NOT YET NOW: SPEAKING OF THE END AND THE END OF SPEAKING

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> Where the future is concerned: Expectation is directed toward the future; it is merely anticipatory, and like all anticipation, it can be deceptive. But life is living on, and the law of time also attributes an apodictic content to expectation.
> Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*

The theme of this chapter intimates both profound risk and uncertainty, ensuing, as it does, from the ominous realization that to speak of the end one must venture to the limits of both language and temporality. Phenomenologically, we experience all sorts of endings—indeed, as philosophers have long noted, we are constantly beleaguered with the menacing sense that ephemerality is the enduring aspect of time, that the only true permanence is impermanence—but I trust that most would concur that the ending par excellence, the end of endings, as it were, is death. It is for this reason that I will commence my reflections on the discourse of the end with an analysis of death as the futural anterior, the event of the nonevent.

We may not want to go so far as the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and define the singularity of human existence as being-toward-death (*Sein zum Tode*), that is, the anticipatory resoluteness of the end that compels one to confront the "nonrelational ownmost potentiality" (*eigenste, unbezügliche Möglichkeit*), which is labeled as "the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein" (*die Möglichkeit der schlechthinnigen Daseinsunmöglichkeit*).[1] It would be difficult, however, to deny Blanchot's insight regarding dying as the "never-ending ending," in the Levinasian formulation,[2] the *impossibility of possibility*, which constantly informs the path of our being as "a presence

[1] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, revised and with a foreword by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), § 50, 241; *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), 250. See Bernard N. Schumacher, *Death and Mortality in Contemporary Philosophy*, trans. Michael J. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72–80.

[2] Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 132. See also text cited below at n. 10.

in the depth of absence," the possibility that secures our "greatest hope" of being human because it reminds us that "the future of a finished world is still there for us."[3] Contrary to what commonsense might dictate, the finality of death does not abrogate but rather engenders hope.[4] Alternatively expressed, instead of viewing the stasis of death as an "eternal present," the *nunc stans* that is without any future, as Merleau-Ponty opined,[5] an intrinsic nexus is forged between death and futurity. To cite Blanchot again: "Death works with us in the world; it is a power that humanizes nature, that raises existence to being, and it is within each one of us as our most human quality; it is death only in the world—man only knows death because he is man, and he is only man because he is death in the process of becoming . . . As long as I live, I am a mortal man, but when I die, by ceasing to be a man I also cease to be mortal, I am no longer capable of dying, and my impending death horrifies me because I see it as it is: no longer death, but the impossibility of dying."[6]

Death and the Surplus of Not Yet

What terrifies us about death is not that it is, as Heidegger surmised, the coming-to-an-end (*Zu-Ende-kommen*), the "mode of being in which each and every actual Dasein simply cannot be represented by someone else."[7] The angst surrounding death lies rather in the prospect of confronting

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[3] Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus and Other Literary Essays*, preface by Geoffrey Hartman, trans. Lydia Davis, ed. P. Adams Sitney (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1981), 55.

[4] For a wide-ranging discussion of the more commonplace theme of death as the enemy of hope, see Bernard Schumacher, *A Philosophy of Hope: Josef Pieper and the Contemporary Debate on Hope*, trans. D. C. Schindler (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 153–202.

[5] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 348: "A present without a future, or an eternal present, is precisely the definition of death, the living present is torn between a past that it takes up and a future that it projects."

[6] Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, 55.

[7] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 48, 233; *Sein und Zeit*, 242. Compare Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. Ingo Farin with Alex Skinner (London: Continuum, 2011), 38–39: "We would be ill-advised to base our investigation on the Dasein of others that has come to an end and is present as a finished whole. First of all, it is central to this Dasein that it too *is* no longer 'there' ['*da*'] as itself. But above all, the particular Dasein of others can never be substituted for the being of Dasein, as long as we wish to maintain that Dasein is in each case one's own [*jeweilig das meinige*]. I can never *be* the Dasein of others, although I may be together with them" (emphasis in original). This text, which was written in 1924 for the journal *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* but only published posthumously in 2004 as volume 64 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, is considered the first draft of *Sein und Zeit*.

the fact that without contemplating the contingency of dying there is no more excess of lack but only the lack of excess, no more pondering the possibility of there being nothing more to ponder. Death does not signify the compulsory extinction that we must each endure in our existential-ontological aloneness—in Heidegger's memorable articulation, dying "is essentially and irreplaceably mine,"[8] or in the equally arresting expression of Reiner Schürmann, death is the *singular object of monstration*, which always arrives unexpectedly in the form of a "this" that cannot be subsumed under the general morphology of the species[9]—but rather the perpetual deferment of that obliteration, the postponement of a termination that can be present only by being absent. Not the certitude of death but the impossibility of dying, in Blanchot's provocative locution, is the source of our greatest consternation, since the hopefulness of being alive is inseparably entwined with the possibility of dying. Levinas alludes to this matter when he writes in his notebooks in 1942 that death is distinguished from all other aspects of human experience because it epitomizes the "extreme possibility" that is the "promise of transcendence."[10] The transcendence to which he refers is the relentless becoming of the future that signals the end that never ends in virtue of its being the consummate end.

Death, we might say, is not the deficiency of no more but the surplus of not yet.[11] Following this logic led Levinas in the third of the four lectures

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[8] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 51, 243; *Sein und Zeit*, 253. See Schumacher, *Death and Mortality*, 71–72. For a critique of this Heideggerian assumption and a challenge to the very possibility that death is ever in our grasp as a phenomenological possibility, see Lilian Alweiss, "Heidegger and 'the Concept of Time,'" *History of the Human Sciences* 15 (2002): 117–32.

[9] Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 17–18.

[10] Emmanuel Levinas, *Oeuvres 1: Carnets de captivité suivi de Écrtis sur la captivité et Notes philosophiques diverses*, ed. Rodolphe Calin, preface and explanatory notes by Rodolphe Calin and Catherine Chalier, general preface by Jean-Luc Marion (Paris: Éditions Grasset and Fasquelle, 2009), 61: "Toutefois la mort n'est pas un fait de l'existence comme un autre. Elle promet quelque chose d'exceptionnel. C'est tout de même une possibilité extrême, une promesse de transcendance." See, however, ibid., 68, where Levinas writes about the "impossibility of dying" (*l'impossibilité de mourir*), and 184, where he similarly uses the expression the "impossibility of death" (*l'impossibilité de la mort*).

[11] This sentiment is expressed movingly in a passage from *Zohar* 1:223b, the compilation of kabbalistic lore published in the sixteenth century after a long period of gestation that began in earnest with the circulation of manuscript fragments in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: "It has been taught: R. Eleazar said, 'Even if a person lives for a thousand years, on the day that he departs from the world it seems to him as if he has lived but one day.'" The anonymous kabbalist well captured the manner in which death attests

entitled "Time and the Other," delivered in 1946/47, to differentiate his view sharply from that of Heidegger:

> Death in Heidegger is an event of freedom, whereas for me the subject seems to reach the limit of the possible in suffering. It finds itself enchained, overwhelmed, and in some way passive . . . This is why death is never a present . . . The ancient adage designed to dissipate the fear of death—"If you are, it is not; if it is, you are not"—without doubt misunderstands the entire paradox of death, for it effaces our relationship with death, which is a unique relationship with the future.[12]

I would be remiss if I failed to note that Heidegger, too, wrote of the not-yet (*Noch-nicht*) as marking the constant "lack of wholeness" (*Unganzheit*) or the quality of being "outstanding" (*Ausstand*) that belongs essentially to Dasein. This sense of "being-ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in" (*Sich-vorweg-sein-im-schon-sein-in*) is identified as the structure of care (*Sorge*), the anxiety about the future,[13] which is not the psychological sense of distress to which human beings seem routinely vulnerable on the level of ontic anthropology but rather the ontological structure that designates "the being of a possible being-in-the-world" (*des Seins eines möglichen In-der-Welt-seins*).[14] Ontologically, "being toward one's ownmost potentiality-for-being [*Sein zum eigensten Seinkönnen*] means that Dasein is always already *ahead* of itself in its being [*das Dasein ist ihm selbst in seinem Sein je schon* vorweg]. Dasein is always already 'beyond itself' [*»über sich hinaus«*], not as a way of behaving toward beings which it is *not*, but as being toward the potentiality-for-being which it itself is. This structure of being of the essential 'being concerned about' we formulate as the *being-ahead-of-itself* [Sich-vorweg-sein] of Dasein."[15]

From Heidegger's perspective, human existence is overshadowed by the gnawing sense that "what belongs together is not yet together" (*Nochnichtbeisammensein des Zusammengehörigen*),[16] that Dasein's being

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not only to the fleetingness of our mortal lives but also to the hope we steadfastly bear that there shall be more time before the coming of the end that heralds the end of becoming.

[12] Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 70–71. Many have weighed in on the difference between the views of death promulgated by Heidegger and Levinas. For two representative studies, see Tina Chanter, *Time, Death, and the Feminine: Levinas with Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 154–62, and Eric Severson, *Levinas's Philosophy of Time: Gift, Responsibility, Diachrony, Hope* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2013), 93–99.

[13] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 41, 189; *Sein und Zeit*, 196.

[14] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 12, 57; *Sein und Zeit*, 57.

[15] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 41, 185; *Sein und Zeit*, 191–92.

[16] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 48, 233; *Sein und Zeit*, 242.

"remains forever *on its way to something* (*unterwegs zu*)."[17] The problem here is not the existentiell-ontical dilemma of not being able to apprehend "the not-yet of the character of Dasein," as we find, for example, in the case of perceiving the moon that is not yet full, but rather detecting the existential-ontological structure of "the possible *being* or *nonbeing* of this not-yet [*Noch-nicht*]. Dasein, as itself, has to *become*, that is, *be*, what it is not yet."[18] Heidegger insists, therefore, that "Dasein never becomes accessible at all as something objectively present [*Vorhandenes*], because being possible belongs in its own way to its kind of being."[19] This comportment, however, "finds its end in death,"[20] and hence the acceptance of one's mortality represents the "eminent possibility of Dasein" (*ausgezeichnete Möglichkeit*),[21] that is, the "most extreme not-yet" (*äußerste Noch-nicht*) to which Dasein relates itself as the end that is "imminent" rather than as "something not yet objectively present."[22] The "structural factor of care"—Dasein's being-ahead-of-itself (*Sich-vorweg*)—finds its "most primordial concretion" (*ursprünglichste Konkretion*) in "being-toward-death" (*Sein zum Tode*) that is divulged as "being-toward-the-end" (*Sein zum Ende*).[23] Ironically, humankind's "*ownmost* potentiality-of-being" (eigensten *Seinkönnen*)—its being-there (*Da-sein*)—is discerned from the "possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there" (*die Möglichkeit des Nicht-mehr-dasein-könnens*).[24] The incompleteness of the not-yet terminates in the future that annuls the openness appropriate to a bona fide sense of futurity. "In death, Dasein is neither fulfilled nor does it simply disappear . . . Rather, just as Dasein constantly already *is* its not-yet as long as it is, it also always already *is* its end." The act of dying, consequently, "does not signify a being-at-an-end [*Zu-Ende-sein*] of Dasein, but rather a *being toward the end* [*Sein zum Ende*] of this being. Death is a way to be that Dasein takes over as soon as it is."[25] In that respect, the being-toward-the-end does not connote an ultimate ending but rather the end that is always also a beginning, the mortality that is the benchmark of our immortality, not in the promise of a postmortem life but in taking hold of the collapse of the difference between life and

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17 Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. Ingo Farin with Alex Skinner, 38.
18 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 48, 234; *Sein und Zeit*, 243.
19 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 49, 239; *Sein und Zeit*, 248.
20 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 48, 233; *Sein und Zeit*, 242.
21 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 49, 239; *Sein und Zeit*, 248.
22 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 50, 240; *Sein und Zeit*, 250.
23 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 50, 241; *Sein und Zeit*, 251.
24 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 50, 241; *Sein und Zeit*, 250.
25 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 48, 236; *Sein und Zeit*, 245.

death in comprehending that the persistence of time consists in its passing, that time is insofar as it constantly is not.[26] Thus, commenting on the verse of Hölderlin, "Life is death, and death is also a life [*Leben ist Tod, und Tod is auch ein Leben*]," Heidegger writes, "Insofar as death comes, it vanishes. The mortals die the death in life. In death the mortals become *im*-mortal [un-*sterblich*]."[27]

In *Der Begriff der Zeit*, a lecture Heidegger delivered to the Marburg Theological Society in July 1924, he offered the following paradoxical account of temporal reversibility that buttresses the centrality accorded to the future in the phenomenological ontology of his earlier work:

> Dasein, as always specifically mine in each case, knows of its death and does so even when it wants to know nothing of it. What is it to *have one's own death in each case*? *It is Dasein's running ahead to its past, to an extreme possibility of itself that stands before it in certainty and utter indeterminacy. Dasein* as human life *is primarily being possible*, the Being of the possibility of its certain yet indeterminate past . . . This past, to which I can run ahead as mine, is not some 'what', but the 'how' of my Dasein pure and simple . . . *This running ahead* is nothing other than *the authentic and singular future of one's own Dasein*. In running ahead Dasein *is* its future, in such a way that in this being futural [*Zukünftigsein*] it comes back to its past and present. Dasein, conceived in its most extreme possibility of Being, is *time itself*, not *in* time . . . Being futural gives time, cultivates the present and allows the past to be repeated in how it is lived. With regard to time, this means that *the fundamental phenomenon of time is the future* (das Grundphänomen der Zeit ist die Zukunft).[28]

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[26] Martin Heidegger, *What Is Called Thinking*? trans. Fred W. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, with an introduction by J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 99: "And what is the temporal? . . . We are unmistakably reminded of what it is when we are told that someone's 'time was up.' The temporal is what must pass away. And time is the passing away of what must pass away . . . Time causes the passing away of what must pass away, and does so by passing away itself; yet it itself can pass away only if it persists throughout all the passing away. Time persists, consists in passing. It is, in that it constantly is not." Heidegger considered this "representational idea of time" as an essential supposition of the "metaphysics of the West." The metaphysical conception is determined by the notion of being as presence and hence what is thought to be in time is that which is present: "Only the 'now' is of the present time at each given moment. The future *is* the 'not yet now'; the past *is* the 'no longer now.' The future is what is still absent, the past is what is already absent" (p. 101, emphasis in original).

[27] Martin Heidegger, *Elucidation of Hölderlin's Poetry*, trans. Keith Hoeller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2000), 189–90; *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* [GA 4] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1981), 165.

[28] Martin Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 11–14 (emphasis in original).

To know one's own death, which is not just to know that inevitably one must die but to know in such a way that one possesses one's death—seemingly a phenomenological impossibility—in the quality of mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) or specificity (*Jeweiligkeit*) that is distinctive to Dasein's being, gives rise to the paradox of temporal reversibility: the running ahead (*Vorlaufen*) to one's past through which one confronts the extreme possibility (*äußersten Möglichkeit*) that stands before oneself in irrefutable certainty (*Gewißheit*) and utter indeterminacy (*Unbestimmtheit*). Obviously, we would have expected Heidegger to speak of running back to the past or running ahead to the future. What does he mean by running ahead to one's past and how is it the authentic and singular future of one's own Dasein (*die eigentliche und einzige Zukunft des eigenen Daseins*)?

