside” of Dasein and embracing it,”<sup>64</sup> as though Dasein’s stretch were external to Dasein’s own being. According to Heidegger, not even the “vulgar interpretation” of Dasein’s connectedness would care to make such a claim, but rather looks for the stretch in Dasein’s own being.<sup>65</sup> Finally, it is not only death, but thrownness as well that argues against an understanding of the stretch as a prior possibility that Dasein somehow makes actual. In the facticity of being delivered over to its thrown there, Dasein is necessarily opaque in regard to the question of some definitive ‘origin,’ or some determinate and objectively present ‘essence’ that Dasein would address or fulfill in its being; thrownness leaves Dasein silent on the question of its “whence and whither,” and thus precludes the possibility of a “prior” for Dasein.

“Dasein,” therefore, “does not first fill up an objectively present path or stretch “of life” through the phases of its momentary realities.”<sup>66</sup> The explicit taking over of itself in the stretch that Dasein always already is does not mean that Dasein takes itself over as an objectively present being. Rather, in taking over the unity of its stretch in stretching itself along, Dasein comes explicitly to its happening. The happening of

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concrete commitments. The unity of thrownness and being-towards-death expresses precisely this action of Being and it does so as the historical eventuation of Dasein.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 374/343

<sup>65</sup> SZ 374/343

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Dasein is nothing other than this “stretched out stretching itself along.”<sup>67</sup> This means, however, that Dasein ‘happens’ only in taking itself over as an ecstatically open temporal being: Dasein *can* take itself over in the unity of its stretch only insofar as Dasein is always already temporally stretched in the ground of its being. “The happening itself and the disclosedness belonging to it, or the appropriation of it, is existentially grounded in the fact that Dasein is ecstatically open as a temporal being.”<sup>68</sup> In the unity of its thrownness and being-towards-death, Dasein is held open precisely for its open. This open, however, is nothing other than the open play of its temporality. Taking itself back completely in the play of its unity, Dasein comes to itself in its own temporal stretch. The appropriation of the disclosedness that properly belongs to Dasein is the appropriation of its ecstatic and open temporality.

It is with the appropriation of temporality that Dasein comes to the fullness of its unity. On the one hand, this means that Dasein takes itself over *wholly and explicitly* in appropriating its temporality. On the other hand, this means that in the appropriation, Dasein holds to its beginning, or more precisely, Dasein takes itself up into the unity of its beginning and end. These movements, however, are not separate occurrences, but are instead one and the same happening. They compose the unity according to which Dasein brings its temporality into play in such a way that Dasein is and can be its beginning all the way to its end.

It now becomes clear the way in which history constitutes a return to beginning. The return at issue is not a return to some prior possibility or definitive origin. Indeed, it is perhaps not a return at all insofar as the turn towards beginning is at once a turn back

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<sup>67</sup> SZ: 375/344: “The specific movement of the *stretched out stretching itself along*, we call the *happening* of Dasein.”

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 386/353

towards death. Rather history, as the happening of Dasein, constitutes a return to beginning to the extent that, in its history, Dasein takes up its beginning and takes itself over in the temporality of its passage. The taking up of the beginning means that Dasein explicitly takes *itself* over in “holding to” the open of its possibilities. In this sense, the taking up of the beginning is nothing other than the explicit taking over of Dasein itself in its temporal open; Dasein holds to itself in holding open the ‘there’ of its own temporal passage. In another sense, however, Dasein holds to the temporality of its open precisely in “holding to” its possibilities, i.e. in letting them be in the open. Holding to the beginning in this sense means that the open *is held open* in Dasein’s inceptual appropriation of its possibilities. History is therefore a return to beginning insofar as the open -- always already ‘there’ for Dasein -- is taken up into the possibilities that Dasein *has been* and which Dasein must *now be* in the play of its temporal passage.

In the end, it is a matter of constantly returning to death or at least to that end which is and can be beginning. Dasein’s happening in its history arises in passage towards this end, and yet again, back from it. Dasein’s inceptual appropriation of its possibilities is therefore inseparable from its appropriation of its end, i.e. of the being of Dasein all the way to its end. This is never more the case than in Dasein’s historical eventuation:

As a mode of being of Dasein, history has its roots so essentially in the future that death, as the possibility of Dasein we characterized, throws anticipatory existence back upon its *factual* thrownness and thus first gives to the *having-been* its unique priority in what is historical.<sup>69</sup>

As we have seen, death stretches Dasein forward; death *is* in being towards it. Towards death, however, Dasein comes to the impossibility of securing itself in the circuit of its

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 386/353

everyday possibility. Dasein is instead opened beyond that circuit. Closed to its being as something possibly actual, Dasein is opened for its being according to the 'there' that is always already in play with the circuit of Dasein's factual possibilities. Death holds Dasein free for appropriating itself in its ownmost potentiality of being. Dasein *can be* itself insofar as Dasein is towards its death as that most extreme possibility which frees Dasein for taking itself back: coming towards death, Dasein comes towards itself. Yet, this coming towards itself of Dasein in the open of its own death is nothing other than the phenomenon of the future: "If authentic or inauthentic being-toward-death belongs to the being of Dasein, this is possible only as futural...Here "future" does not mean a now that has *not yet* become "actual" and that sometime *will be* for the first time, but the coming in which Dasein comes toward itself in its ownmost potentiality of being."<sup>70</sup> In reaching furthest ahead of itself futurally, Dasein reaches ahead of all actualizable possibilities. It leaps into the open of its own being disclosed in the openness of its end. Coming towards itself futurally, Dasein comes towards the possibility of being itself in its disclosure as such.

Insofar as Dasein persists in the unity of its end and beginning, Dasein's futural passage towards its end at once throws Dasein back upon the factual 'there' of its thrownness. The throw according to which Dasein is thrown futurally towards death is at the same time a "throwing back" towards the 'there' that is always already in play with the circuit of Dasein's factual possibilities. However, the open 'there' of its possibilities towards which Dasein is thrown back is always and only Dasein itself. In the throw towards and back, the 'itself' of Dasein plays out in the passage of the end. The 'self' of Dasein that comes to be in this passage is nothing other than the passage itself. Thus in

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 325/299

anticipating, Dasein comes towards itself in coming back to its 'there,' although not in the sense that Dasein comes towards those everyday possibilities upon which Dasein is dependent in the "they-self." Rather, Dasein comes to the there 'of' its possibilities. This means on the one hand, that Dasein comes to the there that arises for Dasein in being towards its most extreme possibility in being-towards-death. In this sense, the 'there' is the open of Dasein's possibility as such. Yet, coming to the there 'of' its possibilities means on the other hand that the there 'is' there always already *in* Dasein's possibilities. Though in the circuit of everyday possibility Dasein is turned away from the open of its there, coming towards death Dasein turns back to the 'there' of its factual thrownness as the open that Dasein always already is in being its possibilities.

In the play of Dasein's thrownness towards and back to itself, it is already possible to see the way in which the future, as end, is also beginning. Indeed, it becomes clear that Dasein's end has never been other than beginning insofar as the beginning is that which, reaching furthest ahead, reaches at once furthest behind. To the extent that the beginning is in being towards it, this means that in its authentic futurity, Dasein comes toward the open of its possibilities as that which is always already in play with those possibilities as such. It is not as if, in the beginning, Dasein is simply open. Rather, Dasein holds itself open in holding to its possibilities. Resolved for its 'there,' Dasein is resolute for the disclosure of its possibilities in letting them be as possibilities. Dasein takes over its open in taking over its possibilities. Of course, this does not mean that Dasein resolves itself upon an everyday possibility of itself. As Heidegger notes, "In the existential analytic, we cannot, on principle, discuss what Dasein *factically* resolves

upon.”<sup>71</sup> Rather, it is precisely *in* its possibilities, i.e. in letting them be, that Dasein holds to the open, and indeed to that open always already exposed in Dasein’s authentic futurity.

In one sense, then, the beginning is the future of Dasein. It is that end of Dasein made possible in Dasein’s passage (back) towards it. Coming towards itself in its end, Dasein comes inceptually towards the being that Dasein has always already been. In another sense, however, this means that the beginning is that which Dasein takes over in being thrown back upon its factual thrownness. The open that Dasein futurally *is* is held open inceptually in Dasein’s appropriation of its thrown possibilities. Dasein thus comes inceptually to be its ‘there’ in the finitude of its happening, or more precisely, in beginning Dasein comes to its happening as such.

The return to beginning in which Dasein is made manifest in its history thus becomes a repetition by which the beginning is taken up explicitly into Dasein’s temporality. In the repetition, Dasein hands itself down to itself precisely in taking itself over inceptually and temporally. Repetition, in the handing down of Dasein itself, puts Dasein explicitly into play with its beginning. To the extent that repetition plays Dasein out in the inceptuality of its beginning, it becomes clear that repetition does not abide within the circuit of possibility and actuality that characterizes the everyday possibilities of Dasein. Repetition “does not disclose the Dasein that has been there in order to actualize it again.”<sup>72</sup> Instead, says Heidegger, “repetition *responds* to the possibility of existence that has-been-there.”<sup>73</sup> The response to the possibility that “has-been-there,” is not a response to some previous or ‘past’ possibility of Dasein which now would be

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<sup>71</sup> SZ: 383/350

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 385/352

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 386/352

brought into the present. On the contrary, in repetition Dasein responds to its own possibility as that extreme possibility that Dasein always already is in its being. The response answers the summons to its own ‘there’ by which Dasein is summoned out of the they and resolved absolutely for its situation in the open of its possibilities. Repetition thus responds to the open that is always already in play with Dasein’s possibilities – the open upon which Dasein resolves itself in its resoluteness for the ‘there’ of its possibilities. Repetition is thus a mode of resoluteness, and in accord with anticipatory resoluteness, it points to the way in which Dasein comes back to the open ‘there’ of its possibilities.

Yet, repetition does not ever simply come back to its ‘there.’ Rather, in coming back, repetition also hands the ‘there’ over to Dasein as the ‘there’ of its own being. This means that in repetition, Dasein brings the open into play with its possibilities. It lets its possibilities be in the open of Dasein’s there. Repetition is therefore that mode of resoluteness in which it “comes back to itself and hands itself down.”<sup>74</sup> Coming back, resoluteness holds Dasein open in its ‘there.’ Handing down, resoluteness repeats the open in letting Dasein be its possibilities precisely in the ‘there’ of that openness. In responding to Dasein’s ownmost possibility of being, repetition hands Dasein over to its possibilities in such a way that, in letting those possibilities be, Dasein holds open the ‘there’ of its being.

In the handing down of the open to Dasein, repetition also hands the open over to Dasein’s possibilities. It is in this sense that “repetition is *explicit handing down*, that is,

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 385/352: “Resoluteness that comes back to itself and hands itself down then becomes the repetition of a possibility of existence that has been handed down.” (translation modified)

going back to the possibilities of the Dasein that has been there.”<sup>75</sup> Initially and in its everyday concern, Dasein does not ever go back to its possibilities. Instead, Dasein is lost within them, dependent upon its possibilities and dispersed in the ‘they.’ In its thrownness, Dasein is not repetitively handed down to itself, but delivered over to the possibilities of the ‘they’ that are always nearest to Dasein. In coming back from its dispersion and taking itself over in its thrownness, Dasein does not somehow abandon its possibilities, nor does it extricate itself from them. The very sense of thrownness is that Dasein is always already thrown into possibilities that Dasein has been. Heidegger notes that “Authentic existentiell understanding is so far from extricating itself from traditional interpretedness that it always grasps its chosen possibility in resolution from that interpretation and in opposition to it, and yet again for it.”<sup>76</sup> When Dasein comes back to its ‘there’ in resoluteness, it is at once summoned back from the ‘they.’ In anticipatory resoluteness, this coming back at once comes towards Dasein’s own most extreme possibility in the closure of its traditional possibilities. In this sense, Dasein’s understanding of its authentic potentiality of being in resoluteness is grasped in opposition to its traditional possibilities. Yet it is also grasped for those possibilities. In its authentic resoluteness, i.e. in repetition, Dasein goes back to its possibilities in order to be the ‘there’ of its possibilities. Taking over its thrownness, Dasein *is* the there of its thrown possibilities; dasein is thus open “for” its possibilities:

The resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself discloses the actual factual possibilities of authentic existing *in terms of the heritage* which that resoluteness *takes over* as thrown. Resolute coming back to thrownness involves *handing oneself over* to traditional possibilities, although not necessarily *as* traditional ones.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> SZ 385/352

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 383/351

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

In repeating its possibilities, it is not as though Dasein simply inhabits them again. Rather, repetition brings Dasein before its possibilities in bringing those possibilities into play with the open that Dasein discloses itself to be. Repetition discloses Dasein in the open that Dasein is and has been in the ‘heritage’ of its thrownness. Freed for its there, repetition frees Dasein at the same time for its possibilities in letting them be. The heritage of Dasein that is disclosed in this movement is Dasein’s thrown possibility towards death. Thus, Dasein inherits its thrown possibility, and it does so in taking over the ‘there’ of its open that Dasein is and has been in its heritage.

The open that Dasein is and has been in *being* its possibilities, however, is nothing other than the future of Dasein which Dasein comes towards and holds open in letting itself be in its possibilities. Essentially and authentically futural, repetition repeats at once the open of the ‘end’ that Dasein discloses in coming towards it. Temporally understood, Dasein can take over the heritage of its *has been* only insofar as Dasein is futural in its passage back towards its possibilities. Repetition repeats Dasein in its futurity, i.e. in the unity of its beginning and end:

Only a being that is essentially *futural* in its being so that it can let itself be thrown back upon its factual There, free for its death and shattering itself on it, that is, only a being that, as futural, is equiprimordially *having-been*, can hand down to itself its inherited possibility, take over its own thrownness and be *in the Moment* for “its time.” Only authentic temporality that is at the same time finite makes something like fate, that is, authentic historicity, possible.<sup>78</sup>

Repetition secures the open of Dasein that *is there* in the passage of Dasein’s temporality. The play of Dasein towards and back from its ‘end,’ when taken over explicitly in repetition, holds to the open and lets the open be in the ‘there’ of Dasein’s possibilities. The open is never “prior” to Dasein as though it were an objective boundary present

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 385/352 [Italics removed]

before Dasein. It is also not a determinate substratum that somehow lies underneath Dasein as an ‘essence’ or ‘ground.’ Were it to be ground, the open could be ground only as concealed [note], and this means only as ecstatic in Dasein’s temporalizing of that ground. The play of the open is rather the play of Dasein’s temporality in its original and ecstatic unity. It is the play in which temporality “‘is” not a *being* at all. It is not, but rather *temporalizes* itself.”<sup>79</sup> Ecstatic, temporality is the open of its unity as such. Authentically futural, Dasein plays itself out temporally in the openness of its ecstatic unity. This means, though, that when Dasein takes itself over wholly and explicitly in its temporality, i.e. when Dasein repeats itself, it does not take itself over in the manner of a determinate possibility of itself that it makes “actual.” On the contrary, Dasein takes over an ‘itself’ that is always already played out beyond the circuit of the actual. Dasein is ‘itself’ in always being “outside” of itself temporally.<sup>80</sup> To say that Dasein temporalizes itself in its happening says then that Dasein is constantly exposed to its open in the passage of its ends. Temporalizing, Dasein is finite: “The authentic future, which is temporalized primarily by *that* temporality which constitutes the meaning of anticipatory resoluteness, thus reveals itself as *finite*.”<sup>81</sup> Finitude is Dasein’s authentic happening in the temporalizing of that openness which Dasein *is*, an openness by which Dasein is always already outside of itself.

Finitude is the exposure of Dasein in its temporality. Yet according to its “time,” Dasein is this exposure itself. Dasein, as finite, happens only in the temporal passage by which Dasein comes towards its ends. As we have characterized this passage, this means that Dasein is the play of its limit, or more precisely, Dasein plays itself out as limit in the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 328/302

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 329/302: “Temporality is the primordial “outside of itself” in and for itself.” [Italics removed]

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 330/303

exposure of that limit. It is not, however, as though Dasein ‘bounces’ back and forth between a boundary posited in advance and outside of Dasein. On the contrary, the limit is put into play only in the passage of Dasein towards and back from its ends, i.e. in the unity of end and beginning. It could be said that in its end, Dasein comes towards and back from its limit, but according to Dasein’s end, this can only have meaning insofar as Dasein is the limit itself. In its ends, Dasein is the ‘itself’ that comes towards and back, or more precisely, Dasein is the limit itself, exposed in and to its play. ‘Limit’ links Dasein to the exposure of its finitude, not as something played out ‘beyond’ Dasein, but rather as that which Dasein finitely is. In the play of its limit, Dasein is the passage towards end and beginning, towards end precisely as beginning. Towards the end, this passage emphasizes the exposure by which Dasein is always already outside of itself in the authentic temporality of its future. Towards the beginning, it emphasizes this exposure as that which Dasein holds open for itself in the “letting be” of Dasein’s possibilities. At once end and beginning, Dasein exposes itself to its end in the exposure of itself to its possibilities.

To say that Dasein is its limit lets it be said that the beginning is the constancy of that open which is held open in Dasein’s temporal passage. Constancy, of course, does not mean that Dasein is a succession of moments temporally. Rather, it points to the way in which the open is held open in Dasein’s authentic resoluteness for its possibilities. As Heidegger notes, “Constancy is not first formed either through or by “Moments” adjoining each other, but rather the Moments arise from the temporality, *already stretched along*, of that repetition which is futurally in the process of having-been.”<sup>82</sup> Beginning names the open of Dasein’s futurity, i.e. its exposure always outside of itself,

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 391/357

as that which is held open in the possibilities towards which Dasein comes back. Dasein thus lets the beginning *be there* for itself, or more precisely, Dasein begins always in the open of its 'there' – an open that Dasein always already is in its possibilities as such. Repeating itself constantly and temporally, Dasein comes back towards the 'there' of its possibilities and lets those possibilities be in their inceptual moment. In the constancy of the moment, Dasein brings its open inceptually into play with its possibilities. Constancy thus affirms for Dasein that the beginning is always beginning: Dasein *is* its temporalizing exposure, i.e. Dasein is its history, in the resoluteness by which Dasein lets its possibilities be there. Yet it also affirms that the beginning has always already begun: Dasein has been futurally the possibility of its open towards which Dasein comes back. Beginning, in the constancy of its moment, reaches furthest ahead in reaching furthest back.

## II. BEGINNING AND THE LIMIT OF TEMPORALITY HORIZONTAL TIME AND INCEPTUAL TIME

### Introduction

“Revolution, the upheaval of the habitual” says Heidegger “is the genuine relation to the beginning.”<sup>83</sup> It is a relation that is at once direct and problematic. It is direct insofar as it calls for an upheaval, an overturning of the habitual and the usual – an overturning of what, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls “everydayness.” It is problematic insofar as the sense of revolution is not that of a return to some more primordial truth, origin, or ground. The revolutionary relation to beginning is precisely such as to resist all such returns. Were it only a return of the beginning to a more original ground, the revolutionary character of the beginning would remain within the customary and the usual. It would return ceaselessly to the self-identical ground of an origin from which it had never escaped. Hence, all progress within such a beginning would be regressive, all dispersion a concealed return, and all original movements only the poor imitations of an already exhausted source. Such a movement is opposed to the revolutionary, and indeed, Heidegger marks this opposition by calling it a “conservative” relation to beginning. Within the endless circling of a customary return, the conservative “adheres to and retains only what was begun in the wake of beginning and what has come forth from it.”<sup>84</sup> It conserves a beginning that is not in fact a beginning at all. Yet more to the point, the conservative works to hide and conceal the very beginning that it would

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<sup>83</sup>GA 45: 41/38.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

claim to appropriate. In the return to an ever-identical ground, the revolutionary sense of beginning becomes subordinated, as concealed, to the conservative movement of the ordinary:

“The concealed destiny of all beginnings, however, is to seem to be thrust aside, overcome, and refuted by what they themselves begin and by what follows them. The ordinary character of what is henceforth the ordinary becomes the lord of what is forever the extraordinary character of the beginning.”<sup>85</sup>

The opposition between the conservative and revolutionary revolves around a certain disequilibrium within beginning. On the one hand, beginning names simply and solely that which has begun. It indicates the starting point of a movement already underway. In this sense, the beginning is the “primitive;” it comes to its completion only at the finish of the movement that it begins. On the other hand, beginning in a more radical sense suggests that which is never simply a starting point. It outstrips the movement that arises from it, both exceeding and withdrawing from that which it begins. On this account, *there is* beginning, and beginning happens in such a way as to withdraw constantly and concealedly from the eventuation of that which it begins.

Whereas the conservative relation to beginning returns again and again to what was begun, the revolutionary attends to the withdrawal of beginning that occurs in every such return. It attends to that extra-ordinary character of beginning that conceals itself even as it gives rise to what is begun through it. Of course, this means that “the domination of the ordinary and all too ordinary must be broken.”<sup>86</sup> Revolution must interrupt the endless circling of return so that it might give the usual and habitual to begin again. It must disrupt the advance to a self-identical ground in order to clear, as we shall see, an open in excess of ground. It is for this reason that revolution is an upheaval and

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> GA 45: 40/38.

not a “mere subversion or destruction.”<sup>87</sup> The goal is not the obliteration of the ordinary or of ground; it is not even the call for such an obliteration. Rather, the revolutionary character of beginning seeks to say the “same” of the conservative, but according to a wholly other grounding. As Heidegger notes, “...the restructuring of the beginning is never the poor imitation of what was earlier; it is entirely other and nevertheless the same.”<sup>88</sup>

It is through the ‘same’ of beginning that one would in fact begin with the beginning. However, the same does not mean the identical. The movement of beginning by which the ‘same’ sounds in a wholly other register is not the conservative movement of return. It is instead a movement of repetition. Beginning with the beginning means the repetition of beginning in such a way that its extraordinary and unique character becomes manifest. In this context, the repetition of beginning carries a double sense. First, repetition points to a movement that is not the return to a self-identical source or ground. It is not, according to Heidegger, that which “merely comes to pass as the *same* for a second and a third time.”<sup>89</sup> In this sense, it is the revolutionary as opposed to the conservative; it points to the upheaval, rather than the preservation, of the habitual. Secondly, repetition carries the sense of that which is outside of every conservative economy of return. In this sense, it suggests that the movement towards beginning is one that turns outside and beyond the circuit of the return to ground. Here repetition does not merely repeat an already given ground. It opens a clearing that exceeds ground. Thus in turning towards beginning, repetition turns toward the very ‘outside’ itself; it turns toward that which withdraws itself constantly in the eventuation of every ground.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 41/39.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> GA 65: 55/39.

Repetition turns, as Heidegger will say, to the ‘same’ of beginning which is ever and only beyng itself.<sup>90</sup>

Beginning with the beginning means therefore that the beginning is made, repetitively, with beyng itself. On this point, Heidegger could not be more explicit: “the *beginning* is *beyng itself*.”<sup>91</sup> However, it should be clear by now that this positing of the ‘same’ of beginning and beyng is not an identity. Indeed, Heidegger’s use of the archaic *Seyn* (as opposed to the standard *Sein*) points in a rather direct way to the impossibility of such an identity.<sup>92</sup> Beyng is not to be understood according to the conservative sense of being, namely as that ground which is and can be ground for beings. Beyng, as opposed to being, is precisely intended to convey that this ground is exhausted, that the movement of metaphysics which circles between being and beings has come decisively into its own end. Beyng therefore suggests the revolution and transformation of the ordinary conception of metaphysics, the upheaval of the circuit of return from beings to being and back again. “Thus,” says Heidegger “beyng can no longer be thought of in the perspective of beings; it must be entought from within *beyng itself*.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> The distinction between repetition and return wants to suggest that whereas return points always to an already given ground, beyng, and the withdrawal of beyng, unfolds only within the movement of repetition itself. It is neither outside nor prior to the repetition. Daniella Vallega-Neu puts the point nicely when speaking about what is needed to learn the “art of repetition:” “we need to learn to perform repetitions of movements of thinking in such a way that what is repeated occurs for us and with us each time anew. We also need to learn that what is repeated occurs only in the repetition, that it has no time, no space, no being outside of the repetition and, thus, occurs in a unique way each time.” *Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 31.

<sup>91</sup> GA 65: 58/41

<sup>92</sup> It is my practice to render *Seyn* simply as ‘beyng,’ and *Sein* as being. The primary benefit of this translation is readability. It allows the distinction to be made without decisively interrupting the text (as Maly and Emad’s “be-ing” seems to do) or suggesting some strange new concept (as Will Richardson’s “beon” certainly does). Heidegger often employs the archaic ‘beyng’ precisely in order to distinguish it from the metaphysical concept of being. The issue of the difference resides in a certain attachment to beings and to the guiding position of metaphysics. Whereas being is thought always with reference to a being and back again from it, beyng is to be thought from out of itself, and indeed in such a way that it carries out a crossing away from this basic metaphysical position according to which being is thought in relation to beings.

<sup>93</sup> GA 65: 7/5

Yet, if beginning is no longer to be thought of in reference to beings, what is to be made of Dasein, and more importantly, of the temporality that belongs to Dasein? If the beginning is to be made with beyng, what then of time? Is the beginning to be made now without time? In a sense, yes, and indeed in such a way that the beginning could be made in no other way. However, the claim that the beginning begins without time does not suggest that the beginning is somehow “eternal” or “supratemporal,” sliding always beyond the mortal exigencies of temporality. Indeed, Heidegger is quick to make the opposite claim: “[All beginnings] withdraw from mere history (*Historie*), not because they are super-temporal and eternal, but because they are greater than eternity: they are the *thrusts* of time which spatialize beyng’s opening of its self-concealing.”<sup>94</sup> The thrust of time, then, and not simply time – a thrust that spaces an opening of beyng whose clearing is not under the regulation of time. Beginning, insofar as it is beyng itself, is the thrust of a clearing that is perhaps “of” time, but not simply reducible to time.

The beginning is to be made with beyng, and not time. It is not the case, however, that time is simply substituted or overthrown. Beginning never moves beyond time, and this remains the case even within the play of beyng and beginning. If the beginning is to be made without time, this is not an attempt to find a ground beyond time. Rather, it points to the involvement of temporality in a movement of grounding that temporality itself cannot fully control. The turn of beginning towards beyng is not a turn away from time; it is a turn towards the ecstatic open of the clearing, an open in which the clearing and concealing of beyng cannot remain founded solely upon time.

To the extent that beginning opens a clearing for beyng that is not reducible to temporality, this means that temporality must undergo the beginning. It must itself be

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<sup>94</sup> GA 65: 13/17 [translation altered]

given to begin. The claim that the beginning is to be made without time is not a rejection of time, but is rather the affirmation of beginning, and indeed in such a way that nothing, not even time, escapes the revolutionary character of beginning. Thus temporality, insofar as it begins, finds itself engaged in the passage towards being. As Heidegger will later say in *Contributions*, temporality “is the *directive* to and *echo* of that which happens as the truth of the essence of being...”<sup>95</sup> It is a directive to the happening of being insofar as temporality points beyond the bounds of the Dasein analytic of *Being and Time*. Even as temporality is thought with reference to a being (Dasein), nevertheless temporality begins, at its limit, to inaugurate a shift away from this reference. While such a shift within temporality by no means captures the whole of the complexity involved, it still constitutes a decisive movement away from the necessity to think being (and to some extent, being) by way of beings. Under the force of its beginning, temporality shifts away from the guiding dominance of a being and prepares instead an open for being that is to be thought from out of being itself.

As directive for being, temporality is at once also an echo that resounds from out of being. This means primarily that temporality does not regulate the open for being that it prepares. Instead, temporality finds itself submitted inceptually to being. The passage towards being is not only something that temporality accomplishes, but equally,

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<sup>95</sup> GA 65: 74/51 [translation altered]. I have chosen to translate *Wesung*, both here and throughout, with ‘essence,’ as opposed to the construction “essential swaying” employed by the translators. However, there is no easy or fully appropriate choice, and I am inclined to agree with Maly and Emad that “[n]o other word in the entirety of *Contributions* offers as varied a possibility for the translator as the word *Wesen*.” (Translator’s Foreword, xxiv) The difficulty concerns the connection of the word ‘essence’ to the history of metaphysics that Heidegger is working to overcome. In most cases, the words ‘essence’ and ‘essence’ are used by Heidegger in such a way as to work against their classical metaphysical meaning. Thus, to translate *Wesen/Wesung* simply as essence/essence risks returning the words to the very orbit of metaphysics that Heidegger wants to resist. Nevertheless, I accept the risk. It is my contention that the more usual translation into essence and essence allows the richness and variety resounding in Heidegger’s use of the words to come forth. If one participates in the movement of thinking that Heidegger opens up in *Contributions*, the usual metaphysical connotations of the words cannot help but lose their force as they undergo the unsettling motion of Heidegger’s thought.

it is something that temporality must *undergo*. As both directive *and* echo, temporality *is* only in the passage towards and back from beyng, or better, temporality *is* only within the happening of its beginning.

Temporality is thus the site of a certain crossing towards beyng, a crossing that is at once a play of temporality with its beginning. In this play, temporality is submitted to beginning in such a way that temporality prepares an open for beyng into which it is at once set back. The crossing towards and back from beyng, however, also puts into play, and indeed must put into play, a shift away from the ontological difference. As we have already noted, beyng is not to be thought of in the perspective of beings, but is rather to be thought from out of itself. Yet, this is not a simple shift of emphasis, i.e. to beyng rather than beings. Rather, it is a revolutionary shift, an inceptual upheaval that overturns the circuit between beings and being, dislocating in the process the metaphysical dominance of being as a self-identical ground for beings. The crossing towards beyng is at once a crossing out of the ontological difference.

Temporality undergoes the beginning, then, precisely to the extent that it carries out this upheaval of the ontological difference and prepares an open for beyng. The task is therefore to trace out this beginning – to let temporality begin, and within this beginning, to mark an overturning of the ontological difference that is prepared through temporality itself. It is a task that calls temporality to its beginning, and indeed to that beginning which is ever and only beyng itself.

## The Trace of the Ontological Difference

The beginnings of a shift away from the ontological difference come almost immediately after *Being and Time*. Of course, this shift is not something new following on the heels of *Being and Time*. Something like this shift is at least already underway in that text. The structure of Dasein's understanding as disclosive, the being of Dasein as care, and of course the happening of Dasein as temporally finite and ecstatic all cast into question the notion and priority of an ontological difference. Temporality as the meaning of the being (care) of Dasein upsets the notion of something like being (or better, beingness) that would function as ground for the being that Dasein is. Yet, it is after *Being and Time* that this shift away from the ontological difference gains a new urgency. The first public statement of the ontological difference comes in a lecture course given at Marburg during the summer semester of 1927.<sup>96</sup> Ostensibly a follow-up for the unfinished third division of *Being and Time*, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* articulates the explicit claim of an ontological difference within the investigation of temporality as the meaning of being in general. Yet it is precisely here, in this first statement of the difference, that the initial gesture is already made to overturn this difference. It is almost as if the very statement of the ontological difference calls for the movement of its transformation, as though its very formulation suggests the manner of its upheaval and "revolution." Much later, Heidegger will say this himself in *Contributions*, noting that "as necessary as this distinction is (to think in traditional terms), in order to provide at all a preliminary perspective for the question of being, just as disastrous does

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<sup>96</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. GA 24. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975). Trans. Albert Hofstadter, *The Basic Problems of Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

this distinction continue to be.”<sup>97</sup> He goes on further to note that the disaster at issue rests solely with the ontological difference itself. It is precisely this distinction that “becomes the real barrier which misplaces the inquiry into the question of beyng...”<sup>98</sup> The ontological difference, even as it opens the path of a certain questioning concerning beyng, nevertheless serves at once to close it off. The opening of that most essential pathway into beyng, a path that would lead even beyond being and its circuit with beings, is hinted at and yet concealed in the formulation of the ontological difference.<sup>99</sup>

It is a tension and ambiguity that must be sustained if one is to leap into beyng, and indeed for Heidegger, the very approach to the question of the ontological difference must be one that preserves this ambiguity. If one is to prepare for a questioning that leaps into beyng, it is necessary “*on the one hand* to begin an initial clarification with this distinction and *then* to leap over this very distinction.”<sup>100</sup> It is not enough then simply to overturn the ontological difference, as if such a move could ever be simply done. Rather, it will be necessary to encounter this difference already within the very leap towards beyng that the difference between beings and being serves to conceal.

In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, temporality functions as the site of this encounter. It grounds the possibility of the ontological difference even as it engages in the overcoming of this possibility. Temporality thus provides a first, and decisive,

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<sup>97</sup> GA 65: 250/176-77

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 250/177

<sup>99</sup> This point is made with particular clarity by Parvis Emad. He understands Heidegger’s interpretation of the ontological difference as a “being-historical” interpretation, and thus always already caught in the passage towards beyng. He notes on the one hand that the ontological difference “fails to countervail the forgottenness of be-ing which determines the thinking of the first beginning and all its offshoots (nihilism, planetary domination of technicity, etc.)” (“On the Inception of Being-Historical Thinking and its Unfolding as Mindfulness,” *Heidegger Studies*, 16, 2000: 57) It occurs in the midst of a concealment and covering over of beyng. Yet, such an understanding of the ontological difference is only possible within the passage towards beyng. It must already point “to the imminent transformation which reveals be-ing as enowning.” (59) In its concealment of beyng, it makes possible a first avenue into beyng itself.

<sup>100</sup> GA 65: 251/177

gesture towards being and it does this precisely through the way in which it functions as ground for the ontological difference. It is time that serves as the site for its own shift, a shift that will draw with it, in its movement towards being, both history and beginning.

Of course, one never simply begins with time, any more than one simply begins with being. In the lecture course, as with *Being and Time*, the beginning is made with Dasein. The concrete turn to the being that Dasein is opens the way to temporality as the ecstatic ground of that being. Temporality is not therefore arbitrary or hypothetical. Rather, as Heidegger notes:

We can follow [temporality] quite well in the basic features of its constitution, unveil the possibilities of its temporalization and its modifications, *but only in going back from the factually concrete nature of Dasein's existence*, and this means in an orientation to that being [*Seienden*] which is unveiled along with Dasein itself and is encountered for Dasein.<sup>101</sup>

There is, then, already a trace of the ontological difference and of the method of such a difference. By way of a being, one would understand something like the being of that being, and even, the grounding of being in time. By way of Dasein, one turns towards temporality precisely through the turn to Dasein. It is as if temporality would be revealed as “ground” for Dasein in just the same way that being is revealed as ground for beings by way of a turn towards a being. It raises a question, and indeed one that will prove decisive later, as to whether time can ground Dasein in a way that does not simply mirror the conservative grounding of beings in being, a question as to whether temporality can in fact exceed being and its circulation with beings insofar as temporality is the meaning of being in general.