We can respond to these queries if we listen carefully to what is hinted at in the statement "Being futural gives time [*Zukünftigsein gibt Zeit*], cultivates the present and allows the past to be repeated in how it is lived." Rather than thinking of the temporalization of time as the indeterminate future determined by the actuality of the past, Heidegger posits the indeterminate past determined by the possibility of the future. Hence, the past to which one runs ahead is not a fait accompli but an open occurrence subject to constant reformulation. Conceived from the vantage point of the "extreme possibility of Being" (*äußersten Seinsmöglichkeit*)—so extreme that the past itself is only past to the extent that it can be replicated as that which is yet to come—the primary mode of temporality for Dasein is the future, and inasmuch as the fundamental phenomenon of time is the future, Dasein is identified as time itself. As in *Being and Time*, so too in this lecture, Heidegger relates the future-orientation of Dasein to the quality of care: "Everything that is encountered in the world is encountered by Dasein as residing in the now; thus it encounters the time itself that Dasein in each case is, but is as present. Concern as absorption in the present is, as care [*Sorge*], nonetheless alongside a not-yet [*Noch-nicht*] that is first to be attended to in taking care of it. Even in the present of its concern, Dasein is the whole of time, in such a way that it does not get rid of the future. The future is now that to which care clings."[29]

The true import of identifying Dasein's ownmost possibility of being as being-toward-death is that Dasein comports the sense of futurity that is the elemental nature of time and thus we should not speak of "having time" or "being in time" but rather that "we are time." The hermeneutical foundation

[29] Ibid., 16.

of the ontology of time is brought to light in the section of *Being and Time* where Heidegger describes temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) as the *being of Dasein which understands being* (Sein des seinverstehenden Daseins); that is, time is *the horizon of the understanding of being* (Horizont des Seinverständnisses) whence "Dasein tacitly understands and interprets something like being at all."[30] Indeed, it is in virtue of this dimension of Dasein's being that we can utter the "fundamental assertion" (*Grundaussage*) that *time is temporal* (*die Zeit ist zeitlich*). At first glance, it would appear that this is nothing but a tautology. Heidegger insists, however, that this is not so; the statement imparts that time assumes meaning—becomes temporal—as a consequence of each individual human being running ahead to its past.[31] Time is thus the *principium individuationis*, and the paramount facet of that temporalizing principle of individuation (*Individuationsprinzip*) is the future of the past that we are destined to live in the present. "In being futural in running ahead, the Dasein that on average is becomes itself; in running ahead it becomes visible as this one singular uniqueness of its singular fate in the possibility of its singular past."[32]

In the time of everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*)—what Heidegger also refers to as the "astronomical and calendrical *time-reckoning*" (*astronomische und kalendarische* Zeitrechnung)[33]—the now of the present is the metrics by which we chronoscopically measure past and future: the past is the irretrievable no-longer-present (*Nicht-mehr-Gegenwart*) and the future the indeterminate not-yet-present (*Noch-nicht-Gegenwart*).[34] The everyday standpoint presumes, therefore, both the irreversibility (*Nicht-Umkehrbarkeit*) of time and its assimilation into space expressed as the homogenization into now-points (*Homogenisierung auf Jetzpunkte*).[35] Authentic time, by contrast, is lived from the futural retrieval of the past in the present, an act that constitutes the nature of Dasein as historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*), that is, the enigma of history that unravels in our being historical. For Heidegger, this is the first principle of all hermeneutics: "*The possibility of access to history* [Zugangsmöglichkeit zur Geschichte] *is grounded in the possibility according to which any specific present understands how to be futural* [zukünftig]."[36] In *Being and Time*, Heidegger argued that the "being of Dasein finds its

[30] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 5, 17; *Sein und Zeit*, 17.
[31] Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill, 20–21.
[32] Ibid., 21.
[33] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 80, 392; *Sein und Zeit*, 411.
[34] Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill, 17.
[35] Ibid., 18.
[36] Ibid., 20.

meaning in temporality," which is defined more specifically as "the condition of the possibility of historicity [*Möglichkeit von Geschichtlichkeit*] as a temporal mode of being [*zeitlichen Seinsart*] of Dasein itself." As the determination of the constitution of the being of Dasein, historicity is prior to the world-historical occurrences (*weltgeschichtliches Geschehen*), which we call history. On the face of it, the historical propensity of the human being may be grounded in the fact that in its factical being (*faktischen Sein*) Dasein always is how and what it already was, that it possesses the past as a property that is still objectively present. However, the appropriation and narration of the past is possible only because Dasein is "its past in the manner of *its* being which, roughly expressed, on each occasion 'occurs' out of its future. In its manner of existing at any given time, and thus also with the understanding of being that belongs to it, Dasein grows into a customary interpretation of itself and grows up on that interpretation . . . Its own past . . . does not *follow after* Dasein but rather always already goes ahead of it."[37] The formulation here anticipates the anti-Hegelian emphasis in Heidegger's later thought on the historical destiny of the unthought of being as the "it gives" (*es gibt*), which comes into language in the words of essential thinkers:

> Therefore the thinking that thinks into the truth of being is, as thinking, historical [*geschichtlich*]. There is not a "systematic" thinking and next to it an illustrative history of past opinions . . . Thought in a more primordial way, there is the history of being [*Geschichte des Seins*] to which thinking belongs as recollection [*Andenken*] of this history, propriated [*ereignet*] by it. Such recollective thought differs essentially from the subsequent presentation of history in the sense of an evanescent past. History does not take place primarily as happening [*Geschehen*]. And its happening is not evanescence [*Vergehen*]. The happening of history occurs essentially as the destiny of the truth of being and from it [*Das Geschehen der Geschichte west als das Geschick der Wahrheit des Seins aus diesem*] . . . Being comes to its destiny in that It, being, gives itself. But thought in terms of such destiny this says: It gives itself and refuses itself simultaneously [*Es gibt sich und versagt sich zumal*].[38]

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[37] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 6, 19 (emphasis in original); *Sein und Zeit*, 19–20. See Jean Greisch, *Ontologie et Temporalité: Esquisse d'une interprétation intégrale de* Sein und Zeit (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994), 352–82; Françoise Dastur, *Heidegger and the Question of Time*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1998), 38–51.

[38] Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 255; *Wegmarken* [GA 9] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004), 335.

In light of this passage, and many others that could have been cited, I would take issue with the observation of Žižek that "the true *Kehre* from *Sein und Zeit* to the late Heidegger is the shift from ahistorical formal-transcendental analysis to radical historicity . . . Heideggerian historicity is the historicity of transcendental horizons themselves, of the different modes of the disclosure of being, with no agent regulating the process—historicity happens as an *es gibt* (*il y a*), the radically contingent abyss of a world-game."[39] I concur with the characterization of the *es gibt* as the world-game in which the real is disclosed—and here I would add the word "concealed," insofar as every disclosure is perforce a concealment, every bequeathing is a refusal to bequeath—as "a *given without givenness*," as that which is "just given, with no possibility of accounting for its being given by any agency of giving."[40] Indeed, this is the crux of my reading of Heidegger offered in *Giving Beyond the Gift*, a reading that invokes the ungifting of the gift, that is, the realization that there is naught but the giving that gives with no will to give and no desire to be given.[41] However, I would challenge Žižek's following the scholarly convention by temporalizing Heidegger's thinking. The notion of historicity elicited from Heidegger after the so-called turn is in evidence even in the early work.

Be that as it may, Adorno astutely criticized Heidegger on the grounds that his notion of Dasein's temporal transiency implies that it "is both absolutized and transfigured as eternal by the existential-ontological drafts. The concept of existence as the essentiality of transience, the temporality of temporal things, keeps existence away by naming it . . . This is the latest type of philosophical solace, the type of mythical euphemism—a falsely resurrected faith that one might break the spell of nature by soothingly copying it."[42] Similarly, from Levinas's perspective, the break with ontology turns on grasping death as the openness that foretells a future that can

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[39] Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), 890.

[40] Ibid., 890 n. 44.

[41] Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 227–60, esp. 236–46.

[42] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 131. Compare Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 88–89. For the contrast between Adorno and Heidegger on the matter of death, temporality, and the finitude of human existence, see Fred Dallmayr, *Life-world, Modernity and Critique: Paths between Heidegger and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 51–52. See also Alexander García Düttmann, *The Memory of Thought: An Essay on Heidegger and Adorno*, trans. Nicholas Walker (London: Continuum, 2002), 52.

never be present except as what is yet to come, and thus the relativization of the temporal is not subject to the absolutization of being, even if the latter is conceived as the past that is eternally in the process of becoming, the reverberation of the same difference. When viewed this way we can appreciate the need to reverse the relationship between transience and temporality that emerges from Heidegger's ruminations on death as the authentic "having-come-to-an-end" (*Zuendegekommensein*).[43] Apparently, pushing back against Heidegger, Levinas writes, "What we have attempted to do is to think of time independently of the death to which the passive synthesis of aging leads us, to describe time independently of death or the nothingness of the end that death signifies. We have attempted to think death as a function of time, without seeing in death the very project of time."[44] It seems to

[43] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, § 47, 230; *Sein und Zeit*, 239.

[44] Emmanuel Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 113. This is not the place to evaluate the accuracy and impartiality of Levinas's critique of Heidegger's position, but it does seem to me that Heidegger anticipates some of this criticism in his assessment of the theme of being-toward-death in Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy* (*of the Event*), trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), § 161, 222–23; *Beiträge zur Philosophie* (*Vom Ereignis*) [GA 65] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1994), 283–84. After asserting that the consideration of being-toward-death in *Being and Time* was "thought only within 'fundamental ontology' and never conceived anthropologically or in terms of a 'worldview,' " Heidegger recasts the earlier discussion in light of his current thinking about *Ereignis* as the truth of beyng (*Seyn*): "The uniqueness [*Einzigkeit*] of death in human Da-sein belongs to the most original determination of Da-sein, namely, to be ap-propriated [*er-eignet*] by beyng itself in order to ground this latter in its truth (openness of self-concealing). In the unusualness and uniqueness of death, what opens up is the most unusual amid all beings, beyng itself, which essentially occurs as estrangement [*Befremdung*]. Yet in order to surmise anything at all of this most original nexus . . . what had to be made visible first . . . is the relation of Da-sein to death itself, i.e., the connection between resoluteness (openness) and death, i.e., the running-ahead [*Vor-laufen*]. Yet this running ahead toward death is not to be made visible for the sake of attaining mere 'nothingness' [*Nichts*], but just the opposite, so that openness for beyng might be disclosed—fully and out of what is most extreme . . . The essential context for the projection of death is the original *futurity* [*ursprünglichen* Zukünftigkeit] of Dasein within its very essence (as that essence is understood in fundamental ontology). In the framework of the task of *Being and Time*, this primarily means that death is connected to 'time,' which in turn is established as the domain for the projection of the truth of beyng itself. This already shows, clearly enough for anyone who wants to participate in the questioning, that there the question of death stands in an essential relation to the *truth of beyng* [Wahrheit des Seyns] and stands *only* in that relation. Accordingly, death is not taken there, and is never taken, as the denial of beyng [*Verneinung des Seyns*] or even, qua 'nothingness,' as the essence of beyng [*Wesen des Seyns*]. Instead, the exact opposite is the case: death is the highest and ultimate attestation of beyng [*der Tod das höchste und äußerste Zeugnis des Seyns*]." As this passage indicates, and the succeeding section makes even more clear, Heidegger was responding to critics who understood his analysis of being-toward-death as promoting a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) that led to nihilism. On the

me entirely apt to ascribe to death Levinas's description of the tragic as the "infinity of existence that is consumed in an instant, the fatality in which its freedom is congealed as in a winter landscape where frozen beings are captives of themselves. Time, far from constituting the tragic, shall perhaps be able to deliver us from it."[45] Reiterating the theme with a slightly different nuance in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes:

> To be temporal is both to be for death and to still have time, to be against death . . . It is a relation with an instant whose exceptional character is due not to the fact that it is at the threshold of nothingness or of a rebirth, but to the fact that, in life, it is the impossibility of every possibility, the stroke of a total passivity alongside of which the passivity of the sensibility, which moves into activity, is but a distant imitation. Thus the fear for my being which is my relation with death is not the fear of nothingness, but the fear of violence—and thus it extends into fear of the Other, of the absolutely unforeseeable.[46]

In contrast to Heidegger's understanding of death as the existential-ontological structure of Dasein's *ownmost and nonrelational possibility*, Levinas depicts death as the relation with the instant whose exceptionality exhibits the impossibility of every possibility, the passivity of the subject overcome by the unpredictability of the other. Borrowing the jargon used by Benjamin to distinguish classical tragedy from the *Trauerspiel*, we can say that, for Levinas, death is not an "individual destiny" but the "form of a communal fate."[47]

I would propose, moreover, that to comprehend Levinas's reference to the instant of death, we must avail ourselves of his earlier conception of the instant as the hypostasis that constitutes the "pretemporal sensibility,"

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contrary, the intent of the analysis of being-toward-death was to enact the "ultimate measuring out [*Ausmessung*] of *temporality* [Zeitlichkeit] and thereby the move into the *space* of the truth of beyng, *the indication of time-space* [die Anzeige des Zeit-Raumes]: thus *not* in order to deny 'beyng,' but rather in order to establish the ground of its complete and essential affirmability [*Bejahbarkeit*]." The "carrying out" (*Vollzug*) of being-toward-death is open to "every essential human being" (*wesentliche Mensch*), but it is incumbent "only on thinkers of the other beginning." With palpable irritation and a smidgen of sarcasm, Heidegger observes, "Being-toward-death would not be touched in its essentiality if it did not give scholars in philosophy an occasion for tasteless scoffing and journalists the right to know everything better" (*Contributions*, § 162, 223–24; *Beiträge*, 284–85).

[45] Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, foreword by Robert Bernasconi (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), 78.

[46] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1969), 235.

[47] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne, with an introduction by George Steiner (London: Verso, 1998), 136. The passage is cited below in n. 176.

in the language of Tina Chanter, the "time that is not yet time."[48] Levinas insisted that one cannot understand the instant unless one is attuned to the problem of origin, a topic that escapes philosophical analysis because the law of contradiction does not apply to what is prior to the event of the beginning, the moment of which we must say that A is concurrently non-A. The "paradoxical duality" is rendered as follows:

> What begins to be does not exist before having begun, and yet it is what does not exist that must through its beginning give birth to itself, come to itself, without coming from anywhere. Such is the paradoxical character of beginning which is constitutive of an instant . . . A beginning does not start out of the instant that precedes the beginning; its point of departure is contained in its point of arrival, like a rebound movement. It is out of this withdrawal in the very heart of the present that the present is effected, and an instant taken up.[49]

The instant of death is the mirror image of the instant of the beginning and thus we can say of it that *its point of departure is contained in its point of arrival*, and much like the beginning, the end is a withdrawal in the very heart of the present. But unlike the beginning, which is the giving birth to oneself, death is letting go of oneself to give birth to another. Death incarnates the temporality that is expressive of the alterity that undergirds the infinite responsibility that one must assume in proximity to the other.[50] That is, just as the temporal invariably bears the inchoateness of the not yet, so the other ceaselessly eludes categorization, since it is always on the way to becoming what it is not and therefore cannot be apperceived as that which is the same. Expressed in the more technical terms adopted by Levinas, the diachrony of time signifies the "noncoincidence" and "inadequation" of the "absolutely other," the "In-visible" that cannot be "assimilated by experience," the something more that is the "*always* of the relationship, an aspiration and an awaiting."[51] As a matter of phenomenological exactitude, death cannot be treated under the taxon of temporal facticity; it is more suitably demarcated as that which transpires in time in relation to which time has expired.