It is however only a trace of the ontological difference, even if it is one that will contaminate the turn towards time, stopping the turn short, at least initially, of that

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<sup>101</sup> GA 24: 465/327 [Italics mine]

“beyond” of being according to which temporality would prove to be outside of the circulation between beings and being. Only a trace, for even as the turn to Dasein would be part of a turning within the ontological difference, such a turn also at once introduces problems into precisely this difference itself. There are two such problems. First, there is the problem of temporality itself. Temporality, as we have seen, is not a being. As Heidegger says in *Being and Time*, “Temporality “is” not a *being* at all. It is not, but rather *temporalizes* itself.”<sup>102</sup> It becomes hard to see, then, how temporality could simply mirror the movement of ground present in the circuit of the ontological difference. Its very sense is such as to remove it from this circuit, placing it outside of beings and of being. If time “is” not, or again, if time “is” the “not” of being, it cannot be the ground for Dasein in the same way that being is the ground for beings. The turn from Dasein as a being, to time, which is not itself in being, is a turn already in some sense engaged in the overcoming of the ontological difference. It is a turn that is to some extent turned away from that difference, for the turn does not attempt an identity between a being and its being. Instead, the movement between Dasein and temporality is such as to interrupt even the possibility of such an identity. John Sallis, commenting on precisely this difficulty, puts the point directly: “How can temporality be identical with that being called Dasein if it is not a being at all? If it is not a being at all, if it is not, then how can it avoid being other than and outside of that being called Dasein?”<sup>103</sup>

The second problem is a problem not with temporality but with Dasein itself. Even as Dasein is “a being,” it is also the case that Dasein is concerned with itself precisely in its being. In some sense, Dasein “is” its concern for itself, insofar as Dasein

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<sup>102</sup> SZ: 328/302

<sup>103</sup> John Sallis, *Echoes: After Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 59.

is uniquely that being for whom its being is in question. Insofar as Dasein holds itself in question, Dasein not only comports itself to beings (and to itself as a being), but equally, Dasein understands something like being precisely in such a comportment. The concern that Dasein has for its being points to the peculiar situation that Dasein, in comporting itself to beings, already and necessarily understands being. Indeed, Dasein's comportment to beings is possible only on the basis of that understanding: "We are able to grasp beings as such, as beings, only if we understand something like being."<sup>104</sup> Moreover, this understanding of being is not somehow separate or distinct from Dasein, but rather, "the understanding of being has itself the mode of being of human Dasein."<sup>105</sup> Dasein "is" the understanding of being by which any comportment towards beings is possible. This, of course, says nothing other than that Dasein is disclosive in its being. Yet in a most peculiar way, Dasein is not only disclosive of beings, but equally of being. The understanding of being, while it makes possible comportment towards beings as such, is nevertheless also that disclosiveness through which something like being itself is first given at all. As Heidegger notes, "We meet with a being's being in the understanding of being. It is understanding that first of all opens up or, as we say, discloses or reveals something like being."<sup>106</sup>

If, however, Dasein is already in its being an understanding of being, then Dasein is never simply 'a' being in the usual sense. Dasein is at once both a being and an understanding of being, both a comportment toward beings and a disclosure in which there is given something like being itself. The turn to Dasein, then, is not simply or directly a turn to a being and only a being. Rather, it is a turn to that being that at once,

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<sup>104</sup> GA 24: 14/10

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 21/16

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 24/18

in its being, opens up something like the ontological difference itself. Indeed, Heidegger characterizes Dasein as in some sense nothing other than this distinction:

Since it exists, Dasein understands being and comports itself toward beings. The distinction between being and beings *is there* [*ist da*], latent in Dasein and its existence, even if not in explicit awareness...Existence means, as it were, “to be in the performance of this distinction.”<sup>107</sup>

Dasein, as a unity of an understanding of being and a comportment toward beings, performs in its existence the very difference of the circuit between being and beings. Even if it is not explicit, even if the difference remains only latent in Dasein, nevertheless Dasein is never simply a being. Rather, Dasein discloses in its being the very difference by which Dasein can understand itself as a being at all.

These two problems thus serve to highlight the ambiguity and tension mentioned earlier in regard to the ontological difference, i.e. that ambiguity that suggests a leap beyond the ontological difference even in the very statement of its performance. The turn towards Dasein as a being is a turn to the very happening of the ontological difference itself, to the disclosure of an understanding of being that both opens up, and is prior to, all comportment toward beings, even the comportment of Dasein towards *itself* as such a being. Yet, the turn towards Dasein is also the turn that allows temporality to become manifest in its temporalization, and indeed, in the temporalization of the being that Dasein *is* as disclosive understanding. This means, however, that the turn towards Dasein in the performance of the ontological difference is at once the turn beyond that difference. It is a turn that at once turns to temporality as that beyond – a beyond that would be, for Heidegger, even beyond being, and thus, even beyond the circuit of the ontological difference between beings and being. Of course, it remains to be seen

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<sup>107</sup> GA 24: 454/319

whether the turn to such a beyond is indeed successful, whether temporality can yet escape the priority of the difference that it articulates. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether there is something like a leap over the ontological difference, a leap that would not simply be that of the beyond of being, but would in addition prepare a way even into beyng and into the inceptual happening of beyng.

### **Temporal Projection and the Beyond of Being**

Prior to such a leap, the way to the beyond of being is prepared by Heidegger according to the projection structure that articulates Dasein in the disclosiveness of its understanding of being. Just as in *Being and Time*, “to understand means, more precisely, *to project oneself upon a possibility*, in this *projection* to keep oneself at all times in a possibility.”<sup>108</sup> Projection is tied to the way in which Dasein is and can be its possibilities. As a structure of disclosive understanding, projection addresses the way in which Dasein comports itself toward its own possibilities, especially toward that possibility which is Dasein’s most essential and peculiar possibility, namely death. Dasein’s possibilities, however, are “not empty logical possibilities lying outside itself, in which it can engage or from which it could keep aloof; instead,” says Heidegger, “they are, as such, determinations of existence.”<sup>109</sup> Dasein *is* its possibilities, and in such a way that Dasein is never somehow outside of the possibilities that Dasein makes possible in projecting them. Dasein’s possibilities are not simply there, ready to be made actual. In this sense, they are not possibilities at all if by a possibility we mean that sense of the possible that orients itself within the circuit of actuality. Instead, they are projected, and

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<sup>108</sup> GA 24: 392/277

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 391/276

this means that they are *made possible* only insofar as Dasein is *towards* them. Thus, Dasein projects itself toward possibilities, and frees those possibilities for itself precisely in being towards them. However, it needs to be clear that the projection of Dasein toward its possibilities is at once Dasein's projection of those possibilities as possibilities of its own self. As determinations of existence, Dasein's possibilities are precisely those to which Dasein comports itself in being towards its ownmost potentiality of being. Comporting itself toward possibilities, Dasein comports itself toward its potentiality of being, a comportment that finds its most authentic expression in that potentiality of being that is found in the possibility of Dasein's being towards death.

Projection therefore carries a double relation with regards to possibility; it is at once both a projection *upon* possibility and a projection *of* possibility.<sup>110</sup> As a projection upon possibility, the "upon-which" [*woraufhin*] of the projection "is a potentiality of being of Dasein's own self."<sup>111</sup> Dasein's potentiality of being is not somehow different from Dasein's possibility. Rather, it is precisely that possibility itself insofar as it is projected in Dasein's being towards it. In being toward its possibility, Dasein is toward itself, and it is toward itself as a certain capacity for being itself, whether authentically or inauthentically. In projecting upon a possibility, Dasein comes toward itself from out of a certain possibility for being itself. Projecting upon its potentiality of being, Dasein comes toward a possibility of itself precisely *as* possibility, and indeed, Dasein's

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<sup>110</sup> GA 24: 392/277 [translation modified] "The phenomenon of projection contains two things. First, that *upon which* Dasein projects itself is a potentiality of being of its own self...Secondly, this projection *upon* something is always a projecting *of*..."

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

potentiality for being is nothing other than that possibility, which *as possibility, is there* for Dasein in coming towards it.<sup>112</sup>

Projecting upon a possibility, Dasein is also a projection of possibility. While these are distinct for the purposes of analysis, it should be remembered that these are not distinct within the projection. Projection is both of and upon possibility in one and the same projection. This means that insofar as Dasein comes towards a certain possibility of being itself, it also holds itself in that possibility. Projection *of* a possibility thus means that Dasein understands itself within the very possibility that it has projected. The unity of the two moments of projection points to the way in which Dasein comes toward itself, *exists* as itself, precisely in existing toward the potentiality of being that Dasein makes possible. As Heidegger notes, “If Dasein projects itself upon a possibility, it is projecting itself in the sense that it is unveiling itself as this potentiality of being, *in this specific being.*”<sup>113</sup> The projection of a possibility thus means that Dasein becomes manifest in the possibility that it projects. Dasein is unveiled *in* its existence precisely *to* its existence, and this unveiling gives Dasein to exist freely in and as the possibility that Dasein makes available in the projection.

Projection thus means that Dasein is always oriented to its own potentiality of being. Dasein is “occupied” with its being precisely in its being. The disclosiveness of projection reveals Dasein to itself as a being that, in its being, is concerned about that very being. To use the language of possibility, Dasein maintains itself in a certain possibility of existence, a possibility for being that Dasein has at once chosen and disclosed. Yet, it maintains this possibility only insofar as Dasein has always already

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. [translation modified] “A potentiality of being, a possibility *as possibility, is there* only in projection, in projecting oneself upon that potentiality.”

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. [italics mine]

come toward itself in its being (whether explicitly or not) according to the potentiality for being that Dasein discloses. It is easy to see, then, the way in which the double structure of projection (the ‘of’ and ‘upon’) happens as the performance of the ontological difference: Dasein comports itself to beings, and to itself as a being, only insofar as Dasein discloses something like the being of those beings, and this disclosure occurs precisely in the way in which Dasein is towards its own being as a certain potentiality of being. As disclosive understanding, i.e. as projection, Dasein opens the ontological difference.

With this opening up of the ontological difference, it is only a matter of time, and of the regression to time by way of the “tricky image” of a certain “stratification” of projections.<sup>114</sup> This stratification occurs as follows:

In *existentiell understanding* one’s own Dasein is first experienced as something that is, a being, and in that process being is understood. If we say that being is understood in the *existentiell* understanding of the Dasein and if we note that understanding is a projecting, then in the *understanding of being* there is present a further projection: being is understood only as, on its own part, it is *projected upon something*.<sup>115</sup>

Of course, time proves to be that upon which being is projected, and so the stratification runs from beings to being and from being to time. It is the sense of disclosure inherent in the double structure of projective understanding that makes this stratified regression possible. Comporting itself toward beings, Dasein has already disclosed something like being, and from out of this disclosive understanding, beings become manifest. Likewise, the projection of being is itself disclosed only insofar as Dasein has again already disclosed something like time, from out of which disclosure, being becomes manifest. In

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<sup>114</sup> This is Heidegger’s wording. He notes, ““Stratification” is admittedly a tricky image [*ein verfängliches Bild*].” (GA 24: 396/280)

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

each case, it is the “upon-which” of disclosive understanding that makes possible what is disclosed. The disclosure in which *there is* being makes possible Dasein’s comportment toward beings. Yet, *there is* and *can be* a disclosure of being only insofar as Dasein is disclosive as such, i.e., only insofar as Dasein is temporally open such that the ‘there’ of Dasein’s understanding can be given at all.

The movement of stratification is therefore one that proceeds by way of the “upon which” of the projections. Beings are understood insofar as they are projected upon being, and likewise, being is understood insofar as it is projected upon time. However, it is the move towards time that would seek to turn beyond being, to turn outside of the circuit of being and beings. Heidegger is explicit:

We confront the task not only of going forth and back from a being to its being but, if we are inquiring into the condition of possibility of the understanding of being as such, *of inquiring even beyond being as to that upon which being itself, as being, is projected.*<sup>116</sup>

The investigation into the explicit “upon which” of being is one that turns to the very possibility of the disclosure of being itself. This “curious enterprise”<sup>117</sup> that inquires even beyond being thus stages an inquiry into the very possibility of the ontological difference. It would seem then, that the movement towards time must necessarily interrupt the order of ground, for clearly the very gesture beyond being precludes the possibility of simply repeating the “forth and back” between beings and being. Moreover, the beyond of being, it must be said, is not being; as we have seen, temporality “is” not at all. Rather, a wholly different movement is underway in the turn towards time – one that would, in the turn beyond being, turn explicitly to that disclosure according to which being can be made manifest in its possibility. The turn to temporality would turn not to the disclosure

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<sup>116</sup> GA 24: 399/282

<sup>117</sup> Heidegger notes, “This seems to be a curious enterprise, to inquire beyond being.” (ibid.)

of being, but to disclosure simply as such – to that sense of disclosure according to which both being and beings can arise at all.

Yet it is precisely here that the image of stratification proves to be tricky. If the turn beyond being would not simply repeat the ontological difference, if it would not simply imitate the ground that being is, nevertheless, the image of stratification seems to suggest such an imitation. As a regression of projections, the stratification would tie time to being in just the same way that being is tied to beings, i.e. as the “upon which” of the projection. Both are linked at least provisionally insofar as being and time function as conditions of possibility for that which they disclose in the projection. This link is complicated further by the nature of the regression. If being is understood only insofar as it is itself projected upon something, it should be the case that temporality follows the same logic: it can be understood only if there is something further upon which temporality would be projected. There is at least nothing in principle that stops this regression from proceeding infinitely. The complication here, however, is not the simple appearance of a possible infinite regression. Rather, the complication lies in the similarity of ground implied by the regression. It is as if the ontological difference between beings and being, the difference that grounds beings precisely in being, would be repeated here indefinitely, mirrored in temporality and in temporality’s “upon which.” Such a repetition would of course undermine the claim that temporality is beyond being, and as such, beyond the circuit of this difference. More importantly, however, the repetition implied by stratification denies the peculiar status of temporality. As the beyond of being, temporality is not simply a further ground. Rather, it is that according

to which and in which there can be something like ground at all. It is, in its projection, the source (though not in the sense of ground) for the possibility of all projection.

The trickiness of stratification does not rest solely with its image, but instead reflects an ambiguity within temporality itself. On the one hand, temporality remains tied to the structure of projection, and thus tied to something like ground and condition of possibility. While it is not a ground in the usual sense, nevertheless, it is also not able to escape entirely the implication of grounding as it is established in the stratification of projections. Temporality remains itself a projection, even as it opens the possibility of the projection of being, and thus the possibility of the ontological difference as such. On the other hand, temporality is not simply one projection alongside others. Rather, it is on Heidegger's account, "original self-projection simply as such."<sup>118</sup> Temporality marks the end of the series of projections insofar as it is the condition of possibility for projection as such. Where there is a disclosure of being (and thus of beings), temporality stands as the possibility of that disclosure, or again, the understanding of being is possible only where Dasein is temporally open in the ecstatic happening of its 'there.' Heidegger notes,

“...wherever and whenever understanding exists – we are here disregarding the other moments of Dasein – this understanding is possible only in temporality's self-projection. Temporality exists – ist da – as unveiled, because it makes possible the “Da” and its unveiledness in general.”<sup>119</sup>

Temporality, then, is not simply a ground in the manner of being. Instead, it opens the very possibility of ground insofar as it clears a space in which both beings and being can come to ground. While it persists within the stratification of projections, and indeed, while it is itself a projection, temporality nevertheless moves beyond being to the extent

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<sup>118</sup> GA 24: 437/307

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

that it marks the condition of possibility for any and all projection, for the very happening of that disclosive understanding by which being and beings are understood.

The turn beyond being thus proves to be caught within this ambiguity. On the one hand, the turn moves outside the ontological difference: temporality functions as the condition of possibility for all projection, especially that projection of being that would open up the ontological difference. Yet, at the same time, the turn is caught by the very projection that it would exceed. In passing beyond the difference, temporality appears to mirror that difference insofar as temporality is itself a projection. The projection structure is repeated, imitated, even if more primordially at the level of time. This of course undercuts the turn beyond being for it states that there is nothing beyond projection, that in a sense, there is nothing beyond the opening of the ontological difference given with projection. Temporality, as itself a projection, would not be able to escape this constant turn back to projection, this constant turn back to the ontological difference.<sup>120</sup>

Much later, Heidegger will wonder whether the turn beyond being is ever fully possible when one begins with the ontological difference. In the presence of that

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<sup>120</sup> It is precisely this ambiguity in temporality that is most often overlooked in the attempts to read Heidegger's later work against the background of time. It is taken for granted that a certain connection remains between temporality and understanding (projection), and that this connection is not seriously jeopardized in the work after *Being and Time*. Karin de Boer's reading of Heidegger, for example, is characteristic of this position. Attempting to understand Heidegger's later work as a systematic development of temporality, she conceives of his later work as a deepening of the temporal structure *in terms of projection and horizon* – i.e. in terms of the very structures that Heidegger's later work (most notably *Contributions*) will cast into question. Citing *Contributions* in particular, de Boer articulates the issue of the later Heidegger as “the question as to how being gives itself its own temporal horizon and thus attempts to make itself understandable.” *Thinking in the Light of Time: Heidegger's Encounter with Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 140. While projection and understanding remain indispensable to Heidegger's work after *Being and Time*, it cannot be overlooked how extensively these concepts are interrogated, questioned, and in certain cases, simply abandoned. There is not a linear progression of thought, and the movement of thinking undercuts inceptually many of the very structures that determine this thinking, including temporality. Indeed, the increasing inadequacy of the projection structure is precisely that which in some way *frees* temporality for being, and yet such a thought is wholly unthinkable within the horizontal understanding of *Being and Time*.

difference, any turn beyond being can only appear as its “onefold,” as a certain unity of that which the distinction separates. Moreover, it is a onefold that, for Heidegger, “can never be anything but the mirroring of the distinction and can never lead to the origin, in view of which this distinction can no longer be seen as necessary.”<sup>121</sup> The concern, then, is that the turn beyond being, the turn beyond the ontological difference, never does more than return to that difference itself. Even if one grants the onefold of the distinction, it is a onefold that orients itself always with reference to that which it unifies, mirroring in the unity the very difference that it would ground. It is a concern for a genuine beginning, for that origin that would not be thought out simply according to the difference, but would instead leap over it.

Yet, curiously, such a leap becomes possible (or at least, is prepared) precisely through the repetition of projection at the level of time. It is almost as if the closeness of temporality to projection, the intimacy of the constant risk of simply mirroring the ontological difference, draws temporality precisely away from projection. Even as temporality is itself a projection, and indeed original self-projection, it also gestures beyond itself as projection. It is, to a certain extent, the very sense of temporality as projection that begins to move temporality to a beyond that would not find itself governed by either projection or the ontological difference. It cannot be denied that the closeness of temporality to projection and thus to the opening up of the ontological difference risks the reduction of time precisely to that difference. Yet, this closeness also suggests something else. It suggests that in the very happening of the difference something other than that difference comes into play. It suggests that insofar as temporality *is* the beyond of being, this beyond does not occur outside of or externally to

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<sup>121</sup> GA 65: 250/177

the happening of the ontological difference. Rather, the beyond of being would happen only in and with that difference itself. It is a matter, then, of leaping over the ontological difference, but not by simply leaving it behind. On the contrary, the leap beyond the difference is prepared within the very opening up of the difference itself, that is, within the very sense of temporality as itself a projection, and thus, as the happening of all projection. It is, then, only with the 'end' of temporality that something like a leap beyond the ontological difference is possible – an end according to which temporality is at once original self-projection and the condition of possibility for any such projecting at all. Strangely then, temporality holds the possibility of leaping beyond the difference precisely insofar as temporality *is* a projection, and indeed, is projection as such.

### **The Open Horizon of Temporality**

The structure of temporality as projection, and thus as end, is manifest for Heidegger in the claim that temporality is not only ecstatic but also *horizontal*. Ecstatic-horizontal temporality is temporality that understands itself projectively. Temporality *is* only within this understanding. This means, of course, that temporality is not anything like an original ground or essence that would somehow define the identity of time. Rather, temporality *happens*, and its happening is always and only ecstatic. To briefly recall the character of this ecstasy, Heidegger calls temporality the *ekstatikon par excellence*<sup>122</sup> (BT 302), that which is itself only in being outside itself. Temporality, says Heidegger,

...is this outside-itself itself. That is to say, it is not something that might first be extant as a thing and thereafter outside itself, so that it would be leaving itself

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<sup>122</sup> SZ: 329/302

behind itself. Instead, within its own self, intrinsically, it is nothing but the outside-itself pure and simple.<sup>123</sup>

Temporality temporalizes only in the movement by which it exceeds itself. Temporality “is” itself only in being beyond itself (and indeed, beyond the “itself” as such); it is, in a sense, nothing other than this beyond insofar as the character of temporality is always to remove itself toward a future, a past, and a present. As the beyond even of itself, temporality temporalizes within a unity of its ecstasies, a unity of its removals to a future, past, and present. This means that temporality is never simply ecstatic; it is never simply and only a beyond, but rather, if it can be said this way, temporality is the beyond of itself only within a specific unity of itself. The ecstasies of temporality, of course, are not separate from temporality, but rather, they compose the specific way that temporality temporalizes in each case. As Heidegger notes, “[temporality’s] essence is temporalizing in the unity of its ecstasies.”<sup>124</sup>

Yet, the ecstasies of temporality, Heidegger argues, “...are not simply removals to..., not removals, as it were, to the nothing.”<sup>125</sup> Ecstatic, temporality is not simply away from itself solely as such. As a unity of its ecstasies, temporality is always away towards a certain mode of its future, past, and present. Thus, temporality does not simply expend itself in a constant, exhaustive gesture of removal. On the contrary, temporality *can* expend itself, it *can* be away from itself only insofar as its movement beyond temporalizes a specific beyond within a specific unity of its ecstasies. In a curious way, temporality opens for itself the very beyond toward which it draws only by somehow delineating that beyond within the specific ecstasis of its removal. As Heidegger notes,

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<sup>123</sup> GA 24: 378/267

<sup>124</sup> SZ: 329/302

<sup>125</sup> GA 24: 428/302

“Each ecstasis, as removal to..., has at the same time within itself and belonging to it a predelineation of the formal structure of the *whereto of the removal*. We call this *whither of the ecstasis* the horizon or, more precisely, the *horizontal schema of the ecstasis*.”<sup>126</sup>

The structure and relation between the ecstasis and its horizontal schema becomes clearer if we recall the twofold structure of projection as both “of” and “upon.” According to this structure, a specific ecstasis of temporality is a projection “of” that ecstasis according to its specific character, whereas the horizon of the ecstasis constitutes that “upon which” the ecstasis itself is projected. Of course, it must be remembered that this dual structure of projection does not in the least imply two separate projections. Rather, temporality’s projection “of” its ecstasies “upon” its horizontal schemata happens only within a single projection.

Heidegger puts this dual structure of projection into play in his specific account of the ecstasis of the present and its projection upon the horizontal schema of *praesens*. It is an account that makes clear, in a concrete fashion, the way in which ecstatic-horizontal temporality happens projectively. Heidegger notes that the present, or “enpresenting,” [*Das Gegenwärtigen*] “projects that which it enpresents, that which can possibly confront us in and for a present, upon something like *praesens*.”<sup>127</sup> In the projection of the ecstasis of the present upon *praesens*, Heidegger is clear that the two are not simply different ways of saying the same thing: “The name “*praesens*” itself already indicates that we do not mean by it an *ecstatic phenomenon* as we do with present and future...”<sup>128</sup> Thus, the ecstasis of the present is not to be confused with its horizontal “upon which.” What is perhaps more striking, however, is the claim that *the horizon is not itself ecstatic*;

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<sup>126</sup> GA 24: 429/302

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 435/306

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

*praesens*, as opposed to the present, is not an ecstatic ‘beyond itself’ that is engaged in the removal to a specific ecstasy. The horizon, precisely as horizon, is therefore not a movement toward some beyond itself, some outside of itself, according to which it would be an ecstasis. Rather, *praesens* in its horizontal structure, is “[t]hat which lies beyond the ecstasis as such...that which determines the whither of the “beyond itself” as such in general...”<sup>129</sup> (BPP 306) It is astonishing, to say the least, that Heidegger makes such a claim about the horizontal schemata, for it says, in effect, that there is a beyond even to the beyond of temporality. Even if it will require a certain reservation concerning the character of this beyond, nevertheless, horizontality delineates a ‘whither’ of the beyond – a ‘whereto’ that would itself be beyond the fundamental “outside itself” of the ecstasies of temporality. Horizontality thus illustrates in the most striking manner the profound ambiguity of temporality as projection. On the one hand, the horizontal schemata function as the upon which of the projection of the ecstasies. On the other hand, however, horizontality moves even beyond these ecstasies in the delineation of a beyond that would stand, in a certain sense, even beyond temporality and thus, even beyond projection.

It is necessary, however, to be clear: the sense of the beyond at issue is not somehow different than time. It is not as if, beyond time, there is no time. Time is not simply exhausted or surpassed in this account. As we shall see, the proper claim of this beyond to the beyond of time is the claim of finitude – the claim of that end to time according to which time never simply stops or runs out. Equally, however, this means that a beyond that is even beyond time does not point to something eternal, or to some substance or essence that would ultimately ground time. It must be remembered that

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid. [italics mine]

temporality, as both ecstatic and horizontal, at once situates and exceeds the ontological difference, and thus, leaps over all such grounds.<sup>130</sup>

Yet, the end remains to be demonstrated and the first step in such a demonstration requires that we show that this beyond to time is found precisely, even if not only, within the opening of time and time's happening. Heidegger makes this clear with regards to the two moments of temporal projection: the horizon, in this case *praesens*, while not itself the ecstasy of the present, nevertheless "joins in constituting the complete time-structure of the present."<sup>131</sup> The horizontal schema completes the ecstasis, and thus, far from simply leaving the present behind, it is *praesens* that first makes possible something like the present. Yet, in a remarkable way, it is also the case that *the present itself makes possible something like praesens*. It is this reciprocal structure of possibility that then defines the "completion" of the time structure. Looking first to the projection of the ecstasis, Heidegger says, "The ecstasis of the present is as such the *condition of possibility* of a specific "beyond itself," of transcendence, the projection upon praesens."<sup>132</sup> It is the ecstasis that makes possible its own "upon which" insofar as it is the ecstasis that first points ecstatically to a beyond. To the extent that temporality is ecstatic it maintains the formal character of a beyond as such, and thus, outside of itself within a specific ecstasy, temporality opens the possibility of that beyond. Each ecstasis

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<sup>130</sup> David Farrell Krell emphatically echoes these points in his own analysis of this structure. Noting as well that *praesenz* "points beyond the ecstatic phenomenon as such," *Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth, and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1986), 34. Krell is quick to point out that this is not a further, and more abstract, removal from beings and from finitude. On the contrary, it is an implication that situates the project of fundamental ontology decisively within beings and within history. He writes, "Being must be projected on the horizon of its understandability, but precisely this "founding act" of ontology is precarious since it remains enmeshed in the ontic realm: this has been the case throughout the history of ontology, and Heidegger cannot rescue his temporal interpretation from the implications of that history." (ibid.) The difference at issue, the beyond that would no longer be the projected beyond of an ecstasis, is one that points back to the present, back to the open and finite happening of that present, i.e. to a history that is more than simply "now."

<sup>131</sup> GA 24: 435/306

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. [italics mine]

thus carries within itself, says Heidegger, “a schematic pre-designation of the where out there this “beyond itself” is.”<sup>133</sup> The present is the condition of possibility for praesens.

Yet the reverse is also true: there is and can be a present only insofar as that present is projected upon praesens. “As removal to...[*Entrückung*], the present is a being-open for *entities confronting us*, which are thus *understood antecedently upon praesens*.”<sup>134</sup> Praesens is thus in a certain sense anterior to the present. Of course, this is anticipated by the notion of horizon as the “upon which” of the ecstasis. The present is understood in such a way that it *can be* at all only insofar as it is made possible in the projection upon praesens. According to the structure of projection, the present is there, i.e. is understood, only insofar as it is projected upon something else, namely, praesens as horizon. Praesens is thus the condition of possibility for the present.

This dual structure of possibility characterizes temporality as projection. The present makes praesens possible only insofar as there is already something like praesens at work in the happening of the present. Within this now complete structure of projection, temporality happens in its most extreme openness. Indeed, this structure does nothing other than characterize that openness, albeit with a certain tension and ambiguity. As Heidegger notes, openness belongs to the ecstasies, and belongs to them insofar as each ecstasis is a remotion [*Entrückung*], that is, a movement towards its specific beyond. “Every such remotion,” says Heidegger, “is intrinsically open.”<sup>135</sup> Yet, the remotion of the ecstasies *can be* open only insofar as each ecstasis is projected upon its horizontal schema. It is the horizon that is “the *open expanse* toward which remotion as such is outside itself.” Mirroring, however, the dual structure of possibility, the horizon is itself

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 436/307

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 378/267

possible only with the ecstasis itself. It is the ecstasis as remotion that “opens up this horizon and keeps it open.”<sup>136</sup>

At this point, however, the ambiguity and tension of this structure becomes unavoidable. Temporality is essentially open. In its ecstatic remotion, its movement always beyond itself, temporality *is* only in the very openness that it gives with its happening. Temporality, it could be said, is nothing other than the very opening of the open itself. Yet, there is the sense that this is not entirely the case. Certainly, Heidegger is clear that it is only with the ecstasies of temporality that there is anything like an open at all. Yet, in opening up the open and in keeping it open, something like a horizon for openness is brought into play – a horizon that cannot but function as an antecedently given open expanse in which and according to which temporality is itself open. As we have said, it is as if there is a beyond even to temporality itself, a beyond of time’s own beyond, such that there is something like (I say this cautiously) an anterior openness – one that time itself gives, but in which, time also is given.

This anterior openness is not a “time before time.” It is not even, as it were, prior to time for such a notion of the prior could be given only with time itself and on this Heidegger is clear: there is nothing prior to time.<sup>137</sup> Yet it is an open that does not appear to be fully under the regulation of time. It is as if temporality opens up a sense of the open that it cannot fully contain, a sense that begins, with its opening, at once to exceed time. The projection structure, while it attempts a regulation of the open, nevertheless also provides the basis according to which such regulation fails. The dual structure of

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 463/325 “Because the original determinant of possibility, the origin of possibility itself, is time, time temporalizes itself as the absolutely earliest. *Time is earlier than any possible earlier* of whatever sort, because it is the basic condition for an earlier as such.”

projection at once opens the open, but equally, it binds the open to that which it opens up: the open is bound to temporality as nothing other than temporality itself. The “upon which” of time is simply time. It is precisely here however that this proves not to be the case. According to the structure of projection, that which is projected is possible only insofar as it is always already disclosed within its “upon-which.” Thus, temporality could be temporality only insofar as it is submitted to an open that is, in the strictest sense, not simply ‘of’ time, even if it is never merely “outside” of time or separate from it.

### **Time, Beginning, and Beyng**

The notion of an openness anterior to time, of a beyond even to the beyond of temporality, is a notion that concerns beginnings. The sense of anteriority then is a specifically inceptual sense, not a temporal category of priority. Certainly, there is something like a priority in the sense of openness as horizontal “upon which.” However, it is not the priority of that which is somehow ‘earlier’ than time. Rather, it is the priority of beginning, the priority of that which would be, somewhat paradoxically, the condition of possibility for anything like priority. The horizon of temporality, then, is at once the end of temporality and its beginning. It is end, at least initially, in the sense that it characterizes the end of the stratification of projections according to which one progresses (or regresses) from Dasein to time:

“The series, mentioned earlier, of projections as it were inserted one before the other – understanding of beings, projection upon being, understanding of being, projection upon time – has its end at the horizon of the ecstatic unity of temporality.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> GA 24: 437/308

Yet, the relevant sense of end here does not suggest that time somehow runs out or stops. The horizon of time is not an end in the sense of a mere cessation. Rather, it is an end that puts temporality into play precisely with its own end. The beyond of temporality, i.e. the beyond that temporality “is,” finds itself in play with a beyond that it cannot regulate. At the limit of the projection structure – at the horizon of time – time finds itself within the happening of an open that is not, strictly speaking, reducible to time and to time’s occurrence. Temporality opens up an open to which time itself is given over: the beyond of time has itself a beyond that is not under the regulation of its projective happening. At the ‘end’ of time, it is a matter of putting time into play with this end, that is, of playing temporality forth into an open that it at once opens and yet cannot contain.

However, the playing of time over into its end is nothing other than beginning and the happening of beginning. Heidegger: “At this horizon [of the ecstatic unity of temporality], each ecstasis of time, hence temporality itself, has its end. *But this end is nothing but the beginning* and starting point for the possibility of all projecting.”<sup>139</sup> At the horizon of temporality, then, *there is* beginning. However, it should be noted that the beginning is not a beginning because it is horizontal. Rather, the reverse is the case: there is and can be something like horizon insofar as time begins, i.e. insofar as temporality plays over into an open that it cannot regulate and that is not strictly horizontal. Beginning happens in the playing of time into its end. Beginning is not, then, simply the horizon or the “open expanse” of that horizon. Rather, beginning names the play of time in its horizontality according to which time both opens, and is opened by, a sense of the open that is the condition of possibility for any horizontality at all and thus, for any projection.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid. [italics mine]

Instead of a return to ground, then, beginning happens as a leap away from ground, a leap in which temporal self-projection is at once opened and exceeded. Heidegger alludes to this leaping when he points to temporality as the source [*Quelle*] from out of which ontology has its own genesis. He notes, “All leaping-forth [*Entspringen*] and all genesis in the field of the ontological is not growth and unfolding, but rather degeneration, insofar as all that leaps forth leaps *away* [*sofern alles Entspringende entspringt*], that is, in a certain sense runs away [*entläuft*], removing itself from the superior power of the source.”<sup>140</sup> Temporal projection thus carries within itself precisely such a leaping forth and leaping away. Moreover, this leaping both forth and away happens, and *happens inceptually*, within the very projection itself; it is, one might say, nothing other than that projection. As a leaping forth, temporality is the condition of possibility for its own temporalizing. Temporality projects itself upon the horizontal schemata in such a way that in this projection, temporality is opened as such within the remotion [*Entrückung*] of the ecstasies. There ‘is’ the open of the there insofar as temporality projects ‘itself’ open in the ‘there’ that temporality itself makes manifest. Yet as we have seen, this movement of projection is also a leaping away. Temporal projection opens a sense of the open that cannot be regulated by temporality itself. Thus, projection is exceeded at precisely that point in which projection is itself given; temporality cannot serve to regulate the open in which it abides, but instead is exceeded by that very open as by its own beyond.

Beginning, then, happens in the play of this leaping. It is the leap of projection both forth and away within an open whose eventuation happens as the play of time with its own end. Thus, at the end of the series of projections it is a matter, not just of the

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<sup>140</sup> GA 24: 438/308 [translation mine]

‘end’ that horizontality marks, but of time’s own end. It is a matter of that peculiar end which never simply ends, but is equally a beginning. The end of the series of projections – from beings to being and from being to time – opens onto the very end of temporality itself, and opens onto it precisely as beginning.

Yet the beginning that is at issue for temporality is ever and only being itself. The leap of temporality both forth and away is one that always already orients itself from within the happening of being. Insofar as temporality plays itself over into its inceptual end, temporality plays being forth. Earlier it was noted that temporality, at its most extreme limit, is both directive and echo for the happening of being. This claim now becomes fully visible at the limit of time’s own end and beginning, that is, at the limit of temporal self-projection.

As original self-projection, temporality is a directive for being insofar as it opens a sense of the open that temporality itself cannot regulate; temporality gives way to an open that is at once ‘of’ time and yet is not simply under its control. Within the inceptual happening of temporality, there is an orientation towards being insofar as temporality gives way to an opening whose event is not controlled or guided by the priority of projection and horizon. The series of grounds established by way of projection – beings to being and being to time – both ends and begins from out of this open. At the limit of time’s inceptual event, then, there is a directive for being insofar as temporality both points to this open and sets itself back into the open. Indeed, Heidegger will later say in *Contributions* that it belongs to the very essence of projection that it be “set back” into its open in just this way.<sup>141</sup> Projection, and most especially temporal

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<sup>141</sup> GA 65: 56/39 “It belongs to the essence of such a projection that, in enactment and unfolding, it must place itself back into what it opens up.” [translation modified]

projection, thus bears this directive towards beyng within its own essential structure, and indeed, it is precisely insofar as projection is “set back” into its open that projection can at all address itself to beyng.

Yet, even as temporal projection is set back into the open for beyng, and thus is directive for beyng, temporality is also the echo of the happening of beyng. We have seen that temporality gives rise to a sense of the open that temporality alone cannot accommodate. It is also the case, however, that to a certain extent, this open gives rise to temporality. Of course, the claim of this open that gives rise to temporality should not be understood to suggest a ‘prior’ origin or basis for time. As we have noted, Heidegger adamantly maintains that there is nothing prior to time. Rather, this claim means to suggest that time begins, and in its beginning, time *takes itself over* according to the leap into an open that exceeds projective regulation. In this sense, we are dealing with the limit of temporality as beginning and not simply end. Temporality is set back into that which first makes possible the open of temporality as such. As such, temporality resounds, echoes, from out of that open and thus echoes inceptually from out of the happening of beyng itself.<sup>142</sup>

As directive and echo, end and beginning, temporality already suggests the relation that Heidegger will make explicit in *Contributions*: insofar as temporality begins, that beginning is nothing other than beyng itself. And yet it is not possible to carry out

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<sup>142</sup> It is in this context that we might begin to understand Heidegger’s own comments regarding the “reversal” or “turn” in his thinking. In his response to Richardson, Heidegger notes that such a turn “is in play within the matter itself.” (Preface in *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), xx.) It is not a matter of abandoning time in favor of beyng, nor is it a matter of turning from time to beyng or even from beings (i.e. Dasein) to beyng itself. Rather, it is a matter of understanding how temporality itself is always already situated within the play of beyng, how within the matter of temporality itself there resides the move towards an opening for beyng that temporality (as projective horizon) cannot control. Heidegger points to this possibility insofar as he affirms that being can be determined by time only if time is understood not horizontally, but as “clearing for self-concealing,” i.e. as beyng itself.

this relation solely through temporality alone. As we have seen, temporality persists within an essential ambiguity. On the one hand, temporality opens the way to being and to the happening of being. Yet it is equally the case that temporality remains in some measure bound to the structure of projection, and thus bound to the ontological difference which that structure grounds and elaborates. Even as temporality prepares a sense of the open that exceeds the regulative control of the ontological difference, it remains doubtful whether temporality (no matter how radical) can fully escape appearing as simply the ground and 'oneness' of the difference.

The beginning, then, must be made, as Heidegger says, with the beginning itself. Thus, at the limit of temporality, i.e. at that limit where there is and can be beginning, it is no longer a question of the ontological difference. Rather, it is a matter of preparing a leap over the difference, and thus a leap beyond the ordered stratification of projections within which this difference is grounded. As a leap over the ontological difference, the beginning, as being itself, is not simply a "ground" for the difference as such, but is instead wholly other than that difference.

The preparation for the leap beyond the ontological difference, however, carries two rather striking consequences. First, in the turn to the open itself, solely from itself, there is a turning away from the Dasein analytic insofar as that analysis retains the trace of an ontological difference. As we have seen, the inceptual sense of openness that would be even beyond the beyond of time is one that occurs solely in leaping. There is no direct movement to this open from out of projection, or even for that matter, from out of original, temporal self-projection. Thus, the open happens only in the leap away from projection and from the stratification of projections. As such, there is no progression that

would lead to this open from any sense or occurrence of Dasein, at least insofar as Dasein occurs within the horizon of its temporal analysis. If we are to inquire into the open as such, i.e. into the open solely from out of itself, then this inquiry does not begin with Dasein as a being.

The second consequence follows from the first. Insofar as the inquiry does not begin with Dasein as a being, neither does it simply turn away from beings towards something like being, or even beyng. The leap beyond the ontological difference forces a reevaluation “from the ground up” of the very move that would circulate between beings and being. Thus, the leap into the open of projection, the open into which projection is itself “set back,” is a leap into grounding, and not simply ground. It opens the very space in which there can be grounding at all without itself becoming simply a ground. The open is thus ‘prior’ to ground even as it is given only with ground. In this sense, the second consequence of the leap does no more than restate the ambiguity and tension inherent within temporality itself. At its horizon, temporality gives over to a ‘prior’ open of itself that is nevertheless given only with temporality. Thus, even as temporality is caught within a certain movement toward ground, it also provides the directive to an overcoming of ground: it echoes, one might say, with the resonance of grounding in the midst of ground.

The leap beyond the ontological difference, the movement towards an overcoming of ground, requires therefore that we mark a distinction between ‘grounding’ and ‘ground.’ In a marginal note to his treatise “On the Essence of Ground,” Heidegger states the matter clearly. Distinguishing between the grounding of something [*Gründen*], e.g. beings within being, and the fathoming of ground [*Ergründen*], Heidegger notes

simply: “Fathoming of ground [is] prior to all grounding of something.”<sup>143</sup> In the present context, this distinction between *Gründen* and *Ergründen* means that the fathoming of ground is not the need to return to ground in a metaphysical sense. Rather, it points to the way in which the circuit between being and beings needs itself to be “en-grounded” in its ground. This does not mean that one simply substitutes being for being. Rather, it points to the fathoming of ground as that which is not a ground at all, but more like an abyss. It is an exceeding of ground in which there is a withdrawal in the midst of ground. The leap into the open of being at once leaps away from the movement of projection, and thus, leaps away from a certain ordering of ground: the open is at once a withdrawal from the very sense of ground that it gives. However, this withdrawal also occurs only in the midst of that ground. The series of projections by which beings are grounded in being terminates in an open that the series itself cannot regulate. Yet, this open is at once made possible only with the series itself. Even as the ordering of ground gives way to an abyss of ground, to an open that exceeds ground, this open is itself only possible with and through that ordering. The abyss of ground, the fathoming of ground, opens up within the very happening of ground.

The beginning is a fathoming of ground, then, and not simply a return to ground. To this extent, the beginning reveals its revolutionary character. As the fathoming of ground, it marks the possibility of a leap into being that overturns the customary order of ground. It submits the ontological difference to an upheaval, an overcoming according to which being happens as the abysmal grounding for the difference between beings and being.

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<sup>143</sup> Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Ground,” in *Pathmarks* ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 125.

Temporality, at its inceptual limit, opens and prepares this beginning. Indeed, it *is* this beginning as directive and echo for beyng. Yet, temporality is not itself sufficient for the leap into beyng, i.e. for the fathoming of ground. It remains, as we have pointed out, too closely tied to the very difference between beings and being that it seeks to overcome. What remains is to think the crossing and leap into beyng fully from out of beyng itself. Stated differently, what is required is that we begin, in a genuine and revolutionary way, with the beginning itself, and this means with the very happening of ground. It is a question, then, not simply of the time “of” beyng, but of the history of beyng, its happening and eventuation within the overturning of the ontological difference. It is a question of that history which would not simply return to what was begun, but would instead turn, as if for the first time, to that which happens in the beginning – a history that would clear the fathoming of beyng that conceals itself abysally in the happening of being. At the limit of temporality, it is an issue of history, and of that history which would begin with beyng itself.

### III. BEGINNING(S) OF BEYNG: THE PLAYING-FORTH OF BEGINNING

#### Introduction

Heidegger's attention to beginning is an attention to that which does not happen [*das Nichtgeschehene*] at the origin and ground of Western metaphysics, a not-happening in view of which the entire tradition of metaphysics unfolds.<sup>144</sup> In the simplest sense, we can express this not-happening by way of the ambiguity surrounding the basic question of metaphysics, i.e. the question of being. Metaphysically understood, the question of being is simply the question about beings. One investigates beings in order to secure beings in their ground. Yet, the ground for beings remains within the purview of beings; it remains itself essentially a being. Even if being is not simply one being beside others, even if it resists comparison to this or that being, nevertheless it remains thought out from beings and returns to beings. Hence, the basic metaphysical question of being is "just another transcendental question, albeit one of a higher order."<sup>145</sup>

Metaphysics thus asks always about beings and never about being *as such*. The ambiguity of the question then rests in an ambiguity concerning being itself. By way of metaphysics, being involves a return to beings; it is addressed always in terms of beings. And yet, the reference to beings precisely obscures and covers over the question of being

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<sup>144</sup> In regards to this sense of beginning, Heidegger notes, "In the realm of what is essential, what does not occur [*das Nichtgeschehene*] is even more essential than what does occur [*das Geschehene*]..." (GA 45: 123/107) Throughout, I prefer the literal, but cumbersome, "not-happening" in order to emphasize the decisive force of the "not."

<sup>145</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Yale: Yale University Press, 2000.), 19. The ambiguity of the question of being, and the distinction between the metaphysical question about beings and the non-metaphysical question concerning being as such is also found in this text. For a fuller discussion, see 19-23.

as such; it conceals, in the guise of an answer, the genuine question concerning being, i.e. that question which would inquire into being, not by way of beings but according to being itself.

The “not-happening” at the very heart of the metaphysical tradition, then, is the question concerning being as such, what Heidegger calls simply *beyng*, as distinct from the metaphysical concept of being. Heidegger’s concern for beginning, then, is a concern for the question of *beyng* and the way in which this question does not sound forth in the inception and unfolding of our Western metaphysical tradition.

It is not, however, a matter of substituting one manner of approach for another of a different kind. The question of *beyng* is not simply one further and additional step on the pathway of metaphysics. On the contrary, it is a question of a wholly other order. We see this in the character of that “not-happening” which *beyng* is, for on the one hand, this cannot suggest a mere absence. The dominance of metaphysics remains intact if its inceptual not-happening is understood according to the thoroughly metaphysical distinction between presence and absence. On the other hand, the “not-happening” is not simply the counter concept to metaphysics; it is not oppositional. This is especially the case in view of the fact that Heidegger does not have in mind a resolution or synthesis of metaphysics with its not-happening. On the contrary, it is a matter of finding, *in* metaphysics, that which is not simply under the order and regulation of metaphysics. The “not” of the happening of metaphysics, or better, the “not” of metaphysics in its happening, comes into play precisely with and through the unfolding of metaphysics, yet in such a way that this negation is neither oppositional nor synthetic. It is a negation that metaphysics *is* in its event and unfolding.

Beginning is thus the name for that unfolding of metaphysics by which, *in* its unfolding, metaphysics is brought into play with that which is not under its regulation. I thus show in *Being and Time* that this play of beginning is at least already underway in the analytic of Dasein. Temporality, which never “is,” plays out precisely in Dasein’s concrete possibilities of being. In the repetition of the wholeness of Dasein in its factual possibilities, Dasein *is* its temporal happening and limit. Thus, Dasein begins insofar as Dasein takes over its temporal limit precisely in taking over its own, thrown possibilities for being.

Yet, if beginning is for Dasein the limit of temporality, it is equally the case that temporality must undergo its own limit. Temporality must itself begin. It was necessary, then, to show that temporality names the first, albeit ambiguous, site for an inceptual repetition of metaphysics. On the one hand, temporality remains tied to the metaphysical question about beings. On the other hand, temporality opens an initial pathway into being, i.e. into the question of being as such that metaphysics leaves unasked. There is thus a beginning for temporality insofar as it shifts toward the open for being – a shift that temporality is not able to unfold through itself alone.

In the present chapter, then, I give an account of the inceptual open for being, but one that elaborates being from out of being itself and not by way of temporality. I thus show that the problem of beginning is the problem of the question concerning being – a question that opens up the “not-happening” that occurs at the origin of Western metaphysics. Insofar as it is beginning that is at issue, it is not a matter of a simple turn to being. Rather, it is a matter of a certain repetition of being by which metaphysics is brought to its limit, i.e. brought into play with being, and indeed in such a way that

beyng happens precisely in and through this inceptual unfolding of metaphysics. I show therefore that the beginning is ever and only beyng itself.<sup>146</sup>

The task is quite simply to begin with the beginning and this means, at least initially, a return to the beginning of metaphysics. Of course, the beginning in this context is not some vague and opaque starting point for the historical movement that we now call ‘metaphysics.’ The beginning is not an origin, and it does not occur at some particular time or place in history. It rests with neither Plato nor Aristotle, nor indeed with the Greeks at all. Rather, the beginning is that which must still come to pass for metaphysics. It is that not-happening which lies at the heart of metaphysics – the withdrawal of beyng in the midst of beings. As Heidegger says in regards to this not-happening, “[it] is something necessarily held back and detained in the beginning and through the beginning, whereby the beginning remains the unfathomable, which ever anew instigates reflection on itself...”<sup>147</sup> The return to the beginning of metaphysics is thus a return to what remains concealed, a reflection that draws toward this concealment and engages it. It is not a simple investigation into the past. “The past,” says Heidegger, “counts for nothing, the beginning for everything.”<sup>148</sup>

Yet, if the return to beginning is never a matter of the past, nevertheless it is still essentially historical. To this extent, Heidegger preserves the distinction made in *Being and Time* between history [*Geschichte*] and the historiographical [*Historie*], noting that “[h]istoriographical considerations attain only the past and never reach the historical.”<sup>149</sup> However, the sense of history marked out by this distinction is radically different from

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<sup>146</sup> “Grasped inceptually, the beginning is beyng itself.” (GA 65: 58/41)

<sup>147</sup> GA 45: 123/108

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 123/107

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 42/39

that found in *Being and Time*. History is no longer simply a matter of temporality. Rather, temporal history gives way to inceptual history, to a history that is at once of beginning and through beginning. This is at least implied in our earlier analysis of temporality. If temporality must undergo the limit of its beginning, if it opens up and gives way to the inceptual openness for beyng, then it is quite clear that history too must suffer this shift, and thus cannot escape the draw towards both beyng and beginning.

What I am calling inceptual history is not altogether distinct from temporal history. While history undergoes, with temporality, the shift towards beyng, it does not in this process somehow abandon or discard its temporal origin. On the contrary, the inceptual deployment of history returns in a more originary way to that question for which temporality was, at least initially, the sole and single answer: history returns to the question of the *meaning* of being. The shift that occurs for history is not a dismissal of temporality but a passage through it. Inceptual history reveals temporality for what it is: the “directive and echo” for beyng. History thus carries out the play of temporality into beyng, not through an overturning of temporality, but rather through a return to the grounding question of meaning, the question that is and remains for Heidegger his “one and only question.”<sup>150</sup>

As a return to beginning, history is a return to the question of meaning, and by way of this return, an initial opening for beyng itself. Heidegger makes this clear in a lecture course given contemporaneously with the writing of *Contributions*. While retaining the connection between history and ‘happening,’ Heidegger nevertheless asserts that history is to be understood now as historical *reflection* [*geschichtliche Besinnung*]. Playing on its etymological relation to meaning [*Sinn*], “reflection [*Besinnung*] is looking

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<sup>150</sup> GA 65: 10/8

for the meaning of a happening, the meaning of history. “Meaning” refers here to the open region of goals, standards, impulses, decisive possibilities, and powers – all these belong essentially to happening.”<sup>151</sup> As a return to beginning, then, reflection is never simply a matter of looking back upon some historical occurrence. Rather, reflection seeks the open for that occurrence, the open of historical happening. In all of the ways that we have outlined, the historical return to the beginning of metaphysics has nothing at all to do with a past that was begun at some previous time and now continues even today. It has to do instead with a certain open for metaphysics, an open that we have suggested is not simply under the regulation of the metaphysical tradition. Reflection upon the beginning of metaphysics is thus the play of metaphysics into its open, the draw towards that open in and through which metaphysics is unfolded in its possibilities, powers, and decisions.

Yet, in what sense do we speak of an open for metaphysics, and indeed, of an open that would be the very meaning of metaphysics? Clearly, Heidegger does not have in mind a *temporal* open, i.e. the ecstatic openness of horizontal temporality. While to some extent meaning is temporality, meaning has never been reducible to temporality as such, and this is true for Heidegger even in *Being and Time*. Meaning does not exhaust itself in temporality.<sup>152</sup> On the contrary, the question of meaning is always already a preparation for the question of being. It already moves beyond temporality. Looking back to *Being and Time* from his later work in *Contributions*, Heidegger thus says of the

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<sup>151</sup> GA 45: 40/34

<sup>152</sup> Noting that being cannot be grounded through time alone, Heidegger argues that “one must first generally attempt to think what is ownmost to time so originally (in time’s “ecstasis”) that time becomes graspable as the possible truth for being as such.” (GA 65: 132/189) I take this to suggest that the task of meaning, i.e. the question concerning being as such (being), is not exhausted through the identification of temporality as the meaning of the being of Dasein. Rather, what is needed is the redeployment of the question of meaning in light of that which time opens up, namely being.

text that, insofar as it articulates the question of meaning, it is “the self-preparing beginning of the essence of being itself.”<sup>153</sup>

The open of meaning, then, is an open for being itself. Indeed, Heidegger states this explicitly in his addendum to the lecture course mentioned earlier. In a parenthetical note appended to the difference between the question of beings and the question of being as such, Heidegger states simply, “Meaning = region of projection, the open ground of being itself and of its essence.”<sup>154</sup> Reflection upon metaphysics is thus a reflection upon the open for metaphysics, the open of being itself. History, in broaching this open for metaphysics, puts metaphysics into play with being, drawing it towards a meaning that is essential to the tradition of metaphysics and yet unaddressable within it.

The return to beginning is thus a return to being itself. In this sense, we now understand more fully what it means to think through Heidegger’s claim that being is beginning. It means that we must carry out the beginning in its *historical* happening. We must attend to that reflection by which metaphysics is played over into being and being is played forth from out of metaphysics. In short, we must learn to begin with the beginning.

Beginning with the beginning thus points to the necessity of showing the historicity of beginning. It requires that we follow the reflection upon being that happens in the return to the beginning of our Western metaphysical tradition. It requires therefore that we attempt a first leap into being itself, one that lets being first come forth in the inceptual playing out of metaphysics.

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<sup>153</sup> GA 65: 243/171

<sup>154</sup> GA 45: 200/172

## The End of Metaphysics

“We must reflect on the first beginning of Western thought,” says Heidegger, “because we stand at its end.”<sup>155</sup> We stand, that is, in the midst of a growing sense that metaphysics can no longer creatively engage our being and the sense of our being. The end is not a stopping point; it does not mark a particular time or place after which metaphysics is no longer. Rather, at the end we are situated in no time and no place: no time insofar as the genuine relation to time has been lost, no place insofar as the end removes every place and covers over every ‘there.’ At once everywhere and nowhere, the end of metaphysics, says Heidegger, “has its own duration, presumably one which is still to last a long time.”<sup>156</sup>

The end thus refers to an exhaustion of metaphysics, the slow, smoldering expiration of possibilities long since worn out. It is not a matter of finishing metaphysics and leaving it behind. As Heidegger is all too quick to remind us, one is never simply done with metaphysics (or better, metaphysics is never really done with us). It is never simply at an end. Rather, the “end” refers to the running out and the dissipation of all the effects of the previous history of Western thinking.”<sup>157</sup> Metaphysics has come into its end insofar as it can no longer deal with its own matter [*Sache*]. It can no longer address itself to beings and to the being of those beings (to say nothing of being). Uprooted from the necessity and situation of its initial unfolding, metaphysics cycles endlessly among the same frozen concepts and ideas, producing in its movement “a confusion of the

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 125/109

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 133/116

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 125/109

traditional basic positions, value concepts, and propositions in the usual interpretation of beings...”<sup>158</sup>

The end of metaphysics is not, therefore, merely an academic gesture. It is not a pronouncement about or upon the history of the West. It is instead a claim that arises from and within our comportment to beings. To stand at the end means that we stand in a certain relation to beings and to being. In the midst of beings, addressing them on the whole and as such, we *are* the end. It is not a matter of seeing the end from the outside, but of attending to it in the stance that we take before and among beings. It is a matter, at the end, of interrogating both *where* and *how* we are as beings in the midst of beings.

In terms of our comportment to beings, then, the end of metaphysics is defined, not by the presence, but by the absence of being. This is clearest in the situation of our most basic disposition towards beings. As Heidegger notes, this disposition “can no longer be the one of wonder, in which beings as such with regard to their Being once emerged as the most unusual.”<sup>159</sup> We are no longer captured, as the Greeks were, by the sheer presence of beings, by the overwhelming forcefulness that beings *are*. To this extent, we are removed from the “all-decisive beginning” that marks the Greek inception of the Western tradition. It is no longer a matter for us of the uncanniness and unconcealment of beings – both that they are and what they are. We do not, as Heidegger puts it, “hold fast to beings as beings in pure acknowledgment.”<sup>160</sup> On the contrary, we are caught in the familiarity and ordinariness of beings and of being. We are underwhelmed, not overwhelmed, by the appearance of beings and we see in them only the most usual of usual things. Indeed, for Heidegger, the measure of our distance from

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 184/159

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 174/150

the first beginning of the Greeks is found in the extent to which we find being and beings both familiar and boringly obvious:

“How far we are removed from the possibility of being again displaced toward beings by [the] basic disposition of the beginning can easily be measured by the fact that for centuries the Being of beings, which was for the Greeks the most wondrous, has passed as the most obvious of everything obvious and is for us the most common: what everybody already knows.”<sup>161</sup>

The problem is not simply that beings are now familiar and being is obvious. Rather, the problem lies with what this says about our relation to beings. In contrast to the Greek sense of the presence of beings in their being, we are faced with the obviousness of beings that are *only* beings – beings marked by an absence of being. The problem with our relation to beings lies in the fact that behind beings, there is nothing.

The obviousness of being refers for Heidegger to the loss and withdrawal of being as such. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger makes this clear in his discussion of being as at once the most obvious and the most undiscoverable. Being is obvious insofar as beings are everywhere. Surrounded by beings we say, and know what we mean by saying, this building *is*, or this pair of peasant shoes *is*. Yet none of our knowledge of beings, or of the being of those beings insofar as they *are*, leads us closer to being. Being remains undiscoverable in the midst of our concern for beings. It is as if, says Heidegger, “we were reaching into a void.”<sup>162</sup> Being cannot be stated directly or indirectly; we cannot say what it is or even where it is. Recalling Nietzsche’s formulation of being as a vapor and an error, Heidegger thus concludes, “The word “being” is then finally just an empty word. It means nothing actual, tangible, real.”<sup>163</sup> Being withdraws in the midst of the obviousness of being that persists everywhere. It’s

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 184/159

<sup>162</sup> Heidegger, *Introduction*, 38.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

very commonness and universality assures this withdrawal, and we know nothing of being even as we predicate it of everything that is.

In the situation of the end of metaphysics, this insight gains a renewed intensity and focus. It is not simply the case that being is lost to beings and withdraws from them. In addition, this withdrawal points more decisively to an *abandonment* of being. Being takes its leave of beings; the ground for beings drops away. The question of being, and indeed, the question of the meaning of being, is no longer asked or askable. The empty vapor of being as such becomes the utter and complete withdrawal both of being and of its question. “Beings,” says Heidegger, “are abandoned by being, which belongs to them and them alone. In this way beings are manifest then as object and as extant [*Vorhandenes*], as if being did not hold sway.”<sup>164</sup> The abandonment of being is decisive. It returns beings only to themselves. It lets them be as if they were only beings and no more, as if being did not resound among them, as if being were only a not and a nothing.

The abandonment of being does not, therefore, result in an awareness of the abandonment as such. On the contrary, it results only in a greater obtrusiveness and indifference with respect to beings.<sup>165</sup> The abandonment of being *conceals itself* as abandonment. It is overtaken by beings and being is forgotten in the “growing validity” of what Heidegger calls “*calculation, acceleration, and the claim of massiveness.*”<sup>166</sup> In this concealment, there is a withdrawal even of the withdrawal of being. It is as if being is consumed by its withdrawal, and the evident obviousness of beings conceals the

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<sup>164</sup> GA 65: 115/80-81

<sup>165</sup> In the abandonment of being, says Heidegger, “beings are what is indifferent and obtrusive at the same time, in the same undecidedness and randomness.” (ibid.)

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 120/84 [Emphasis in text]

abandonment of being, not as something held in reserve, but rather as something that never was.

There are, for Heidegger, three modes of beings that carry out this concealment: calculation, acceleration, and massiveness. The first, calculation, becomes now at the end of metaphysics, “the basic law of comportment.”<sup>167</sup> According to its manner of concealment, beings are no longer investigated in their being, they are managed. The uncertainty and risk of the being of beings is supplanted by the certainty of measurement and the guarantee of rules and planning. Nothing, not even the nothing itself, escapes calculation, for even the incalculable “is here only what has not yet been mastered by calculation.”<sup>168</sup> Acceleration, the second mode of concealment, conceals by way of the “mania for what is surprising, for what immediately sweeps us away and impresses us, again and again in different ways.”<sup>169</sup> Beings draw us always to other beings. Our mania is not simply for what is new, but more precisely, for what *passes us along*. There is no tarrying with being or the question of being, there is only forgetting and the desire to lose oneself among beings.<sup>170</sup> Under the mania of progression, under the guise of being ‘on the way,’ we hide our essential uprootedness from being. We conceal from ourselves the essential insight that, in our fleeting passage to beings, we are in fact going nowhere at all.

The third mode of concealment, massiveness, follows from the others. It points to the dissemination everywhere of what is common; it points to the essential priority of the “many” and the “all.” Massiveness does not therefore mean enormity. It means the

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> “It is necessary to forget rapidly and to lose oneself in what comes next.” (Ibid.)

substitution of the highest – the rarity and uniqueness of beyng – with the commonness of the everyday. We are ruled, not by the destiny of beyng, but by what everyone already knows. The obviousness of beings thus becomes the measure for everything that is.

In all of these modes of concealment, however, there is still a fourth mode that comes into play with the other three. It is not simply one mode beside others, but instead accompanies all of them, and “takes over in an emphatic way the dissembling and disguising of the inner disintegration.”<sup>171</sup> Heidegger calls it the “divesting, publicizing, and vulgarizing of all attunement.”<sup>172</sup> If we recall for a moment the role of attunement in *Being and Time*, the decisiveness of this fourth mode becomes immediately clear. Attunement reveals to Dasein “that it is and has to be.”<sup>173</sup> It is that which places Dasein before itself and gives Dasein over to its there. In attunement Dasein is revealed, and thus attunement prepares for Dasein the possibility of reflecting upon itself and taking itself over in its primordial temporality and spatiality.

The divestiture of attunement, then, is at the very least, the loss of both the space and time of Dasein. In the most basic sense of the question of the meaning of being, it is the loss of Dasein *as that question*, the loss that abandons the question as such and leaves Dasein simply to be one being forlorn in the midst of beings. Yet at the end of metaphysics, it is not simply the loss of the question that is at issue, but the loss of the *possibility* of the question. It is a matter of a withdrawal of reflection, a concealment not simply of beyng but of the possibility of reflecting upon beyng. The divestiture of

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<sup>171</sup> GA 65: 123/86

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. [emphasis removed]

<sup>173</sup> SZ: 135/127

attunement thus points to the fact that “all gathering of a possible reflection is removed and reflection itself is scorned as something strange and weak.”<sup>174</sup>

With the divestiture of attunement, the end of metaphysics becomes “the epoch of [a] total lack of questioning anything.”<sup>175</sup> There is no space and no time for questioning. Not only is the question of *beyng* lost, but equally, there is the loss of any sense that there remains something worthy of question. There is, as Heidegger calls it, an “oblivion of being.”<sup>176</sup> This oblivion is not simply a reference for the fact that *beyng*, i.e. the question of being *as such*, is forgotten. Rather, it seeks to highlight the way in which the forgetting is itself forgotten. The oblivion of being is one “that itself falls into oblivion.”<sup>177</sup> The possibility of reflecting upon *beyng*, of opening up a possible inquiry into *beyng*, becomes impossible.

The loss of reflection thus points to an end for metaphysics that cannot know itself as such. In the abandonment and oblivion of *beyng*, in the concealments of calculation, acceleration, and massiveness, what is decisive is that the end *does not reveal itself*. There is no awareness of the exhaustion of metaphysics and its possibilities, no awareness of the timeless nowhere that stands unquestioningly amidst a parade of beings. Finally, there is no awareness of reflection, of the destabilizing power that accompanies every inquiry into the ‘meaning’ of being. The end of metaphysics cannot reflect upon its own end. The end *persists*, but only insofar as it is never made visible as such. The loss of reflection is thus not a consequence of the end, but is rather a condition of it. The end of metaphysics is truly at an end only insofar as it is never thematized as such. The loss

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<sup>174</sup> GA 65: 123/86

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Heidegger, *Introduction*, 20.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

of reflection is the loss of any sense of the end. With this loss, the end goes on, but only to the extent that the end conceals itself in its passage.

### **End and Beginning(s)**

The end is still our time. Even unnoticed, it determines our relation to beings and our relation to our own being. The abandonment and concealment of being is carried out among beings. The nothing behind beings, the utter lack of questioning, and the impossibility of reflection – all of this finds expression solely within our comportment before beings. It is there in our boredom and our indifference. It is there in the obviousness and familiarity of beings. The loss and removal of being is everywhere among beings.

There remains, then, not simply a persistence of the end, but a persistence of being insofar as it withdraws and abandons beings. In our time, we undergo this abandonment, both in and as the end. Paradoxically, it ‘is’ there even in the timeless nowhere of its concealment. This is the double-edged play of the abandonment of being. At its most concealed, and in the utter forlornness of its oblivion, being echoes among beings. The very obtrusiveness and obviousness of beings points to this echo. The more beings lead only to themselves, the more adamantly and insistently resounds the call of being from out of its withdrawal. As Heidegger notes, the “[a]bandonment of being is strongest at that place where it is most decidedly hidden.”<sup>178</sup>

The abandonment of being thus points to being, not as something that is simply withdrawn, but rather as that which *is* essentially its withdrawal. “When being abandons beings,” says Heidegger, “being *conceals itself* in the manifestness of beings and is itself

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<sup>178</sup> GA 65: 110/77

essentially determined as this self-withdrawing concealing.”<sup>179</sup> At the end, beings make manifest what is peculiar to our time. In their plain indifference, they reveal the concealment, not the presence, of being. Thus, we stand at the end and not the beginning. We stand removed and in removal from the prevailing unconcealment and forceful presence of being that marked the Greek task and destiny. At the end of metaphysics, being conceals itself, and this concealment plays out within the heavy but fleeting manifestness of beings that are only beings.<sup>180</sup>

The end thus admits of a dual sense. On the one hand, the end is that which silently runs out over centuries. It is the end that marks the exhaustion of every question, the destitution of every reflection, and the steady concealment of the abandonment of being. On the other hand, there is the sense of the end that holds the possibility of becoming aware of itself as such. For this end, the abandonment of being is an intimation and not a conclusion. It is a sense of the end that is not a cessation or stopping-point, but is instead a transition – a movement towards an other beginning.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 111/78 [Translation modified]

<sup>180</sup> The concealment of being, however, is not the loss of being, but the peculiar mode of access to being. In noting that the concealment of being finds its place in abandonment, Heidegger locates a certain inseparability between beings and our access to being. In the playing out of the end among beings abandoned by being, the leap into being is prepared, and this as one and the same movement. Frank Schalow points to this movement quite clearly: “The spontaneity of a “leap” occurs as the only recourse we have as finite beings when we come to experience our thrownness with such complete finality.” (“The Question of Identity and Its Recollection in Being’s Historical Unfolding,” *Heidegger Studies*, 11 (2001): 36.) The end of metaphysics reveals our thorough embeddedness within our own thrownness, even as this insight prepares a leap into being that becomes in some sense unavoidable.

<sup>181</sup> The dual sense of end that I am elaborating corresponds closely to that which Daniela Vallega-Neu determines as “de-cision” in *Contributions*. Noting the “cut,” the “-cision” of every decision, Vallega-Neu writes, “This cut articulates both a passing away and an arrival, a closure and an opening, in their unbridgeable difference. To be in decision means to be in this unbridgeable difference, exposed to it, and called to take a stance in it.” (“Thinking in Decision,” *Research in Phenomenology*, 23 (2003): 248.) To stand at the end is thus to stand in the midst of decision, not as “a” decision – not as a choice between already given possibilities – but rather to stand in such a way that one undergoes the decision, suffers it “as an event of coming to be and passing away.” (249)

There are not two ends. On the contrary, the dual sense of the end highlights the curious interplay of the one and only end of metaphysics. Even as metaphysics runs out and is exhausted, even as reflection becomes increasingly impossible in the concealment of being, nevertheless being and its question become all the more pressing and compelling.<sup>182</sup> It is as if being first opens up only in face of its utter removal and withdrawal. It is as if reflection becomes increasingly necessary in proportion to the threat of its impossibility. In either case, the end of metaphysics prepares at its end the possibility of inquiring into that which metaphysics refuses. The end holds the possibility of an inquiry into being as such.

Thus, when Heidegger says, as we mentioned earlier, that we must reflect on the beginning of Western thought insofar as we stand at its end, this means initially that we must come to an awareness of the end as such; we must appropriate the end in such a way that it prepares the possibility of a beginning, and indeed, an other beginning. The end stands as that which must be *accomplished*. This does not mean that metaphysics is somehow left behind. As Heidegger notes, “[t]he talk of the end of metaphysics should not mislead us into believing that philosophy is finished with ‘metaphysics.’”<sup>183</sup> Even at the end, metaphysics and its history go on. Opposed to any claim concerning the cessation of metaphysics, the accomplishment of the end occurs “by grasping this end now for the first time in what is ownmost to it and by letting this be transformed and played into the truth of being.”<sup>184</sup> The appropriation of the end calls us to attend to

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<sup>182</sup><sup>182</sup> Heidegger calls this peculiar situation “the distress of no distress at all” [*die Not der Notlosigkeit*]. Playing on the German ‘*Not*’ [need or distress] as the basis of ‘*Notwendigkeit*,’ Heidegger wants to call attention to the way in which we are compelled into being, i.e. into the necessity of the question of being, precisely insofar as being is not, and has never been, a question for us.

<sup>183</sup> GA 65: 173/122

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* The phrase “what is ownmost” translates the German *Wesen*. It is for Maly and Emad the most common rendering of this most difficult of words, and they rarely use the simple (and most times

beyng. It calls us towards the withdrawal and concealment of beyng that is manifest everywhere among beings. What is ownmost to the end of metaphysics is not its exhaustion and confusion; it is not the manic obviousness of beings. On the contrary, what is ownmost to the end is beyng and its hiddenness – the resounding echo of that which recedes in face of beings and their indifferent presence.