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[48] Chanter, *Time, Death, and the Feminine*, 151. The author suggests that the idea of the instant may be viewed as "the germ of the notion that Levinas will later call the trace. As such, it also anticipates the structural tension and ambiguity that he will explore under the heading of the saying and the said."

[49] Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, 75.

[50] Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 104.

[51] Ibid., 32 (emphasis in original).

Death falls outside the parameter of phenomenality—at least when construed from the vantage point of a genetic as opposed to a generative phenomenology. Applying the words that Blanchot relegates to the phenomenon of the disaster, we can say of death that it is not a fact or an event because there is no "I" to undergo the experience, and since this is so, we are led to the paradox that death can take place only after having taken place.[52] The time of death, accordingly, is the *future anterior*; that is, concerning death we can only say post factum that it will have been the event that it was to become.[53] There is, as Françoise Dastur wrote, an impasse shared by the phenomenology of eventuality and the phenomenology of mortality: "Death, as an event, is also that which always happens against all expectation, always too early, something impossible that nevertheless happens. It comes to us without coming from us. It takes place in the impersonal manner of this event that happens also to others and it is the most universal event for living beings. One could say that death is the event par excellence, except that it is never present, it never presently happens."[54]

Husserl already recognized the problem in wrestling with what he considered to be the inconceivability of imagining that everything that is presently immanent—that is, all beings constituted noetically in the enduring present of consciousness—would come to a halt such that there would then be nothing:

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[52] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 28.

[53] My thinking reflects the approach to the event more generally affirmed by Claude Romano, "Awaiting," in *Phenomenology and Eschatology: Not Yet in the Now*, ed. Neal DeRoo and John Panteleimon Manoussakis (Surrey: Ashgate, 2008), 46. See also Françoise Dastur, "Phenomenology of the Event: Waiting and Surprise," *Hypatia* 15 (2000): 178–89, esp. 182–83: "But what is an event, in fact? At first, we can only define it as what was not expected, what arrives unexpectedly and comes to us by surprise, what descends upon us, the accident . . . The event in the strong sense of the word is therefore always a surprise, something which takes possession of us in an unforeseen manner, without warning, and which brings us towards an unanticipated future. The *eventum*, which arises in the becoming, constitutes something which is irremediably excessive in comparison to the usual representation of time as flow. It appears as something that dislocates time and gives a new form to it, something that puts the flow of time out of joint and changes its direction . . . The event constitutes the critical moment of temporality—a critical moment which nevertheless allows the continuity of time . . . Against all expectation, even if it has been partially expected and anticipated, such is in fact the 'essence' of the event. Based on this we could say without paradox that it is an 'impossible possible.' The event, in its internal contradiction, is the impossible which happens, in spite of everything, in a terrifying or marvelous manner."

[54] Dastur, "Phenomenology," 183.

> As soon as one conceives of the "then-not-being," one presupposes a "then-being," which conflicts with the non-being. One imputes the possible cessation of every conceivable particular being to a putative cessation of the stream of life. The cessation itself as the cessation of the object presupposes a non-cessation, namely, consciousness to which the cessation is given.[55]

Merleau-Ponty extends the point to birth as well: "Neither my birth nor my death can appear to me as my personal experiences, since if I conceive of them in this way, I must imagine myself as preexisting or as surviving myself in order to be able to experience them, and thus I could not genuinely conceive of my birth or my death. Thus, I can only grasp myself as 'already born' and as 'still living,'—I can only grasp my birth and my death as pre-personal horizons: I know that one is born and that one dies, but I cannot know my birth or my death."[56] Simply put, none of us can experience our own birth or our own death even as we know categorically that one is indisputable and the other inescapable. By this yardstick, death is quintessentially the nonevent of the terminus delimited as the limit always to be delimited, the limit beyond which there is no limit, and hence the limit of what cannot be delimited, the threshold that may be crossed only by not-crossing. Death signifies a radical experience of time as the erasure written from the abiding evanescence of the end that stops being an end once it is attained, the future that can never arrive because, as future, it is always still arriving.

Prima facie, the inability to reach the end, which temporalizes our existence in a distinctive manner, can be expressed as an apophasis of language. The point was well captured by Schürmann: "The singularizing withdrawal that death exerts on life would reduce language to zero if it were possible for us to see it in all its clarity. A radical *Aufklärung* on the subject of fantasms would deprive us of the common space where the give and take of speech proves to us that we are not dead."[57] This seems reasonable enough—all things being equal, the possibility of dialogue with another is a tell-tale sign that one is still walking amongst the living. The silence of not speaking may thus be correlated with death. Probing the matter from an

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[55] Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 467. Husserl's position is discussed by Saulius Geniusas, "On Nietzsche's Genealogy and Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology: The Case of Suffering," in *Nietzsche and Phenomenology: Power, Life, Subjectivity*, ed. Élodie Boublil and Christine Daigle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 50.

[56] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 223.

[57] Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, 18.

even more paradoxical perspective, however, we can say that human time-keeping is such that death is the signpost that illumines the way to the end that is still spoken, albeit spoken as unspoken. But how does one speak of what cannot be spoken? How does one discourse about death without traversing the coming of one's time—as in our saying "one's time has come"? Death—the unexpected, but yet altogether anticipated, end that comes unendingly as the end to come intermittently—opens consciousness to the moment that escapes objectification and thematization, a moment that may be rendered poetically as the confrontation with the face most visible when it can be seen no more. In this encounter—the effacement at the intersection wherein existence and nonexistence are indistinguishable, or, as Levinas put it, the "interval of discretion" that is the "third notion between being and nothingness"[58]—truth is disclosed in the concealment of its disclosure. The sign of the end, accordingly, would signify the end of the sign, but it is a sign nonetheless, indeed the ultimate sign inasmuch as it signifies that which cannot be signified, a semiosis of the end that is inherently endless.

Waiting for the End of Waiting

Beyond the complexities of delineating death as an abstract homogenization that would lead paradoxically to the positing of a singularity that does not allow for singularity, we must be cognizant of the fact that any thinking that attempts to grapple with the endtime more generally in an age inundated by severe fragmentation, heterogeneity, and disjointedness needs to engage the problem of the viability of system and the incommensurability of truth as the exception to exceptionality, the trace of transcendence that defies incorporation into totality. As Joanna Hodge summarized the situation in the twentieth century, which can easily be extended to the twenty-first century, "In place of completed systems or delimited position statements, philosophy has tended to be written under the sign of incompleteness, and thus has the open-ended form of a practice which requires the active participation of its inheritors."[59] Thinking in the

[58] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 58.

[59] Joanna Hodge, "Poietic Epistemology: Reading Husserl Through Adorno and Heidegger," in *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, ed. Iain Macdonald and Krzysztof Ziarek (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 66.

footsteps of Rosenzweig,[60] I would proffer that system does not denote an architectural structure, which is formed by assembling individual stones whose meaning is validated by the sense of the whole, but rather the striving on the part of individual entities for correlationality; the merit of a system is dependent, therefore, on postulating a unity incessantly in the making, a cohesiveness that displays an impulse for order that must be realized continually through negotiating the chaos. The idea of the open system is captured aptly by Hodge's expression "poietic epistemology," which she deploys to convey the idea that phenomenology is a practice of thinking that is always in the process of formation.[61] Rosenzweig elucidated his view by noting that, in the Hegelian system, each individual is anchored temporally in the whole and thus every present is an interval related exclusively to two others, the one that immediately precedes it as past and the one that immediately succeeds it as future, but in his notion of systematicity, the genuine novelty of each moment is not to be confirmed spatially by its occupying a median position sequentially between what came before and what comes after. To the extent that the moment is authentically novel—an event of presence that is always in excess of being present—it is experienced as the constant resumption of what is yet to be, the return of what has never been, the vertical intervention that opens the horizontal timeline to the spherical redundancy of eternity. In this manner, Deleuze famously cast Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence as the repetition that consists in conceiving the same on the basis of the different; that is, what is the same is the reiteration of difference,[62] and hence, as Heidegger pithily portrayed the paradox of temporal

[60] I am here restating the argument in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 88–89, and compare Elliot R. Wolfson, "Structure, Innovation, and Diremptive Temporality: The Use of Models to Study Continuity and Discontinuity in Kabbalistic Tradition," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 6 (2007): 156–57. Rosenzweig's notion of system has been explored by various scholars. See, for instance, Stéphane Mosès, *System and Revelation: The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, foreword by Emmanuel Lévinas, trans. Catherine Tihanyi (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992); Benjamin Pollock, *Franz Rosenzweig and the Systematic Task of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and the essays in *Die Denkfigur des Systems im Ausgang von Franz Rosenzweig's* »Stern der Erlösung«, ed. Hartwig Wiedebach (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 2013).

[61] Hodge, "Poietic Epistemology," 65.

[62] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 41; Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 48. For discussion of the Deleuzian perspective and the passage of Heidegger cited in the following note, see Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 243.

tensiveness, every "already" (*wieder*) is an "altogether otherwise" (*ganz anders*). Repetition, therefore, means "to *let* the *same*, the uniqueness of beyng, become plight *again* and *thereby out of a more original truth*."[63]

For Rosenzweig, this paradox suggests that the renunciation of totality and the consequent turn to individuality are not an unmitigated toppling of system but a reorientation based on a notion of system according to which universality is revamped continuously in light of the entanglement of the general in the web of particularity. This notion of systematicity, as I have suggested elsewhere,[64] offers something of a corrective to the postmodern dismissal of essentialism, insofar as it entails a conception of integration and a mode of discursive coherence that provide the relatively stable framework through and in which the changing constellations evolve, dissolve, and revolve, without assuming that all tensions, inconsistencies, and contradictions are reconciled in a unified structure akin to a Hegelian ideal of sublation. What may be elicited from Rosenzweig is not conceptually far-off from Benjamin's idea that the expressionless points to the absolute, which is not a substance that can be reified ontotheologically but rather the infinitude (*Unendlichkeit*) of language that prevents the setting of definite limits and thus serves as the principle of falsification that shatters the whole into fragments—corresponding linguistically to the translatability of the *Ursprache* into the multiple languages of humankind[65]—"reducing it to the *smallest* totality of semblance, a totality that is a great fragment

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[63] Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 33, 58 (emphasis in original); *Beiträge*, 73. It follows that, for Heidegger, the inceptuality of the beginning (*die Anfängnis des Anfangs*)—the event (*Ereignis*)—is a reiteration (*Wiederanfangen*) of what has already been that which is to come, the thinking of the first that is always a rethinking of the second, a point exploited by the anarchic drift of Derridean deconstruction. See Heidegger, *Contributions*, § 23, 46; *Beiträge*, 57; Martin Heidegger, *The Event*, translated by Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), §§ 252–53, 195–97; *Das Ereignis* [GA 71] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2009), 227–29: "The beginning is not inceptually in the inceptuality; the beginning commences in what has not begun, inasmuch as the beginning disentangles itself from that in order to emerge. The disentangling is what is concealed of the unconcealedness . . . The other beginning is *the* beginning *otherwise* than the first—the first is still otherwise than the other [*der erste ist anders noch als der andere*] . . . Beginning [*Anfang*] does not mean commencement [*Beginn*], and afortiori never means the commencement of beings . . . In order to think the beginning, we must already in advance be appropriated in the experience of being [*Erfahrung des Seins*], appropriated by being to this experience" (emphasis in original). See also Martin Heidegger, *Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938* [GA 94] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014), II, § 237, 100, and IV, § 115, 243.

[64] Elliot R. Wolfson, "Revealing and Re/veiling: Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson's Messianic Secret," *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 26 (2012): 52.

[65] Andrew Benjamin, "The Absolute as Translatability: Working Through Walter Benjamin on Language," in *Walter Benjamin and Romanticism*, ed. Beatrice Hanssen and Andrew Benjamin (London: Continuum, 2002), 109–22.

taken from the true world, the fragment of a symbol."[66] Moving beyond the rhetoric of Rosenzweig and Benjamin, employing the strategies of more recent semiotic theory, enhanced by contemporary physics and mathematics, I would say that the complexity of any given system requires that each one of the interacting semantic signs is implicated in the production of the very system that produces it, a network of patterns that express the dynamical properties fashioned by an ever-changing interconnectivity; this ensemble of irreducible and yet mutually interdependent clusters, however, does not form a homogeneous and symmetrical whole devoid of ambiguity and incoherence.[67] Following Badiou, we may wish to adopt the notion of *universal singularity*—epitomized by Paul in his appeal to the "evental truth" that casts the universal messianically with reference to the singular and subjective occurrence of the resurrection, that is, the human becoming the ultimate subject by relinquishing integration into the totality (Greek wisdom) and abdicating the mastery of a literal tradition that triggers the deciphering of signs (Jewish ritualism and prophetism)[68]—in an effort to affirm the construction of imaginary identities that are shared but not subsumed under an axiomatic homogeny. In Lacanian terms, the world is "an interplay of the symbolic and the imaginary in response to the collapse of the real."[69] However, as Badiou himself acknowledges, this collapse

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[66] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 225.

[67] Paul Cilliers, *Complexity and Postmodernism: Understanding Complex Systems* (London: Routledge, 1988), 44–45, 94–95. See also David Bohm, *Thought as a System* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[68] Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, translated by Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 14, 42. For a sustained critique of Badiou's approach to Paul, see Stephen Fowl, "A Very Particular Universalism: Badiou and Paul," in *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical Engagements with Agamben, Badiou, Žižek, and Others*, ed. Douglas Harink (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2010), 119–34.

[69] Alain Badiou, "St. Paul, Founder of the Universal Subject," in *St. Paul among the Philosophers*, ed. John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 28. Badiou's indebtedness to Lacan is well-documented in the conversations recorded in Alain Badiou and Élisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan, Past and Present: A Dialogue*, trans. Jason E. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014). On the truth as universal singularity and Paul, see also Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 9–14, esp. 11: "For if it is true that every truth erupts as singular, its singularity is immediately universalizable. Universalizable singularity necessarily breaks with identitarian singularity." On the thesis that every universal is a singularity, see Alain Badiou, "Thinking the Event," in Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, *Philosophy in the Present*, ed. Peter Engelmann, trans. Peter Thomas and Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 29–31. See also Frederiek Depoortere, "Badiou's Paul: Founder of Universalism and Theoretician of the Militant," in *Paul in the Grip of the Philosophers: The Apostle and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, ed. Peter Frick (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 143–64.