Reflection upon the end is therefore a reflection upon beyng, not beings. The accomplishment of the end does not remain with beings, nor even with the being of those beings. Rather, it presses into beyng and draws beyng forth, as concealed, into the open space of the end. Reflection accomplishes the end insofar as it lets beyng be in the midst of the manifestness of beings. Such a reflection is of course not at all metaphysical, but instead begins already to move beyond metaphysics. It inquires into that which metaphysics cannot address. To this extent, the accomplishment of the end is a crossing out of metaphysics. Beyng, as we have already seen, is not beingness, and it does not simply perpetuate the metaphysical order of grounding that proceeds out from, and back into, beings. It leaps beyond being, and thus it leaps beyond any determination within the order of beings. As a crossing, the reflection upon beyng “swings out,” says Heidegger, “to a shore that must first be decided.”<sup>185</sup>

Reflection upon the end is therefore equally a reflection upon beginning. In crossing out of metaphysics, reflection carries out an other beginning. We no longer stand within the Greek beginning. We are not awed by the presence of beings, but instead stand in terror [*Erschrecken*] before the nothingness they make manifest – a terror

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inappropriate) ‘essence.’ While I tend to adhere to this usage in the main, there are nevertheless times where it is necessary to translate *Wesen* with the straightforward ‘essence.’ Where this occurs, I note the divergence with Maly and Emad.

<sup>185</sup> GA 65: 169/119

that nevertheless holds the possibility of a “new wonder.”<sup>186</sup> In face of the withdrawal and concealment of being, attuned by our terror, we begin again. We pass from the exhaustion of metaphysics into the beginning of metaphysics, into the compelling echo of being that metaphysics has long since covered over.

This other beginning is possible, however, only insofar as we return to precisely that first beginning which would now be surpassed and overcome. Reflection, like beginning, is never linear. As Heidegger notes, “[I]eaping into the other beginning is returning into the first beginning and vice versa.”<sup>187</sup> The crossing into being is at once a crossing back into metaphysics and its beginning. This does not mean, however, that metaphysics simply returns again. The crossing back to the first beginning is not the simple imitation of metaphysics, nor is it the desire to somehow make metaphysics ‘actual’ and effective once again.<sup>188</sup> On the contrary, says Heidegger, “[r]eturning into the first beginning is rather and precisely distancing from it, is taking up that distant-positioning which is necessary in order to experience what began in and as that beginning.”<sup>189</sup> The reflection upon the first beginning of metaphysics lets it come forth *as* beginning, in all of its possibilities and powers. Far from a simple imitation, reflection allows metaphysics to become visible as if for the first time. It opens the possibility of experiencing what began with that beginning, and also, what did *not* begin – what had to remain in withdrawal and concealment in the following out of the first beginning. In the distance of the other beginning, reflection opens up, within metaphysics, that which

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<sup>186</sup> GA 45: 197/169

<sup>187</sup> GA 65: 185/130

<sup>188</sup> “But returning into the first beginning (the “repetition”) is not displacement into what has passed, as if this could be made “actual” again in the usual sense.” (ibid.)

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

metaphysics can neither address nor accommodate. It opens up the self-concealing of being itself.

Distance and nearness thus belong together in the reflection upon the beginning of metaphysics. Reflection installs a certain distance from metaphysics, indeed, the only possible distance – the “distant-positioning” of the other beginning. It carries out a crossing that draws away from the metaphysical tradition and prepares a leap into being itself. However, this is not a distance that simply seeks to leave metaphysics behind. On the contrary, it is a distance that is found only in the appropriation of metaphysics and of its end. The leap into being breaks out of the manic parade of beings; it turns away from their obviousness and everydayness. In the crossing to the other beginning, the abandonment of being is no longer allowed to remain concealed in the slow passage of the end. The echo of being no longer remains unheard. The distance of the other beginning distances itself from the exhausted end of metaphysics. It constitutes a refusal to let the end simply pass by in the concealments of calculation, acceleration, and massiveness.

In this distance, however, metaphysics becomes all the more visible. As Heidegger notes, with the crossing between first and other beginning, ““metaphysics” now first becomes recognizable in its essence.”<sup>190</sup> No longer silent in its passage, the end of metaphysics is accomplished, and this means that the appropriation of the end constitutes a reflection that exposes metaphysics in the scope and field of its possibilities. For the first time, metaphysics becomes recognizable in its abandonment and uprootedness, in the obviousness of beings and in the concealment of being. In this way, the distance from metaphysics becomes a nearness to it. It becomes a return to the first

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<sup>190</sup> GA 65: 171/120 [Essence translates *Wesen*]

beginning of metaphysics and a reflection upon what did and did not begin with that beginning, for as Heidegger points out, “in the realm of what is essential, what does not occur is even more essential than what does, for it can never become a matter of indifference, but instead always stands, and ever more firmly, within the possibility of becoming more necessary and more compelling.”<sup>191</sup> Beyng, the ‘non-occurrence’ in the midst of metaphysics, is thus revealed not as simply other to metaphysics, but rather as that which abides in a concealed way at the origin and ground of metaphysics. The other beginning in beyng is carried, as concealed, in the unfolding and elaboration of the first beginning. In reaching ahead towards beyng, reflection thus reaches back towards that which is always already operative in the ground of metaphysics. It comes near to metaphysics and its ground precisely by way of the distance that it establishes in the leap towards the other beginning.<sup>192</sup>

The task, then, is to follow out this reflection, and that means, to show the unfolding of beyng from within the return to the first beginning and its ground. Yet, this is the specific task of history. The reflective return to the first beginning is not, as we have said, the imitation of that beginning, but is rather the elaboration of metaphysics in terms of its *meaning*, i.e. in terms of the open of beyng that characterizes its happening and event. History thus constitutes the site of reflection. It is the unique domain in

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<sup>191</sup> GA 45: 123/107

<sup>192</sup> Walter Brogan offers an excellent analysis of what I take to be the connection between leap and reflection, that is, the way in which the draw both towards and away from metaphysics constitutes the peculiar character of the leap. In so doing, Brogan captures nicely the sense of *concreteness* at issue in the leap such that it draws towards a renewed *sense* of beings even as it draws away from them. He writes, “The leap is there in the space/time where the difference of beings emerges, where the irruption of the manifold of beings in their multiplicity unfolds; it occurs in the space where be-ing withdraws and thus initiates the discussion of beings.” (“Da-sein and the Leap of Being” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Scott, Susan M. Schoenbohm, Daniela Vallega-Neu, and Alejandro Vallega (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 177.)

which the play of first and other beginning can come forth. The task of reflection, therefore, is and has always been an enactment of history, but one that serves in its elaboration to open up the happening of beginning – a happening that is ever and only being itself.

### **The First Beginning**

“The history of the first beginning,” says Heidegger, “is the history of metaphysics.”<sup>193</sup> It is the history of that relation between beings and being that has remained dominant, in a variety of forms, since the time of the Greeks. Indeed, the first beginning is in a sense nothing other than this Greek beginning, especially insofar as what follows from this beginning takes its measure from it. The beginning made by the Greeks determines all that later unfolds both from that beginning and as that beginning. Hence, the first beginning is not first because it is the earliest. It is first insofar as it guides and directs everything that follows after. Our lineage is the lineage of the first beginning.

In its essentially Greek origin, the first beginning is guided by the basic disposition of wonder. It is in wonder that we are first displaced into the midst of beings and by way of this displacement, first brought before our own being. Wonder compels us into the necessity of the first beginning, and it does this precisely by placing us into the “between” of that which Heidegger calls the “most usual” and the “most unusual.” Heidegger describes this between in the following way: “In wonder, something unusual is not set off against the usual, but instead wonder sets *us* before the usual itself precisely as

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<sup>193</sup> GA 65: 175/123

what is the most unusual.”<sup>194</sup> The usual in this instance is nothing less than everything. It does not pertain to this or that being, and it does not refer to anything objective or determinate. Rather, the usual pertains to the whole of beings, to everything *as* everything. As Heidegger notes, “[e]verything has in everything at first the most usual to which attention is not paid and which, if it is glimpsed, is not explicitly heeded.”<sup>195</sup> The most usual does not refer to the obviousness of beings or to their everydayness. It is not the familiarity of beings that renders them usual. On the contrary, the usual pertains to that which would go unnoticed and unheeded even within the most striking presentation of beings: the whole of beings as such. The entirety of everything is thus the most usual precisely because it is that which is never attended to, it is what always escapes notice within any apprehension of this or that being. Thus, the most usual is that which, while given everywhere, is heeded nowhere.

Yet in wonder the most usual comes forth, but it does so precisely as the most unusual. In this way, wonder opens the between of the usual and the unusual – that space in which the whole of beings, the usual, becomes manifest in the unusualness of its “that it is.” For this is precisely what constitutes the most unusual in beings and for beings: that they are what they are.<sup>196</sup> It is not the case, however, that the usualness of beings exists prior to its coming forth in unusualness. As Heidegger points out, if this were possible, the whole of beings would no longer be the most usual, for the very nature of the most usual is that it goes unnoticed, that it remains unheeded amidst beings. In

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<sup>194</sup> GA 45: 174/150

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 167/144

<sup>196</sup> “Everything in what is most usual (beings) becomes in wonder the most unusual in this one respect: that it is what it is.” (ibid., 167/144)

contrast to some prior existence of the usual, both the usual and the unusual arise together. Heidegger notes:

“The usualness of the most usual first erupts the moment the most usual becomes the most unusual. In this transition the most usual first steps forth separately in its usualness *and* in its unusualness, such that these then appear precisely as such.”<sup>197</sup>

In the between of wonder, the whole of beings now comes forth as both the most usual and the most unusual. It comes forth as the most usual to the extent that beings as a whole step forth in the ‘what’ of their being. What beings are, namely the whole as such and *as* a whole, becomes visible. Yet this becoming visible of the whole is at once the most unusual for it reveals *that* the whole *is*. *That* beings *are*, in their emergence and surge, stands forth in wonder. Taken together, wonder lets the whole come forth precisely *as* the whole,<sup>198</sup> and this means beings step forth in the self-showing of their being. The happening of wonder thus points to the coming forth of beings both in terms of what they are (their usualness) and that they are (their unusualness). In short, wonder opens up beings “as” beings, where the “as” points for Heidegger to the between itself – to “the open of a free space hardly surmised and heeded, in which beings come into play as such, namely as the beings they are, in the play of their Being.”<sup>199</sup>

Wonder thus opens up beings as such and lets them come forth. Yet, even as wonder displaces beings into the unusualness of their showing, it also displaces man into the force and presence of those beings. In the between of wonder, not only do beings come forth, but man as well insofar as he is revealed as that one who “has to hold fast to

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 168/146

<sup>198</sup> “...wonder now opens up what alone is wondrous in it: namely, the whole as the whole, beings as a whole...” (ibid., 169/146)

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 169/146

beings as beings in pure acknowledgement.”<sup>200</sup> In the open of wonder, man secures beings in their emergence as beings and sustains them in the perdurance of the between. Heidegger points out, however, that beings are sustained in the open of wonder only insofar as they are *questioned* in their being. The emergence of beings as beings is tied to the necessity of questioning what those beings as such *are*. Indeed, it is precisely in such questioning, says Heidegger, that one adheres to beings and attends to their coming forth.<sup>201</sup> The basic disposition of wonder thus compels us to attend questioningly to the whole of beings that it opens up. It draws us towards the interrogation of beings in their being, and thus puts into play the necessity of the question about beings – a question that acknowledges and sustains both what beings are and that beings are.

The whole trajectory of metaphysics lies within this question, i.e. the question “What are beings as such?” Indeed, Heidegger calls it the “guiding question” of the first beginning, that question whose necessity compels the beginning of Western metaphysics even as it haunts that beginning all the way to its end in Nietzsche. It is a question that is both asked and answered in Plato with the consequence that this answer determines all subsequent metaphysics. What beings are, their essence as such, is precisely their *whatness* [*Wassein*]. As empty as this answer initially sounds, it is nevertheless decisive. The whatness of something, on Heidegger’s account, “is what is *constantly present* in that something.”<sup>202</sup> It is that which is and remains always already present in all showings of any given being. Yet, this is more than just the empty generality of the *κοινων*.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 174/150

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> GA 45: 61/56 [Italics mine]

<sup>203</sup> A clarification is needed here. On the one hand, the *κοινων* is empty insofar as it is the merely general. As such it is not what is most essential regarding essence, i.e. regarding the *ιδεα*. It does not determine the *ιδεα* as such. On the other hand, however, the *ιδεα* later becomes the *κοινων*, and with this determination,

The whatness of a being is never simply what is common to all individual instances of that being. Such a notion of the essence, i.e. the essence as universal, does not penetrate to what is most essential about the essence. It does not approach the essence, the whatness, of a being as such.

More than a simple universal, the whatness of a being is the *ιδεα*, “the *look* that something offers, the aspect it has and, as it were, shows of itself, the *ειδος*.”<sup>204</sup> The *ιδεα* is not, however, merely the representation of some being. Rather, it is the very presencing of the being itself, its self-showing. The look of the *ιδεα* is that which a being shows both from itself and out of itself. It is that which, as look, is seen insofar as one sees any given being at all.

The *ιδεα*, however, is not simply sighted along with beings; it is never simply present, but rather in its presencing it also “provides *stability in presencing*.”<sup>205</sup> It is constantly present. In its constancy, the *ιδεα* is the look of a being that is sighted *in advance* of that being. It is the look that is in some sense already in view in order for this or that being to come forth at all. Far from any mere semblance or appearance, the *ιδεα* is the look of a being that precedes and determines that being as the very being that it is. It first lets the being come forth and be recognized. Seen in advance, the *ιδεα* stabilizes the presencing of any given being insofar as it lets it appear according to that which is constantly in sight, i.e. according to the look that is always already prior to the being that it makes visible.

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being as beingness gains its most decisive, and most hollow, character. As Heidegger notes, “this subsequent determination of *ιδεα* as beingness, the *κοινων*, then becomes the first and last determination of beingness (of being); this [being] is the “most general!”” (GA 65: 209/146)

<sup>204</sup> GA 45: 62/56

<sup>205</sup> GA 65: 209/146

The  $\text{\iota}\delta\epsilon\alpha$  is thus the answer to the question about beings. It is what arises insofar as one inquires into the very whatness, the essence, of beings at all. This answer, however, not only makes a decision about beings, but equally, it involves a decision about being as such. For as Heidegger notes, “in the essence as whatness or what-it-*is*, there resides...a conception of the being with regards to its Being.”<sup>206</sup> The essence of a being points, not simply to the being itself, but to what that being *is* in its being; it points to the being of that being. Hence, the  $\text{\iota}\delta\epsilon\alpha$  does not name beings. Rather, it names the beingness [*Seiendheit*] of beings, that which determines beings precisely in their being.

The determination of being as  $\text{\iota}\delta\epsilon\alpha$ , as beingness, is the decisive determination for metaphysics. It puts into play the passage from beings to being and back again that guides the whole history of metaphysics. This passage is evident in the first instance by virtue of the way in which being surpasses beings. As that which is constantly present, beingness presences as that which is always already prior to any given being. It is that which precedes and determines beings as the beings that they are. To this extent, beingness lies both before and after beings, and as such is “more in being” [*seiender*] insofar as it is that which lets beings be at all. Yet even as being surpasses beings, it is read off from beings. As Heidegger notes, “being as beingness is experienced and thought only in terms of “beings.”<sup>207</sup> Beingness thus points to beings and to the question of beings. As we noted with regards to wonder, the  $\text{\iota}\delta\epsilon\alpha$ , the whatness of beings, arises only insofar as we hold fast to beings as beings, i.e. only insofar as we interrogate beings themselves with regards to their being. The  $\text{\iota}\delta\epsilon\alpha$ , even as it puts beings into play with being, is inseparable from beings and arises from them.

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<sup>206</sup> GA 45: 67/61

<sup>207</sup> GA 65: 209/146

Metaphysics thus proceeds always by way of beings. Its history is the history of the passage from beings to being and back again to beings. Thus, metaphysics is oriented by the ontological difference, that is, by the distinction between being and beings and the way in which this distinction opens up in the surpassing of beings to being. Of course, in the first beginning, the ontological difference is barely a difference at all. It does not denote the separateness of beings and being, but rather serves only to enforce the intimacy of their connection. Indeed, Heidegger speaks of the closeness and “immediacy” of the ontological difference,<sup>208</sup> i.e. of the way beings pass without mediation into being and vice versa. In the first beginning, even as being is set apart from beings as the highest, it remains only a being and indeed, “the thinnest thinning of a being.”<sup>209</sup>

### **The Other Beginning**

As we have noted, however, the recognition of metaphysics in its history already seeks to move beyond metaphysics. The reflection upon the first beginning that understands metaphysics in its guiding trajectory is equally a turn away from that beginning. It is a reflection that begins to move already within an other beginning. This is the peculiar ‘ambiguity’ of metaphysics in the crossing between first and other beginning: the elaboration of metaphysics in its history happens only to the extent that metaphysics no longer holds sway. As Heidegger notes, even the question about metaphysics (i.e. “What is metaphysics?”) “already inquires into the essence of metaphysics in the sense of gaining an initial footing in crossing to the other

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<sup>208</sup> Cf. GA 65, Section 266.

<sup>209</sup> GA 65: 466/328

beginning.”<sup>210</sup> Metaphysics, we have seen, is operative only to the extent that it conceals itself in its passage. The surpassing of beings to being, the slow exhaustion of possibility, even the abandonment of being – all of these essential and related occurrences are effective within the metaphysical tradition only if they go unheeded and unthematized. Once they are brought to recognition in their essence and ground, metaphysics begins to pass into something wholly other to metaphysics; it begins to pass into the “distant-positioning” of the other beginning. The question about metaphysics thus disturbs the silent passage of metaphysics. It reveals that being is not enough, that something of beings (and being) remains unquestioned in the circulation of the ontological difference. In the question concerning metaphysics, there is the suggestion of something concealed, something that withdraws from the history of metaphysics, and yet in its withdrawal, leads metaphysics into its overturning.

Thus, says Heidegger, “what [the question about metaphysics] makes manifest is already no longer metaphysics but rather its overcoming.”<sup>211</sup> The passage back into metaphysics becomes at once the passage beyond it, the passage into what Heidegger calls *beyng* and not beingness. The overcoming of metaphysics is not, however, a simple mirroring of the passage between beings and being. It is not the case that, having surpassed beings on the way to being, we now surpass being on the way to *beyng*. Such an order of progression would only serve to reinforce the metaphysical circulation between beings and being. It would make of *beyng* simply another being – a highest being that would serve as ground for both being and beings. At the same time, however, the overcoming of metaphysics is not placed in opposition to metaphysics, for any

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<sup>210</sup> GA 65: 171/121 [Translation modified]

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

opposition always invokes that which it opposes. It determines itself, as opposition, always with reference to what it would seek to overturn, and thus metaphysics would be reinstated at the very site of its supposed overcoming.

In contrast to either an imitation or opposition to metaphysics, the overcoming of metaphysics is unfolded in the crossing as that which makes metaphysics impossible. As Heidegger notes, “To understand [metaphysics] within the thinking of the crossing means to transpose what is understood into its impossibility.”<sup>212</sup> We should take care, however, to note that the sense of the impossible at issue, the sense that determines the overcoming of metaphysics, is itself not metaphysical. The impossible is not the counter concept to the possible. It does not mean that which is never actual or will never become actual. Rather, we should understand the impossibility of metaphysics with reference to that sense of impossibility first opened up in Heidegger’s analysis of death in *Being and Time*.<sup>213</sup> The impossible is that which *closes off* the possibilities of metaphysics, outstrips those possibilities, and in passing beyond their measure, nevertheless frees metaphysics precisely *for* those possibilities. The transposition of metaphysics into its impossibility means that it is no longer possible to proceed by way of the metaphysical passage between beings and being. Beyng is not of the order of beingness, and as such, it is not understood with reference to beings. Rather, beyng outstrips the possibilities of metaphysics, it passes beyond beings and beingness, yet in such a way that the movement of this passage is not the simple imitation of metaphysics. Beyng exceeds the limit of metaphysics, it exceeds the measure of beings, and thus withdraws concealedly in the midst of metaphysics. Thus, the impossibility of metaphysics does not mean that

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 172/121

<sup>213</sup> Cf. SZ sections 50-53.

metaphysics no longer occurs. We have seen that this is not the case. On the contrary, it means that in the midst of metaphysics and its possibility, something wholly other sounds forth – beyng comes forth as concealed and withdrawn in the opening up of the metaphysical passage from beings to being.<sup>214</sup>

Yet just as with death, beyng is not simply other to metaphysics. It is instead that possibility which is for metaphysics its most extreme possibility. Thus, Heidegger is able to say in *Contributions*, “Being and beyng is the same and yet fundamentally different.”<sup>215</sup> In order to understand this connection, we can recall from *Being and Time* that Dasein, in coming towards its death, comes toward itself, sets itself off from its everyday possibilities, and sets itself back into death as that which is its own. Thus Dasein becomes free for its death and understands itself not with reference to its everyday possibilities, but rather takes over in itself that possibility which is its own, most extreme possibility. In a similar manner metaphysics, facing its own death, understands itself with reference to beyng and not simply being. In leaping into beyng, metaphysics sets itself back into beyng as that extreme possibility that unfolds with the unfolding of metaphysics. Coming towards beyng, metaphysics comes decisively towards itself, towards that possibility which lies at the ground of the metaphysical tradition, and yet, as an extreme possibility, is always already beyond metaphysics and excessive to it.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> This reading of first and other beginning is in contrast to those readings that seek to understand them as two separate and distinct beginnings, albeit related by a leap. (Cf. George Kovacs, “An Invitation to Think through and with Heidegger’s *Beiträge zur Philosophie*,” *Heidegger Studies*, 11 (1989): 28-30.) Rather, it needs to be understood that there is only one beginning, and this beginning plays forth in the happening of first and other beginning in their mutual origination.

<sup>215</sup> GA 65: 171/120

<sup>216</sup> In this regard, Dennis Schmidt speaks of a “catastrophe” of history in Heidegger’s work, a sense in which history is staked to death, unthinkable without death, and poignant precisely within the unfolding of history itself. He writes, “Catastrophe is not the by-product of history, but the revelation of the truth of history itself, namely, that the past has made possible the impossibility of its own future.” (“Heidegger and

## The Essency of Beyng<sup>217</sup>

And yet, what of beyng, or if we allow the doubly inappropriate question, what is beyng? Clearly, such a question cannot be easily asked or answered. On the one hand, it is impossible to ask what beyng *is* without already coming to a decision regarding the very 'is' itself, i.e. without already determining the sense of beyng that is ostensibly interrogated in the question. On the other hand, the question concerning the 'what' of beyng appears to ask after the metaphysical essence of beyng; it inquires into the 'whatness' of beyng, and thus draws beyng back into the constant presence of the  $\text{ιδεα}$ . Any question concerning the 'essence' of beyng cannot avoid the insertion of beyng back into the very sense of metaphysics that beyng seeks to overcome and render impossible.

Nevertheless, the question remains compelling. Even as we cannot ask after the essence of beyng, it is as if the question of its essence demands to be addressed. There appears to be a certain play at work in the notion of essence such that its unfolding in the first beginning compels the necessity of a wholly other sense in the other beginning. It might even be said that the essence of beyng (and even being) is nothing but this play, and thus the question of essence orients itself wholly in the crossing between first and other beginning. Certainly, in *Contributions* the term 'essence' is not reserved solely for the sense of beingness operative in the first beginning. On the contrary, Heidegger speaks extensively of the essence of *beyng*, and more surprisingly, of the *essency* of beyng.

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'The' Greeks: History, Catastrophe, and Community" in *Heidegger toward the Turn: Essays on the Work of the 1930s*, ed. James Risser (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 85.)

<sup>217</sup> Throughout, I will translate *Wesung* as 'essency.' However, it should be noted that essency is intended in a verbal sense. It wants to say the very happening of essence, the play of essence as it passes between first and other beginning, i.e. between beingness and beyng.

In order to understand *beyng*, then, it is necessary to understand the essence of *beyng*. Of course, this does not mean that one inquires into the whatness of *beyng*. The question of the essence of *beyng* is not the metaphysical interrogation of the  $\text{id}\epsilon\alpha$ . Rather, the sense of essence operative in the crossing inverts the metaphysical understanding, and thus in the inversion overturns the classical priority of the  $\text{id}\epsilon\alpha$ . Initially, Heidegger carries out this inversion by way of a straightforward reassignment of the ‘is.’ Within the first beginning, to say that a being *is* speaks “out of the mostly implicit basic position of metaphysics, which lets man light upon a being as what is the nearest and lets him start with a being and go back to a being.”<sup>218</sup> The “is” of a being refers to its passage towards being. It invokes the metaphysical circulation by which one proceeds from beings to beingness and back again. Thus, the statement that a being *is* is a statement that points to the constant presence of beings, to beings precisely in their being. Moreover, it is only beings that are at issue. As we noted earlier, being (or better, beingness) is not beyond or outside of beings. On the contrary, even as it surpasses beings (as the most-being or the highest being), being nevertheless remains within the field of beings and is read off from them. Within metaphysics, the ‘is’ remains assigned solely to beings.

The inversion occurs, then, insofar as Heidegger simply switches the assignment. Noting that *beyng* “‘is’ never a being and least of all the most-being,” Heidegger asserts that contrary to the basic position of metaphysics, “*beyng* and only *beyng is* and that a being is *not*.”<sup>219</sup> The ‘is’ relates now solely to *beyng* and not beings, and indeed to such

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<sup>218</sup> GA 65: 473/333

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 472/332. Interestingly, this saying in regards to *beyng* inverts rather precisely the saying regarding time. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explicitly rejects the claim that temporality “is,” noting instead that temporality “is” not, and yet we cannot avoid saying that it “is.” (SZ: 322/308) With *beyng*,

an extent that the ‘is’ can no longer be said of beings at all. Of course, this does not mean that beings somehow disappear, that they no longer are in the sense of mere presence. Beings remain everywhere – they surround us in their proximity and familiarity. Yet, it must be said that beings are not insofar as they circle endlessly back to beingness and never beyng. Beings remain, as Heidegger says, “forgetful of beyng”<sup>220</sup> and indeed to such an extent that the return to beingness forgets even the forgetting itself, leaving beyng in oblivion and submitting beyng to an abandonment by beings.

Yet, if beyng and only beyng *is*, this cannot be said easily or unambiguously within the dominance of the metaphysical understanding. It all too easily finds itself caught within the prevalence of beings, and thus subordinated to the metaphysical sense of essence. While beyng *is*, it is only rarely possible to state the “is” of beyng from out of beyng itself. Given this difficulty, Heidegger thus argues that although beyng *is*, one cannot simply say that it is, but must instead say “beyng happens essentially” [*Das Seyn west*]. “It must be said *thus*,” notes Heidegger, “when one is speaking in terms of metaphysics.”<sup>221</sup>

“Beyng happens essentially”: with this saying, beyng traces out a crossing that shifts away from the dominant sense of metaphysics according to which the “is” returns always to a being. Yet what is to be understood with such a shift? If beyng, and indeed

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on the other hand, we can only say, and indeed must say, that beyng “is,” but we cannot avoid saying in some sense that beyng “is not.”

<sup>220</sup> GA 65: 473/333

<sup>221</sup> Ibid. There is simply no good way to render the verb form of *Wesen*. In contrast to Maly and Emad’s use of “holding sway,” I have chosen the more direct, “happens essentially.” There are two reasons for this choice. First, my analysis of *essency* makes it necessary to explicitly show the connection between essence, *essency*, and essential happening. Hence, “holding-sway” would prove misleading in the extreme insofar as it would lose every connection to that happening which *is* the *essency* of beyng. Second, what is at issue in the verbal use of essence is precisely the happening of beyng as such. Thus, I find it interpretively equivalent to say that beyng happens and that beyng *is* its *essency*. Hence, happening is an appropriate rendering of the verbal use of essence.

the essence of being, is not to be thought by way of beings, how then is it to be thought? Again, we are faced with the question, “What *is* being?,” or better “How *is* the essence of being?” In answer to this question, Heidegger offers a threefold response.

First, Heidegger points out, the saying that ‘being is’ is not a saying at all if we mean by this an assertion *about* being. The recasting of the “is” as a *Wesung*, as an essence, accomplishes at least this much: it undercuts the claim that something is *attributed* to being in the saying. Being is thus not to be understood as something “extant” that possesses some given quality or characteristic.<sup>222</sup> It is not circumscribed by any sense of objective presence, but instead stands outside of all such senses.

Yet, if being is not defined by presence, this amounts to saying that being is not to be understood by way of a being. With this, Heidegger arrives at the second part of his answer: the essence of being “says being itself out of itself [*das Seyn selbst aus ihm selbst*].<sup>223</sup> Thus, being is for itself the sole measure of its saying. Neither a being nor beingness provide a reference for the essential happening of being. This corresponds to the impossibility of metaphysics outlined earlier. In the passage to being, the circulation from beings to beingness is exceeded, and thus the position of proceeding by way of beings is closed off. Being calls to be addressed in a way wholly other than that of beings.

The third and final part of Heidegger’s answer thus follows from the second. If being alone is the measure for its essence, then it follows that being *is* nothing other than its essence – the essence of being says nothing other than being itself. In regards to

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<sup>222</sup> “...the saying [being *is*] does not say anything *about* being that is generally attributed to being or is extant in it...” (GA 65: 473/333)

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

its essence, "...being is said out of "is" and, as it were, is said back into "is""<sup>224</sup> The essence of being, its essential happening, "is" the very play of the "is" itself. In the crossing from first to other beginning, being happens only in and through the very crossing itself. Insofar as being *is*, it does not abide within the metaphysical circuit between beings and beingness. At the same time, however, being does not simply abandon this circuit. Rather, being happens *in* the very unfolding of this circuit as that which is wholly other to it. The essence of being occurs in the play of the "is" by which both beingness and being open up in the between of their crossing.

### **Playing-Forth**

Everything depends, then, upon the proper understanding of this play between beingness and being, or rather, everything depends upon understanding their relation precisely as a play, and indeed, as the play of beginning. Heidegger calls it simply "playing-forth" [*Zu-spiel*].<sup>225</sup> In its primary sense, playing-forth refers to the passage between beginnings, to the way in which each beginning is played over to the other. According to this play, there are not two beginnings. Heidegger makes this clear at the very outset of *Contributions*. Speaking about the relation between first and other beginning, Heidegger notes that "the "other" beginning of thinking is named thus, not because it is simply shaped differently from any other arbitrarily chosen hitherto existing philosophies, but because it must be the only other beginning according to the relation *to*

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> It should be noted that "playing-forth" is not a wholly adequate rendering of *Zu-spiel*. While it nicely catches the play inherent in the term, it misses the sense of *passage* that the term evokes (e.g. as in soccer, when one player assists another in the passage of the ball), a sense that proves decisive for the interrelation of first and other beginning. In addition, one should hear in the word the "to" of the play, the *Zu-spiel*. The play at issue is not a play towards some determinate goal or given object. Rather, it is a play that opens up its 'to,' its 'towards,' precisely from within the play itself.

the one and only first beginning.”<sup>226</sup> The play between beginnings, then, is the play *of* beginning, the playing-forth that makes manifest only the beginning as such. To this extent, talk of first and other beginning is misleading insofar as it appears to reference two discrete, separate beginnings and not simply beginning as such. In contrast to this understanding, playing-forth highlights the between of beginning, the passage that draws first and other beginning into their mutual elaboration.

Yet, even as playing-forth situates itself in the between of beginnings, i.e. in the crossing from first to other beginning, it is nevertheless the case that there is no beginning outside of playing forth. Beginning *is* only in its play. First and other beginning are not somehow there prior to the playing forth that happens between them, i.e. they are not objectively present, and the play of their between does not arise only as a consequence of the givenness of the beginnings. On the contrary, it is only in the between of the crossing that first and other beginning *are* at all and thus are able to confront one another as such.

Playing-forth is thus an outgrowth of historical reflection. Insofar as it unfolds first and other beginning in their play, playing-forth traces out the course of reflection. It returns to the beginning of metaphysics in order to set metaphysics back into that beginning, and this means, back into *beyng*. In its connection to reflection, playing-forth thus puts metaphysics into play with that which is not addressable within metaphysics as such. It draws metaphysics to the limit of its most extreme possibility, even as it elaborates metaphysics only from out of this limit. Yet, this play is nothing other than the history, the happening, of metaphysics, a history that is equally of *beyng*. As Heidegger

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<sup>226</sup> GA 65: 5/4. Maly and Emad’s translation is slightly misleading. Though I have kept it intact, one could just as easily say that the relation of other to first beginning is the relation to the “only one and first beginning.” What is expressed in the difference is the sense that there are not two beginnings, but rather one beginning – a sole and single beginning – that plays forth in first and other beginning.

notes, “the essence of playing-forth is historical.”<sup>227</sup> History, of course, is not at all concerned here with the historiographical. Playing-forth does not serve as the basis for historical observation or analysis. Rather, playing-forth is historical insofar as it first opens up the meaning of metaphysics – it attends to that which conceals itself and withdraws in the playing out of metaphysics. As essentially historical, playing-forth attends therefore to both the happening and the not-happening of metaphysics. It puts metaphysics into play with its not-happening, or to mark the tension most explicitly, it plays out the happening of metaphysics in its essential not-happening.

Playing-forth is historical, then, insofar as it plays out the ‘not’ of metaphysics, the ‘negation’ of its happening. This is not of course an inversion of Heidegger’s sense of history, i.e. the substitution of the happening [*Geschehen*] of history with the not-happening [*Nicht-geschehen*] of history. On the contrary, it is an affirmation of what has always been at stake in such history, namely, *beyng*. The emphasis upon the ‘not’ of happening is one that accentuates the primordially (and inceptually) of negation, a primordially that exceeds the simple dichotomy of presence and absence. Indeed, insofar as negation is tied to *beyng*, it is tied to a withdrawal that reaches deeper than mere absence. *Beyng*, we have seen, *is* its concealment, and concealing itself, *beyng* closes off those possibilities of presence that might define its concealment – whether as absence or as non-presence. The negation at issue in playing-forth does not, and indeed cannot, merely negate the happening of metaphysics, for it is not in opposition to metaphysics; it is neither an opposite nor a counter concept. Rather, it is a negation that negates precisely insofar as it exceeds and outstrips any common space of occurrence. It is a negation, one could say, that negates even the possibility of becoming merely

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<sup>227</sup> GA 65: 169/119

negative. As Heidegger notes, in the play of the crossing, i.e. in the play of metaphysics with its ‘not,’ “what is separated is so decidedly separated that no common area of differentiation can prevail at all.”<sup>228</sup>

And yet, in its separateness, negation is decisive for metaphysics. It is not as if the negation runs parallel to metaphysics, as if along with the tradition of metaphysics there is another, more concealed tradition that *does not* occur even as metaphysics *does* occur. Rather, negation is always already in play with metaphysics as such. Playing-forth attempts to make clear that metaphysics, *in* its happening, *is* its not-happening. There is no sense of metaphysics outside of the play of negation, and likewise, negation happens only in the elaboration of metaphysics. Heidegger makes this clear in *Contributions*:

“...negating unfolds by laying open the first beginning and its inceptual history and by putting what is opened up back into the possession of the beginning, where it, laid back, even now and in the future still towers over everything that once took place in its course and became an object of historical [*historisch*] reckoning.”<sup>229</sup>

Negation ‘happens,’ on this account, precisely in unfolding the history of the first beginning. Indeed, it is nothing but this unfolding, and as such, the happening of metaphysics is its not-happening. Negation negates, that is, carries itself out in its negation, to the extent that it lays open the first beginning in its history. Yet, negation unfolds in and with the first beginning only insofar as that beginning is put into play precisely with the beginning as such. The unfolding of metaphysics “in its history” points to that unfolding by which metaphysics is transposed into its impossibility; it points to the necessity of the crossing between beginnings – a crossing that is ever and

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 177/124

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 179/125

only the play of beginning itself. In the unfolding of its history, i.e. in its negation, metaphysics is thus set back into beginning. It is put back into that which is always already at work in the first beginning, but is nevertheless not reducible to it or to its historiographical course and progression. To say, then, that metaphysics *is* its not-happening is to say nothing other than beginning, and indeed, that beginning which plays forth in the negation that opens up in the historical crossing between first and other beginning.

Understood within the specific historicity of playing-forth, this play of beginning can be understood as the play of the future. To this extent, Heidegger retains something of the sense of history elaborated in *Being and Time*. Echoing the distinctions found in that text, Heidegger notes, “the happening and the happenings of history are primordially and always the future, that which in a concealed way comes toward us, a revelatory process that puts us at risk, and thus is compelling in advance.”<sup>230</sup> Of course, the parallel with *Being and Time* can only go so far. In the present context of beginning, the future does not, and indeed cannot, mean one of the three ecstases of temporality. As we have already seen, the horizon of temporality that determines the ecstases remains too closely bound to the structure of metaphysics that it seeks to overturn. Moreover, each ecstasis of temporality is organized by projection, and it is precisely this aspect of Dasein that is seriously and radically rethought in the move from *Being and Time* to *Contributions*. Thus, even if it were possible in this context to locate the future as a part of temporality, one would first need to follow out the quite fundamental divergences that occur in Heidegger’s own understanding of both time and projection as these come to be reappropriated in light of beginning.

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<sup>230</sup> GA 45: 36/35

In contrast to a temporal understanding of the future, Heidegger refers the future over to beginning. “The future,” he says, “is the beginning of all happening.”<sup>231</sup> Of course, this is a deceptively simple statement, one that points to far more than a mere identity between future and beginning. Putting aside for a moment the obvious difficulties that attend any use of the “is” in this context, the future names beginning insofar as it points to the ‘not’ of beginning, the negation that opens up in the laying out and laying back of the first beginning. The future is thus connected to the deepest possible senses of withdrawal and concealment. It is connected to that negation which nihilates [note] in the playing-forth of first and other beginning.

Yet insofar as it is connected to negation, the future is thus connected to that sense of play that is the playing-forth of beginning as such. Beginning *is* negation, and thus the future *is* beginning, but only insofar as beginning plays out the happening of metaphysics in its essential not-happening. Beginning, we have said, is the play of beginning, and this play is the crossing from first to other beginning. It is the crossing in which metaphysics is first laid open as such, and in its unfolding, is set out from, and back into, being. Negation reveals, however, that there are not two separate movements at issue here. The play of beginning, i.e. playing-forth, attempts to articulate the way in which negation unfolds precisely within the unfolding of metaphysics. To say, then, that the future is the beginning of all happening says the very happening itself – it says that happening of the first beginning that plays forth, in its happening, the ‘not’ that it both unfolds and *is* in its event.

Thus Heidegger says, “What is most futural, however, is the great beginning, that which – withdrawing itself constantly – reaches back the farthest and at the same time

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid., 36/35

reaches ahead the farthest.”<sup>232</sup> The future, understood as the negation that nihilates in the play of beginning, is thus turned over to the beginning itself. Beginning, for its part, plays-forth the future insofar as it plays negation out in the reach that is at once both ahead and behind. What is decisive in this play, however, is the very reach itself, for it is with this reach that beginning comes to the fullest elaboration of its play.

The beginning reaches ahead. It reaches into the “distant-positioning” of the other beginning. To this extent, as we have seen, beginning unfolds the first beginning in its impossibility; it reveals metaphysics in the exhaustion of its possibilities, and in the closure of that circulation which passes from beings to beingness and back again. Beginning withdraws from metaphysics, it conceals itself in the passage and unfolding of that tradition and history which is begun with the beginning, but is yet not equal to it. The beginning is thus, says Heidegger, “unsurpassable.” [*unüberholbar*]<sup>233</sup> It is that which is not to be outstripped or outpaced. Reaching ahead, beginning reaches farthest ahead. Even as it elaborates and unfolds the first beginning, it always already reaches beyond that beginning. In this sense, beginning is most futural for as unsurpassable, it reaches beyond every sense of beyond. As Heidegger notes, “there is no way that leads directly from the being of beings to *beyng*.”<sup>234</sup> This is perhaps the simplest account of the difference between temporal futurity and the futurity of beginning: the ecstasis of the future *does not go far enough*; it does not, and indeed cannot, leap into *beyng*. Of course, it should be noted that this is more a function of the *horizontality* of the future (i.e. of projection) than the future itself. Even in *Being and Time*, there is at least one sense of the future that approaches the inceptual sense of *Contributions*: the sense of the future as

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<sup>232</sup> GA 45: 40/38

<sup>233</sup> GA 65: 55/39

<sup>234</sup> GA 65: 75/52

essentially *closed*.<sup>235</sup> It is this sense of closure that later becomes the primordially of negation operative in the unsurpassability of beginning.

Yet in its futurity, the beginning also reaches back. It reaches into the ‘ground’ of metaphysics and its happening, i.e. into that which, already in play with metaphysics, is nevertheless carried as concealed within the metaphysical tradition. Our earlier analysis of negation makes this clear: metaphysics is *set back into* its not-happening even as it is set forth from it. It is put back into being as that which is its most extreme possibility. To this extent, beginning reaches back the farthest insofar as it reaches back into being. It reaches into that which, while exceeding metaphysics, is nevertheless already in play as the ownmost possibility of metaphysics itself, albeit one that remains unaddressed, and unaddressable, within the metaphysical tradition that abandons it. As extreme possibility, being is thus in some sense prior to metaphysics. It is that which, in concealing and withdrawing, first opens up the metaphysical passage from beings to beingness and back again. Of course, such a notion of priority does not at all point to an *a priori* condition of possibility. Rather, the sense of priority designates, with some reservation, the way in which being, in playing-forth its concealment, first lets beings and beingness come forth themselves. The happening of being *is* the happening of metaphysics, and even as metaphysics opens onto being, it is only by way of being that metaphysics first becomes visible in its essential character. The priority of being is thus in some sense the priority of meaning. It points to that which is always already at play, and indeed must be at play, in order for anything like beings or beingness to arise at all.

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<sup>235</sup> “The ecstatic quality of the primordial future lies precisely in the fact that it closes the potentiality-of-being, that is, the future is itself closed and as such makes possible the resolute existentiell understanding of nullity.” (SZ: 330/303)

In every case, then, the priority attends neither to beyng nor to metaphysics, but instead points to the play between them – the playing-forth of beginning in the reach both ahead and back. Beginning is the very reach itself. In this way, beginning is not the articulation of some origin or starting point. It does not say beyng as that which is simply or solely prior to metaphysics. Rather, it says beyng *in* the very unfolding of metaphysics: beginning plays beyng out in the playing-forth of metaphysics in its essential not-happening.

At the heart of this understanding of beginning, i.e. at the heart of the play of beginning, is thus a certain operation of repetition and limit. It is this operation that remains consistent across all of the analyses of beginning. In every case, it is a matter of bringing into play, within a given ordering of being, that which is never reducible to that ordering, but – and this is the heart of it – in such a way that the ordering of being *itself plays out* that irreducibility precisely *in* the unfolding of its order. For Heidegger, this means nothing other than the constant repetition of the inceptuality of beginning in the midst of what is begun. As Heidegger notes, “Because every beginning is unsurpassable, in being encountered it must be placed again and again into the uniqueness of its inceptuality and thus into its unsurpassable fore-grasping.”<sup>236</sup> The repetition happens then in the repetition of the *inceptuality* of the beginning. It happens, that is, only insofar as the beginning genuinely begins. The repetition of beginning is not the repetition of this or that origin. It is a repetition by which there *is* beginning at all – a repetition by which and through which beginning can come forth in its unsurpassability.<sup>237</sup> Beginning

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<sup>236</sup> GA 65: 55/39

<sup>237</sup> This is the essential character of beginning for Heidegger. As Dennis Schmidt shows in his analyses of the *Origin of the Work of Art*, “the essential principle of the beginning for Heidegger is that it is a continual re- and dis-location of both itself and what lies beyond it. This means that the beginning is authentic only

thus “determines”, says Heidegger, “its own repetition.”<sup>238</sup> It is the always the measure for repetition while at the same time, beginning remains only and ever within the repetition itself. Repetition thus does not ever point to imitation. It is not the vehicle for the ‘sameness’ of a movement ceaselessly repeated in all of its particulars. Rather, it is the enactment of uniqueness, and indeed so much so that Heidegger argues, “only what is unique is given to repetition.”<sup>239</sup>

The repetition of the first beginning in playing-forth is thus one that returns the first beginning precisely to its beginning. As Heidegger notes, “the first beginning remains decisively the *first* – and yet is overcome as beginning.”<sup>240</sup> The first beginning is given over to the very play of beginning itself – a play by which the first beginning can arise only in and with the carrying out of the other beginning. First and other beginning thus name one and the same beginning, not because they are somehow identical, but because they each point to the uniqueness of beginning in its repetition. Whether as negation, the futural, or as *beyng*, what is repeated in every saying of beginning is solely the beginning itself – the unsurpassability of a uniqueness and inceptuality that attends every happening, and opens every history.

Beginning happens only in repetition, but equally, beginning is also the limit of repetition. The sense of limit, however, does not point to anything like a boundary. It is not some objectively given point beyond which repetition cannot pass. On the contrary, the claim that beginning is the limit of repetition wants to say only that repetition plays

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so long as this dislocating movement of origination continually opens itself up. The genuine beginning always originates more than itself...” *The Ubiquity of the Finite: Hegel, Heidegger, and the Entitlements of Philosophy* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1986), 110.

<sup>238</sup> GA 65: 55/39

<sup>239</sup> Ibid. Translation mine

<sup>240</sup> GA 65: 6/5

out beginning in the play of the limit. As we saw, for instance, in *Being and Time*, Dasein begins, and appropriates its beginning, only in the repetition of its deathliness, i.e. only in the repetition of its furthest, and most extreme, limit. Yet this limit does not mark the end of Dasein, but rather, in repetition, Dasein plays out precisely in its limit – Dasein takes over the limit that it *is* in its death precisely in coming back towards itself and towards its thrown possibilities.

The ‘same’ sense of limit appears as well at the heart of temporality itself. Unfolding itself as horizontal projection, temporality unfolds at the limit of that horizontality. It gives way to being as that which is, as we noted, even beyond the “beyond of being.” Yet again, this limit does not mark a refusal or negation of temporality and its projection. On the contrary, it is at and with this limit that temporality begins – temporality plays out its limit, i.e. plays over into being, insofar as it plays itself out within the horizontality of projection.

Finally, this limit is operative in the present analyses of the playing-forth of first and other beginning. Metaphysics, in the approach of the other beginning, approaches its own impossibility. It approaches that limit which, like death, outstrips metaphysics and closes off its circulation from beings to beingness. Yet, this limit is precisely that which metaphysics plays out in its unfolding. It is that which, always already operative in the first beginning, plays out only with the first beginning as such. Metaphysics *is* its limit insofar as it plays out its not-happening precisely *in* the inceptual playing-forth of its happening.

In each case, beginning names this play of repetition and limit – the play, in the end, between the order of metaphysics and that which is irreducible to that order.

Beginning is thus always the ‘same,’ that is, it is always unique, and in its uniqueness, sets every happening back into the inceptuality of its event. The goal, however, is not to provide a continuity to beginning. Rather, the goal is to provoke, and carry out, a rethinking of that which is cast into its inceptuality, a rethinking of the very sense of beings and of being. If there is any ‘constancy’ to beginning, it lies in the “suddenness” [note] of beginning, the striking vitality of the disruptive engagement that characterizes every beginning. To show the beginning as an operation of repetition and limit is thus to call into question our deepest relation to beings, to find in that relation an opening – what Heidegger will call a clearing – that while not simply of the order of beings, nevertheless gives us to begin again with beings, to begin again even with our own being, and thus with ourselves as the beings that we are.

#### **IV. DIFFERENCES IN TRUTH: BEGINNING AGAIN WITH BEYNG AND BEYNGS**

##### **Introduction**

The saying of beginning is always precarious. There is the risk that one will say too much, that the beginning will become identified with a particular origin. The danger of every saying of beginning is conservation – the attempt to hold fast and preserve “the” beginning, whether as starting-point or historical epoch, in the midst of its constant passage and loss. It is the danger of an easy attachment to presence and an all-too-metaphysical commitment to understanding *what* beginning *is*. One wants to identify the beginning, just as one would identify the start of a journey or the origin of capitalism. Yet, the peculiar problem of such an identification is by now utterly familiar and banal. Every such identification requires that one always already be *on the way*. One locates the beginning only from out of what has begun. The difficulty is obvious: the beginning is determined with reference to that which is opened up precisely by the beginning itself. The beginning becomes merely the first and earliest elaboration of what is already underway, albeit now as the “primitive” or “rudimentary.”

Every practice of identification is at heart one of conservation. It is not so much an inquiry into beginning as it is an affirmation of what has begun. Holding to “the” beginning, every identification occurs always in the loss of beginning as such. It settles for ‘what’ has opened up in beginning – the constant presence of an unchanging origin. The uniqueness of beginning, the striking and vital suddenness of the inceptuality of beginning: none of this is or can be present in identification. The withdrawal in every

beginning, the withdrawal that every beginning *is* goes unheeded. In the moment of identification, beginning and its inceptuality are lost.

Loss is nevertheless essential to beginning. Heidegger makes the point by noting that “beginning happens only in the leap.”<sup>241</sup> Insofar as it begins, every beginning leaps away from the common and familiar. It inaugurates something wholly other than what has always already come to pass. As leap, beginning figures a loss in the sense that it opens a region not reducible to what has begun or to what follows, derivatively, from the beginning. There is no continuity, no progression between the leap of beginning and the unfolding of ‘what’ begins. When successful, i.e. when inceptual, beginning constitutes the loss and failure of every attempt at encompassment. It resists every practice of identification. Beginning, in its inceptuality, outstrips every measure.

It is the loss inherent in beginning that makes the saying of beginning precarious. Every such saying must encounter the loss; it must engage the leap of beginning and attempt, in whatever way, to let the inceptuality of beginning sound forth in the saying. There is always a tension at work in the saying of beginning. On the one hand, beginning leaps away from the saying itself. No statement of beginning is absolute, or rather, the saying of beginning is never its identification. The saying of beginning, insofar as it succeeds as a saying, becomes superfluous to beginning as such. On the other hand, every saying of beginning is a *necessary* saying. The inceptuality of beginning arises and comes into play only with the saying as such. Beginning is given to begin precisely in the saying that articulates its playful and leaping measure. Engaged with the loss, the

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<sup>241</sup> GA 65: 229/162

saying of beginning is at once superfluous and necessary, unneeded and essential – in other words, precarious in the extreme.<sup>242</sup>

Part of the difficulty, but also part of the power of beginning is the extent to which beginning serves as its own ineluctable measure. Every saying gives way to beginning as its measure, and thus, becomes superfluous at precisely that point where beginning opens up within it. It is for this reason that *Contributions to Philosophy* should never be understood as a “work” *about* beginning, but rather as a release *of* beginning, i.e. as a saying of beginning that effaces itself as such, and in the effacement, leaves only beginning. Nowhere is this more clear than in Heidegger’s own engagement with his work from out of what *Contributions* first opens up. In an astonishing moment of reflection upon *beyng*, Heidegger proclaims that “all specific “contents” and “opinions” and “pathways” of the first attempt in *Being and Time* are incidental and can disappear.”<sup>243</sup> This is not, as I understand it, a statement of the inadequacy of *Being and Time*. Quite the contrary, it is an illustration of its success, a recognition by Heidegger that his own work stands under the sway of beginning and is determined by it. The superfluity of *Being and Time* that Heidegger remarks upon is the necessary result of any saying of beginning that succeeds as such.

At issue, then, is not this or that account of beginning. *Contributions*, as the preeminent text of beginnings, says nothing about beginning and gives no analysis of beginning. What it wants to achieve is simply beginning as such. It begins again with

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<sup>242</sup> As Dennis Schmidt notes, “The repetition of the beginning, beginning again with the same, is doubly difficult. After Heidegger one feels both liberated and stymied; if one has read him carefully, then one is uneasy about proceeding and picking up the thought.” (“In Heidegger’s Wake: Belonging to the Discourse of the “Turn”” in *Heidegger Studies*, 4 (1989): 203.) I take this to be a recognition of the fragility of beginning, of the way in which every saying of beginning in some sense serves to leap away from its saying, and thus calls us always to begin again.

<sup>243</sup> GA 65: 242/171

beyng and its question in such a way that it undergoes the very beginning that it would seek to open up. Thus, Heidegger characterizes the preliminary attempts of *Contributions* as attempts “always to say the same of the same.”<sup>244</sup> The task is not to say beginning, or beyng, definitively or absolutely. Rather, the task is to say beginning in such a way that it outstrips and exceeds the measure of the saying. Beginning is said in such a way that one is called to say it again, always the same, precisely because the saying succeeds – and thus in its saying, gives way to beginning and its leap.

It would be wrong to conclude that this means every saying of beginning must by necessity fail in saying anything at all about beginning. The superfluity, the incidental character of the saying is not a constant deferral of beginning. Rather, beginning *is* only in the saying that it outstrips. In its superfluity, every saying of beginning bears a certain necessity. It attests to the uniqueness of beginning and to the essentiality of every saying. As Heidegger puts it in *Contributions*, “the saying *is* the “to be said.””<sup>245</sup> Beginning is enacted in the saying. It happens, leapingly as it were, in the saying that finds itself, outstripped and unnecessary, opened into a region that is not reducible to the saying as such. Beginning, we have said, is a play, and this is no less true in the saying of beginning. Even if beginning renders the saying unnecessary, it also comes into play only with the saying that it surpasses. Beginning is not the object of the saying; it is not the referent for an assertion. Rather, it *is* in the tension of its saying, in the leap that the saying enacts, and in the opening up of a territory not under the control of the saying as such. Beginning is nothing without the saying of beginning, and yet, once it is said, it need not have been said at all.

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 82/57

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 4/4

My own saying of beginning follows in the path of this superfluity and necessity. The goal has not been to record what Heidegger says and thinks about beginning. Rather, it has been a matter of following out, with Heidegger, a sense of beginning that no thinking and no saying can fully control. Where I find the most resonance with Heidegger are those places in which beginning overwhelms even Heidegger's attempts to regulate it. I have elaborated the guiding statement of beginning, i.e. that beginning is being itself, always in terms of these points of excess. In *Being and Time*, for instance, where the unsettling openness of temporal ecstasis threatens to overwhelm the temporal horizon of the Dasein analytic – there beginning *is* for Dasein, and yet it leads Dasein already beyond its horizon. The same point is again made with projection. Temporality begins only where it is overwhelmed in its projective elaboration, i.e. only where projection fails to regulate the very sense of the open that projection first makes manifest. Finally, beginning is there in being, in the play of first and other beginning, and in the overwhelming force of that not-happening which occurs in and with the happening of metaphysics. In each case, what is at issue is nothing other than beginning. One is returned in each case precisely to beginning, and to the necessity of beginning again.

It is to this necessity that I now turn in the present chapter. As with every saying of beginning, there is a certain superfluity to this necessity – a recognition that if I succeed, it will mean beginning again in the midst of a leap that my own thinking and saying cannot wholly embrace.<sup>246</sup> Thus in this chapter and in the one that follows, I offer

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<sup>246</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the present chapter concerning truth. It is here that Heidegger's own work also undergoes the superfluity and necessity of every saying of beginning. While Heidegger locates truth as the realm of thinking the clearing in the most primordial sense, this assignment of clearing to truth will be overturned much later in his essay "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking." The clearing proves unable to be regulated by truth, if indeed such regulation were ever possible, and Heidegger thus finds it necessary to begin again with the clearing, to separate it from the question of truth, and finally to acknowledge that the matter for thought at issue in the clearing proves more primordial, and more

two separate ways in which Heidegger says beginning, ways of saying always the same of the same. Yet, even as each way is separate and bears within it both the necessity and uniqueness of beginning, nevertheless, both contribute to the same project. They reside under the same demand: the necessity to rethink, in light of the end of metaphysics, the relation between, as Heidegger puts it, beyngs and their beyng.<sup>247</sup> Is this demand an identification of beginning, an appeal to a commonality unsuited to the uniqueness of every beginning? Not at all. It is rather the recognition that we begin always in the midst of beings. Any beginning, if it genuinely begins, calls us to and before our relation to beings and our relation to our own being. Especially now, where beginning arises in the uncanny space of the end of metaphysics, the inceptual question of our relation to beings becomes more pressing than ever. Beginning becomes increasingly necessary. In our time, where being is perhaps only a vapor and beings parade past us in the familiarity of the new, we can only begin and find in that beginning a renewed relation to beyngs and to ourselves as a beyng.

In the present chapter, beginning is said by way of the question of the essence of truth, i.e., by way of the clearing for beyng which arises in and with this question. This is the most comprehensive beginning with respect to the redetermination of the relation between beyngs and beyng, for it first opens truth as “that between [*das Zwischen*] for the

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inceptual, than that granted in the thinking of *aletheia*. The inceptual matter for thinking, i.e. clearing, remains even where the path of its saying (in truth) no longer proves suitable for beginning. For a full discussion, see not only Heidegger’s essay (in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins 1993), 427-449) but also Robert Bernasconi, *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1985), Ch. 2 and John Sallis’s essay “At the Threshold of Metaphysics” in *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Die Geschichte des Seyns*. GA 69. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998), §155.

essence of being and the beingness of beings.”<sup>248</sup> The question of truth enacts, in the most direct way, the play of beginning that we have elaborated in our analysis of first and other beginning. It carries out the between in and through which metaphysics comes into play with that open for being which is never simply under the regulation of metaphysics. It is with the question of the essence of truth, one might say, that beginning properly begins.

### **The Open of Truth**

The analysis of the essence of truth begins with a critical reflection upon our “natural” and obvious notion of truth. Truth, Heidegger notes, appears curiously ungrounded in its essence. For all of its apparent obviousness and familiarity, the classical conception of truth says little about its own ground. There remains something questionable in our unquestioned acceptance of the true and of truth. The basis of this questionability, for Heidegger, concerns that which is not thought out in truth, an open that passes unheeded in the relation that truth is. The question of the essence of truth is thus a matter of taking up the essence as such. It is a matter of attending to an open for truth that, while unnoticed, is nevertheless the ground for the possibility of truth as such.

The open is made manifest in the unfolding of the classical sense of truth. Truth is a matter of accord, and primarily of a coming to accord between a proposition and its matter. Heidegger notes,

“The true, whether it be a matter or a proposition, is what accords, the accordant [*das Stimmende*]. Being true and truth here signify accord, and that in a double sense: on the one hand, the consonance [*Einstimmigkeit*] of a matter with what is

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<sup>248</sup> GA 65: 13/10

supposed in advance regarding it and, on the other hand, the accordance of what is meant in the statement with the matter.”<sup>249</sup>

In the first sense, the true is understood as the genuine, e.g. true gold as opposed to false gold. It is not a matter of a relation between proposition and thing, but rather of a relation between a given real object and what is “always and in advance” meant with such an object. Genuine gold thus accords with what is properly contained in our understanding of gold. It is, as Heidegger points out, the matter itself that is in accord. In the second sense, however, “it is not the matter that is in accord, but rather the *proposition*.”<sup>250</sup> It is this sense that forms the nexus of our understanding of truth as such. The true is a certain relation between a proposition and the matter referred to by the proposition. As opposed to the first sense, the locus of truth here resides in the proposition. It is not the matter that is true or false, but the statement about the matter, and the extent to which it accords in its saying with that about which it speaks.

If truth is an accord between the proposition and its matter, everything hinges on the nature and possibility of this relation. The grounding of truth means in the most specific sense the grounding of this relation and its possibility. It means determining how it is that a statement can correspond to its matter, i.e. to that which is not at all a statement. “As long as this “relation” remains undetermined and is not grounded in its essence,” Heidegger notes, “all dispute over the possibility and impossibility, over the nature and degree, of the correspondence loses its way in a void.”<sup>251</sup> It is thus necessary to turn to the relation itself, to ground truth by way of providing a ground for correspondence.

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<sup>249</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit” in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 75. Trans. John Sallis “On the Essence of Truth” in *Pathmarks* ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 138. Henceforth, WW.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 79/141

Noting that correspondence clearly does not suggest that a statement become ‘like’ the matter [note], Heidegger determines correspondence to consist in a kind of presentation [*Vorstellung*].<sup>252</sup> The true statement corresponds to its matter by letting it come forth just as it is. It presents, or perhaps better, re-presents the matter at issue in the statement precisely *as* it is in its particular disposition. The presentative character of the statement is thus grounded upon the presentation of the object; it requires that the object be already accessible in advance, i.e. that it appear always already in and for the statement. Thus Heidegger says, “to present here means to let the thing stand opposed as object.”<sup>253</sup> The statement presents the thing in such a way that it lets the thing appear as what it is and in the way that it is. It brings the object to a stand as the being that it already is, and to this extent, corresponds to the object.

The presentative character of the statement is not that of a subject giving a “representation” of an already given object. There is nothing that stands between the statement and its matter. As Heidegger has already noted in section forty-four of *Being and Time*, “Any interpretation that inserts something else here as what one has in mind in a statement that merely represents falsifies the phenomenal state of affairs about which a statement is made.”<sup>254</sup> Presentation does not point to an act of a subject, nor does it point to the givenness of objects – a givenness that requires only that one point it out. On the contrary, presentation refers to the way in which every statement bears a comportment towards the beings that it lets appear. Correspondence is not between a psychical content and a given object. It is rather the outgrowth of a comportment towards beings such that

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<sup>252</sup> Ibid., “Correspondence here cannot signify a thing-like approximation between dissimilar kinds of things.”

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> SZ 217/201

in the bearing of this comportment, i.e. in the presentative statement, beings appear *as* they are precisely *in* their appearing.

The basis of correspondence thus lies in a certain comportment towards beings, one borne and enacted in the presentative statement about those beings. “But all comportment,” says Heidegger, “is distinguished by the fact that, standing in the open region, it adheres to something opened up *as such*.”<sup>255</sup> Comportment is a directedness towards beings in the open of their being. It persists in an openness that must already be given as such. A statement can be true, i.e. can let beings be as they are, only if beings are in some sense already accessible within the open region made manifest in comportment. It is this ‘prior’ openness of beings that grants to the statement the measure for its truth. In the open beings stand forth, and as standing, provide the directive to which the statement subordinates itself insofar as it is true.<sup>256</sup>

The ground for truth, and thus for the possibility of the correctness of assertions, is the open. In the lecture course, *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, Heidegger refers to this open as a fourfold-unitary openness [*vierfach-einigen Offenheit*], an opening up “(1) of the thing, (2) of the region between thing and man, (3) of man himself with regard to the thing, and (4) of man to fellow man.”<sup>257</sup> Each sense of the open is interconnected with the others, and each follows from the others. Though multiple in its sense, the open is a unitary openness – an open in which each sense plays decisively towards the others. In the first sense, the open is the open of the thing in its presentation, the open in which things come to a stand. Insofar as things come forth, they do so within a region of

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<sup>255</sup> WW: 80/141

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 80/142. “A statement is invested with its correctness by the openness of comportment; for only through the latter can what is opened up really become the standard for the presentative correspondence.”

<sup>257</sup> GA 45: 19/18

openness that defines man's comportment to what is thus opened up. Thus, the second sense comes into play. There is a field of openness according to which one is able to be directed towards beings and to engage them in their open presentation. Beings *are* in the comportment that lets them be, and this comportment traverse a region of openness that plays out between beings and man. This gives way to the third and fourth sense – senses already visible in *Being and Time*: man *is* in his comportment towards beings. We are always already in the midst of beings and concerned for our own being. As such, we come to a stand in the open, and to a stand with and before others, precisely by way of that comportment towards beings that bears the open in which man and beings are first manifest.

Without such an open, there is no possibility for correctness: “Correctness of representation is only possible if it can establish itself in this openness which supports it and vaults over it.”<sup>258</sup> The relation of accord, the correspondence between the statement and the matter, is impossible without the prior open of comportment. Beings, and one's own being, must always already be in play with the open, must be opened as such, in order then to be directed towards those beings and subordinated to them in the presentative statement. The open is therefore always already prior to truth as correctness, or as Heidegger puts it, “...openness holds sway *in* correctness.”<sup>259</sup> It is not a consequence of truth or of the true assertion. The open is not opened only with the occurrence of the presentative statement. Rather, the open “is taken over as what was always already holding sway.”<sup>260</sup> It precedes every statement and every accord as the ground of its possibility. Insofar as there is the possibility of correspondence, of

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 20/19

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

correctness, this possibility bears the comportment towards beings that stands in the open and as such, lets beings first come to a stand. Truth, relegated to the assertion, finds its ground in the open.

“But,” says Heidegger, “the reference to *openness* as the ground of correctness is still quite extrinsic...”<sup>261</sup> There is *prima facie* no essential relation between openness and the traditional conception of truth. At present, the insight into openness remains at best merely a critical reflection, a judgment as to what perhaps lies at the ground of truth, but is itself ungrounded in its legitimacy and justification. Not only, however, is the sense of openness doubtful in a preliminary way, but equally the traditional conception of truth that openness is supposed to ground remains itself questionable. In positing the ground for truth, it is implicitly assumed that the understanding of truth so grounded is legitimate and justifiable.<sup>262</sup> Truth as correctness must first be granted as legitimate in order then to seek its ground. Yet, there is nothing immediately evident to support this assumption. As Heidegger notes, “the characterization of truth as correctness could very well be an error.”<sup>263</sup> It, too, lacks any immediate legitimacy or justification. The open thus remains an extrinsic consideration concerning the ground for truth to the extent that it, along with the understanding of truth, remains itself ungrounded.

In order for the inquiry into the open to become more than a critical reflection, i.e. to be more than merely extrinsic, it is necessary to provide a ground for the open. The open must itself be opened up. This means on the one hand that the open must be shown in its essential relation to truth. It must be demonstrated as that which lies necessarily

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 21/20

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 31/31 “With the return to that openness by which all correctness first becomes possible, we in fact presuppose that the determination of truth as correctness has indeed its own legitimacy.”

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

and decisively at the heart of the traditional conception of truth. This involves more than simply showing how openness becomes correctness. Rather, it involves showing the way in which openness is tied to the metaphysical conception of beings (and of being) that makes correctness possible. It requires an understanding of the way in which openness functions, in some sense, as the condition of possibility for that metaphysical conception even as it is “yoked” inextricably to it. On the other hand, however, the demonstration of this connection must be carried out in such a way as to attempt a ground for the open as such. Openness must not only be shown in its metaphysical possibility. Equally, it must be shown how and in what way the open exceeds this possibility, turns decisively from it, and orients itself solely within the open as such. There is a double necessity to the grounding of the open. It must first be demonstrated that the open is ground for correctness in such a way that this ground is at once the ground for the classical determination of metaphysics. In this way, both the traditional conception of truth and openness as its ground gain their “legitimacy” and justification. Second, however, the open must itself be grounded as such. It must be opened up precisely in its openness – not merely as ground for correctness, but rather in such a way that openness attains its own ground.

It is with this dual necessity of ground that the question of the essence of truth attains its relation to beginning. In the most concrete sense, the relation of this question to beginning is a relation to the specifically Greek beginning, i.e. to *aletheia* as the fundamental experience of truth. It is with the Greek understanding of *aletheia* that truth, at its very inception, comes into an essential relation to openness. It is here (and only here) that truth was originally inseparable from a sense of the open as such. Understood

as *aletheia*, i.e. as unconcealment, truth was essentially, even if not primarily, the open itself, only later falling into the domain of assertion, becoming finally ομοιωσις (assimilation) and correctness. Thus, the question of the essence of truth requires a return to beginning in the sense of a concrete return to the beginning of the Greeks – a recollection of the sense of truth as *aletheia*.

At the same time, however, the return to the Greek beginning puts into play another sense of beginning. It puts into play the first beginning as such.<sup>264</sup> As *aletheia*, truth nevertheless comes under the sway of metaphysics. Even prior to its reduction to correctness and adequation, truth is always already engaged in the project of metaphysics; it is always already “yoked” to a sense of the open that is tied, immediately and decisively, to the opening up of the circulation between beings and being. The open of *aletheia*, while grounding this circulation, becomes absorbed by it, and finds itself determined solely with reference to the very difference between beings and being that *aletheia* itself puts into play.

Heidegger notes, however, that “even ἀληθεια and ἀληθεια are not the same.”<sup>265</sup> While it is tied inextricably to the first beginning, *aletheia* is not thereby wholly encompassed within it. Thus, the question of the essence of truth is not at all a mere reiteration of the first beginning, but rather turns already towards the other beginning. The question begins again, one might say, with *aletheia* and attempts to open up the open of *aletheia* outside of the regulation of the metaphysical circulation between

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<sup>264</sup> The first beginning is not at all identical with the Greek beginning, even if the first beginning comes to be with the Greeks. The difference concerns the sense of beginning. The first beginning does not point, as we have seen, to any historical epoch, but to the arising of the circulation between beings and beingness – a circulation that originates for Heidegger in the guiding question, “What is a being?” Though the site of this enactment of beginning rests initially (if not primarily) with the Greeks, it is not reducible to the Greeks as such. It could be said, albeit with a certain reduction, that it is not the Greeks who give rise to beginning, but rather it is beginning that gives rise to the Greeks.

<sup>265</sup> GA 65: 331/232

beings and being. It is here that we can say truth properly attains beginning, for it attempts to interrogate openness as such. Truth, in this attempt, is not simply the openness for beings and for beingness, but instead becomes a clearing for beyng, i.e. a clearing for that which is essentially self-concealing. In the sense of clearing, *aletheia* does not simply ground the open of metaphysics. It forces a redetermination of the open as such, opening up a movement that carries into the impossibility of metaphysics, and thus brings about a renewed reflection upon the relation between beings and being. *Aletheia* opens the very open for beyng itself.

The task, then, is to mark out the way in which *aletheia* and *aletheia* are not the same, i.e. to carry out the inceptual sense of *aletheia*. This requires, in the first instance, an analysis of *aletheia* as it is understood in the Greek beginning – a recollection of *aletheia* as that which begins in the beginning as the open region for the metaphysical circulation between beings and being. The focus of this portion of the analysis is upon the way in which *aletheia* is the open ground for that circulation as its most essential possibility. It will be shown, then, the extent to which *aletheia* finds itself yoked to the very possibility of metaphysics that it originates.