"eliminates the event, and so fidelity to the event, which is the subjective essence of the truth. The world is then hostile to the process of truth insofar as it resists the universal of identity through homogeny or the adhesion to constructed identities."[70]

The relevance of this claim to the topic at hand should be obvious. The repudiation of homogeneity and symmetry calls into question the rigidity of positing a clearly marked beginning or end. For our purposes I will concentrate on the latter, although I readily admit that the correlativity of the two precludes their partition. In contemplating the end, we enter into the thicket of eschatology—literally, the discourse or thinking about the end—for there is no end that has commanded as much attention in Jewish theorizing about the end as the eschaton. Here, too, it is prudent to note the messianic paradigm embraced by Rosenzweig, which is to be contrasted with a conception of the climactic fulfillment of history as we find in some forms of Christian soteriology, Enlightenment utilitarianism, and Hegelian idealism. The teleological notion is upended by the possibility of the future diremptively breaking into the present at any moment, an incursion that disturbs the chronometric flow of time and undercuts the supposition that there is a progressive march towards an attainable goal. Messianic hope hinges on preparing for the onset of what takes place as the *purely present future*, that is, the future that is already present as the present that is always future, the *tomorrow that is now because it is now tomorrow*.[71] "Eternity is not a very long time," wrote Rosenzweig, "but a tomorrow that just as well could be today. Eternity is a future, which, without ceasing to be future, is nevertheless present."[72] It is specifically through adherence to Jewish law in the course of the annual liturgical cycle that one is "permitted to implore eternity into time."[73] The Jews are the eternal people because they ritually embody this sense of fulfilled time: "For it its temporality, this fact that the years recur, is considered only as a waiting, perhaps as a wandering, but not as a growing . . . For eternity is precisely this, that between the present

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[70] Badiou, "St. Paul," 28.

[71] Elliot R. Wolfson, *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menaḥem Mendel Schneerson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 286; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Open Secret in the Rearview Mirror," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 35 (2011): 417–18.

[72] Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 241.

[73] Ibid., 347.

moment and the completion time may no longer claim a place, but as early as in the today every future is graspable."[74]

Rather than viewing the nomadic quality of the Jew as a detriment, Rosenzweig interprets the stereotype of wandering as the spatial analogue to the temporal exploit of waiting for the end. The position taken by Rosenzweig is put into sharp relief when compared to Heidegger, who viewed both Jewish messianic faith and the nomadic status of the Jew prejudicially: the directive to wait for redemption as an incident in history that has not yet occurred is the temporal equivalent of spatial dislocation and the diasporic desire to return to the homeland.[75] Needless to

[74] Ibid., 348.

[75] Concerning Heidegger's view on Jewish messianism, see the passage from *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* cited and discussed in Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 232–33. On the disparaging depiction of the itinerant status of the Jewish exile, see especially the comment in Martin Heidegger, *Nature, History, State 1933–1934*, trans. and ed. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 55–56: "History teaches us that nomads have not only been made nomadic by the desolation of wastelands and steppes, but they have also often left wastelands behind them where they found fruitful and cultivated land—and that human beings who are rooted in the soil have known how to make a home for themselves even in the wilderness. Relatedness to space, that is, the mastering of space and becoming marked by space, belong together with essence and the kind of Being of a people . . . From the specific knowledge of a people about the nature of its space, we first experience how nature is revealed in this people. For a Slavic people, the nature of our German space would definitely be revealed differently from the way it is revealed to us; to Semitic nomads, it will perhaps never be revealed at all." See the analysis of this text in Peter E. Gordon, "Heidegger in Purgatory," in Heidegger, *Nature, History, State*, 85–107, esp. 96–98. As Gordon rightly notes, Heidegger's deleterious comment has to be evaluated against his overall thinking regarding the themes of enrootedness, dwelling, homelessness, and homecoming, as they relate to the destiny of the human being in the world. On the political issues surrounding the topological-geographical elements of Heidegger's thinking in light of his affiliation with Nazism, see Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 17–27, 283–85; and Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 137–57. The matter is too complicated to deal with adequately in this note, but I would say briefly that Heidegger's sense of homecoming or enrootedness in place cannot be separated from his sensitivity to the matter of homelessness, and both are to be gauged from the vantage point of the proximity to or the distance from being, which is determinative of the fundamental character of human ek-istence (*Ek-sistenz*), that is, the ecstatic inherence as the "there" (*das »Da«*) that is the "clearing of being" (*Lichtung des Seins*). See the "Letter on 'Humanism' " (1946) in Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 248; *Wegmarken*, 325. For Heidegger, these are not polar opposites, as the logic of noncontradiction and the principle of the excluded middle might prescribe, for what is nearby is concomitantly faraway, what is disclosed is concomitantly concealed. See Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 104 and references to other scholars cited on 366 n. 110, to which one could add Richard Capobianco, *Engaging Heidegger*, foreword by William J. Richardson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 52–69. Most importantly, after resigning from the rectorship in 1934, Heidegger seems to have shifted from a purely political sense of "the homeland" (*die Heimat*) and of "the German" (*das Deutsche*) to a theologico-poetic sense, in Lacoue-Labarthe's turn of

say, the distinction that Heidegger draws in the 1920–1921 lecture course, "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion," between the historical time of Jewish messianism and the kairetic time of Christian eschatology is too simplistic. One can discover in some versions of Jewish messianism the chiastic paradox that Heidegger associates with the structure of hope and the temporality of the enactment of life (*Vollzug des Lebens*) ritualized sacramentally by the Christian *parousia*: the future is already present as the present that is always future.[76] This form of hope is not expressed by waiting for something to take place in the ordinary procession of time but as an expectation of the unexpected, the renewal of what has already transpired.[77] Heidegger distinguishes Jesus's proclamation (*Verkündigung*)

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phrase, which shares affinity with Benjamin's signature expression "theological-political." See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Poetry's Courage," in *Walter Benjamin and Romanticism*, 163–79. This is not to say that the geopolitical sense is completely obliterated in Heidegger, but only that it is somewhat attenuated. Consider, for instance, the following exposition of these lines from Hölderlin, "A sign is needed,/Nothing else, plain and simple" (*Ein Zeichen braucht es,/Nichts anderes, schlecht und recht*), in Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 153 (*Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister"* [GA 53] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), 191): "This alone is the singular need of journeying into the locality of what for the Germans is their ownmost [*der Wanderschaft in die Ortschaft des Eigensten der Deutschen*]: 'A sign' (a poet), 'Nothing else, plain and simple'—there is need of this unconditional founding of what remains." And see especially Heidegger's admonition, ad loc., n. 2: "There is no need for the affected extravagance, the loud gestures and bewildering din, or the immense monuments characteristic of the un-German monumental of the Romans and Americans. And such things are not needed if the sign remains plain, that is, oriented directly toward that which is to be said, and it has nothing to do with all those other things that are adverse and detrimental to one's own." That these words were written in 1942 is not insignificant. On the diasporic nature of Heidegger's "thinking poetics," see Alejandro A. Vallega, *Heidegger and the Issue of Space: Thinking on Exilic Grounds* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003); Aubrey L. Glazer, *A New Physiognomy of Jewish Thinking: Critical Theory After Adorno as Applied to Jewish Thought* (London: Continuum, 2011), 31.

[76] Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 280–81; Elliot R. Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted within a Dream: Oneiropoiesis and the Prism of Imagination* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 254.

[77] Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 101–2, 231–32. I will not repeat here the other scholarly analyses of Heidegger's exegesis of Paul and Christian eschatology that I cited in that study, but I do want to take the opportunity to draw the reader's attention to some additional references: Thomas J. Sheehan, "Heidegger's 'Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion,' 1920–21," *The Personalist* 55 (1979–1980): 312–4, reprinted in *A Companion to Heidegger's "Being and Time,"* ed. Joseph Kockelmans (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1986), 40–62; Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 33–34; Joachim L. Oberst, *Heidegger on Language and Death: The Intrinsic Connection in Human Existence* (London: Continuum, 2009), 17–47, esp. 28–36; Glazer, *A New Physiognomy*, 34–35; Sylvain Camilleri, *Phénoménologie de la religion et herméneutique théologique dans la pensée du jeune Heidegger: Commentaire analytique des Fondements philosophiques de la mystique médiévale (1916–1919)* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 457–64; Justin D. Klassen, "Heidegger's Paul and Radical Orthodoxy on the Structure of Christian Hope," in *Paul, Philosophy, and*

of the coming of the kingdom of God in the synoptic gospels and Paul's notion of enactment, which in turn is based on the factical life experience (*Faktische Lebenserfahrung*) whose object is Jesus, the messiah that has already come. The factical life experience for the Christian "is historically determined by its emergence with the proclamation that hits people in a moment, and then is unceasingly also alive in the enactment of life."[78] The enactment of life, therefore, entails the ability for one to relive the historical moment—the Christ-event of the crucifixion—which from its inception bears the retroactive not yet.

In this regard, the messianic annunciation is not simply a "thankful memory" but rather the "having-become" (*Gewordensein*) that engenders the possibility of a "new becoming" that "always remains co-present."[79]

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the Theopolitical Vision, 64–89; Simon Critchley, "You Are Not Your Own: On the Nature of Faith," in *Paul and the Philosophers*, ed. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 224–55; Judith Wolfe, *Heidegger's Eschatology: Theological Horizons in Martin Heidegger's Early Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 61–65; Benjamin Crowe, "Heidegger and the Apostle Paul," in *Paul in the Grip of the Philosophers*, 39–56. Also relevant here is the discussion in Düttmann, *The Memory of Thought*, 258–63, of Heidegger's "Dionysian mysticism," which rests upon a "forgetting of the Messianism of Jewish mysticism." The catalyst for Düttmann's comments is the contrast between Heidegger and Derrida made by Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 167: "Derrida passes beyond Heidegger's inverted foundationalism, but remains in its path. As a result, the temporalized *Ursprungsphilosophie* takes on clearer contours. The remembrance of the messianism of Jewish mysticism and of the abandoned but well-circumscribed place once assumed by the God of the Old Testament preserves Derrida, so to speak, from the political-moral insensitivity and the aesthetic tastelessness of a New Paganism spiced up with Hölderlin." It is beyond the confines of this note to evaluate Habermas's remark but Düttmann is correct to derive from it a portrait of a Heideggerian messianism devoid of any influence of Jewish eschatology.

[78] Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 83; *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* [GA 60] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 116–17. See Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (London: Verso, 2012), 169–70.

[79] Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 84; *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, 117. Travis Kroeker, "Living 'As If Not': Messianic Becoming or the Practice of Nihilism?" in *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision*, 40 n. 8, commented on the affinity between Heidegger's interpretation of Paul's notion of "having become" and Badiou's emphasis on becoming a subject. I would add that another similarity relates to the primacy accorded the now of the singularity of the event, or as Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 59, puts it, "every truth is marked by an indestructible *youthfulness*" (emphasis in original). I read Badiou's idea of the eventual truth as a further secularization of Heidegger's interpretation of Pauline eschatology and the hope engendered by waiting for the second coming. Consider the following summary given in an interview with Fabien Tarby in Alain Badiou, *Philosophy and the Event*, trans. Louise Burchill (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 12: "In every situation, there are processes faithful to an event that has previously taken place. It's not a matter, then, of desperately awaiting a miraculous event but, rather of following

Commenting on Paul's observation that the appointed time has grown short or contracted itself, *ho kairos synestalmenos estin* (I Cor. 7:29), Heidegger writes in a conspicuously Kierkegaardian spirit[80] that the primordial Christian religiosity (*urchristlichen Religiosität*) demands that one live incessantly in the distress of the only-yet (*Nur-Noch*), a "compressed temporality" (*zusammengedrängte Zeitlichkeit*) instantiated in the moment of vision (*Augenblick*), in which there is no time for postponement.[81] The true believer ascertains that salvation partakes of the factical life experience that converts the temporal into the eternal. "The obstinate waiting," writes Heidegger, "does not wait for the significances of a future content, but for God. The meaning of temporality determines itself out of the fundamental relationship to God—however, in such a way that only those who live temporality in the manner of enactment understand eternity."[82]

Utilizing Ricoeur's discussion of Augustine's notion of time and eternity as it pertains to the psychological experience of *distentio animi*,[83] we can hypothesize that even at this early stage, Heidegger—in a manner that is consonant with Rosenzweig[84]—does not embrace a metaphysical

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through to the very end, to the utmost degree, what you've been able to extract from the previous event and of being as prepared as possible, therefore, to take in subjectively what will inevitably come about. For me, truth is an undertaking; it is a process made possible by the event. The event is only there as a source of possibilities."

[80] Compare the analyses of Kierkegaard and Heidegger in Koral Ward, *Augenblick: The Concept of the 'Decisive Moment' in 19th- and 20th-Century Western Philosophy* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 1–33, 97–124.

[81] Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 85; *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, 119.

[82] Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, 83–84; *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, 117. For a critical assessment of Heidegger's view, see Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Outlaw Justice: The Messianic Politics of Paul* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 82–83, 88, 134. Various scholars have explored the relation between time and eternity in Heidegger. Here I mention two studies worthy of attention: Gerd Haeffner, "Heidegger über Zeit und Ewigkeit," *Theologie und Philosophie* 64 (1989): 481–517; Jean Greisch, "The Eschatology of Being and the God of Time in Heidegger," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 4 (1996): 17–42.

[83] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University Press, 1984), 26. My discussion here is indebted to Greisch, "The Eschatology of Being," 20.

[84] Elliot R. Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth, and Death* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 176–77: "The disavowal of time does not imply an abrogation or even a dialectical surpassing of temporality, but rather its radical deepening, an eradication of time by rooting oneself more deeply in the ground of time. Eternity, accordingly, is not the metaphysical overcoming of or existential escape from time but rather the merging of the three-dimensional structure of lived temporality through eternalization of the present in the continuous becoming of the being that has always been what is yet to come."

conception of eternity that is the ontological negation of time, but rather eternity is to be construed as the limiting idea that determines the horizon of and intensifies our experience of time. The intensification of the experience of time is the phenomenological content of the enactment of life identified by Heidegger as the primordial Christian religiosity. In *Der Begriff der Zeit*, a lecture delivered a few years later, Heidegger defines Christian faith (*Glaube*) as that which "is in itself supposed to stand in relation to something that happened in time—at a time, we are told, of which it is said: I was the time 'when time was fulfilled.' "[85] Heidegger distinguishes between the theologian's concern to understand time in relation to eternity (*Ewigkeit*), which is a matter of faith, and the philosopher's quest to understand time through time (*die Zeit aus der Zeit*) or in terms of that which exists perpetually (*aei*), which appears to be eternal but is actually a derivative of being temporal.[86] The dichotomy seems decisive: the theologian comprehends time from the standpoint of eternity and the philosopher, eternity from the standpoint of time. And yet, Heidegger is clear that faith dictates that the believer experiences eternity in relation to what has occurred at a given moment in time, an eternity that should be understood neither as *sempiternitas*, "the ongoing continuation of time" (*das fortgesetzte Weitergehen der Zeit*), nor as *aeternitas*, the "ever-enduring presence" (*immerwährende Gegenwart*) of the "standing now" (*nunc stans*), the two explanations of eternity offered by Heidegger in the lecture course on Hölderlin's hymn *Germanien* delivered in the winter semester 1934–1935 at the University of Freiburg.[87]

Heidegger's reading of Pauline eschatology and his interpretation of Christianity based thereon rest upon a third possibility that presumes the eternalization of the temporal without appeal to the two conceptions of eternity (*Ewigkeitsbegriffe*)—the incessant flow of time, a "never-ending sequence of 'nows,' " and the motionless and everlasting present, "an encompassing 'now' that remains standing ahead of time"—that spring from the experience of time as a "*pure sequential passing of* '*nows*' " (reinen

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[85] Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill, 1. The scriptural citation is from Galatians 4:4. It is of interest that Heidegger copied this introduction in the article with the same name "Der Begriff der Zeit," also written in 1924 (see above, n. 7). See Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. Ingo Farin with Alex Skinner, 37.