The second part of the analysis follows from the first. The attempt is made to begin again with *aletheia*, to show how and in what way *aletheia* becomes the clearing for self-concealing, i.e. the clearing for beyng itself. It is here that beginning is broached for the clearing proves to be nothing other than beginning itself. The focus thus falls upon the way in which the open of *aletheia*, passing unthought in the first beginning, compels the necessity of grounding the open as such – an inceptual grounding that in the end will prove to be accomplished only by way of *ereignis*.

## Brightness and the Yoke of the Idea

Heidegger is explicit: “*aletheia* comes under the yoke of the *idea*.”<sup>266</sup> It comes to be bound inextricably to that sense of essence that opens up and puts forth the decisive characterization of metaphysics – *aletheia* falls under the sway of the *idea* as the beingness (*Seiendheit*) of beings. In so doing, *aletheia* becomes a matter of accessibility and not clearing, a matter of presence and the brightness of what shines and not concealment and hiddenness. Under the yoke of the *idea*, *aletheia* appears to lose the privative sense that belongs decisively to it. It loses the *a-privativum* by which it is *unconcealment*, a wresting from concealment, that is, a negation (in a sense yet to be determined) of the concealment and hiddenness that lies at the very heart of *aletheia*.<sup>267</sup> It is almost as if *aletheia*, in the mode of accessibility, loses every connection to concealment, loses, as Heidegger says, “its originary depth and abyssal-dimension.”<sup>268</sup> Tied to the *idea*, *aletheia* can only affirm what is opened up within its open. It can only show, and be the domain for showing, that which shines out into the open, i.e. the idea as such.

It is in some sense purely a matter of shining, or at least, a matter of the pure shining of the *idea*, for as Heidegger notes:

“The idea is pure shining...[it] does not first let something else (behind it) “shine in its appearance” [“*erscheinen*”]; it itself is what shines, it is concerned only with the shining of itself. The idea is that which can shine [*das Scheinsame*]. The essence of the idea consists in its ability to shine and be seen [*Schein- und Sichtsamkeit*].”<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit,” in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1978), 137. Trans. Thomas Sheehan, “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 176. Henceforth, PL.

<sup>267</sup> GA 65: 332/233. “And because ἀληθεια thus becomes φως and is interpreted according to φως, the character of the *a-privativum* gets lost.”

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> PL 131/173

The *idea* comes forth. It is, as we have seen, that which shows itself from out of itself – the visible ‘look’ sighted in advance by which a being can come forth *as* the being that it is. ‘Seen’ in advance, there is nothing prior to the *idea*. This is what it means to say that the *idea* shines from out of itself, that it is “pure” shining. The *idea* does not refer to a previous model, nor is it such a model itself. It is rather that which first lets something come forth, it lets, as Heidegger notes, “the being *come* to us so to speak.”<sup>270</sup> It is always already present in its shining and constant in its visibility. By way of the constantly present shining of the *idea*, a given being can come forth as the being that it is; it can *be* its being and thus come to a stand, i.e. come to presence in the shining of the *idea*. The *idea* is not itself some thing that possesses as a property the quality of shining. It is rather that whose essence “consists in making possible and enabling the shining that allows a view of the visible form.”<sup>271</sup> Shining forth in its look, the *idea* is essentially visible, and thus allows a given being to come forth into visibility as *what* it is.

It is the visibility of the *idea* that serves as the yoke for *aletheia*, or more precisely, the brightness that attends all such visibility. In order to shine, in order to be visible to and for sight, i.e. to be seen in advance, the *idea* must come forth in the light. It must appear in the “brightness” of its shining. Of course, as Heidegger is quick to point out, brightness does not refer at all to a mere optical sensation.<sup>272</sup> It is not a kind of “glimmer” or “brilliance” that stands up and stands alongside the dimness of the dark. Indeed, to some extent brightness is itself nothing visible at all in the sense of that which is seen with the eyes. Rather both brightness and its correlate darkness are “the

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<sup>270</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*. Trans. Ted Sadler (London: Continuum Books, 2002), 42. Henceforth, ET.

<sup>271</sup> PL 135/175

<sup>272</sup> ET 39

*conditions of the possibility* of experiencing the visible in the narrower sense.”<sup>273</sup> Noting the connection between ‘brightness’ [*Helle*] and ‘reverberate’ [*hallen*], Heidegger points out that brightness “is originally a character of tone or *sound*,” and thus not initially a part of the visible at all.<sup>274</sup> The proper sense of brightness comes not through its relation to seeing and to sight, but by way of its relation to hearing – to the sound that reverberates.

What is distinctive about the tone or the sound, Heidegger says, is that it is “what *penetrates*: it not only spreads itself out but forces itself through.”<sup>275</sup> One can easily imagine such penetration, for instance, in the sharp crack of the bat at a ballgame. The sound does not spread gently out across the field, but instead whips out through the air with directed force. Or again, we speak of piercing or shrill sounds, sounds that penetrate dramatically into our awareness. In each case, it is a matter for Heidegger of what goes through, and it is this going-through “which allows the meaning of ‘brightness’ to be transferred from the audible to the visible.”<sup>276</sup> As a going-through, brightness is the condition of possibility for the visible. It is that which, in some sense, grants visibility; it lets visible things come forth. Thus, brightness is a going-through to the extent that it “is that *through which* we see.”<sup>277</sup> Brightness lights up the open region of visibility, that is, it lights up visibility as such. It holds open the visible such that one can precisely penetrate the visible, i.e. see and perceive visible things in the open of their shining.

In its connection to sound, light thus gains the primary sense of *transparency*.<sup>278</sup> Indeed, for Heidegger, “the *essence* of light and brightness is to be transparent.”<sup>279</sup> Of

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 40

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 41

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Heidegger is playing here on the German word for the transparent, *das Durchsichtige*, what lets visibility through. The transparent is thus quite literally a kind of going through according to which visibility is possible.

course, to the extent that we speak of the transparency of brightness, this must be distinguished from the usual sense of transparency. Brightness, as the transparent, does not mean that which itself allows light to pass through it (as, for example, with a glass). Rather, it is the “genuinely originally transparent.”<sup>280</sup> It is that lighting up according to which anything may pass through at all. It is, we might say, the condition of possibility for transparency in the normal sense. Brightness lets visible things through and first allows something to be viewed as a visible thing. It makes possible in its brightness the visibility of everything visible. As such, “brightness is visibility, the opening and spreading out of the open.”<sup>281</sup> In its transparency, it is the very open itself, the open through which one penetrates to beings, i.e. to things in their visible presence. Thus, says Heidegger, “we see two things: light first lets the object through *to be viewed* as something visible, and also lets-through the view *to the visible object*.”<sup>282</sup> As the open of visibility, brightness not only opens up beings in their visibility, i.e. allows them to come to a stand, but also opens the region in which such beings can be visible to and for sight. It makes beings available to vision according to the ‘look’ that they offer and lets them come forth in their visible aspect.

It is with this dual sense of transparency that brightness shows its essential relation to the *idea*. The “essence” of brightness, what Heidegger calls the “letting-through for seeing,” is “the basic accomplishment of the *idea*.”<sup>283</sup> The *idea* in its shining is that which, sighted in advance, lets beings come forth in their visible ‘look.’ It lets beings take their stand in the open of visibility and thereby become available to sight as

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 42

the beings that they are. The *idea* is nothing other than its brightness, and likewise, brightness names ever and only the shining of the *idea*.

At the essential core of this connection is accessibility. To say that the *idea* is brightness, and vice versa, is to say nothing other than that the *idea*, insofar as it is transparency as such, lets through both the being itself and the view to that being. It grants access to beings, and this in a double sense that mirrors the two-fold structure of transparency. According to the first sense, the *idea* grants access to beings themselves, that is, to beings precisely in their being. It lets beings through by offering, in advance, the very being of those beings. Beings come forth according to ‘what’ they are, and it is only insofar as being (in the sense of beingness) is given in advance that beings *are* at all within the visible open. Thus, Heidegger is able to say, “being, the *idea*, is what lets-through: the *light*.”<sup>284</sup> The light of visibility, the brightness that names the open for the visible as such is ever and only beingness, the *idea* as such. In its connection to the *idea*, the open of brightness thus proves to be accessibility in an exceptional sense: it names the arising and coming forth of beings as such in the presence of their being. It points not simply to beings, but to the being of beings, to ‘what’ beings are such that they can come forth at all.

Yet, if brightness gives way to the *idea*, it is equally the case that the *idea* in some sense gives way to brightness. This is the second sense of accessibility. While beings are accessible in themselves, i.e. in their being, it is also the case that they are accessible precisely in and for sight. The *idea* is always already something *seen*. Beings come forth as beings, i.e. according to their *idea*, only within the field of the visible. They offer a visible ‘look,’ a presentation that is not self-contained, but instead penetrates across the

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<sup>284</sup> ET 43

region of visibility. Beings *are* in their being according to the light of visibility, the brightness that shines in and for sight. Of course, we must be clear. It is no ordinary sense of sight that is intended here. The sight that brings forth the *idea*, that grants a view of the *idea*, “does not see by merely staring at what is present at hand or what is otherwise already accessible...”<sup>285</sup> The seeing of the *idea* is not a seeing that occurs with the eyes alone; it is not the *sensation* of vision. On the contrary, it is a “productive seeing [*ersehen*].”<sup>286</sup> It is a seeing “which draws forth, a seeing which in the very act of seeing compels what is to be seen before itself.”<sup>287</sup> The view of an *idea* is not separate from the *idea* itself. Rather, it is precisely in being seen that an *idea* is or can be at all. The productive sighting of the *ideas* brings them forth, lets them come to a stand, and in bringing forth the *ideas*, this sight brings forth at once beings *as* beings – beings in the open of their *ideas*. Ideas *are* insofar as they are brought forth. They do not somehow exist prior to their arising within productive seeing, and they are not “present but somehow hidden objects which one could lure out through a kind of hocus-pocus.”<sup>288</sup> Rather, the *ideas* arise in the open of visibility according to their being seen, and with them, beings arise as well. The productive seeing of the *ideas* is at once the granting of access to beings according to the ‘look’ of their *idea*. In the bringing forth of the *ideas*, beings become visible, and indeed, become visible precisely to and for sight. Beings are given visibility within the open of their being, within that open granted and maintained by the sighting of the *idea*.

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<sup>285</sup> GA 45: 85/76

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. The translation of *ersehen* as “productive seeing” follows that used by Rojcewicz and Shuwer. However, it should be noted that the prefix *er-* suggests something like an upsurge or eventuation of seeing, one that occurs only with the very seeing itself. It does not “produce” anything in the mechanical or technical sense.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> ET 53

Taken together as a unity, the two senses of accessibility do more than simply elaborate the connection between brightness and the *idea*. Rather, they articulate a particular, and peculiar, view of beings – a view tied to the open in which beings come forth, or better, tied to the coming forth of beings into their open. Brightness is indeed the accomplishment of the *idea*. It grants the *idea* in the pureness of its self-showing, that is, in the coming forth of beings in their being. Likewise, the *idea* is the accomplishment of brightness. The *idea* shows itself in and for the field of visibility opened up in brightness. It is brought forth in the productive seeing that lights up the *ideas* as such. In each case, it is precisely a matter of such bringing forth. It is a matter of what, in the Greek sense, is *aletheia* – unconcealment. As Heidegger points out:

“A being in its beingness (*ousia*) is, briefly and properly, the unconcealedness of the being itself. Beings, determined with regard to their unconcealedness, are thereby grasped with respect to their coming forth and emerging, their *phusis*, i.e., as *idea*, and so are grasped as nothing other than beings in their beingness. To productively see a being as such in its beingness – in what it is as a being – means nothing else than to encounter it simply in its unconcealedness...”<sup>289</sup>

Beings come forth in their being from out of concealment. They step forth into the light, and this means, they arise *as* beings according to their ‘look,’ their *idea*. Thus, beings are unconcealed and brought into the open of their view. What is most essential about beings is precisely that they come forth, that they *are* only in the coming-forth, and that insofar as they are, beings stand unconcealed with regards to their being. The link between brightness and the *idea* thus points always to the unconcealment of beings, to *aletheia* as the open arising of beings in their being and for visibility. To say that the *idea* shines forth is to say only this unconcealment. The beingness of beings, the light in which beings come forth, determines *aletheia*, or rather *aletheia*, the unconcealedness of beings,

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<sup>289</sup> GA 45: 97/86

proves to be nothing other than the emergence of the *idea*, the light of being which, sighted in advance, grants access to beings.

*Aletheia* is thus yoked to the *idea*. The open of its unconcealment names always and only the light of beingness, the idea which in its brightness lets beings come forth. *Aletheia* is tied as well to accessibility, both to the accessibility of beings in their being and to the accessibility of beings for sight. As Heidegger explicitly points out, “with Plato *aletheia* becomes *accessibility*, in the twofold sense of a being’s standing detached as such and of the passageway for perceiving.”<sup>290</sup> Yoked to the *idea*, *aletheia* becomes merely such accessibility. It turns, as we mentioned earlier, wholly to the side of presence, to the manifestness of the visible and to the stability of beings in the presence of their being. There is nothing of concealment in this view of *aletheia*, nothing of what must perhaps always remain hidden from the open view of presence. On the contrary, *aletheia* is the open only to the extent that it grants a passage to and for beings. It is simply open, and does not name the open as such, but points instead to the grasping of beings in their being, to that accessibility which holds fast to beings in order to sustain them in the bright shining of their presence.

All of the troubles and difficulty with *aletheia* follow, for Heidegger, from this yoke to the *idea*, a yoke that is not a mere oversight or mistake, but one tied to the deepest necessities of the Greek task. The submergence and forgetting of *aletheia*, the move towards truth as correctness, and finally, the long, slow process of decline that flows out from the first beginning – all of these occurrences find their basis and ground in the experience of *aletheia* according to the light of the *idea*, i.e. according to the accessibility of beings both in themselves and for the sight that sees them. It is with the

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<sup>290</sup> GA 65: 332/232

yoke to the *idea* that a beginning is both gained and lost with *aletheia* – gained insofar as this experience opens up the first beginning of Western thought, but lost insofar as it covers over the essential ‘truth’ of *aletheia* as such, that truth which will drive the need and necessity of an other beginning. This can be shown according to the three most fundamental consequences that occur as a result of the yoke of *aletheia* to the *idea*.

The first and most obvious consequence is the move from truth as *aletheia* to truth as correctness. Though the specific particulars of this occurrence exceed the scope of the present analysis, the basis and ground for this occurrence can still be noted. Tied to accessibility by way of the *idea*, *aletheia* is tied to each “side” of the relation that obtains between beings and the view of those beings. *Aletheia* concerns both the coming forth of beings and the perception (seeing) of beings. It operates as the space of their between, or more precisely, as the site of their relation. It takes its place relative to the “seeing” of beings *as they are in their being*. *Aletheia* therefore becomes a matter of assimilation, of guaranteeing the perception of beings with reference to the measure provided by those beings themselves. *Aletheia* comes to be determined by *homoiesis*, that is, by the correctness of the relation between what is sighted (or said) about beings and what those beings are in themselves. It becomes, therefore, a matter of truth as correctness.

The second consequence occurs in some measure along with the first. *Aletheia can* become a matter of correctness precisely because it is always already connected to a being, and to the arising of beings precisely in their being. As Heidegger notes in *Contributions*, “In all cases, *aletheia* continues to denote unconcealedness of a being...”<sup>291</sup> The yoke to the *idea* means then that *aletheia* is yoked decisively to the fundamental metaphysical determination about beings. *Aletheia* names the beingness of

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<sup>291</sup> GA 65: 332/233

beings. To this extent, it is inextricably linked to the first beginning and to what arises in and with that beginning. *Aletheia* is the open in which arises the setting forth of beings, and with this occurrence, the setting back of beings into beingness. As the open of beings, it is the open for that play of circulation between beings and being – the play that grounds beings in being and thus with this grounding answers the fundamentally Greek question, “What is a being?” It is here that *aletheia* is most fully and firmly tied to presence, for it is tied to the sustaining of beings, i.e. to their constant presence over and against the threat of their possible loss. As the open for beingness, *aletheia* holds open the possibility of holding fast to beings, of maintaining them in their being and thus guaranteeing the stability of their emergence – a stability that overrides any sense of absence or non-being. Thus for the Greeks, a being *is* its unconcealedness, and indeed, unconcealedness is the primary character of beings.<sup>292</sup> However, this means only that beings show forth in their being, that they emerge in and with the constant presence of being, and that they stand in the fullness of a shining undimmed by absence or concealment.

Tied to the metaphysical determination of beingness, and thus tied to the first beginning as such, the third consequence for *aletheia* follows from the second. Even as unconcealment is the basic character of beings, it nevertheless remains unquestioned by the Greeks themselves.<sup>293</sup> They did not inquire into *aletheia* as such, that is, into *its* ground and possibility. The “essence” of *aletheia*, the very sense and enactment of the open as such, comes to be submerged once *aletheia* is yoked to the *idea*. Of all of the consequences, this proves to be at once the most decisive and the most far-reaching. It is

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<sup>292</sup> GA 45: 132/115. “For we must bear in mind that to the Greeks *aletheia* was a – indeed *the* – determination of beings themselves...”

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 120/105

decisive to the extent that it determines the course and path of the first beginning. The project of metaphysics is enabled in and through this loss of the original essence of *aletheia*. Once *aletheia* is simply accessibility, once it becomes solely a matter of the *idea*, the open as such becomes a (forgotten) function of presence. It gives way to the constant presence of beingness and to the stability of beings. Tied to beings, any inquiry into *aletheia* can only be, and indeed becomes, an inquiry into beings themselves, and thus into beingness as their ground. Yet, this consequence is also the most far-reaching insofar as, on Heidegger's account, it continues even today. The submergence of *aletheia*, of the question of the open as such, is carried as concealed in the very tradition of metaphysics that it makes possible. It is not an historical event that is noteworthy simply as a question of scholarship. Rather, it carries itself out in the modes of exhaustion and depletion that we have already noted.<sup>294</sup> In the abandonment of being, in the exhaustion of metaphysical possibility, and in the fast attention to the new, the neglect of *aletheia happens*, and carries itself out as this happening.

With this third consequence, the question of *aletheia* bears a renewed relation to beginning, that is, it bears the possibility of an other beginning. It opens the possibility of attending to the open of *aletheia* as such – an attention that carries all of the difficulty and complexity of such a beginning. The task, then, is to fathom *aletheia* in its ground, to open up the open as such at the very limit of metaphysical possibility. It is a task that requires, paradoxically, an attention to *concealment*, i.e. to that concealment at the heart of *aletheia* that is itself concealed in the unfolding of *aletheia* as beingness. As an attention to both openness and concealment, or better, to the open that conceals, the

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<sup>294</sup> See my Chapter 3 above.

matter at issue is ultimately that of the clearing, for it is with the clearing that *aletheia*, in the sense of the open as such, attains its ground.

### **Clearing for Self-Concealing**

The turn of *aletheia* towards the clearing, i.e. towards the open purely as such, is at one and the same time a turn away from the purely metaphysical determination of *aletheia*. It is a turn that seeks to enact, in the most decisive way, the substance of Heidegger's claim that "*aletheia* and *aletheia* are not the same." In thinking the clearing, the attempt is made to think an open region that persists outside of the domain of accessibility that essentially determines the Greek understanding.<sup>295</sup> Or at least, within the context of my analyses, it should be said that one thinks with the clearing a concealment that occurs in and with the metaphysical enactment of the open. It is not as if, in the turn, we now substitute one sense of *aletheia* for another. We are not interchanging a misguided and rudimentary notion of truth with one that is more essential, more 'true.' Moreover, it cannot easily be said that *aletheia* in the Greek sense is somehow separate from *aletheia* in the sense of clearing. While it is indeed the case that they are not the same, everything hinges on the character of the 'not,' of the concealment that attends the open – a 'negating' that is not reducible to mere differentiation or opposition.

*Aletheia*, in the sense of clearing, is essentially tied to concealment. When we say that the clearing is carried as concealed in the domination of metaphysics, when we point

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<sup>295</sup> As Kenneth Maly points out, however, this open region of *aletheia* should be heard verbally, i.e. as a happening. It is not at all a static region of openness, but rather an open that comes to pass in the eventuation of the clearing as such. For his excellent discussion of this point, see "From Truth to *Αληθεια* to Opening and Rapture" *Heidegger Studies* 6 (2002): 33-46.

to the forgottenness of *aletheia* in the midst of the openness of the *idea*, this is not the result of some neglect or oversight. It is not an attempt to redress an historical misconception or scholarly failing. Rather, it points to the fundamental occurrence that *aletheia*, in its clearing, precisely *conceals itself*. Concealment attends the happening of the clearing; it is, both literally and interpretively, at the heart of un-concealment. The ‘failure’ of the Greeks to think *aletheia* is not therefore a failure in any real sense, but rather points to what is most primordial in *aletheia* itself. The loss of the *a-privativum*, the withdrawal and concealment of concealment itself, originates from out the experience of *aletheia* itself. While it is true that the Greeks, on Heidegger’s account, did not think *aletheia* primordially enough, this points only to the fact that the specific necessity of their task inclined them away from concealment, inclined them towards the presence of what presences, and thus directed them to what was opened up with and in the open itself. It is not intended to suggest that the clearing, or the concealment that attends every clearing, is somehow *extrinsic* to *aletheia*.

The task of thinking *aletheia* bears the necessity of inquiring into the clearing as such, into that clearing which lies in the midst of un-concealment, and which conceals itself and withdraws in the metaphysical appropriation of the open as what is accessible, i.e. in the open as *idea*. It is a task that begins initially by way of following the withdrawal itself, of tracing out the way in which the turn towards the clearing precisely turns away from any metaphysical sense of the open. Heidegger marks this turn explicitly and decisively in his later essay, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking.” Recalling that the task of philosophy has always been to attend to the matter itself [*die Sache selbst*], Heidegger notes that this has in some sense always been a

project of presence, of the *appearance* of the matter both in and for philosophical thought. Yet, any appearance of the matter for thought must first *be able* to appear, it “necessarily occurs in luminosity.”<sup>296</sup> Thus retracing, though without naming it as such, the decisive characterization of *aletheia* for the Greeks, Heidegger proceeds to note that, “only by virtue of some sort of brightness can what shine show itself, that is, radiate.”<sup>297</sup> If philosophy has been in its history a matter of presence, then it has likewise been a matter of the open insofar as it grants presence, i.e. of the open as the accessible way to presence, and thus as that brightness which allows the matter for thought to appear.

It is here that Heidegger now proceeds to separate the open precisely from this characterization, to point to the open as something concealed within this account, something that must necessarily withdraw wherever brightness takes hold. Says Heidegger:

“But brightness in its turn rests upon something open, something free, which it might illuminate here and there, now and then. Brightness plays in the open and strives there with darkness. Wherever a present being encounters another present being or even only lingers near it...there openness already rules, the free region is in play.”<sup>298</sup>

Openness is not to be equated with brightness. It is not now simply a matter of the accessibility of presence. On the contrary, openness is always already in play wherever there is brightness. It is, noting with caution the metaphysical attachments of such a phrase, the condition of possibility for brightness as such. Wherever beings stand in brightness, in luminosity, there the open already plays forth – not simply as brightness

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<sup>296</sup> Martin Heidegger, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking” trans. David Farrell Krell in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), 441. Originally published as “Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens” in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1976). Henceforth, EP.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

itself, but as that which lets beings be along with their brightness, as that which is anterior to the shining forth of their appearance.

This open, says Heidegger, is to be called the clearing.<sup>299</sup> Noting the relation of this term both to the sense of a forest clearing and to its verbal root *lichten* (to make something light), he notes that “to lighten something means to make it light, free and open, e.g., to make the forest free of trees at one place. The free space thus originating is the clearing.”<sup>300</sup> If we follow for a moment the image that Heidegger offers, an image that will prove to conceal itself as image, the clearing “is the open region for everything that becomes present and absent.”<sup>301</sup> Just as with a clearing in the forest, the open region first lets anything appear within the open as such, whether what appears be simply present, or present by virtue of its absence (e.g. as with the trees cleared from the clearing). The clearing is that free space which first allows brightness to reign and gives the open for things to show forth within the clearing.<sup>302</sup>

Yet, Heidegger is adamant. It is not the open insofar as it is lit up, that is, insofar as it is filled with light. Heidegger points out, “What is light in the sense of being free and open has nothing in common with the adjective “light” which means “bright,” neither linguistically nor materially.”<sup>303</sup> The clearing is not itself visible, is not itself lit up within that which it grants and shows forth. The clearing, even as it grants light, even as it lets light “stream into the clearing,” does not show forth within the light. It is not to be understood with reference to that light whose luminosity allows beings to show forth in

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid. “We call this openness that grants a possible letting appear and show “clearing.””

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 442

<sup>302</sup><sup>302</sup> For an excellent analysis and explication of the sense and etymology of *Lichtung* and its related words in Heidegger, see David Farrell Krell, *Intimations of Mortality* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1986), 80-94.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 441-2

their shining appearance. Even as it gives light to reign within it, the clearing is that which precisely conceals itself, and indeed, conceals itself within the very open that it grants.

With its removal from brightness, and from the very light itself, the clearing withdraws from every metaphysical sense of openness. It withdraws from any attachment to beings or to beingness in the sense of the *idea*. Whereas for the Greeks *aletheia* is inextricably bound to beings and is the very character of beings themselves, *aletheia* in the sense of the clearing carries out a removal from beings. It is “*definitively disengaged from all beings* in every manner of interpretation...”<sup>304</sup> The clearing is not determined with reference to presence or to what it gives as present within the open that it clears. Even as it grants the full brightness of the light, even as it grants the circulation of beings and the setting back of beings into being, the clearing is not of the order of that which it puts into play. It withdraws in the midst of beings.

Yet, if the clearing removes itself from the metaphysical sense of beings, this does not mean that it thereby neglects beings as such. The clearing does not forsake every relation to beings, or to put the matter differently, the clearing does not simply become a pure (and somewhat ineffable) open – one that would be, as Heidegger describes it, “the emptiest of the empty.”<sup>305</sup> On the contrary, in the withdrawal and removal of the clearing from the metaphysical sense, the clearing both grants, and is granted, a more primordial relation to beings. In keeping with the image of the clearing, we might say that just as it lets through both light and brightness, the clearing first lets beings through, that is, it lets beings be, and come to be, in its open.

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<sup>304</sup> GA 65: 329/231 [Italics in text]

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 338/237 [Italics removed]

Heidegger has already pointed to this sense of the clearing in his essay “On the Essence of Truth” insofar as he locates freedom as the ‘essence’ of truth. Granting the limitations of this essay, and granting, too, a certain transcendental mode of speaking that Heidegger will later reject, freedom “reveals itself as letting beings be.”<sup>306</sup> Of course, this initially appears to instantiate the very claim that was just refused, namely that the clearing neglects beings. Heidegger notes, “to let something be has here the negative sense of letting it alone, of renouncing it, of indifference and even neglect.”<sup>307</sup> It appears precisely as a way of forsaking beings. Far from retaining a more primordial relation to beings, freedom in the sense of letting be appears to abandon them. Yet, Heidegger quickly points out that the sense of freedom he has in mind is precisely the opposite; it is positive rather than negative, and thus “to let be is to engage oneself with beings.”<sup>308</sup> Discounting every metaphysical sense of engagement, that is, every engagement that would be merely the management and planning of beings, Heidegger asserts that the engagement with beings is an engagement with the *open* of beings, with that open in which beings come forth precisely as the beings that they are. To engage beings in their freedom, i.e. to let beings be, means that one attends to the open that accompanies every being, it means therefore “to engage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were, along with itself.”<sup>309</sup> In this engagement, one makes no demands upon beings, one does not hold them to this or that standard or expect them to appear in this or that way. Indeed, one attends to beings in some sense precisely through withdrawing from them, removing

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<sup>306</sup> Martin Heidegger, “On the Essence of Truth” trans. John Sallis, in *Pathmarks* ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 83/144. Henceforth, OET.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 84/144

oneself from beings and thus allowing them to come forth according to the open in which they are.

What is decisive in the account of freedom is that one does not attend to beings as this or that already given being. Rather, one attends to the very showing of beings themselves, or put more precisely, one attends to their coming forth as such. The letting be of beings is one that lets beings stand in the open in such a way that the very open itself becomes manifest. Beings are freed insofar as they stand in the “free” of the open, that is, insofar as beings disclose themselves in their disclosure as such.

As freedom, the clearing bears a primordial relation to beings insofar as it is that open which first makes possible the coming to presence of beings at all. As Heidegger will say much later, “The clearing grants first of all the possibility of the path to presence, and grants the possible presencing of that presence itself.”<sup>310</sup> It does not simply grant beings, as if beings were somehow already extant within an open expanse. Rather, the clearing gives beings to come forth precisely *as* beings and in the way that they *are* as beings. In the clearing, beings come forth *in their very coming forth itself*. Thus, Heidegger shifts the clearing to the side of possibility. It is that which makes presence, and the presencing of that presence, possible in its coming to be. Of course, the sense of possibility remains removed (as it has since *Being and Time*) from every metaphysical determination, i.e. from every relation to the actual and to the necessary. In its possibility, the clearing points to the way in which beings bring the open of their happening, as it were, along with them. It points to the measureless sense of the open that attends every happening of beings, to the ex-posure of beings precisely in their open, and finally, to the open itself as that which “possibilizes” beings in their coming to be.

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<sup>310</sup> EP: 445

The clearing, it could be said, clears itself insofar as it clears beings in their possibility, and thus engages beings even as it withdraws and removes itself from the beings that it clears.

Yet, if the clearing clears beings in their possibility, i.e. insofar as they *are* beings, then this cannot mean that the clearing grants beings *in their being*. Even as it cannot avoid, in some sense, a certain metaphysical reference, the clearing is not a ‘condition of possibility’ for beings or even for beingness. On the one hand, this is the case to the extent that every sense of condition, and indeed, every sense of the *a priori* entailed by such a condition, pertains always and only to beingness, to the *idea*. To say, then, that the clearing is the condition of possibility for beings would thus say nothing other than that the clearing persists in beingness, that it remains wholly encompassed within the accessibility of brightness and the light – a claim already refused by the very sense of the clearing itself. On the other hand, the clearing cannot be a condition of possibility for beings precisely because the clearing serves to shift the very sense of beings themselves. To think beings in the clearing no longer means that one thinks beings according to their metaphysical determination. Beings are not simply present in the ‘what’ of their being. On the contrary, with the open of the clearing, beings happen in a way fundamentally different from their occurrence within the brightness of beingness. Beings happen now in the open of being, or more simply, to think the clearing of beings means always to think being itself.

The freedom of the clearing and the letting-be of beings happens in relation to being and not beingness. This is at once both the simplest and most difficult aspect of the clearing. It is the simplest to the extent that the thinking of being “does not require a

solemn approach and the pretension of arcane erudition,” but rather on Heidegger’s account, “all that is needed is simple wakefulness in the proximity of any random unobtrusive being, an awakening that all of a sudden sees that the being “is.””<sup>311</sup> Echoing in some sense the earlier analysis of freedom, the attention to the open of being occurs precisely in and with the engagement with beings. There is in principle nothing difficult here, and nothing is needed beyond a wakefulness before beings – an attention to the “suddenness” with which beings *are* in the open of their happening. The simplicity is such that any being will do. One does not need, as with *Being and Time*, to attend to a specific being, e.g. Dasein, whose being is such as to be concerned for its being. The procedure here, true to the sense of *aletheia* as the clearing, does not proceed by way of beings. It does not begin with a being, but rather calls only for an awakening that attends – in whatever being – to the suddenness of being, an awakening that simply thinks being itself.

Yet, this wakefulness to being, to the “it is” of beings, is also the most difficult aspect of the clearing. It calls us to attend to an open that is not of the order of metaphysics, to an open whose very sense is such as to withdraw from metaphysics, and thus we are called to an open for being that gives us to leap out and away from the habitual ground of metaphysics. Heidegger says, “To think being requires in each instance a leap, a leap into the groundless from the habitual ground upon which for us beings always rest.”<sup>312</sup> As opposed to the straightforward setting back of beings into the

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<sup>311</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides* trans. André Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 149. Henceforth, PM.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 150

ground of beingness, the thinking of beyng leaves us groundless, casts us forward into an abyss and situates us with respect to a ground that “never bears.”<sup>313</sup>

On the one hand, this groundlessness of beyng, or better, the groundlessness that *is* beyng,<sup>314</sup> suggests a turning away from what Heidegger calls the “bridges and railings and ladders of explanation.”<sup>315</sup> The leap into the open ignores every “factual” or “actual” claim with regards to beings and arising from beings. This is not intended to suggest that beyng is another speculative metaphysics, albeit one more radical than that which originates in Plato. On the contrary, the leap away from “explanation” composes for Heidegger a recognition that all grounding of beings (and above all, their grounding in the “fact” of their being) occurs only by way of those beings themselves. Such grounding expresses an attachment solely to beings and thus an attachment that for Heidegger amounts to an oblivion of beyng. The leap into the groundless therefore leaps away from every habitual (and ultimately metaphysical) understanding of beings, away from every common and familiar ground.

On the other hand, the groundlessness of beyng suggests an initial characterization of the relation that abides between beings and beyng. As Heidegger notes,

“For everywhere and always and in the closest proximity to the most inconspicuous beings there already dwells the openness of the possibility of explicitly thinking the “it is” of beings as the free, in the clearing of which beings appear as unconcealed. The open, to which every being is liberated as if to its freedom, is beyng itself. Everything unconcealed is as such secured in the open of beyng, i.e., in the groundless.”<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., “Being, however, is not a ground but is the groundless.”

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 150

The leap into the clearing, i.e. into the open of beyng, first opens up beings in their open. It lets beings be in the suddenness of their happening and event. Beings are not given in their being, that is, they are not set back upon a ground, but are opened up for and in the abyss of the open as such. They are revealed, if it can be said this way, in the groundlessness of their beyng. The abyssal open of beyng, the open in which beings *are*, is thus nothing like a container or 'space' that, already extant, lets beings appear in its expanse. It is rather, Heidegger says, an open that "first releases even space-time as an "open," traversable, extension and spread."<sup>317</sup> The groundlessness of the open points to the way in which the open is more primordial than every given space and every given time. Insofar as it is the free, and in its freedom gives beings forth in their freedom, the open of beyng first makes possible an open in which beings can come forth in the time and space of their appearance. In this context, Heidegger speaks in *Contributions* of the play of time-space, the *Zeitspielraum* – a play of opening that in some sense first gives there to be an open at all in the sense of a time and space for the coming to presence of beings.

Beings *are* in this open. As we have already said, beings bring the open with them in their happening and coming forth. The open, in the sense of the free, names *how beings happen*. In its primordial groundlessness, the clearing for beyng is not an addendum to beings. As Heidegger says, "Beyng is not a subsequent species, not a cause that is added, not an encompassing that stands behind and above beings."<sup>318</sup> On the contrary, clearing articulates the very happening of beings themselves precisely in their happening. To say that beings come forth in the open says nothing other than that beings

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 149

<sup>318</sup> GA 65: 258/182

are; it says the “it is” of beings that marks the “essentially unmediated and immediate irruption of beyng into beings...”<sup>319</sup> This is the decisive “fact” of the clearing: it names a happening, and not a givenness, of beings and of beyng.

In its groundless and abyssal openness, the leap into the clearing marks the eventuation both of beings and of beyng. This is what is suggested in the claim that the open in which beings *are* is nothing other than the happening of those beings in their coming to be. To the extent that the open is ever and only beyng itself, the happening of beings is at once the happening of beyng. The open abides in the “between” of beings and beyng, and thus clears both in its eventuation. Heidegger puts the point directly in *Contributions*: “Beyng – rather, the essential happening – is that out of and back to which a being as a being is above all unconcealed and sheltered and comes to be.”<sup>320</sup> A being happens from out of beyng. It comes to be in its unconcealment by way of the clearing that first grants to a being that it is. Yet, we must also say that insofar as it *is*, a being carries the clearing of beyng with it, as it were, in its eventuation. In the giving forth of a being, beyng happens as well, and indeed in such a way that only with the happening of beyng is there a being at all. Beyng clears beings, and in the same movement beings clear beyng. There is no sense of an *a priori* in this happening, no assignment of priority (e.g. through the establishment of an ontological “difference” between beyng and beings) that counts beyng more primordial than beings. There is only the clearing and with it, the coming to be of beings that eventuates both out from and back into beyng.

It is here that the groundlessness of beyng gains its fullest sense. Beyng, and with it the clearing itself, is not groundless simply because it withdraws and recedes from

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<sup>319</sup> PM 149

<sup>320</sup> GA 65: 258/182

every metaphysical sense of ground. The abyssal sense of beyng does not constitute either a counterconcept or opposition to the “ground” of metaphysics. Rather, it points to the way in which beyng *conceals itself*, to the way in which beyng is self-concealing within the very clearing that it grants and sustains. This is why we must speak of a leap into beyng (and with it, a leap into beings). Even within the relation between beings and beyng, beyng “is never autochthonous in beings.”<sup>321</sup> It is not somehow derived from beings or found “within” them, as it were. To undergo the happening of beings in their coming to be is at once to leap into beyng – a leap that does not bridge the “space” between beings and beyng, but rather opens up the abyss of the clearing for the self-concealing of beyng.

The between of the clearing, that between which clears both beings and beyng, is not simply a clearing. It is instead a “clearing for self-concealing.” [*Die Lichtung für das Sichverbergen*] Initially, this says only what we have already seen. The clearing clears beyng and thus clears that which conceals itself in its essence. Heidegger notes, “Beyng is not merely hidden; it withdraws and conceals itself. From this we derive an essential insight: the clearing, in which beings are, is not simply bounded and delimited by something hidden but by something self-concealing.”<sup>322</sup> It is important to note in this account that the self-concealing of beyng is not the concealing of some ‘thing’ that is nevertheless there, but merely hidden. The very pairing of beyng with the clearing makes such a notion impossible insofar as the clearing is that which first grants anything like a ‘there’ at all such that something could appear within it. In addition, if there is no ‘thing’ that conceals itself, then it is likewise the case that the self-concealing of beyng is not

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<sup>321</sup> PM 150

<sup>322</sup> GA 45: 210/178

somehow prior to the clearing itself. On the contrary, the happening of the clearing *is* the happening of being in its self-concealing.

It is the connection to happening that gives Heidegger to conclude that we cannot say the clearing is “bounded” by something “hidden,” but must instead say that it is “*for* self-concealing.” The clearing clears beings in their coming to be: it clears them ‘for’ being. The coming forth of beings into the freedom of the open points always to the open itself. It points to the eventuation of being out of which (and back to which) beings are. This does not refer, as we have said, to an *a priori* condition for beings, but rather points to the way in which beings happen in the leaping suddenness of being, i.e. to the happening of being itself. The clearing is thus ‘for’ self-concealing insofar as it spans the abyss of the between according to which beings play forth being and being plays forth beings.

As the clearing for self-concealing, the open between of the play of beings and being necessarily says something decisive about being. It points to being as that which *is* its self-concealing, that is, it points to the self-concealing of being as one that is “primordially proper to it. [Being] shows itself and withdraws at the same time.”<sup>323</sup> Being comes into the clearing. Indeed, it must come forth in the clearing to the extent that it is borne (that is, secured) in the happening of beings. Yet, it does not come forth in the manner of something present. Being, even as it gives beings and with them, the very clearing for beings, does not appear in the manner and way of what it gives. It withdraws and conceals itself, and it is precisely this self-concealing that “delimits” the clearing, that opens the clearing first of all and thus grants beings in their free coming forth. Being *is* in the clearing; it is the very clearing itself. Yet, it comes forth only in the

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<sup>323</sup> GA 45: 210/178

manner of withdrawal; it ‘appears’ in the clearing precisely through its withdrawal, and is thus secured only and essentially in its self-concealing. Beyng, it could be said, plays itself out, and thus plays forth the clearing in which beyng comes forth in its most proper self-concealment. As Heidegger points out, “This vacillating self-refusal is what is properly cleared in the in the clearing...”<sup>324</sup>

Beyng does not simply withdraw. It conceals itself and shows itself precisely in its concealment. This is not, on Heidegger’s account, a mere being-absent. All of our previous critiques of beyng as a ‘thing’ hold here as well. Rather, the self-concealing of beyng is such as to undo the very notion of the ‘self’ that would conceal. In its hesitant vacillation, beyng is that which refuses every presence (and every absence, as well). It withdraws from every granting of what comes to presence even as, in its withdrawal, it is that which allows such granting to happen and come forth. This is the peculiarity of the refusal of beyng: it gives in its refusal precisely that from which it withdraws, and in the giving, makes manifest the withdrawal itself. This is what is said in the claim that the clearing is for self-concealing. Beyng is the clearing and this means that beings come forth, i.e. beings are, in the vacillating self-concealing of beyng itself.

At this point it becomes difficult, if indeed it was ever possible, to speak about beings in any usual sense. The move toward the clearing, the opening up of the clearing for self-concealing, forces a decisive reorientation of beings themselves. Beings are no longer simply there in their being. Heidegger makes clear in his account that in some sense beings have never been ‘simply there.’ Even where beings are the most obvious and familiar, even where they reside in the most ontic categories, beings bear the possibility of the clearing. They bear the possible open for beyng itself. Thus, Heidegger

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

speaks, infrequently but decisively, not of beings but of beyngs.<sup>325</sup> Reflecting the primordial thrust of the clearing, the change in spelling (mirroring the archaic ‘beyng’) points to the happening of beyngs, to the way in which beyngs clear beyng in their happening, and thus points to the clearing itself – to that which is most properly the self-concealing of beyng.

The shift to beyngs wants to carry out a shift away from beings, and this is what the account of the clearing seeks to accomplish. In place of the being of beings, the clearing for self-concealing opens up the beyngs of beyng. As we have seen in our analysis of clearing, this is more than a mere reversal. On the contrary, it reaches to the very heart of beginning, and to that sense of beginning which organizes the main focus of this dissertation. On the one hand, the shift to beyngs wants, in every sense of the phrase, to “begin again” with beings. It seeks to find, in the midst of the metaphysical determination about beings, that which cannot be accommodated within such determinations. It locates in the midst of beings a clearing for beyng that, while irreducible to beings, is nevertheless *how beings are*. It encounters in its engagement with beings the groundlessness and abyss of beyng itself. This abyss is beginning.

On the other hand, the shift to beyngs reveals that beginning is always to be thought *by way of beyngs*. If beginning is beyng itself, this must mean equally that beginning is beyngs. The turn to beyng does not merely turn away from metaphysics, but also must turn through it. It forces an inceptual thinking not only of beyng, but of beyngs

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<sup>325</sup> There are two very prominent instances of the term “beyngs.” The first occurs in Heidegger’s marginal notes to his essay “On the Essence of Ground.” Marking the “distinction” between the ontic and the ontological in regards to truth, Heidegger poses the suggestion that thinking the *beyngs* of beyng results in an overcoming of the distinction that at the same time overcomes the *being* of beings. The second occurs in *Die Geschichte des Seyns* (§155) and links the turning between the being of beings and the beyngs of beyng to the abyssal character of beginnings.

as well, and thus of the relation between beyngs and beyng. The beginning of beyng lies with beyngs. It happens with beyngs and in the clearing that “comes with” them. It will therefore be necessary to engage beginning with respect to *ereignis*, i.e. with respect to that which sustains the grounding by which beyngs are “owned over” to beyng and vice versa. It is with *ereignis* that the inceptuality of beyng gains its full relation to beyngs, and it is with *ereignis* that beginning comes to name the “sheltering” of beyng in beyngs.

## V. *EREIGNIS* AND SHELTERING: THE NECESSITY OF BEYNGS

### Introduction

Heidegger's analysis of *aletheia* opens up the clearing. It opens up the very open itself. Even if, as Heidegger will say later, it is no longer a question of "truth," even if the historical reflections upon truth must be given up, the clearing remains. There is clearing. It is a "primal matter," an *Ursache* which, once opened, "sets us the task of learning from it while questioning it, that is, of letting it say something to us."<sup>326</sup> What the clearing says, however, is not at all easy or obvious, to say nothing of what is needed in order to hear its saying. As we have seen, the clearing withdraws from every metaphysical sense of openness. It removes itself from accessibility and brightness, and thus defies every attempt to say "what" it is. The clearing cannot be understood with reference either to beings or to their grounding in being. In its openness, the clearing is that which first lets there be something like an open for beings at all. It clears the site, the *Zeit-spiel-Raum*, in which both the time and space for the open first come into play, and indeed, it clears the possibility of that play itself. Far from a grounding among beings, the clearing is that which first lets beings come forth, and lets them come forth precisely *in* their being. In the open of the clearing, beings and being arise.

In its withdrawal from the metaphysical circulation between beings and being, the clearing is not determined with reference to beings. It is not to be thought under the aegis of the guiding question of the first beginning, "What is a being?" The clearing is rather

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<sup>326</sup> EP: 442/72

that which, turned away from beings, opens up something already in play with the first beginning, something that in a sense always precedes the metaphysical determination of being and beings without itself becoming a ground for that determination. The clearing opens up beyng itself. If we remain for a moment within this somewhat metaphysical account of the issue, we might say, as Heidegger does, that beyng “is the difference that holds sway between being and beings.”<sup>327</sup> It is that which, withdrawing, clears the open space for the circulation between beings and being and first lets them be in their happening and coming forth. The clearing clears beyng. Beyng, in its turn, sustains and holds open the clearing. What is at issue in each case is the open clearing for beyng, what Heidegger calls in *Contributions* the “truth of beyng.” With the truth of beyng, Heidegger brings together both beyng and clearing in such a way that the very “essence” of beyng, its essential happening, is the happening of the clearing itself. The truth of beyng says ever and only beyng itself, but says it according to the clearing and withdrawing by which both beings and being arise in their mutual presence.

The relation to clearing, however, does more than simply name beyng. It names beings as well, or as we shall say, beyngs.<sup>328</sup> In my earlier analysis, it was shown that the turn towards the clearing, though it turns away from beings in the metaphysical sense, nevertheless does not simply abandon beings. Rather, it forces a redetermination of those very beings themselves. In the turn towards beyng, the clearing turns equally towards beyngs. It situates beyngs with respect to beyng and sets them back into the happening of

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<sup>327</sup>WW 198/153

<sup>328</sup> Throughout this chapter, I employ the term ‘beyngs’ to mark a distinction from beings in the metaphysical sense. Primarily, this echoes the shift carried out already with regards to beyng. However, it is not without a certain grounding in Heidegger himself. In *Geschichte des Seyns*, Heidegger distinguishes between the *being of beings* and the *beyngs of beyng* with the understanding that crossing from first to other beginning is a shift, not only from being to beyng, but equally from beings to beyngs (157).

beyng. In the clearing, both beyng and beyngs happen essentially, albeit in a way wholly other than that which guides the metaphysical determination.

In the end, it is precisely this tension and belonging together of beyng and beyngs that serves to mark what is decisive in the truth of beyng. On the one hand, the truth of beyng points to beyng and to the necessity that beyng be thought without reference to beings. It marks the opening up of an other beginning according to which beyng is thought solely from out of itself. As Heidegger notes in *Contributions*, “beyng can no longer be thought of in the perspective of beings; it must be enthought from within beyng *itself*.”<sup>329</sup> On the other hand, the truth of beyng needs beyngs and comes to be “sheltered” in them. Thus, the directive that seeks a thoughtful saying of beyng “indicates the free sheltering of the truth of beyng *in beings* as a necessity...”<sup>330</sup> By way of the clearing, beyng proves to some extent inseparable from beyngs, and the truth of beyng names both in their belonging together. Even as beyng would seek to turn away from beings, even as it would shift out of any metaphysical connection to beings as such, beyng nevertheless returns, and indeed must return (in a wholly other way) to beyngs and their happening. There is never simply a withdrawal from beings. On the contrary, Heidegger sometimes speaks as if the issue were solely one of beyngs – and not beyng – identifying the “task” of thinking in the other beginning with the need “to restore beings from within the truth of beyng.”<sup>331</sup>

However one speaks of it, the tension remains. The goal is not to eradicate the tension, to decide ultimately in favor of beyng or beyngs. Rather, the goal is to bring the tension into the fullness of its strife, to let the tension between beyng and beyngs spring

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<sup>329</sup> GA 65: 7/5

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 7/6 [italics mine]

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 11/8

forth in the happening of the clearing. The truth of beyng does not convey the empty concept of a “container” that holds both beyng and beyngs. It is not a frame for the space of beyng. It points to the very tension itself, to the strife that happens in and with the happening of beyng and beyngs. The truth of beyng *is* the strife itself. It names the very struggle according to which both beyng and beyngs come forth in their event.

Everything hinges on the proper account of this strife between beyng and beyngs. It is no longer a matter of grounding beings upon being, that is, of showing beings *in their being*. At the same time, however, it is not a matter of a counter-movement to metaphysics, a relation that would find itself defined by the metaphysical conception that it seeks to overturn. Rather, what is needed is to show beyngs and beyng in their tension and belonging together as a sole and unique enactment that is non-metaphysical in its origin and beginning. Beyng and beyngs are not separate. They do not come together by virtue of some joining that occurs “between” them, as it were. Rather, both beyng and beyngs *are* the between, and in the strife of the between come to be in their belonging together. Casting this relation in terms of Da-sein, Heidegger observes,

“The “between” of Da-sein overcomes the χωρισμος, not, as it were, by building a bridge between beyng (beingness) and beings – as if there were two riverbanks needing to be bridged – but by simultaneously transforming beyng and beings in their simultaneity.”<sup>332</sup>

It is a matter of the simultaneity of beyngs and beyng, of the happening that sets beyngs back into beyng and sets beyng forth as sheltered in beyngs. Of course, we must be cautious in our understanding of this simultaneity. It would be misleading, as we shall see, to imagine that the use of a temporal term at such a crucial juncture suggests that beyng (and thus beyngs) remain wholly grounded on time. On the contrary, both time

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<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 14/11

and beyng, and their relation, find themselves wholly reoriented in the springing forth of beyng and beyngs in their eventuation. ‘Simultaneity’ does not invoke a simple return to time, as if time were the condition of possibility of being. It names rather the *Ereignis* of beyngs to beyng in the open clearing of their eventuation. “Enowning,” Heidegger says, “is the temporal-spatial simultaneity for beyng and beings.”<sup>333</sup>

The proper name for this simultaneity is thus “enowning,” *Ereignis*.<sup>334</sup> It is by way of *Ereignis* that Heidegger thinks the peculiar and unique relation between beyngs and beyng that happens in and with the clearing. Moreover, it is with *Ereignis* that my analysis of beginning comes to its full expression. Throughout my analyses, I show the manifold and complex meanings at work in Heidegger’s claim that the beginning is beyng itself. Yet the emphasis is not, and has never been, on beyng alone, but rather on the necessity that one always attend to beyngs, concretely and committedly, in the open eventuation of beyng and beginning. Thus, I have attempted to show that beginning, insofar as it is beyng itself, arises always already in play with the multiple orders and

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 13/10

<sup>334</sup> It is my practice throughout to leave *Ereignis* untranslated. In part, this is a response to Heidegger’s claim that *Ereignis* “can no more be translated than the Greek *λογος* or the Chinese *Tao*.” *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 1969), 36. However, it is also a recognition that no translation is fully adequate – even the ‘translation’ implied by leaving it in the original German. The customary translations of *Ereignis* as “enowning” (Maly and Emad) or “event of appropriation” (de Beistegui) and its variants (Hofstadter, for instance, uses “disclosure of appropriation”) are not at all bad translations, but rather awkward and incomplete ones. The untranslatable character of *Ereignis* rests upon the irreducibly multiple meanings of the word, a multiplicity that reaches to its very etymology. Thomas Sheehan notes that while *Ereignis* came later to be associated with the adjective *eigen* and its infinitive *eigenen*, this is not the original root of the word. (“A Paradigm Shift in Heidegger Research,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 34(2) (2001), 197.) Following Heidegger’s annotations of the Grimm etymologies, Sheehan notes that *Ereignis*, related to the reflexive verb *sich ereignen*, has its roots in *er-äugen* (to show, to come forth, in the sense of placing before the eyes [*Augen*]). It is thus related primarily to that which Heidegger will designate with clearing, *Lichtung*, namely, the coming forth of what appears in its appearing as such. Heidegger, notes Sheehan, “accepts the Grimms’ etymology, including the fact that *eigen/proprium* is not the original etymon.” (19) Yet, there is no mistaking the fact that Heidegger continues to insist upon both meanings. *Ereignis* is deployed both in the sense of ownness/appropriation and in the sense of clearing and coming forth. Indeed, these meanings are not exclusive for Heidegger. Each is to some extent ‘appropriate’ for translation. Yet, each leaves something to be desired. Thus, while *Ereignis* is perhaps no better a ‘translation’ than ‘enowning,’ it is at least no worse.

epochs to which beyng gives rise, whether we mean with such orders the thrownness of Dasein's everydayness or the long, slow exhaustion of the first beginning of metaphysics. The task, then, has been to show – in and through a certain repetition – that the beginning is beyng itself only insofar as beyng is understood as *Ereignis*, that is, only insofar as beyng happens in the simultaneity of beyngs. Of course, this is not at all new. Heidegger proposes the same formulation, observing in *Contributions*: “The *beginning* is *beyng itself* as enowning, the hidden reign of the origin of the truth of beings as such. And beyng as enowning is the beginning.”<sup>335</sup> Yet, in elaborating this relationship, the point is not simply to link beginning to beyng, but rather to show that beginning is, and can only be, in its relation to *beyngs*. If it is *Ereignis* that marks the relation of beyng and beginning, this is not because it somehow marks a third term, a new addition that would in some way bring beyng and beginning together. Rather, *Ereignis* says what is already at work in the relation of beginning to beyng: it says beyngs in their simultaneity with beyng – a simultaneity that transforms our most fundamental notions of both beyngs and beyng and brings us inceptually before beyngs. Thus, we might rewrite the path Heidegger proposes (beginning – beyng – *Ereignis*) in the following way: beginning – beyng – beyngs.

The attention to beyngs is not a metaphysical one. It does not wish to install once again the fundamental question of the first beginning. Rather, it wants to say that beginning never occurs at the level of what we might call our grandest speculations. It does not take flight into something like beingness. It does not rest somehow out beyond beyngs. Beginning concerns itself with the very smallest of the small. Beginning happens, if we are prepared for it, in the everyday obviousness of beyngs, in the slow

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<sup>335</sup> GA 65: 58/41

hours of labor, in the quick moments of joy, in looks and glances that mark a happening they cannot control. To say that beginning is being itself as *Ereignis* is not a saying that commits us to the broad sweep of the historiography of beingness. It does not simply place us in the noble and canonical narrative of the Western tradition. Instead, it unseats our traditional understandings, it leaves us once again before beings, and it calls us to the momentary and sudden inceptuality of beings that happens in our most unguarded times.

At the same time, however, beginning as *Ereignis* points to that character of beginning that is the very inceptuality of beginning itself. I do not mean, of course, something like an identity that persists at the heart of beginning. On the contrary, if I might be permitted a crude inversion, I mean precisely the opposite: *Ereignis* points to the non-identity of beginning. It points to that sense of beginning according to which it is never under the regulation of that to which it gives rise. To the extent that beginning says *Ereignis*, it says as Heidegger points out “always the same of the same.” It says that which can only be said in multiple namings – all of which are necessary, and all of which are in the end superfluous, even the name of *Ereignis* itself.

The task of the present chapter, then, is to complete the analysis of beginning, to show the way in which beginning is being itself as *Ereignis*. To this end, it must be shown the way in which *Ereignis* arises and happens in the simultaneity of beings and being. *Ereignis* marks the happening by which the strife of beings and being comes into the fullness of their belonging together. With this elaboration of *Ereignis*, it becomes possible to show the necessity of beings for being, and with this necessity, the need to think beginning always in its connection to the happening of beings.

## The Giving of *Ereignis*

At the conclusion of his lecture, “Time and Being,” Heidegger observes that the attempt to think *beyng* as *Ereignis*, i.e. to think *beyng* without reference to beings in the metaphysical sense, must of necessity be an attempt that no longer engages metaphysics at all. Noting the persistence of metaphysics, the way in which it subverts and determines even those discourses set up against it, Heidegger concludes that the task, insofar as one thinks *Ereignis*, “is to cease all overcoming, and leave metaphysics to itself.”<sup>336</sup> It is a drastic, even confusing, claim: *beyng* without metaphysics. To leave metaphysics behind would mean in some sense that one leave *beyng* behind, or at least that one cease speaking of it in the context of a “crossing” to *beyng* from out of the first beginning of metaphysics. This task, the task named by *Ereignis*, would in effect overturn Heidegger’s own overturning of metaphysics as it is laid out in *Contributions*. In a way reminiscent of Nietzsche’s fable of the true world, it would twist *beyng* free from all talk of overcoming, free even from the necessity of its own archaic spelling, leaving *beyng* finally to be thought solely from out of itself – an “itself” situated in the extreme displacement of *beyng*. It would be the most radical of beginnings, one that would begin again even with the very opening up of *beyng* itself, a beginning that would find its expressive inceptuality in the attempt to think and to say *beyng as Ereignis*.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Zeit und Sein,” in *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Max Niemeyer Verlag: Tübingen 1976), 25. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, “Time and Being,” in *On Time and Being* (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 2002), 24. Henceforth, ZS.

<sup>337</sup> To this extent, I take issue with Robert Bernasconi’s claim that the leaving of metaphysics to itself “says nothing that Heidegger had not frequently said earlier.” Indeed, he goes farther and notes that “If there is a division at all...it is between the period of the destruction and that of the overcoming of metaphysics. There is no third phase in relation to this issue.” *The Question of Language in Heidegger’s History of Being* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1985), 89. This claim leaves aside entirely the powerful force of beginning at work in Heidegger’s remarks. One cannot imagine that Heidegger is unaware of the drastic contrast between his current claim and his earlier, persistent insistence on the overcoming of metaphysics. Contrary to Bernasconi’s claim, Heidegger submits his own overcoming of metaphysics to beginning in

Such a saying threatens us in the most extreme way with the possibility that in the end, we can say nothing at all. If the task of *Ereignis* “leaves metaphysics to itself,” this means at the very least that we cannot speak of *Ereignis* in terms that declare *what* it is. We say nothing of *Ereignis* to the extent that we speak in propositional sentences *about* it, for every such sentence already makes a decision concerning its “what.” It decides already in favor of a metaphysical conception that allows *Ereignis* to appear only in terms of presence, i.e. in terms of *what Ereignis is* in its being. Thus, the point of the lecture on *Ereignis* “is not to listen to a series of propositions, but rather to follow the movement of showing.”<sup>338</sup>

This movement does not show anything that *is*. On this point, Heidegger is explicit: “*Ereignis* neither *is*, nor *is Ereignis there*. To say the one or to say the other is equally a distortion of the matter, just as if we wanted to derive the source from the river.”<sup>339</sup> Removed from every metaphysical sense, we cannot say of *Ereignis* that it *is*. It does not hold to being, nor does it arise somehow from out of being. Yet in equal fashion, it is also not possible to say that *Ereignis* “is not.” *Ereignis* simply does not operate within the field of an “is” at all. If metaphysics is genuinely to be left to itself, if we are to cease all talk of overcoming, this means that every sense of opposition – between presence and absence, between “is” and “is not” – must be left to itself. *Ereignis* says only *Ereignis* in the movement of its showing.

The problem with saying that *Ereignis* “is” does not rest simply with the inevitable metaphysical connection to being. Rather, the problem concerns the very

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this account. The result is not the mere imitation of what Heidegger has already said, but a fundamental redetermination, beyond and outside of metaphysics, of the primordial relation between beyngs and beyng – a redetermination that threatens Heidegger’s own discourse.

<sup>338</sup> ZS: 2/2

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 24/24

status of *Ereignis* itself. To say that *Ereignis is* mistakes, as we shall see, the gift of *Ereignis*, i.e. the sending of presence in manifold ways, with the giving of that gift itself. It mistakes what flows from the source for the very source itself, wholly absorbing *Ereignis* into the very gift to which *Ereignis* gives rise. It is not a matter of simply refusing on principle to say that *Ereignis* “is.” It is a matter of preserving that which is uniquely *of Ereignis* – that giving of presence which is not reducible to presence itself.

*Ereignis* neither is nor is not, but instead we must say: “*Ereignis ereignet.*”<sup>340</sup> In this way, too, we also say *beyng*, for the eventuation of *Ereignis* from out of itself says ever and only *beyng as Ereignis*. Again, however, caution is needed in such sayings. Heidegger reminds us that the “as” does not at all mean that *beyng* is to be thought *in terms of Ereignis*, as if *Ereignis* were yet another interpretation for *beyng* in the long history of metaphysics that passes from the *idea* in Plato to the will to power in Nietzsche. It is not a species of *beyng*, and it is not subordinate to *beyng*. Rather, we must say that *beyng* “belongs into” *Ereignis*.<sup>341</sup> Noting, while yet withdrawing, the inversion, it is perhaps more appropriate, Heidegger says, to say that *beyng* is subordinate to *Ereignis*. At the very least, such belonging of *beyng* to *Ereignis* wants to say that *beyng* is given over to the giving of *Ereignis*, that it proves as we shall see to be nothing other than *Ereignis* itself, so that finally “[b]eyng vanishes in *Ereignis*.”<sup>342</sup> *Beyng as Ereignis, Ereignis as beyng*: both “say the Same in terms of the Same about the Same.”<sup>343</sup>

Yet, how is *beyng*, especially insofar as it is no longer metaphysical, and thus, no longer *is*? Likewise, how is *Ereignis* such that *beyng* belongs into it without determining

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 24/24

<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 22/21

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 22/22

<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 24/24

it as a species or ground? The answer in both cases is by way of giving. Noting the grammatical and propositional difficulties that attend every saying, whether of being, time, or *Ereignis*, Heidegger observes: “We do not say: Being is, time is, but rather: there is [*Es gibt*] being and there is [*Es gibt*] time. For the moment we have only changed the idiom with this expression. Instead of saying “it is,” we say “there is,” “it gives.””<sup>344</sup> Of course it is not a matter of a mere change in our way of speaking. Rather, the task is to “show how this “there is” can be experienced and seen.”<sup>345</sup> It is a matter of letting the giving of the “it gives” arise and come into play precisely as giving. The change in idiom thus serves to indicate the matter [*Sache*] at issue in both being and *Ereignis*. It points to the happening of being, to the eventuation of its gifting and to the very giving of its gift that is stated in the “*It*” that gives.<sup>346</sup>

Insofar as the matter is one of giving, in the case of being such giving is to be understood with reference to presencing. Recalling the analyses that stretch all the way back to *Being and Time*, Heidegger says “Being, by which all beings as such are marked, being is presencing.”<sup>347</sup> Presencing, however, takes a double sense according to its relation to giving, and to the gift that being comes to be. Retracing, though with a certain displacement, some of the major moments of *Contributions*, Heidegger marks a distinction between *what* is given *as* presencing and the *giving* of presencing as such.

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<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 5/4

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Miguel de Beistegui points out that this giving of *Ereignis*, its “pure event” is precisely subject-less. As he notes about *Es gibt* and other similar phrases, “the verb is pointing purely to that which is taking place or rather to the taking place or the happening itself, which is entirely indissociable from that which is actually taking place. There is no subject withdrawn from or in excess of the taking place: the taking place is itself the subject...” (“The Transformation of the Sense of Dasein in Heidegger’s *Beiträge zur Philosophie*,” *Research in Phenomenology* 33 (2003): 221-246 (223-24).) What is essential in this idiom is the emphasis precisely upon the eventuation of *Ereignis*, the way in which ‘it’ is precisely and only its happening itself. There is nothing of *Ereignis* outside of its happening, nothing beyond its event, and the subject of its eventuation is precisely the event itself.

<sup>347</sup> ZS: 5/5

Unlike *Contributions*, however, Heidegger does not understand this distinction within a movement of ‘crossing,’ or within the context of an overcoming of the first beginning of metaphysics. On the contrary, the emphasis falls upon the way in which this distinction finds a certain belonging together in the giving of the “It gives,” a belonging that nevertheless preserves the inherent tension and strife operative between the two senses. Presencing, on Heidegger’s account, is now to be thought precisely within this belonging together, i.e. precisely within the tension of its different senses – a tension that serves to prefigure the ‘simultaneity’ that will mark *Ereignis*.

The first sense of presencing is that found in the Greek beginning of Western thought. It is the metaphysical sense of being as that which is unconcealed in its presence. Being as presencing here means what is unconcealed as such: the being of beings, the ground out of which and back into which beings are given. In this sense, presencing refers to constant presence, to the shining of the idea that is always already given insofar as we say that this or that being *is* in its being. Presencing thus names what is given in the present, that which is steadfastly available in the light of its showing. It is precisely this sense of presence that always already guides our understanding of being and determines every conception of metaphysics. Heidegger observes, “Ever since the beginning of Western thinking with the Greeks, all saying of “Being” and “Is” is held in remembrance of the determination of being as presencing which is binding for thinking.”<sup>348</sup> We remember being as presencing, we take it over as that which already shapes our thinking and saying of being. We do not invent it or enact it through philosophical labor. Being as presencing is claimed from out of the deepest history of

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 7/7

beginning; it is taken over in the tradition of metaphysics that originates with the Greek understanding.

Yet, this sense of presencing is not simply Greek, or at least, the sense of presence that guides our thinking of being opens a *Sache*, a matter, that is not reducible to the Greek understanding as such. Heidegger says, “But we do not by any means perceive being as presencing exclusively, primarily in the remembrance of the early presentation of the unconcealment of being accomplished by the Greeks.”<sup>349</sup> Presencing does not pertain simply to being and to the unconcealment of being in the sense of the *idea*. Rather, we might say also that presencing pertains to beings as well, and thus is to be found in any “sufficiently unprejudiced reflection on what is present-to-hand [*Vorhandenheit*] and ready-to-hand [*Zuhandenheit*].”<sup>350</sup> Recalling this distinction from *Being and Time*, presencing is found in our useful dealings with the beings that we encounter in the world. It is there in our care of beings, in our comportment before them, and in the open understanding that makes such care both possible and necessary. To this extent, presencing points to *beings* and to the ways in which such beings both shape, and are shaped by, our worldly comportment to and among them.

If the first sense of presencing concerns *what* is present, i.e. the unconcealment of being and beings, the second sense concerns their coming to presence as such. It concerns what Heidegger calls in *Contributions* the “truth of beyng” and not simply being in the metaphysical sense of ground. Heidegger says:

“Thought with regard to what presences, presencing shows itself as letting-presence. But now we must try to think this letting-presence explicitly insofar as

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

presencing is admitted. Letting shows its character in bringing into unconcealment. To let presence means: to unconceal, to bring to openness.”<sup>351</sup>

Being as presencing does not point to being as what is simply and solely unconcealed in presencing. It points to the way in which such presence first arises and comes to be in its unfolding. Presencing is not another name for being in the long history of names that marks the tradition of metaphysics. It is not determined from being or subordinate to it. Rather, presencing is that which *lets* being “be,” that which is, within certain bounds, *prior* to being and to what being grants as ground. Presencing names the unconcealing as such, the opening up of the open for being, and not merely what is opened up within the open. In this sense, presencing is the clearing. It is that site for the happening of being and beings according to which both first come forth and *are* in their coming to be. Of course, it must be reiterated that insofar as presencing now names the clearing, it does not name anything that *is*, it does not abide within our metaphysical trajectories. As Heidegger reminds us, “To think being itself explicitly requires disregarding being to the extent that it is only grounded and interpreted in terms of beings and for beings as their ground, as in all metaphysics.”<sup>352</sup> Being as presencing is not a ground – whether for beings or even for being itself, or echoing the terminology of *Contributions*, it could be said that presencing is *grounding* for being and beings without itself falling prey to the ground that it opens and sustains. Presencing, in the sense of the clearing, is the abyssal open for the ground of metaphysics, but yet remains non-metaphysical in its enactment and event.

It is this second sense of presencing that prepares the way to giving, and to that giving which will be finally “of” *Ereignis*. Heidegger notes, “In unconcealing prevails a

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 5/5

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 6/5

giving, the giving that gives presencing, that is, being, in letting-presence.”<sup>353</sup> Giving is not understood primarily with reference to what is present, but rather points to the coming to be of being precisely in its presence. It points to what in *Contributions* Heidegger calls the “essential happening” of beyng – that enactment in and through which anything like being or beings can come to be. Giving names the unconcealing as such.

Yet, even as giving points to the clearing, it does not thereby abandon what is given. Being, in the metaphysical sense, “is not expelled from giving.”<sup>354</sup> Indeed, on this point, Heidegger is emphatic: “As the gift of this It gives, being belongs to giving.”<sup>355</sup> It is not then a matter of overcoming a certain metaphysical conception of being. It is instead a matter of situating that conception with reference to the giving itself, of understanding the *metaphysical* sense of being as it arises from out of (and belongs into) the *non-metaphysical* happening of the clearing by which any such being is possible at all. When we thus say, as Heidegger suggests, “It gives [*Es gibt*] being,” the giving of being says at once both being as gift and being as unconcealing. It says being in the belonging together of its happening and *what* happens through it, or echoing *Contributions*, the giving of being says that “being and beyng is the same and yet fundamentally different.”<sup>356</sup>

It is the difference between being and beyng, or rather the difference within being itself, that is decisive. As Heidegger is quick to point out, the giving of their belonging

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> GA 65: 171/120

together, the giving in which such difference can come forth, remains “obscure.”<sup>357</sup> At the very least, it raises the question as to how such belonging together is to be thought, especially in view of the fact that the giving as such, i.e. presencing as unconcealing, is precisely what passes unthought in our Western tradition. As Heidegger points out, “In the beginning of Western thinking, being is thought, but not the “It gives” as such.”<sup>358</sup> The history of being is marked by precisely this withdrawal of the giving itself from being, i.e. from what is given. The constant presence of being, the determination of being only within the purview of beings: all of these manifestations of being happen within the withdrawal of the giving as such. They establish the gift of being without inquiring at all into the clearing by which such gifting is first possible. Thus Heidegger says, “The history of being means destiny of being in whose sendings both the sending and the It which sends forth hold back with their self-manifestation.”<sup>359</sup> As we have seen repeatedly, this holding-back is not a mere oversight. It is not an historical mistake that now needs to be corrected. On the contrary, such holding-back is “the fundamental characteristic of sending.”<sup>360</sup> To think the difference in being itself, i.e. the difference between beyng and being, calls for the necessity that one think the holding-back of the giving. It calls for a thinking of this holding-back as such, the withdrawal that happens in and with the unfolding of the gift in its givenness. In this way, it is a matter (as it has always been) of dismantling [*Destruktion*], of deconstructing the “obscuring covers” that make it difficult even to inquire into the withdrawal of the giving as such, such that in the

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<sup>357</sup> ZS: 6/6

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 8/8

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 9/9

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

dismantling it becomes possible to think the “It” that gives being, the “It” that will prove to be nothing other than the giving itself – the “It” finally as *Ereignis*.