[86] Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, trans. William McNeill, 1–2.

[87] Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns "Germania" and "The Rhine,"* trans. William McNeill and Julia Ireland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 52; *Hölderlins Hymnen "Germanien" und "Der Rhein"* [GA 39] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999), 54–55.

Vergehens des Jetzt im Nacheinander). Insofar as this notion of time "does not grasp the essence of time"—the view already espoused in *Being and Time*—it follows that the concepts of eternity dependent upon it also will not "reach the essence of eternity."[88]

In addition to these perspectives, Heidegger proposes a third notion of eternity that is tagged as "the time that is essentially long" (*die wesenhaft lange Zeit*). Utilizing the following lines from the second version of Hölderlin's poem *Mnemosyne* as a springboard, "Long is/The time, yet what is true/Comes to pass" (*Lang ist/Die Zeit, es ereignet sich aber/Das Wahre*), Heidegger distinguishes the ascription of the quality of length to "everyday time" (*alltägliche Zeit*) and to "time of the peaks" (*die Zeit der Gipfel*), an expression derived from the poem *Patmos*. In the case of the former, the feeling that time is long is a sign of boredom, whereas in the case of the latter, it signifies that at the height of sublimity there "reigns a persistent waiting for and awaiting *the event* [*Ereignis*] . . . There is no passing or even killing of time there, but a struggle for the duration and fullness of time that is preserved in awaiting."[89] In this context, Heidegger has unquestionably departed from the theistic mind-set operative in his exegesis of Paul. Nevertheless, there is a thread that ties together that discussion and his analysis of Hölderlin. Both instances demonstrate that Heidegger did not think of eternity as atemporal or supratemporal but rather as the elongation of time experienced in the adamant waiting for the event that is the "becoming manifest of beyng" (*das Offenbarwerden des Seyns*),[90] the repeatedly renewed conferral of the origin that remains permanently still to come.

Along similar lines, Agamben argued that Paul's technical term for the messianic event is *ho nyn kairos*, the time of the now, which is not the end of time that will happen in the future but the time of the end that is experienced as the interminable waiting in the present.[91] Messianic time is thus defined as "*the time that time takes to come to an end*, or, more precisely, the time we take to bring to an end, to achieve our representation of time. This is not the line of chronological time . . . nor the instant of its end . . . nor is it a segment cut from chronological time; rather, it is operational time pressing within the chronological time, working and transforming it from within; it is the time we need to make time end: *the time that is left us*."[92]

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88 Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns*, 52; *Hölderlins Hymnen*, 55.
89 Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns*, 53; *Hölderlins Hymnen*, 55–56.
90 Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymns*, 53; *Hölderlins Hymnen*, 56.
91 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 61–62.
92 Ibid., 67–68 (emphasis in original).

The seventh day emblematizes messianic time because the Sabbath "is not another day, homogenous to others; rather, it is that innermost disjointedness within time through which one may—by a hairsbreadth—grasp time and accomplish it."[93] The anticipation of the end, therefore, reveals a complex interplay between foresight and reminiscence, between the experience of absence and the nonexperience of presence, between the nongivenness of an event and the givenness of the nonevent, between the disappearance that has appeared and the appearance that will disappear.[94]

Rosenzweig himself attests to the fact that the messianic tenet of Judaism, in a manner congruent to, even though not identical with, Christian faith, betokens a tension between the absent presence of the past and the present absence of the future. That is to say, redemption is always of the future but a future that retrieves the past and ruptures the present, thereby bending the timeline such that not-yet is already-there insofar as already-there is not-yet.[95] The eternal people live an eternal life in time, constantly anticipating the end and thereby transposing it into the beginning. This reversal "denies time as resolutely as possible and places itself outside of it." To live in time means to live between beginning and end, but to live outside time—which is the necessary condition for one who lives eternally—must deny this between. From Rosenzweig's standpoint, the individual who adheres to Jewish ritual "experiences precisely the reversal of the between," and thus "disavows the omnipotence of the between and denies time."[96] Redemptive time, therefore, is concomitantly overflowing with and empty of quotidian time, a novel iteration that can disrupt the temporal flux at any and every moment. Instead of circumscribing the future as being-toward-death, Rosenzweig characterizes the future as the fecundity of the distension that bears the paradox of the linear circularity of time, the restoration

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[93] Ibid., 72. See Eleanor Kaufman, "The Saturday of Messianic Time: Agamben and Badiou on the Apostle Paul," in *Paul and the Philosophers*, 297–309; Ryan L. Hansen, "Messianic or Apocalyptic? Engaging Agamben on Paul and Politics," in *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision*, 198–223; Alain Gignac, "Agamben's Paul: Thinker of the Messianic," in *Paul in the Grip of the Philosophers*, 165–92.

[94] My approach can be fruitfully compared to the discussion of the *parousia* in Jean-Yves Lacoste, "The Phenomenality of Anticipation," in *Phenomenology and Eschatology*, 15–33.

[95] Stéphane Mosès, *The Angel of History: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem*, trans. Barbara Harshav (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 56–57. See Stéphane Mosès, "Walter Benjamin and Franz Rosenzweig," *The Philosophical Forum* 15 (1983–1984): 188–205, esp. 200–202. See also Pierre Bouretz, *Witness for the Future: Philosophy and Messianism*, trans. Michael Smith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 138–47.

[96] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 443.

of what is to come.[97] This view resonates with Schwarzschild's observation that there is an "anticipation of the end-time within time, or, more properly perhaps, this vestige of the primaeval time within time."[98] Redemption is not the consequence of historical development, the effect of a causal chain that links the retention of the past and the protention of the future, but rather the corollary of an expectation that is realized as the expectation of what cannot be realized. "That which is future calls for being predicted. The future is experienced only in the waiting. Here the last must be the first in thought."[99]

The allure of the future, accordingly, is not to be assessed from the standpoint of an achievable goal but from the standpoint of the activity that the waiting for that goal incites. To utilize again the language of Schwarzschild: on the one hand, Judaism shows evidence of an "actionable Messianism," that is, the anticipation of the endtime affects behavior in the life of the present,[100] but, on the other hand, the duty conferred on the devout Jew is to believe in a savior who is always in the process of coming and not in one that has already come.[101] The expectation for the nonexpected

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[97] See analysis in Beniamino Fortis, "Thinking the Future: Death and Redemption—Heidegger and Rosenzweig," *Daimon: Revista Internacional de Filosofía* 3 (2010): 249–56.

[98] Steven S. Schwarzschild, "An Introduction to the Thought of R. Isaac Hutner," *Modern Judaism* 5 (1985): 245. In that context, the author is discussing the eschatological thought of Levinas and Hutner. See below, n. 101.

[99] Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 235.

[100] Steven S. Schwarzschild, *The Pursuit of the Ideal: Jewish Writings of Steven Schwarzschild*, ed. Menachem Kellner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 219, and see 363 n. 72, where the author notes this theme in thinkers as disparate as Martin Buber, Isaac Hutner, Ernst Bloch, and Walter Benjamin. For a more detailed discussion of Hutner's messianic view, especially in conversation with Cohen and Levinas, see Schwarzschild, "An Introduction," 238–56.

[101] Schwarzschild, *The Pursuit of the Ideal*, 209–11, cited in Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 116. The Cohenian influence of Schwarzschild has been noted by scholars. See Kenneth Seeskin, "The Rational Theology of Steven S. Schwarzschild," *Modern Judaism* 12 (1992): 284; Menachem Kellner, "Introduction," in Schwarzschild, *The Pursuit of the Ideal*, 10–11. A related but somewhat different issue is the question of a personal redeemer versus the ideal of redemption, a topic discussed by Schwarzschild in a 1956 essay, reprinted in *The Pursuit of the Ideal*, 15–28. In his later thought, Schwarzschild unequivocally renounced the belief in a personal messiah and sided with Cohen in affirming an asymptotic approach that conceives of the end as the ethical goal towards which we strive but which we can never attain. See also Schwarzschild, "An Introduction," 244. Commenting on Hutner's teaching concerning the ultimate actualization of the good and the disclosure of God's truth in the endtime, which is compared to Cohen's idea of noumenal knowledge as the rational formulation of the regulative ideal and to Rosenzweig's notion of messianic speech, Schwarzschild writes, "The eschatological future, in which evil has ceased, is, however, actually a restoration of Edenic existence, before sin entered the world in the first place. In short, it is not really future but outside of (historical) time, i.e., eternity."

transposes the temporal order by inverting the causal succession—what determines the present is not the past but the future. This transposition is communicated by Rosenzweig in language—"the last must be first in thought"—that calls to mind the dictum in the hymn *Lekha Dodi*, composed by the sixteenth-century kabbalist Solomon Alqabets, *sof ma'aseh be-maḥashavah teḥillah*, "the end of action is first in thought."[102]

Echoing Rosenzweig's view, Levinas noted that because Judaism does not identify salvation as the denouement of history, it remains possible at every moment.[103] This is the messianic mystery alluded to in the disquieting expression "awaiting without an awaited." To wait without an awaited implies that there can be no end to the waiting, the very condition that underscores the essential feature of time as the promise of a future.[104] Levinas thus explicitly identifies waiting for the Messiah as the "actual duration of time." The waiting attests to the procrastination that is germane to the relation with the Infinite, which can never enter fully into the present.[105] The continual deferral, the not-yet that is resolutely yet not at hand, is what eternalizes the temporal and temporalizes the eternal in a now that is persistently not now, the momentary present in which the future is made present as the withdrawal of being present. The tomorrow that is today is nevertheless still tomorrow. If the guarantee of there always being another tomorrow ignites a sense of hopefulness, it is a hopefulness that cannot be extricated from an insurmountable hopelessness. To paraphrase the comment of Kafka transmitted by Max Brod and recorded by Benjamin,[106] from the fact that there is plenty of hope, indeed an *infinite amount of hope*, we may infer that at any given moment the hope can never be spoken of in relation to us. One can be hopeful only in the recognition that the fulfillment of the hope one bears will never come to pass except

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[102] Regarding this dictum and its earlier philosophical sources, see Wolfson, *Open Secret*, 371 n. 160.

[103] Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 84. See Bettina Bergo, "Levinas's Weak Messianism in Time and Flesh, or the Insistence of Messiah Ben David," in *The Messianic Now: Philosophy, Religion, Culture*, ed. Arthur Bradley and Paul Fletcher (London: Routledge, 2011), 45–68, esp. 50–52; Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 117–18, and references on 380–81 n. 214 to a host of other scholars who have written on Levinas and messianism.

[104] Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 32; Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 139.

[105] Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, trans. Gary D. Mole (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 143.

[106] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927–1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 798. The comments of Kafka were first reported in Max Brod, "Der Dichter Franz Kafka," *Die neue Rundschau* 11 (1921): 1213.

as the hope for fulfillment. As Schwarzschild correctly discerned, "The certainty of the expectation of the end-time contains a fundamental aporia."[107]

Analogously, although in slightly different terminology, Scholem noted that the messianic idea in Judaism is "anti-existenialist," since it has "compelled a *life lived in deferment*, in which nothing can be done definitively, nothing can be irrevocably accomplished." The presumably unending need to impede the coming of the end is both the "greatness" and the "constitutional weakness" of Jewish messianism.[108] Eliciting a similar conclusion from the messianic speculation attributed to the Ḥasidic master Naḥman of Bratslav, Marc-Alain Ouaknin observed:

> The messianic era is not the time when the Messiah is here. On the contrary: it is the time during which the Messiah is awaited . . . the Messiah is made for not coming . . . and yet, he is awaited. The Messiah allows time to be continually deferred, to generate time . . . Messianic man (the one who is waiting) constantly projects himself into the "yet to come" (*à-venir*) of the future; he produces a difference, a suspense . . . In this suspension of meaning, time is forever projected toward the yet-to-come by an act of anticipation. But this anticipation does not foresee anything; there is no fulfillment at the end of the road. It is the anticipation of an anti-anticipation.[109]

The Messiah is the one that comes by not-coming, the one that is present by being absent. Waiting for the end is the adjournment of time that occasions the fostering of time.

Messianic Time, Futural Remembering, and Historical Disjointedness

Writ large we can say that the delay of the end's historical concretization is what secures the potential of its constant implementation. In this respect, there is close affinity to Benjamin's notion of the present or the now-time (*Jetztzeit*) that is described in a passage from an earlier draft of

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[107] Schwarzschild, "An Introduction," 243.

[108] Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 35 (emphasis in original). The bibliography on Scholem's messianism is immense, and here I mention one study that provides a good historical background to understand his ambivalence and reluctance to affirm a teleological understanding: Michael Löwy, "Messianism in the Early Work of Gershom Scholem," *New German Critique* 83 (2001): 177–91. Also pertinent to the theme of this essay is the analysis in Eric Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 52–81.

[109] Marc-Alain Ouaknin, *The Burnt Book: Reading the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 302.

"On the Concept of History"—a text composed in the early part of 1940, several months before Benjamin's suicide in September of that year[110]—as being "shot through with splinters of messianic time," the moment that is the "small gateway [*kleine Pforte*] in time through which the Messiah might enter."[111] The import of this statement is made clear from the opening of the fourteenth thesis: "History is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time [*Jetztzeit*]."[112] The historian, in particular, is entrusted with the responsibility of bearing witness to the soteriological potential in the now-time that ensues from attending to the unrealized possibilities of the past. The narrative recapitulating affords one the opportunity to blast the past out of the continuum of history [*Kontinuum der Geschichte*] in the explosive and subversive manner[113] that Benjamin describes Robespierre's relationship to ancient Rome.[114] In the culminating sentence of the eighteenth and last thesis, Benjamin elaborates: "Now-time, which, as a model of messianic time, comprises the entire history of mankind in a tremendous abbreviation, coincides exactly with the figure which the history of

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[110] For a comprehensive discussion and close reading of this text, see Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2005). The author uses the expression "talmudic analysis" to characterize his approach (p. 17).

[111] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938–1940*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and others, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 397; Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Herman Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 704.

[112] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 395; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2, 701.