Initially, Heidegger thinks the “It” of the “It gives” as time, and thus the de-structuring of the history of being occurs in such a way as to make time visible as the possible horizon for the meaning of being in general. In this sense, time (like being) is understood with reference to giving. The turn to time is to some extent inevitable insofar as being as presencing bears an obvious relation to the temporal sense of the present, and to what presences in such a present. Unlike the classical sense of the present as a temporal moment, i.e. as a “now,” time as a giving expresses the reach and reciprocation of future, past, and present – the reach that first opens up and extends the possibility of a present at all. Thus, Heidegger says, “Time-space now is the name for the openness which opens up in the mutual self-extending of futural approach, past, and present.”<sup>361</sup> Time is the very giving of the open itself, the giving that extends – in what Heidegger calls the “fourth dimension” of time – a certain unity of time according to which presencing, and the space for presencing, first come to be in their enactment.

Time would serve, then, as the “It” that gives being, the extension whose four-dimensional reach opens up and holds open the giving of presencing as such. Yet even time does not go far enough. As Heidegger observes, time, too, “remains the gift of an “It gives” whose giving preserves the realm in which presence is extended.”<sup>362</sup> Even if time is inseparable from being, even if it remains tied in its extension to the open presencing of being, nevertheless time is also a gift, and thus rests within an “it” that

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 14/14

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 17/17

remains uninterrogated in its giving. Time determines within certain bounds the giving of being, but it leaves undetermined the “it” that gives both being and time.

How then are we to think the “It” that gives both being and time? How are we to think that which remains, even at the level of time, unthought and uninterrogated? Heidegger answers: *Ereignis*: “What determines both, time and being, in their own, that is, in their belonging together, we shall call: *Ereignis*.”<sup>363</sup> Insofar as “It gives” being and “It gives” time, *Ereignis* stands as the “It” through which such giving occurs. It is that which passes unthought and withdrawn in the destinal sending of being and in the opening up and extending of time.

Yet, even as we hold to the idiom of saying “It gives” as opposed to “It is,” Heidegger is clear that the “It” by which *Ereignis* is provisionally named does not point to a ground for both being and time, i.e. it does not point to “a presence of something that is present.”<sup>364</sup> Were this the case, not only would we have returned to the very sense of metaphysical presence that *Ereignis* seeks to “leave to itself,” but more importantly, we would reinstall at the very heart of the *unconcealing* of being nothing other than being itself. It would no longer be possible to say “It gives being,” but only “Being gives being.”<sup>365</sup> The sense of unconcealing would be lost. Thus, though we cannot avoid the inherent grammatical and logical implications of the proposition “It gives being,” *Ereignis* is not a subject. It is not a being that stands somehow present within the eventuation of the giving of both being and time. At the level of *Ereignis*, the idiom breaks down, and leaves us where we begin. It leaves us with the necessity of saying “*Ereignis ereignet*.”

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<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 19/19

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 18/18

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

## Appropriations of Ereignis: Beyng and the Need for Beyngs

It was said earlier that being (and thus time as well) vanishes into *Ereignis*. It is perhaps appropriate to say as well that *Ereignis* vanishes into being. Insofar as it is not a subject, *Ereignis* is not a third term. It is neither a logical unifier nor a basis from out of which spring both time and being. Rather, *Ereignis* names both time and being precisely in their ownmost enactment and eventuation. Heidegger notes, “In the sending of the destiny of being, in the extending of time, there becomes manifest a dedication, a delivering over into what is their own, namely of being as presence and of time as the realm of the open.”<sup>366</sup> Playing on the connection of *Er-eygnis* to *eignen* (to own) and *eigen* (sole; one’s own), *Ereignis* brings both time and being into their own.<sup>367</sup> It sets them forth with regard to their own and from out of their own. *Ereignis*, insofar as it owns time and being over to themselves, thus “vanishes” into them, and is nothing other than their ownmost eventuation in the destiny of being and in the extension of time.

The sense of ownedness in *Ereignis* does not therefore point away from time and being, but rather points back to them. It points to the very giving as such, and thus is not separate from the giving. In the ownedness of *Ereignis*, being belongs into the very giving according to which being can first come forth at all. In the double sense of being as presencing outlined earlier, such belonging necessarily points to the tension of these two senses, i.e. to that tension sustained precisely *as* their belonging together. Insofar as *Ereignis* owns being over to itself, this means most primarily that *Ereignis* names being in the striving of its presencing, i.e. in that tension through which being eventuates in

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<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 19/19

<sup>367</sup> For a brief discussion of the relation between *Ereignis* and *eignen*, see n 9 above.

both its giving and its gift. *Ereignis* lets the tension eventuate, and indeed, eventuate as nothing other than being itself.

On the one hand, this means that *Ereignis* names the unconcealing of being. It names the opening up and extension of the clearing that in *Contributions* Heidegger calls the truth of being. To this extent, *Ereignis* owns being over to the very giving itself, that giving which happens in its withdrawal from, and refusal of, the gift of being as what is present. On the other hand, however, *Ereignis* names such giving *only insofar as it happens in and with the gift of being itself*. In the owning over of being to itself, the giving of being comes forth precisely in the gift. To some extent, the giving *is* (noting the difficulty of such a saying) the gift itself. *Ereignis* does not place the giving of being in contradistinction to what being gives, nor does it set them apart in an overcoming by which one would simply turn away from being as what is present. On the contrary, *Ereignis* sets forth the giving of being *in* its gift or, recalling Heidegger's earlier formulation, "the gift of being is not expelled from giving."<sup>368</sup> All of this wants to say that being, in the enactment of its presence – whether as idea or will to power – brings its clearing with it, as it were, and allows the clearing for being to come forth among and through those beings that it grants.

The ownedness of *Ereignis* points to the necessity of a tension within being that it does not resolve. It does not point to a unity by which being "takes possession" of itself, as it were, and thus comes into the fullness of a self-sustained identity. *Ex hypothesi*, such a notion of identity is impossible to the extent that any "identity" of being falls prey to the tension of being – a tension that indeed cannot be resolved insofar as it joins the metaphysical eventuation of presence with its *non*-metaphysical event and happening. In

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<sup>368</sup> ZS: 6/6

the ownedness of *Ereignis*, every possible identity of being is a non-identity, an identity of the very “not” itself, or better, an “identity” that in its belonging carries out the “not,” the negation of every sense of identity.

Heidegger makes clear that a certain sense of the “not,” a sense of withdrawal and holding-back, is at the heart of *Ereignis* and its sense of ownedness:

“...to giving as sending there belongs keeping back – such that the denial of the present and the withholding of the present, play within the giving of what has been and what will be. What we have mentioned just now – keeping back, denial, withholding – shows something like a self-withdrawing, something we might call for short: withdrawal. But inasmuch as the modes of giving that are determined by withdrawal – sending and extending – lie in *Ereignis*, withdrawal must belong to what is peculiar to *Ereignis*.”<sup>369</sup>

When we say that giving, in the sense of clearing, comes along with the eventuation of being as what is present, this does not at all mean that the clearing comes forth *as something that is itself present*. Rather, the clearing for being – being in the enactment of its giving – comes forth as concealed. Being as *Ereignis* comes into its own precisely insofar as it is concealed in its giving, that is, insofar as the giving as such recedes and withdraws from what is given. In this withdrawal and holding-back, the giving forth of being (i.e. *Ereignis* as the “it” that gives) is able to come forth precisely as giving. Thus, the ownedness of *Ereignis*, the “appropriation” according to which being comes to its own, points to nothing that is merely present. Rather, it points to the giving of being as that which *comes forth* and *remains* as giving only through its holding back and withdrawal. Thus, Heidegger says, “*Ereignis* makes manifest its peculiar property, that *Ereignis* withdraws what is most fully its own from boundless unconcealment.”<sup>370</sup> The ownedness of giving into itself, the way in which *Ereignis* “enowns” such giving, points

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 22/22

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

therefore to the withdrawal itself, to the way in which such withdrawal comes forth *in* its withdrawal in the eventuation of the gift of being.

*Ereignis* is thus also an *Enteignis*, an ex-proprietation in the midst of the appropriation of the giving of being over to itself. In this way, *Ereignis* maintains itself in its ‘own,’ it holds to its own in the withdrawal that clears the clearing, and with such clearing, comes forth precisely in its withdrawal as such. Thus Heidegger says, “*Enteignis* belongs to *Ereignis* as such. By this *Enteignis* [expropriation], *Ereignis* [appropriation] does not abandon itself – rather, it preserves what is its own.”<sup>371</sup> With respect to giving, this means that the giving “enowned” by *Ereignis* gives itself precisely in and through its own withdrawal. Indeed, it has to be said that such giving occurs only with the withdrawal, and *is given* in the manifestness of the withdrawal as such.<sup>372</sup>

In the giving of *Ereignis*, and in the withdrawal proper to such giving, being is sent – we understand being *as Ereignis*. *Ereignis* grants being into its giving. It opens up and sustains that giving according to which being, in the very giving itself, withholds and withdraws itself, and indeed, comes forth precisely in its withdrawal. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the belonging of being into *Ereignis* – the ownedness of being as such – constitutes anything like a return to ground. Being, even in its most radical sense, is not given “in its being.” This is the difficulty of the sense of *Ereignis* as the “ownedness” of being. It does not intend a ground for being even as it cannot avoid the suggestion of the “proper” for being, of that which is in some sense “appropriate” for

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 23/23. Stambaugh chooses to translate *Enteignis* as “expropriation” and thus, *Ereignis* as “appropriation” in order to show the connection between the two. I have in this instance left the German words in place while placing Stambaugh’s translation of these words in brackets.

<sup>372</sup> For a fuller discussion of the relation between *Enteignis* and *Ereignis*, particularly in the context of *Contributions*, see Parvis Emad, “The Echo of Being in *Beiträge zur Philosophie – Der Anklang: Directives for its Interpretation*,” *Heidegger Studies* 7 (2003): 31-38.

being. Thus, even as *Ereignis* names that which is “proper” for being, it does so as an *enteignis*, as a withdrawal of every classical sense of the proper, and finally, as a withdrawal of being itself such that being could never simply *be* proper. The ownedness of being is not a ground, but an abyss. *Ereignis* exposes being. It shows being forth, not as anything present (i.e. as anything that *is*), but as that which withdraws from every present, as that which “is” its withdrawal as such, and indeed in such a way that the coming forth of this withdrawal holds open and sustains the giving that is always “of” being and “of” *Ereignis*. The “proper” of being is this abyssal withdrawal.

Yet, the abyss of being, the abyss that characterizes being as *Ereignis*, nevertheless requires in its own way a grounding. ‘Grounding,’ however, is to be distinguished from ‘ground.’ Whereas ground names the metaphysical enactment of being “in its being,” grounding names the coming to pass of being. It names that essence of being that happens always otherwise to metaphysics and outside of its guiding conceptuality. In the context of the present analysis of *Ereignis*, grounding points to the need to sustain and hold open the giving for being, to preserve the giving precisely *as* giving, and this means to let the giving of being come forth in its ownmost self-withdrawal. Grounding points to the grounding of the abyss of being itself.<sup>373</sup>

This grounding occurs, strangely enough, in beings. Heidegger observes, “Being (as *Ereignis*) needs beings so that being may happen essentially. Beings do not need being in the same way.”<sup>374</sup> The coming to pass of being, the way in which being

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<sup>373</sup> It should be noted, however, that this grounding of the abyss does not somehow overcome the abyss as such. Rather, it first lets the abyss play forth as abyss. In his essay dealing with those “grounders of the abyss” mentioned by Heidegger, John Sallis writes, “The grounders are of the abyss in that, from within the abyss, they bring forth (through grounding) a ground within the abyss.” (“Grounders of the Abyss,” in *Companion to Heidegger’s Contributions to Philosophy*, eds. Charles E. Scott, Susan M. Schoenbohm, Daniela Vallega-Neu, Alejandro Vallega (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 191.)

<sup>374</sup> GA 45: 30/22

happens in the essentiality of the truth of beyng, *requires* beings. It is with beings and through beings that beyng comes to be sustained and preserved in its abyssal happening. At the very least, this marks an inversion of the metaphysical enactment of beings and being. In metaphysics, it would never be said that being needs beings, but rather, the opposite is true: beings need being. Beings *are* insofar as they come forth in their being. Beings require something like being in order to be first of all. In the context of our earlier analysis of the Greek beginning, this is made clear with reference to being as the *idea*. The *idea* is that which is sighted *in advance* of beings, that which is always already ‘seen’ such that beings can stand forth in their visibility. Without the idea, i.e. without the ground of visibility as such, beings could not shine forth – beings could not be.

Inverted in *Ereignis*, it is beyng that needs beings. Of course, we have seen repeatedly that this is more than a mere inversion. The connection that Heidegger marks out here between beings and beyng transforms the very sense of beyngs and beyng, and opens up their relation in a wholly other way. The need for a grounding of beyng in beyngs, the need for beyngs themselves, is one that sets forth a “simultaneity” of beyngs and beyng – a simultaneity that speaks, through *Ereignis*, not only to the ownedness of beyng, but to the ownedness of beyngs as well. Heidegger writes:

“Thus nothing occurs within the sphere of beings. Beyng remains non-appearing; but with a being as such it can happen that it moves into the clearing of what is non-ordinary, casts away its ordinariness, and has to put itself up for decision as to how it suffices for beyng. But this does not mean how a being would approximate and correspond to beyng but rather how a being preserves and loses the truth of the essential happening of beyng – *and therein comes into what is its ownmost, which consists in such preserving.*”<sup>375</sup>

To say, then, that beyng needs beings does not suggest a reflection into representation. It is not a matter of setting beyng forth according to beyngs, or vice versa. The need that

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<sup>375</sup> GA 65: 482/339-40 [italics mine]

beyng has for beyngs is not that of approximation or correspondence. It is not, in short, a matter of ground, whether one way or the other. Rather, a being can shift into the clearing for beyng, it can happen with beyng in such a way that it is set back into the clearing, and thus, a being can come to bear the clearing, i.e. the truth of beyng, as such. Heidegger argues that this bearing for the clearing is precisely what characterizes beings in the other beginning, that is, beings insofar as they are interrogated outside of the metaphysical commitment to *what* beings are. He notes, “But in the other beginning, beings are such that they also carry the clearing into which they are placed, which clearing happens essentially as clearing for self-concealing, i.e. for beyng as *Ereignis*.”<sup>376</sup> Beyng thus needs beyngs insofar as beyngs bear the clearing itself. Beyngs are grounding for the truth of beyng, and in such grounding, beyng happens essentially.

It is precisely through their relation to the clearing, i.e. to the essential happening of beyng, that beyngs come into their own. Heidegger writes in *Contributions*, “...all beings are sacrificed to beyng, from which beings as such first receive their truth.”<sup>377</sup> To the extent that beyngs bear the happening of beyng, beyngs *preserve* that happening and come into what is their ownmost. Beyngs are themselves “enowned” by the very clearing for beyng which beyngs set forth, as preserved, in their own enactment and “coming to be.” To this extent, beyngs are sacrificed to beyng, albeit with one crucial note: the sacrifice is not such as to eliminate beyngs altogether. It does not absorb beyngs fully into beyng. On the contrary, in their sacrifice to beyng, beyngs stand forth as if for the first time *as the beyngs that they are* in their ownmost happening – in their truth, as it were.

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<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 230/162

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

The ownedness of *Ereignis* is thus twofold. It names on the one hand the enactment of beyng itself, the happening of the unconcealment of presence in the open of the clearing. *Ereignis* owns beyng over to the truth of beyng. Yet at the same time, the truth of beyng comes to be preserved in its happening only in beyngs. Beyngs bear the truth of beyng, and in such bearing, beyngs likewise come into their own. They come to be their own precisely by way of the clearing that they sustain. Thus, beyng is owned over to beyngs, and in one and the same movement, beyngs are owned over to beyng. In this mutual enactment of ownedness, i.e. in the happening of *Ereignis* as such, both beyng and beyngs come to pass.

### ***Ereignis* and Sheltering**

*Ereignis* expresses in its ownedness the simultaneity of beyng and beyngs. It brings into a belonging both the truth of beyng as such and the preservation of that truth in beyngs. To the extent that *Ereignis* names the eventuation of this belonging-together, *Ereignis* names what Heidegger calls ‘sheltering’ [*bergen*]. The term ‘sheltering’ plays out first of all in its connection to concealing [*verbergen*]. Sheltering shelters that which, in its own way, is most deeply sheltered, that which is in the most literal sense *ver-bergen* – sheltered such that in its sheltering it remains concealed. To this extent, we may at least note that sheltering does not shelter anything that *is*. On the contrary, it shelters that which conceals itself as such, shelters it such that it remains concealed, and comes forth in the sheltering precisely in its concealment as such.

Yet insofar as sheltering is tied to concealment, it is also tied to the clearing, i.e. to the truth of beyng as such. Sheltering preserves concealment. It sustains such

concealment and lets it remain concealed as such. The preservation of this concealment, however, happens only insofar as concealment is *brought forth* in its concealment, i.e. only insofar as it comes into the open *as concealed*. Sheltering does not therefore name only the concealing as such, but rather names the clearing *for self-concealing* – the clearing for that open in which what is essentially concealed makes itself manifest in its concealment as such. Thus, Heidegger says “...this sheltering of what is open must at the same time and in advance be such that the openness comes to be in such a way that self-concealing and thereby beyng happens essentially in it.”<sup>378</sup> Concealment happens, but only in and with the clearing. There is never simply concealing, just as there is never simply clearing. Rather, there is clearing for self-concealing, and this says always and only the happening of beyng itself, i.e. the truth of beyng in its event.

To the extent that sheltering opens up the open and keeps it open such that concealment comes forth within it, sheltering names what we pointed to earlier as the grounding of the abyss, that grounding for the self-concealing of beyng that happens with and through beyngs. Heidegger makes this clear insofar as truth, in its essential happening, is grounded in its happening only through sheltering. He observes, “Sheltering belongs to the essential happening of truth. This truth *is* not an essential happening if it never happens essentially in sheltering.”<sup>379</sup> Truth *is* truth only insofar as it is sheltered. It is not “extant” outside of its sheltering, and as Heidegger notes, truth is not somehow given in advance only later to be ‘sheltered.’ Rather, to speak of the essential happening of truth, i.e. the clearing for self-concealing, is to speak of its sheltering as such. Truth eventuates in sheltering, and sheltering grounds truth.

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<sup>378</sup> GA 65: 389/272

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 389/271 [translation mine]

Heidegger insists that this is no arbitrary grounding, but one needed by truth itself: “The clearing must ground itself into its open. Clearing needs that which keeps it in openness, and that is in each case a different being (thing – tool – work).”<sup>380</sup> It is not only the case that truth belongs into sheltering, but equally, truth needs sheltering in order that truth comes to pass in its eventuation. It should be noted, however, that our talk of grounding does not in any way suggest the presence of two distinct events such that one is somehow set back into the other. Rather, there is only the clearing for self-concealing itself that sets itself into its open as such. The open of the clearing, and the open that ‘grounds’ the clearing in sheltering, are one and the same, or to state it differently, the clearing grounds itself *upon itself alone*, and it accomplishes this grounding in sheltering. It is for this reason that sheltering is most properly understood as *Ereignis*. Sheltering does not name a phenomenon other than the truth of being. Rather, it names the truth of being insofar as it sets itself into its truth as such. Sheltering is the “enownment” of the clearing for self-concealing into its own, i.e. into the clearing as such, such that being comes forth in its ownmost, essential concealment. Thus, we might say “there is/it gives” clearing for self-concealing in the eventuation of sheltering.

Sheltering sets the clearing forth into the clearing. It grounds the clearing in the open such that the clearing – the truth of being – happens in its eventuation. Yet, as we have noted, “the pathways and manners of sheltering *are beings*.”<sup>381</sup> The clearing comes to the open of its clearing with beings and through beings, or stated from the other direction, beings bring the clearing with them, as it were, into the open of their eventuation. In terms of *Ereignis*, this means as we have said, that the coming of being

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 29/21

into its own is at once the coming of beyngs into their own. Just as beyng happens only in sheltering, beyngs, too, find their own happening – their truth, as Heidegger notes – only to the extent that they bear the enactment of sheltering in their own eventuation. Beyng needs beyngs, and beyngs are sacrificed into beyng. Though we have marked this connection in various ways, nevertheless, the connection itself remains to some extent obscure.<sup>382</sup>

There are a few reasons for this obscurity. First, the connection between beyngs and beyng – their ‘simultaneity’ in *Ereignis* – is a connection that defies every metaphysical orientation. It is in its enactment decidedly non-metaphysical. Beyngs are not ‘grounded’ in beyng such that they appear “in their being.” Rather, as we have pointed out, the reverse is the case: beyng finds a grounding in beyngs. This grounding, however, points not to metaphysics but to *Ereignis*, to the way in which beyngs and beyng come into their own in the open eventuation of the truth of beyng. It is a simultaneity that leaves metaphysics to itself, that seeks neither its endorsement nor its overcoming, but wants only to say “*Ereignis ereignet.*”

Secondly, beyngs undergo a fundamental shift in their connection to beyng. They are not the ‘beings’ of metaphysics, i.e. those beings that appear always in light of being as that which is given somehow in advance. To this extent, the connection between beyngs and beyng is not the circulation of the ontological difference according to which

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<sup>382</sup> While I proceed to elaborate this connection in terms of an inceptual strife of beyngs and beyng, it should be noted that this is not the only possible elaboration. Indeed, there is something about this connection that calls for it to be named again and again. Heidegger himself employs many names: *Zuspiel*, *Übergang*, *Auseinandersetzung* to name a few. However, perhaps the most provocative naming of this connection comes from Hans Ruin, who attempts to read the relation of beyng and beyngs (though he does not state the relation as explicitly as I have) as an *Augenblick*. While I disagree with this naming to the extent that it appears to reinstall a certain (horizontal) notion of temporality, the “kairological” dimension of the *Augenblick* that Ruin highlights offers unique possibilities for thinking *Ereignis* in its practical and thoroughly concrete dimension. For a fuller discussion, see Hans Ruin, “The Moment of Truth: *Augenblick* and *Ereignis* in Heidegger” *Epoche* 6(1) (1998): 75-88.

beings pass into being and likewise, being passes into beings. Indeed, as Heidegger points out, we can no longer even say that ‘a being *is*,’ for every such saying risks a relation to metaphysics that beyngs (in the truth of beyng) do not bear. Thus, the connection between beyngs and beyng remains ‘obscure’ to the extent that beyngs cannot be thought according to any casual relation to the metaphysical notion of being, but must be thought solely from out of beyng itself, and this means, by way of sheltering.

Finally, the connection between beyng and beyngs remains obscure to the extent that it *is* a connection only in the most nominal sense. It is perhaps more appropriate to say that the simultaneity of beyng and beyngs is not a connection, but a difference, a strife by which each comes into its own precisely through the tension that abides between them. Heidegger addresses this strife insofar as he asks where one should begin “to find the way from “a being” to the essential happening of truth and in this way to make manifest the *sheltering* as belonging to truth.”<sup>383</sup> Such a beginning proves problematic – proves, we might say, to be a beginning as such – insofar as any such way requires “a corresponding leap ahead into beyng.”<sup>384</sup> As we have noted in our earlier chapters, there is no way that leads directly to beyng. The happening of beyng is always a leap into beyng, an interruption that draws one in to the open enactment of the self-concealing of beyng. Thus, every such ‘connection’ between beyng and beyngs names a leap into beyng and not a connection at all. It names a non-connection, or at least, it names the eventuation of the ‘not’ that rests at the heart of every such connection between beyngs and beyng.

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<sup>383</sup> GA 65: 389/271

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

Yet, the strife does not simply originate on the way from beyngs to beyng, but equally on the way from beyng to beyngs. In following the way, Heidegger asks, “do we not have first to grasp today’s relation to a being, as we reside within it, i.e., put what is most ordinary before our eyes? And this is exactly what is most difficult, because it cannot even be carried out without a shock, and that is to say: without a displacing of the basic relation to beyng itself and to truth.”<sup>385</sup> The leap into beyng requires that we attend to beyngs, and indeed, that we attend to them in their obvious, everyday relations. Beyngs remain beyngs. It is not as if, in sheltering, beyngs somehow become transparent to beyng, as if beyng is somehow *more* manifest in beyngs. On the contrary, the leap into beyng happens with the obviousness and familiarity of beyngs, with the way in which beyng withdraws and conceals itself from such obviousness, and in such concealing is cleared in and for beyngs. Not only do beyngs leap ahead into beyng, but in a similar manner, beyng leaps forth into beyngs in the everydayness of beyngs that at once opens up the strangeness and uniqueness of the self-withdrawal of beyng.

That is how one begins along the way of this simultaneity: by way of that strife in which beyngs leap ahead into beyng and beyng leaps forth for beyngs. It is in the midst of this strife that the sheltering of the truth of beyng comes to pass. In the end, what is conveyed by the strife of beyng and beyngs is not a ‘connection’ at all. It is not as if beyng persists already prior to its enactment in beyngs. Likewise, beyngs are not outside of the sheltering of truth in which beyng comes to pass. Strife, therefore, does not name a movement that abides “between” beyngs and beyng. It is not distinct from the enactment of the sheltering of beyng in beyngs. On the contrary, it names *beyngs* in the eventuation

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

of their truth. It names *beyng* in its sheltering. Thus, strife names both *beyng* and *beyngs* in their *simultaneity*. It begins along its way by saying always and only *Ereignis* as such.

The strife of *Ereignis* proves in the end to be inseparable from beginning. As Heidegger observes, it *is* nothing other than beginning itself insofar as “the greatest *Ereignis* is always the beginning.”<sup>386</sup> Yet, it cannot be said enough that insofar as *Ereignis* is beginning (and beginning is *beyng* itself *as Ereignis*), this relation does not constitute a return either to identity or to ground. We do not, in *Ereignis*, come to that which is in some sense “first” or “primary.” Even as *Ereignis* is beginning in the firmest sense, i.e. as that Urphanomen which first opens up the space even for *Ereignis* itself, this beginning is understood in the end as nothing that *is*, as nothing metaphysical, and thus, as no ‘thing’ to be understood within the metaphysical orientation towards beings and their ground.

Beginning, in *Ereignis*, is strife. It is that peculiar strife according to which *beyngs* come into play with that which is not – and never can be – simply under the regulation of *beyngs* alone, i.e. *beyng* itself. It is a strife that we have seen already in our analysis of Heidegger’s account of first and other beginning, one that plays out in the playing forth of those beginnings, and thus comes into play in the overcoming of metaphysics as such. The strife of *beyng* and *beyngs* is at least initially the turn through metaphysics. It is the turn away from the metaphysical sense of beings in order to put metaphysics into play with *beyng*, i.e. with that which is carried as concealed in our Western metaphysical tradition. Yet, this is possible only insofar as metaphysics is understood precisely from within its overcoming as such. As Heidegger makes clear, the overcoming of metaphysics is not the enactment of a counter movement or opposition to

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<sup>386</sup> GA 65: 57/40

metaphysics, but rather occurs insofar as one submits metaphysics to a *repetition*. It is an overcoming that arises from out of metaphysics itself. *Being* plays out and plays forth in the unfolding of metaphysics as such. Thus, the inceptual strife of *Ereignis* is manifest in the confrontation [*Auseinandersetzung*] of first and other beginning – a confrontation that bears the simultaneity of beginning in an overcoming of metaphysics that unfolds from *within* metaphysics itself.

In the move towards *Ereignis*, it is precisely this simultaneity that is accentuated in beginning. To the extent that it leaves metaphysics to itself, as it were, *Ereignis* puts into play an inceptual redetermination of *being* and *beings*, or better, *beings* become nothing other than their play. This is not at all to be understood as a repudiation of the analyses of beginning that occur in *Contributions*. On the contrary, those analyses open up this redetermination and bring the focus to bear, not simply on *being*, but now on *beings* as well. In the context of the confrontation of first and other beginning, it might be said that *Ereignis* elaborates what it means to say that *being* unfolds *within* the happening of metaphysics. It inaugurates a redetermination of in-ness as such – one that focuses precisely on *beings*, and on the way in which *beings* play out in their play with *being*.

*Ereignis* thus calls for a beginning with regards to *beings*, a beginning that finds itself located in *beings* as such. To this extent, *beings* play out in a repetition that leaves metaphysics behind, a repetition by which *beings*, as we have seen, unfold themselves in their enactment only insofar as they unfold a space irreducible to those *beings* themselves. If beginning is the strife of *Ereignis*, it is that strife only in the play of *beings* that shelters the happening of the truth of *being*. By way of *Ereignis*, beginning

is brought back to beyngs. It is brought back to that which, in its unfolding, opens up the open itself – an open that is not simply under the regulation of *what* is opened up within it.

The repetition of beyngs in *Ereignis* lies at the heart of beginning. Moreover, this attention to beyngs bears a few rather striking conclusions when viewed in light of beginning. First, and most obviously, it calls for the need to think beginning with reference to beyngs and by way of beyngs, especially insofar as beyngs are the “ways and manners of sheltering.” To this extent, the interrogation of beginning is a questioning that can occur only at the level of a concrete commitment to beyngs in their unique life and eventuation. On the one hand, this makes sense of Heidegger’s later attention to beyngs – whether as art, tool, work, or thing. It suggests that Heidegger’s concern with the concrete “lives of things” arises out of an engagement with beginning as *Ereignis*, i.e. out of a recognition that *Ereignis* gives beyng to be thought only by way of beyngs, and thus, only within their enactment and eventuation. On the other hand, this concrete commitment to beyngs suggests that the question concerning beyng (the *Seinsfrage*) is not nearly as abstract as one might imagine. It is not, as Heidegger himself points out repeatedly, an esoteric point of contention to be debated only among scholars. It is rather a question that arises, each time anew, in our closest and most committed engagements with the beyngs that surround us – beyngs from which we are, admittedly, never separated. To think beyng inceptually does not therefore mean that we inaugurate a grand narrative of beyng. Rather, it points to the everyday comportments of our dealings with beyngs – the small and local eventuations that shape our most profound senses of how things arise and *are* in their enactment.

The second consequence of the need to think beginning by way of beyngs finds expression in an inceptual redetermination of Heidegger himself. To the extent that beginning is *Ereignis*, beginning names the simultaneity of beyngs and beyng. It names beyngs in their play with beyng as such, such that both beyngs and beyng come into their “own” precisely in the play itself. Yet, the claim of beyngs as play serves to indicate that beyngs are not to be understood within any distinction between beyng and beyngs. The happening of beyngs in their play resists every such distinction. Of course, this means on the one hand that such beyngs are not at all metaphysical. They do not abide within the ontological difference between beings and being. However, to the extent that all distinctions are suspect, it must be admitted that, even as beyngs are not metaphysical, they are also not *ontic*. It no longer makes sense to speak of beyngs as though they are manifest both ontically and ontologically, i.e. as though beyngs in their everyday comportments and enactments are somehow distinct from the enactment of beyng in its understanding. Rather, the ontic would in some sense *be* the ontological, or at least, beyngs in their ontic everydayness serve to make the very separation of ontic and ontological untenable. There is/it gives beyngs, and such giving undercuts any need to set beyngs out in terms of the ontic.

This inceptual redetermination of the ontic is not, however, completely foreign to Heidegger himself. In his marginal notes to the essay, “On the Essence of Ground,” Heidegger notes that the “forking” of truth in terms of the ontic and ontological betrays an association with the ontological difference that suggests the distinction is a “fixed reference point.” Thus, Heidegger says, what is needed is not fixity of the ontological difference (the very difference that orients the ontic and ontological), but rather it’s

overcoming, and this occurs by way of "...thinking the "distinction" as **beyng itself** and therein the *beyngs of beyng* – no longer as the being *of beings*."<sup>387</sup> Beyng itself, insofar as one thinks beyngs within it, would be how one thinks beyond the distinction to its overcoming. The happening of beyngs, i.e. the sheltering of beyng, exceeds in its enactment both the difference between being and beings and equally, the division between ontic and ontological – a division that Heidegger suggests should now be thought solely within the enactment of beyng itself, and thus solely by way of those beyngs that are *of beyng*.

The loss of the ontic, however, does not at all suggest the loss of beyngs in their everyday comportments. As we have noted already, beyngs nevertheless remain beyngs. Even as beyngs cannot be said to be ontic, they are nevertheless *thrown*. Indeed, the claim of beginning is such as to accentuate this thrownness, to bring it into relief and thus to give it priority in the analysis of beyng. As Heidegger observes, thrownness is that which brings us before beyngs, it "drives us round" to beings as a whole: "what drives man round is his thrownness into beings, a thrownness that determines him as the thrower of being (of the truth of beyng)."<sup>388</sup> To be brought before beyng in its truth, i.e. to be given over to the happening of beyng, one must be given over equally to beyngs in their thrown possibility. Thrownness is not something that must be overcome on the way to beyng. Rather, it is that which first speaks to the possibility of beyng itself. It is that which opens up, in various ways, the 'throw' of beyng in its self-concealing uniqueness. Thus, the inceptuality of beyng happens only with and in the entanglements of beyngs in

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<sup>387</sup> Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Ground" trans. Thomas Sheehan in *Pathmarks* ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 105.

<sup>388</sup> GA 65: 45/32

their thrown possibility, i.e. beginning begins with beyng insofar as it unfolds in the throw of beyngs as such.

In every case, whether in the necessity of thrownness or in the overturning of the ontic, the priority of beginning rests with the concrete eventuation of beyngs. Beginning attends to beyngs in the fullest sense. *Ereignis* is thus not at all simply another name for beyng. It is more importantly the name for an inceptual recognition and redetermination of beyngs. It is the name of beginning as such insofar as one is called, always and anew, to the very happening of beyngs, to their concrete unfolding *in* which beyng happens. In the most basic sense, beyngs are beginning in the most radical and fundamental of ways, for beyngs name the eventuation of that which plays out *in* beyngs without being simply reducible to beyngs as such. To this extent, beyngs begin, and are brought to begin insofar as they open up a clearing that is never simply under the regulation of what is begun through it.

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