[113] Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 88, calls our attention to a variant of thesis fourteen where "*Jetztzeit* is defined as an explosive [*Explosivstoff*] to which historical materialism adds the fuse. The aim is to explode the continuum of history with the aid of a conception of historical time that perceives it as 'full,' as charged with 'present,' explosive, subversive moments." For the original text, see Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.3, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Herman Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 1249.

[114] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 395; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2, 701. See text cited below at n. 150. Compare Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 107–37; Werner Hamacher, " 'Now': Walter Benjamin on Historical Time," in *Walter Benjamin and History*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London: Continuum, 2006), 38–68, esp. 40–41; Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 87–89; Eli Friedlander, *Walter Benjamin: A Philosophical Portrait* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 192–95. Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 143–44, suggests that Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* parallels Paul's technical designation of messianic time as *ho nyn kairos* and that his view that the now-time is an abridgement of the totality of history corresponds to Paul's *anakephalaiōsasthai*, that is, the gathering together of all things in Christ in the fullness of time (Ephesians 1:10). See Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 100, and the criticism of Agamben, 134 n. 161. Compare Roland Boer, "Agamben, Benjamin and the Puppet Player," in *Paul in the Grip of the Philosophers*, 57–68, esp. 63–65.

mankind describes in the universe."[115] The present, as Michael Löwy put it, is likened to a "messianic monad," for in every instant the entirety of history is reflected just as Leibniz had argued that each monad reflects the universe from its own perspective.[116] The redemptive power of the *Jetztzeit*, therefore, is a consequence of the historian's ability to alter the course of the future by eliciting from the moment the whole of the past that is abbreviated or condensed in the present.

This is the gist of Benjamin's remark in the second thesis that the "past carries with it a secret index by which it is referred to redemption." The "secret index" (*heimlichen Index*) relates to the human aptitude for the futural remembering that redeems the past.[117] Benjamin also alludes to this potential as the "secret agreement" (*geheime Verabredung*) between past generations and the present, an agreement that turns both on the redemptive potential of chronicling and narrating the past such that nothing is lost to history and also on the fact that since there can never be a total amelioration of past inequities, there is always unfinished business that will have to be addressed in some future time. Each generation, therefore, is "endowed with a *weak* messianic power [*eine* schwachen *messianische Kraft*], a power on which the past has a claim."[118] What has not been actualized in the past lingers as a "secretly insistent appeal" to us in the present.[119] In the fifth of the historical theses, Benjamin relates this idea to Gottfried Keller's statement "The truth will not run away from us." The image of history promoted by historicism—the image "pierced by historical materialism"—is "an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image."[120]

The historian must believe that the present is intended in the image of the past, and yet, as Benjamin argues in the sixth thesis, in language that

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[115] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 396; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2, 703.

[116] Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 99–100.

[117] With regard to this temporal reversal Benjamin's thinking can be compared profitably to the analysis of Bloch's reflections on memory and utopia examined in Vincent Geoghegan, "Remembering the Future," in *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, ed. Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan (London: Verso, 1997), 15–32, and the essay in the same volume by David Kaufmann, "Thanks for the Memory: Bloch, Benjamin, and the Philosophy of History," 33–52.

[118] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 390; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2, 693–94.

[119] Michael G. Levine, *A Weak Messianic Power: Figures of a Time to Come in Benjamin, Derrida, and Celan* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 2–3.

[120] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 390–91.

parallels the Heideggerian idea of historicity mentioned above[121]—and this in spite of his explicit rejection of Heidegger's attempt "to rescue history for phenomenology abstractly through 'historicity' [*Geschichtlichkeit*]"[122]—to

[121] See text cited above at n. 37, and compare Andrew Benjamin, "Time and Task: Benjamin and Heidegger Showing the Present," in *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, ed. Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000), 212–45.

[122] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, prepared on the basis of the German volume edited by Rolf Tiedmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 462; Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 577. See the translator's comment in *The Arcades Project*, 983, n. 4: "Benjamin, like Heidegger, plays on the archaic verb *wesen* ('to be') embedded in the *Gewesenen* ('what has been'); he cites the being in what has been." On the respective views of Benjamin and Heidegger on history, see David S. Ferris, "Introduction: Aura, Resistance, and the Event of History," in *Walter Benjamin: Theoretical Questions*, ed. David S. Ferris (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 1–26, esp. 3–10. See also Peter Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction: Walter Benjamin and the Shape of Time* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 118–22. The author discusses Benjamin's criticism in a letter to Scholem from November 11, 1916 (*The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994], 82) of Heidegger's analysis of historical time and mechanical time of the physical sciences in the essay based on his inaugural lecture delivered on July 27, 1915, "Das Problem der historischen Zeit," even though he also acknowledges the shared lines of inquiry and terms of expression, which can be explained, in part, by the fact that Heidegger and Benjamin both participated in Heinrich Rickert's seminar on Bergson. For Benjamin's criticism of Heidegger's idea of historicity, see also Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, *Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 91. See the comment of Benjamin in a letter to Scholem from January 20, 1930, in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin 1910–1940*, 359–60: "It now seems a certainty that, for this book [*Paris Arcades*] as well as for the *Trauerspiel* book, an introduction that discusses epistemology is necessary—especially for this book, a discussion of the theory of historical knowledge. This is where I will find Heidegger, and I expect sparks will fly from the shock of the confrontation between our two very different ways of looking at history." For Benjamin's disparaging assessment of Heidegger's book on Don Scotus, see the letter to Scholem from December 1, 1920, in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, 168, but see his somewhat more conciliatory assessment in the letter to Scholem from January 1921, op. cit., 172. Compare Benjamin's comment in the letter to Scholem from April 25, 1930, op. cit., 365, "We were planning to annihilate Heidegger in the summer in the context of a very close-knit critical circle of readers led by Brecht and me." On Benjamin's own reporting that he was considered a "follower of Heidegger," see his letter to Gretel Adorno from July 20, 1938, op. cit., 571. My own view is close to the assessment of Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995), 201: "Without realizing it, Benjamin actually had more in common with Heidegger's remarkable sense for living eyes and living bones that had sea-changed into pearls and coral, and as such could be saved and lifted into the present only by doing violence to their context in interpreting them with 'the deadly impact' of new thoughts, than he did with the dialectical subtleties of his Marxist friends." For a criticism of Arendt, see Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 3–4. The author refers to the passages noted in this text wherein Benjamin was unequivocally dismissive of Heidegger's thought and wherein he explicitly rejects the comparison of his thought to Heidegger. Löwy admits that there are affinities between the two thinkers concerning the theme of eschatology, the conception

portray the past historically does not mean to verify *the way it really was*, according to Leopold von Ranke's definition of the historian's task. To recount the past "means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to hold fast that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to the historical subject in a moment of danger."[123] Benjamin's method, exemplified in *The Arcades Project*, was to liberate "the enormous energies of history that are bound up in the 'once upon a time' of classical historiography. The history that showed things 'as they really were' was the strongest narcotic of the century."[124] Parenthetically, this dynamic holds the key to understanding Benjamin's extolling the virtue of quotation as the bridge that links past and present in the dialectical fabrication of historical experience. Explicating Goethe's insight that "classical works do not really allow for their criticism," Benjamin proclaimed that "the exegesis, the ideas, the admiration and enthusiasm of past generations have become indissolubly part of the works themselves, have completely internalized them and turned them into the mirror-images [*Spiegel-galerien*] of later generations . . . And here, at this highest stage of investigation, it is vital to develop the theory of the quotation."[125] The resonance of Benjamin's perspective with traditional Jewish learning and the practice of citation should be obvious. Just as the rabbinic perspective on history, which is the basis for the textual reasoning that has spanned many centuries, rests on a contemporaneity of past, present, and future, so Benjamin's view, as opposed to the historicist notion of history, is one in which the past is a function of the present and the present a function of the future.[126]

Significantly, in *The Arcades Project*, the remark concerning the "dissolution of 'mythology' into the space of history . . . through the awakening of a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been [*eines noch nicht bewußten Wissens vom Gewesnen*]" is immediately followed by the aphorism,

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of authentic temporality, and the openness to the past, but he insists nonetheless that it would be incorrect to call Benjamin a "follower" of Heidegger, especially since his critical conception of time took shape before the publication of *Sein und Zeit* in 1927. Löwy's objection is not persuasive inasmuch as Arendt spoke of affinities between Benjamin and Heidegger and did not refer to the former as a follower of the latter. See below, n. 153.

123 Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 391.

124 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 463; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 578.

125 Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, 372; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 170.

126 Bram Mertens, *Dark Images, Secret Hints: Benjamin, Scholem, Molitor and the Jewish Tradition* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 42–51.

"This work has to develop to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks [*ohne Anführungszeichen zu zitieren*]. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage."[127] The threading together of different citations produces a "literary montage" (*literarische Montage*),[128] which is comparable to the intertwining of images in a photomontage. The ostensibly troublesome turn of phrase *citing without quotation marks* is not meant to justify plagiarism but rather to highlight the fact that the citation of the words of previous authors releases them from the discarded rubble of the past and resuscitates them into contemporary forms (*heutige Formen*). The "lost forms" (*verlorenen Formen*) of an epoch are retrieved in the guise of novel creations, and hence it is not necessary—indeed, it would be misleading—for the citations to be transmitted with quotation marks.[129] What was previously said has not yet been spoken.

Benjamin thus described his own undertaking: "I needn't *say* anything. Merely show" (*Ich habe nichts zu sagen. Nur zu zeigen*). Through the art of citation the thought-images (*Denkbilder*), excavated from the arcades of history, manifest themselves in narratological figurations of thought (*Denkfiguren*) that were never before written. "I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them."[130] Benjamin refers to this process as *Verfremdung*, the alienation that results by quoting out of context in order to devise a new context. The practice of quotation, therefore, preserves the continuity of tradition through its discontinuity.[131] The historian, in the words of Hugo

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[127] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 458; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 571–72. My discussion has benefited from the analysis in Norbert Bolz and Willem van Reijen, *Walter Benjamin*, trans. Laimdota Mazzarins (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1996), 53–54. On the notion of montage and *Das Passagen-Werk*, see Eiland and Jennings, *Walter Benjamin*, 288.

[128] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 460 and 860; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 574 and *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.2, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 1030.

[129] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 458; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 472.

[130] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 460 and see the slightly altered version on 860; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 574 and vol. 5.2, 1030. On Benjamin's notion of the thought-image, see Sigrid Weigel, *Body- and Image-Space: Re-reading Walter Benjamin* (London: Routledge, 1996), 49–60.

[131] Bolz and van Reijen, *Walter Benjamin*, 54: "In this way, quotation envisions the continued existence of tradition as discontinuity; it salvages the elements of tradition through seemingly brutal blows. Benjamin's hermeneutic practice of explication is actually a process of beating something out of its original context; for this reason, all interpretations have something violent about them." On citation and the dialectics of awakening, see also Eiland and Jennings, *Walter Benjamin*, 290–91.

von Hofmannsthal, the Austrian poet who published Benjamin's essay on Goethe's *Elective Affinities* in the *Neue Deutsche Beiträge* (1924–1925), is commended to "read what was never written,"[132] or in the language of Friedrich Schlegel paraphrased and interpreted by Benjamin, "the historian is a prophet facing backward."[133] The dialectical image, which "emerges suddenly, in a flash," is perceived through "the prophetic gaze [*Seherblick*] that catches fire from the summits of the past"[134] and thereby rescues what was in the "now of its recognizability" (*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*) "solely for the sake of what in the next moment is already irretrievably lost."[135] This method of temporal interruption, which coerces authorial voices "to appear before the tribunal of history,"[136] involves, in Bloch's expression mentioned by Benjamin, the "turn of remembrance" (*Wendung des Eingedenkens*), that is, a "dialectical reversal" of past and present that is compared to the experience (*Erfahrung*) of awakening from a dream: "Accordingly, we present the new, the dialectical method of doing history: with the intensity of a dream, to pass through what has been, in order to experience the present as the waking world to which the dream refers!"[137]

That the present is experienced as the dream to which the waking world refers does not mean, as Heidegger prosaically argued in his notes

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[132] The remark is cited in Gerhard Richter, *Thought-Images: Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections from Damaged Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 50.

[133] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 405. Benjamin offers two explanations of Schlegel's aphorism. The first one is the conventional sense that "the historian, transplanting himself into a remote past, prophesies what was regarded as the future at that time but meanwhile has become the past." The second, and more daring, explanation, and the one that conveys Benjamin's own thought, implies that "the historian turns his back on his own time, and his seer's gaze is kindled by the peaks of earlier generations as they sink further and further into the past. Indeed, the historian's own time is far more distinctly present to this visionary gaze than it is to the contemporaries who 'keep step with it.'... It is precisely this concept of the present which underlies the actuality of genuine historiography... Someone who pokes about in the past as if rummaging in a storeroom of examples and analogies still has no inkling of how much in a given moment depends on its being made present [*ihre Vergegenwärtigung*]." And see 407: "The seer's gaze is kindled by the rapidly receding past. That is to say, the prophet has turned away from the future: he perceives the contours of the future in the fading light of the past as it sinks before him into the night of times... To grasp the eternity of historical events is really to appreciate the eternity of their transience."

[134] Compare Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 360, where Carl Gustav Jochmann is described as turning "his back on the future (which he speaks of in prophetic tomes), which his seer's gaze is kindled by the vanishing peaks of earlier heroic generations and their poetry, as they sink further and further into the past."

[135] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 473; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 591–92.

[136] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 363; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 459.

[137] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 838; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.2, 1006.

recording a conversation with Medard Boss on March 2, 1972,[138] that the dreamworld belongs to waking life as a manner of being-in-the-world, inasmuch as one speaks about dreams while awake but not about being awake

[138] Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols—Conversations—Letters*, ed. Medard Boss, translated and with notes and afterwords by Franz Mayr and Richard Askay (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 230. Heidegger's implicit critique of the psychoanalytic approach to dreams appears in a letter to Boss from August 2, 1952, in Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 245: "Dreams are not symptoms and consequences of something lying hidden behind [them], but they themselves are in what they show and *only* this. Only with *this* does their emerging essence [*Wesen*] become worthy of questioning" (emphasis in original). See also Heidegger's criticism of Freud in the notes from the conversation with Boss on September 7, 1963, in Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 182–83: "Concealment is not the antithesis of consciousness but rather concealment belongs to the clearing. Freud simply did not see this clearing . . . In Freud's repression we are dealing with hiding [*Verstecken*] a representation [*Vorstellung*]. In withdrawal [*Entzug*] we are dealing with the phenomenon itself. The phenomenon withdraws itself from the domain of the clearing and is inaccessible—so inaccessible that this inaccessibility as such cannot be experienced anymore. What conceals itself remains what it is, otherwise I could no longer come back to it. Clearing is never mere clearing, but always the clearing of *concealment* [*Sich-Verbergen*]. In the proper sense the clearing of *concealment* [*Lichtung des Sich-Verbergens*] means that the inaccessible shows and manifests itself as such—as the inaccessible . . . What manifests itself as the inaccessible is the mystery [*Geheimnis*]" (emphasis in original). For the utilization of Heidegger's stance to provide an alternative to Freud's interpretation of the oneiric phenomenon, see Medard Boss, *"I Dreamt Last Night . . ."*, trans. Stephen Conway, introduction by Paul J. Stern (New York: Gardner Press, 1977), 46, 182–83, 185–87. Boss draws on Heidegger's insights to articulate the view that dreaming and waking share in a concept of reality that is brought into openness (*Unverborgenheit*) from an originary hiddenness (*Verborgenheit*), two states that are "mutual determinants of each other" (p. 182). The common matrix of the two is the notion of *Dasein*, the human way of being-in-the-world, the standing-out (*ek-sistence*) or the ecstasy (*ekstasis*) disclosed in the opening-sheltering of the clearance (p. 185). On Heidegger's attitude to dreams, see as well the anecdotal comments of Medard Boss, "Martin Heidegger's Zollikon Seminars," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 16 (1978–79): 12–13. Heidegger's critique of Freudian psychoanalysis is assessed by Richard Askay, "Heidegger's Philosophy and Its Implications for Psychology, Freud, and Existential Psychoanalysis," in Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 308–12. See also Joseph J. Kockelmans, "Daseinanalysis and Freud's Unconscious," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 16 (1978–1979): 21–42; Richard Askay, "A Philosophical Dialogue between Heidegger and Freud," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 24 (1999): 415–43; Richard Askay and Jensen Farquhar, *Apprehending the Inaccessible: Freudian Psychoanalysis and Existential Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 190–229; Richard Askay and Jensen Farquhar, *Of Philosophers and Madmen: A Disclosure of Martin Heidegger, Medard Boss, and Sigmund Freud* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 113–18. On Heidegger and psychotherapy more generally, see the discussion in Dallmayr, *Life-world*, 210–37, and reference to other scholarly analyses cited on 234 n. 2. Noteworthy is the impact of Heidegger and Freud on Medard Boss's *Psychoanalysis and Daseinanalysis* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), but this is a matter than cannot be explored here. For an introduction to this topic, see F. Alec Jenner, "Medard Boss' Phenomenologically Based Psychopathology," in *Phenomenology and Psychological Science: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives*, ed. Peter D. Ashworth and Man Cheung Chung (New York: Springer, 2006), 147–68. See also Ludwig Binswanger, *Being-in-the-World: Selected Papers of Ludwig Binswanger*, ed. Joseph Needleman (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 206–21.

while dreaming; the intent, rather, is the far bolder claim that the present can be calibrated as the real world only vis-à-vis the past, which is like a dream. We awaken to the present that is the realization of the dream that is the past. Recollecting the past in the present is not merely the replication of the past; it is an act of consciousness that seeks a "teleological moment" by bestowing new reality on the past, the "moment of waiting" that is akin to the dream that "waits secretly for the awakening."[139] Benjamin identifies this inversion of past and present—the waking from the dream that one is waking from the dream—as the *Copernican revolution in historical perception* [*geschichtlichen Anschauung*], which he elaborates as follows:

> Formerly it was thought that a fixed point had been found in "what has been," and one saw the present engaged in tentatively concentrating the forces of knowledge on this ground. Now this relation is to be overturned, and what has been is to become the dialectical reversal [*dialektischen Umschlag*]—the flash of awakened consciousness [*Einfall des erwachten Bewußtseins*]. Politics attains primacy over history. The facts become something that just now first happened to us, first struck us; to establish them is the affair of memory. Indeed, awakening is the great exemplar of memory . . . There is a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been [*Noch-nicht-bewußtes-Wissen vom Gewesenen*]: its advancement has the structure of awakening . . . The new, dialectical method of doing history presents itself as the art of experiencing the present as waking world [*die Gegenwart als Wachwelt zu erfahren*], a world to which that dream we name the past refers in truth. To pass through and carry out *what has been* in remembering the dream [*Traumerinnerung*]!—Therefore: remembering [*Erinnerung*] and awaking [*Erwachen*] are most intimately related. Awakening is namely

[139] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 390; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 492. On the dream in Benjamin's thought, see Wolfson, *A Dream*, 326–27 n. 99, and reference to other scholarly analyses mentioned there. Many more sources could have been cited including Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 46–51; Tyrus Miller, "From City-Dreams to the Dreaming Collective: Walter Benjamin's Political Dream Interpretation," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 22 (1996): 87–111; Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 253–86. See also Friedlander, *Walter Benjamin*, 90–111, esp. 94–95: "We should not understand waiting in terms of an objective, external determination of time . . . but rather in relation to the process of transformation internal to the dream's space of meaning, through which awakening can occur. However, this does not mean that all there is to waiting is patience, as though killing time until that transformation occurs. Waiting must be understood as holding to two distinct and opposed moments. On the one hand, waiting is the gathering of forces or of potential; on the other, waiting is the seeking of an opportunity to realize that potential . . . Waiting is the dialectical overcoming of the opposition between gathering energy and actively seeking 'experiences' that stimulate or awaken."

> the dialectical, Copernican turn of remembrance [*die dialektischen, kopernikanische Wendung des Eingedenkens*].[140]

Constructing a materialist historiography is facilitated by the act of remembrance that unsettles the monolithically irreversible causal sequence between past and future, the repetition of singularity and the singularity of repetition, and is thus comparable to the narrative space of the dreamtime (*Zeit-traum*) in which origin is the goal (*Ursprung ist das Ziel*), according to the phrase from Karl Kraus cited by Benjamin as the motto for the fourteenth thesis.[141] As in the remembering of the dream, so in the historian's retelling, we find neither the irreversibility nor the repeatability of events but rather the "contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous," the prognosis of the future rooted in and hence already existent in—even though not yet having occurred—the past that is reshaped in the present.[142]

> In the dialectical image, what has been within a particular epoch is always, simultaneously, "what has been from time immemorial." As such, however, it is manifest, on each occasion, only to a quite specific epoch—namely, the one in which humanity, rubbing its eyes, recognizes just this particular dream image as such. It is at this moment that the historian takes up, with regard to that image, the task of dream interpretation

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[140] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 388–89 (emphasis in original); Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 490–91. On the dialectic of memory and forgetfulness in Benjamin, see Orietta Ombrosi, *The Twilight of Reason: Benjamin, Adorno, Horkheimer and Levinas Tested by the Catastrophe*, trans. Victoria Aris (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 81–92. See also Eiland and Jennings, *Walter Benjamin*, 289.

[141] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 4*, 395; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2, 701. See Peter Szondi, *On Textual Understanding and Other Essays*, trans. Harvey Mendelsohn, foreword by Michael Hays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 157–58. Szondi illumines Benjamin's dialectic of the messianic future and the historical past by citing the following passage about the origin (*Ursprung*) from Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 45–46: "The term origin is not intended to describe the process by which the existent came into being, but rather to describe that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance . . . That which is original is never revealed in the naked and manifest existence of the factual; its rhythm is apparent only to a dual insight. On the one hand it needs to be recognized as a process of restoration and re-establishment, but, on the other hand, and precisely because of this, as something imperfect and incomplete . . . Origin is not, therefore, discovered by the examination of actual findings, but it is related to their history and their subsequent development. The principles of philosophical contemplation are recorded in the dialectic which is inherent in origin. This dialectic shows singularity and repetition to be conditioned by one another in all essentials." For previous citation and analysis of this passage, see Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 120–21. See also Mosès, *The Angel of History*, 75–76.

[142] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. and with an introduction by Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 95.

> [*Traumdeutung*] . . . The realization of dream elements in the course of waking up is the canon of dialectics. It is paradigmatic for the thinker and binding for the historian.[143]

The exigency of the dialectical motion—the "leap in the open air of history"[144]—enjoins the mission of brushing history against the grain,[145] the expectation of what was once upon a time and the commemoration of what is yet to come.[146] For Benjamin, the past does not cast its light on the present nor does the present cast its light on the past. The two modes of time converge in the image "wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill [*Dialektik im Stillstand*]. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: it is not progression [*Verlauf*] but image [*Bild*], suddenly emergent [*sprunghaft*].—Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language. Awakening."[147] The dialectic image, as opposed to a mimetic image, does not merely mirror the past; the present is thus marked by a "temporal rupture in which time and space are out of joint. This out-of-jointness is the *Sprunghaftigkeit*, possessing the qualities of leaps and cracks that characterize our relation to the past, the present, and the future, a relation that perpetually is at odds with itself."[148]

The writing of history proceeds from this out-of-jointness, the leap that bridges past and present and thereby brings together what remains at a distance, the constellated moment wherein time is, paradoxically, most fluid and most sedentary—*dialectics at a standstill*.[149] Accentuating the same point in the sixteenth of the theses on the concept of history, Benjamin

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[143] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 464; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 580.

[144] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 4*, 395.

[145] Ibid., 392.

[146] This dimension of Benjamin's thinking is attested in Scholem's poem "Paraphrase, aus der Prosa des ‚Tagebuchs'," written on May 12, 1918, and inspired by reading "The Metaphysics of Youth." See Gershom Scholem, *The Fullness of Time: Poems*, trans. Richard Sieburth, introduced and annotated by Steven M. Wasserstrom (Jerusalem: Ibis, 2003), 52–53: "Even as you die, Youth, you establish history . . . The future was. The past shall be [*Die Zukunft war. Vergangenheit wird sein*]." The reversal of time that is affirmed here—the future already past and the past yet to come—is indicative of an anti-utopian spirit and a resignation to the fact that history is not redemptive.

[147] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 462; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 576–77.

[148] Richter, *Thought-Images*, 62.

[149] Theodor Adorno, "Progress," *The Philosophical Forum* 15 (1983–1984): 69: "What Benjamin called dialectic at a standstill is certainly less a platonizing regression than an attempt to raise such a paradox to a philosophical consciousness. Dialectical images:

writes: "The historical materialist cannot do without the notion of a present which is not a transition, but in which time takes a stand [*einsteht*] and has come to a standstill. For this notion defines the very present in which he himself is writing history . . . He remains in control of his powers—man enough to blast open the continuum of history."[150] It follows that the "concept of historical time forms an antithesis to the idea of a temporal continuum. The eternal lamp is an image of genuine historical existence. It cites what has been—the flame that once was kindled—in perpetuum, giving it ever new sustenance."[151] The past, consequently, is not the irrevocable cause of the present; it is the trace that is reconfigured anew in each moment through the agency of anamnesis in the manner of the dream that is remembered upon waking. The remembering itself blurs the boundary between dream and wakefulness, since in recalling the dream, the dreamer is no longer certain if s/he is dreaming of being awake or evoking the dream once s/he has awoken. To be awakened, on this score, consists of waking to and not from the dream, that is, waking to the realization that what we call reality is a component of the dream from which we imagine that we awake,[152] a realization that sufficiently narrows, if not eviscerates, the distinction between interior and exterior—"the external world that the active man encounters can also in principle be reduced, to any desired degree, to his inner world, and his inner world similarly to his outer world, indeed regarded in principle as one and the same thing."[153]

Noteworthy is Benjamin's utilization of Bloch's expression "darkness of the lived moment" (*Dunkel des gelebten Augenblicks*) to illustrate the knowledge that is "secured on the level of the historical, and collectively."[154] Let me cite Bloch's words verbatim so that we get a better sense of the fuller context:

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these are the historical-objective archetypes of that antagonistic unity of standstill and movement definitive for the most bourgeois concept of progress."

[150] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 4*, 396.

[151] Ibid., 407.

[152] Wolfson, *A Dream*, 101, 255–74.

[153] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1*, 202. This passage from Benjamin's 1919 essay "Schicksal und Charakter" is discussed by Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction*, 70–71, in support of his contention that Benjamin, like Heidegger, rejected the Husserlian phenomenological reduction, which presumed the naturalness of the natural attitude, since for both thinkers, "the reduction of the 'natural' attitude has already taken place in everyday activity . . . Far from positing a world of things that affect consciousness and to which it reacts in return, there is only the 'working' situation, and the distinction between interior and exterior is purely functional, not substantial." The breakdown of the distinction between inside and outside corresponds to my claim regarding the inability to distinguish dream and reality.

[154] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 389; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 491.

> Thus, once again, the unconstruable, the absolute question certainly also runs towards the moment, into its darkness. Not as a clearing, but as an unmistakable allusion to the immediate darkness of the Now, in so far as its central latency in terms of content nevertheless depicts itself in such astonished questioning, such questioning astonishment. If the content of what is driving in the Now, what is touched in the Here, were extracted positively . . . then conceived hope, hoped-for world would have reached their goal. *Once more: darkness of the lived moment; Carpe diem* . . . Even the feeling of internal and external stimuli, at the point where these plunge into the Now, participates in the latter's darkness . . . Together with its content, the lived moment itself remains essentially invisible, and in fact all the more securely, the more energetically attention is directed towards it: at this root, in the lived In-itself, in punctual immediacy, all world is still dark.[155]

With these penetrating and poignant words of Bloch in mind, we can circle back to Benjamin's description of the *Jetztzeit* as the present shot through with splinters of messianic time. The redemptive potential is connected to the present or, more specifically, to the recollection of the past in the present, the commemorative act that transforms the former by the latter and the latter by the former. And yet, the present in its punctual immediacy is essentially invisible, not in the manner of some past experience that is lost in the fog of oblivion, but as the memory that haunts the present like a ghostly figure that "constantly reappears" in the "opening in the passage of time," as Benjamin described the character of fate in his study on the origins of German tragic drama (*Trauerspiel*).[156] The past is a phantom that can be manifest only to the extent that it remains occluded, and like all manifestations of the imagination, according to Benjamin, the apparition is a "deformation [*Entstaltung*] of what has been formed. It is a characteristic of all imagination that it plays a game of dissolution with its forms."[157]

Remembering proceeds from the blind spot that is the darkness of the lived moment, the not-yet that is necessary for the possibility of there being something rather than nothing, the negation that impels the indeterminate emptiness that is the fullness of becoming.[158] To seize the moment—*Carpe*

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[155] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 290–91 (emphasis in original). See the passage from *The Spirit of Utopia* cited below at n. 239.

[156] Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 135, and see analysis in Ilit Ferber, *Philosophy and Melancholy: Benjamin's Early Reflections on Theater and Language* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 108–9.

[157] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1*, 280.

[158] On Bloch's ontology of becoming and the demarcation of being in the mode of not-yet, see Schumacher, *Death and Mortality*, 81–82 n. 68.

diem—is to take hold of this darkness, for one can see the light only by gazing from within the darkness and not by dispelling it. Benjamin's assertion that each moment betrays the splintering of messianic time is indicative of the fact that he was incapable of ascribing to history as a whole the capacity for fulfillment. This crucial point is missed by many interpreters of Benjamin's utopianism. The more conventional approach is attested in the explication of Benjamin's idea of redemption and recollection offered by Stéphane Mosès:

> It is this break of historical temporality, this appearance of the unpredictable, that Benjamin called Redemption. But this is not located anywhere at the end of time; on the contrary, it happens (or it can happen) at any moment, precisely as each moment of time—grasped as absolutely unique—brings a new state of the world into being. The qualitative difference of each of the fragments of time always brings a new possibility of an unforeseen change, a brand-new arrangement of the order of things. In contrast to the Marxist idea of the "end of history," based on a quantitative and cumulative vision of historical time, what is drawn here is the idea, borrowed from Jewish messianism, of a *utopia appearing in the very heart of the present*, of a hope lived in the mode of today . . . It is thus that the Benjaminian notion of "recollection" (*Eingedenken*) continues the Jewish category of "re-remembering" (*Zekher*), which does not denote the preservation in memory of events of the past but their reactualization in the present experience . . . As for the messianic hope, it must not be conceived as aiming for a utopia destined to be realized at the end of time but as an extreme vigilance, a capacity to detect what at each moment shows the "revolutionary energy" of the new.[159]

There is much about this statement with which I am in agreement but it does obfuscate the fact that even after having espoused a leftist agenda with its professed belief in political insurgency as a harbinger of socio-economic reform, Benjamin was consigned to a deep-seated skepticism—one might even say Saturnine distrust[160]—about the redemptive potential

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[159] Mosès, *The Angel of History*, 108–9 (emphasis in original). The expression "revolutionary energy" appears in a passage from Henri Focillon, *Vie des formes*, cited by Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 488 (*Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 611): "I have elsewhere pointed out the dangers of 'evolution': its deceptive orderliness, its single-minded directness, its use, in those problematic cases . . ., of the expedient of 'transitions,' its inability to make room for the revolutionary energy of inventors" (Henri Focillon, *The Life of Forms in Art*, trans. Charles Beecher Hogan and George Kubler [New York: Zone Books, 1989], 47). A proper attunement to Focillon's words confirms the interpretation of Benjamin that I have presented in this essay.

[160] Compare the important comment regarding the angelic form of Klee's *Angelus Novus* in the first version of the autobiographical fragment "Agesilaus Santander" (1933), in Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, 713: "By turning to his advantage that I was born under the sign of Saturn—the planet of slow revolution, the star of hesitation and

of history not only as the utopian future but also as it pertains to the potential of each present to serve as a stimulus for upheaval.[161] When Benjamin writes that the "concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe," he does not only mean that the status quo has the "ever-present possibility" of being calamitous, but rather that the cataclysmic is "what in each case is given," and hence "hell is not something that awaits us, but this life here and now."[162] In a revealing comment in his essay on Kafka, published in December 1934 on the tenth anniversary of his death, Benjamin elaborates on Kafka's aphorism "Don't forget the best!", "But forgetting always involves the best, for it involves the possibility of redemption."[163] One would have reasonably expected Benjamin to affirm a connection between memory and redemption, and yet, he inverts Kafka's advice and substitutes forgetfulness for memory. The instruction was not to forget the best but Benjamin insists that through forgetfulness

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delay—he sent his feminine aspect after the masculine one reproduced in the picture, and did so by the most circuitous, most fatal detour, even though the two had been such close neighbors." The text is cited as well in Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (New York: Schocken, 1976), 207, and see his analysis, 219–20. Regarding this passage, see also Max Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics: Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), 13–14; Mosès, *The Angel of History*, 79–80; Moshe Idel, *Saturn's Jews: On the Witches' Sabbat and Sabbateanism* (London: Continuum, 2011), 91–94, 168 n. 26. On the theme of melancholia and Saturn, see Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 149–51, and analysis in Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics*, 102–5. The classical study of this motif is Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964), 127–214. For other discussions of melancholia in Benjamin's oeuvre, see Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism*, 174 and 202; Pensky, *Melancholy Dialectics*; Ferber, *Philosophy and Melancholy*. For the larger intellectual and cultural milieu to assess Benjamin's depressive tendencies, see the discussion on "Melancholy Germans" in Jane O. Newman, *Benjamin's Library: Modernity, Nation, and the Baroque* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 138–84.

[161] Wolin, *Walter Benjamin*, 110. See, however, Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 101–2. The author interprets Benjamin's image of the *Jetztzeit* being shot through with splinters of messianic time as a reference to "moments of revolt," and hence it conveys the "imminent or potential presence of the messianic era in history." Löwy reinforces his argument with a citation from Scholem's unpublished notebooks of 1917 where he reports that Benjamin once said, "The messianic kingdom is always there." Commenting on this passage, Löwy writes: "We are, here, in the rupture between messianic redemption and the ideology of progress, at the heart of the constellation formed by the conceptions of history of Benjamin, Scholem, and Franz Rosenzweig, who draw on the Jewish religious tradition to contest the model of thought that is common to Christian theodicy, the Enlightenment and the Hegelian philosophy of history. By abandoning the Western teleological model, we pass from a time of necessity to a time of possibilities, a random time, open at any moment to the unforeseeable irruption of the new." The influence of Rosenzweig's idea that the future can erupt at any moment is repeated, ibid., 104, and see 8, 122 n. 18. As Löwy explicitly acknowledges, 134 n. 165, his argument is indebted to Mosès.

[162] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 473; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5.1, 593.

[163] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, 813.

alone one can access the best, since forgetfulness involves the possibility of redemption.

At most, we should attribute to Benjamin the redolent title of one of Scholem's poems "Melancholy Redemption" (*Traurige Erlösung*), composed in 1926, three years after his arrival in Jerusalem, which already expresses disillusion with the possibility of the "untarnished ray" of the light of Zion attaining the "world's inmost core" (*Innere der Welt*).[164] In another poem composed in 1933, "With a Copy of Walter Benjamin's 'One-Way Street'," Scholem reiterated the primacy accorded to melancholy in the religious outlook of Benjamin and in his own worldview: "In days of old all roads somehow led/to God and to his name./We are not devout. Our domain is the profane,/and where 'God' once stood, Melancholy takes his place [*und wo einst 'Gott' stand, steht Melancholie*]."[165] Scholem, like Benjamin, came to perceive reality as the "abyss of nothingness in which the world appears" (*der Abgrund des Nichts, in dem die Welt erscheint*).[166] At the conclusion of the *Theological-Political Fragment*, Benjamin asserts that the "task of world politics" (*Aufgabe der Weltpolitik*) is to strive for the "eternal and total passing away" (*ewigen und totalen Vergängnis*) that is characteristic of "the rhythm of messianic nature" (*der Rhythmus der messianischen Natur*) and hence the method befitting this "eternally transient worldly existence" is nihilism.[167] I thus assent to Gillian Rose's educing from this passage—which

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[164] Scholem, *The Fullness of Time*, 68–69. The influence of Benjamin's preoccupation with mourning (*Trauer*) in Scholem's poem is duly noted by Wasserstrom, *The Fullness of Time*, 146. See also the emotive beginning of the poem "W.B." in the same volume, 62–63: "Mournful one, near to me yet always in hiding [*Trauernder, nah mir und doch stets verborgen*]."

[165] Scholem, *The Fullness of Time*, 98–99. Idel, *Saturn's Jews*, 91, perceptively notes that this "radical statement about melancholy as a form of hypostasis is, at the same time, a melancholic statement in itself."

[166] Scholem, *The Fullness of Time*, 96–97. One should here recall Scholem's expression "nothingness of revelation" (*Nichts der Offenbarung*) mentioned in the letter of Benjamin to Scholem from August 11, 1934, and in Scholem's response to Benjamin from September 20, 1934, in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem 1932–1940*, ed. Gershom Scholem, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevere, with an introduction by Anson Rabinbach (New York: Schocken, 1989), 135 and 142. See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 233, and reference to other scholars cited in n. 166, to which one might add David Kaufmann, "Imageless Refuge for all Images: Scholem in the Wake of Philosophy," *Modern Judaism* 20 (2000): 154–55; Ilit Ferber, "A Language of the Border: On Scholem's Theory of Lament," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 21 (2013): 169–70.

[167] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and others, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 306; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2.1, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Herman Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 204. For an analysis of this text as the framework within which to evaluate Benjamin's early thinking on history

basically accords with the reading proffered by Taubes—that the political agenda envisaged by Benjamin "presupposes the inner man in isolation, able to bear a suffering that promises neither realization nor redemption. *E contrario*, it implies misfortune which is unable to bear this suffering, a thirst for the realization of entreated redemption, for the politics of the world, and total perdition."[168]

The depth of Benjamin's dark luminosity—or what we may call his utopian pessimism[169]—is driven home in the ninth of his theses on the concept of history, which is offered as a midrashic exegesis of the fifth stanza of the poem on Klee's *Angelus Novus*, "Gruß vom Angelus," which Scholem composed in honor of Benjamin's twenty-ninth birthday, July, 25, 1921: "My wing is ready for flight,/*I would like to turn back*./If I stayed everliving time,/I'd still have little luck."[170] The first thing to note is that in the use of

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and redemption, see Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane*, 19–51. See also the attempt of Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Jan Assmann in conjunction with Horst Folkers, Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, and Christoph Schulte, trans. Dana Hollander (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 72–74, to read Benjamin's insistence on world politics as nihilism in light of the use of the expression *hōs mē* ("as not") by Paul in his description of the *kairós* in 1 Corinthians 7:29. On Heidegger's explication of this locution, which he translates as *als ob nicht*, "as if not," see Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 33–34, whose reading has much affinity to my interpretation in *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 231–32, of Heidegger's rendering of the expression *ouk edexanto*, "they received not," in 2 Thessalonians 2:10, as an "enactmental not" (*vollzugsmäßige Nicht*). For discussion of Agamben and the structure of messianic time, and Paul's exhortation for the community to love *hōs mē*, see Elizabeth A. Castelli, "The Philosophers' Paul in the Frame of the Global: Some Reflections," in *Paul and the Philosophers*, 151–53. On *hōs mē* and Paul's meontology according to Heidegger, see also Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 177–83; idem, "You Are Not Your Own," 236–40. On Taubes's reading of Paul as a prism of his conflictual relationship to Judaism and Christianity, see Larry L. Welborn, "Jacob Taubes—Paulinist, Messianist," in *Paul in the Grip of the Philosophers*, 69–90.

168 Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 189. Compare ibid., 181: "The object, style and mood of Benjamin's philosophy converge, not in the Christian mournfulness or melancholy, discerned from the Baroque *Trauerspiel* to Baudelaire, but in the Judaic state of desertion—in Hebrew, *agunah*—the stasis which his agon with the law dictates. . . . Benjamin is the *taxonomist of sadness*, and he adds figures of melancholy to the philosophical repertoire of modern experiences . . . stoicism, scepticism, the unhappy consciousness, resignation and *ressentiment*" (emphasis in original). See also Rebecca Comay, "Benjamin's Endgame," in *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, 246–85.

169 The expression is derived from David McLellan, *Utopian Pessimist: The Life and Thought of Simone Weil* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

170 I am following the translation in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 392. The German original appears in Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1.2, 697. A different translation of the entire poem appears in *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin*, 184–85. For a third translation of the poem and the original, see *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*, 79–81. Scholem included this poem together with some others in a letter written to Benjamin on September 19, 1933. A fourth translation with

these words as the epigraph to his own text, Benjamin italicized the second line of this verse, *I would like to turn back*, a point of emphasis lacking in the original German "ich kehrte gern zurück." This may seem to be nothing more than a stylistic triviality but, in fact, it speaks very loudly as it underlines the redemptive potency of looking backward, the stance that is essential to historical writing. In Benjamin's own terms:

> This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before *us*, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is *this* storm.[171]

From the vantage point of the angel of history—which we can assume is a symbolic configuration of the faculty of memory—what appears as a concatenation of discrete events is but one single catastrophe constituted by the conglomeration of wreckage piled upon wreckage. The angel desires to tarry in the past to revive the dead and to repair what has been shattered but the storm blowing in from Paradise drives him into the future as the mound of trash, which is the past, continues to expand heavenward. With searing cynicism, Benjamin notes that this storm is what we call progress. Adorno well understood what should be adduced from the labyrinth of Benjamin's messianic-utopian thought:

> The traces always come from the past, and our hopes come from their counterpart, from that which was or is doomed; such an interpretation may very well fit the last line of Benjamin's text on *Elective Affinities*: "For the sake of the hopeless only are we given hope."[172] And yet it is tempting to look for the

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the German text appears in Scholem, *The Fullness of Time*, 64–67. Concerning this poem, see also Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*, trans. Harry Zohn (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981), 102; Robert Alter, *Necessary Angels: Tradition and Modernity in Kafka, Benjamin, and Scholem* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 113–15; Weigel, *Body- and Image-Space*, 56–57.

171 Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 392 (emphasis in original). See Rolf Tiedemann, "Historical Materialism or Political Messianism? An Interpretation of the Theses 'On the Concept of History,'" in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, ed. Gary Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 175–209, esp. 177–81; Bouretz, *Witnesses for the Future*, 212–23; Eiland and Jennings, *Walter Benjamin*, 661.

172 The reference is to the concluding line in Benjamin's essay "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," written in 1919–1922 and published in *Neue Deutsche Beiträge*,

> sense, not in life at large, but in the fulfilled moments—in the moments of present existence that make up for its refusal to tolerate anything outside it.[173]

Any hope we can muster to breathe is knotted with the suffocation of hopelessness. This is the intent of Benjamin's pronouncement that we have been given hope for the sake of the hopeless; that is, the hopelessness can never be eradicated by hope, for if hopelessness was truly eliminated, we would not be capable of exuding hopefulness. It is safe to assume that Benjamin's sense of the hopeless hope underlies Adorno's classification of his own thinking as "melancholy science," which he further identifies as the "true field of philosophy." To know the "truth about life in its immediacy," one "must scrutinize its estranged form, the objective powers that determine individual existence even in its most hidden recesses . . . Our perspective of life has passed into an ideology which conceals the fact that there is life no longer."[174]

Here it is relevant to recall as well the fragment entitled "Idea of a Mystery" that Benjamin attached to a letter to Scholem sent in November

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1924–1925. An English translation, "Goethe's Elective Affinities," is found in Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1*, 297–360. The crucial line appears on 356: "Only for the sake of the hopeless ones have we been given hope."

[173] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 378. Compare Adorno, "Progress," 56–57: "But the dependence of progress on totality is a thorn on its side. Consciousness of this dependence inspires Benjamin's polemic in his theses on the concept of history against the coupling of progress in the direction which one might crudely call politically progressive . . . The concentration of progress on the survival of the species is thereby confirmed: no progress should be supposed in such a way as to imply there already is such a thing as humanity which therefore simply could progress. Rather, progress would produce humanity itself, the perspective for which is opened in the face of extinction. It follows that the concept of universal history cannot be saved, as Benjamin further teaches; the concept is illuminating only as long as the illusion of an already existing humanity, harmonious and ascending to unity, remains credible. If humanity remains entrapped by its own self-made totality, then, as Kafka wrote, no progress has really yet occurred, while reference to totality alone allows it to be thought." But see ibid., 65: "The progress of domination of nature which, according to Benjamin's parable, proceeds in contradiction to that true progress with its *telos* in redemption, is still not without all hope. The two concepts of progress communicate with each other not just in fending off the final calamity, but much more in each actual form of the mitigation of persistent suffering."

[174] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), 15. The summation by Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 148, is worth citing: "The melancholy science is not resigned, quiescent or pessimistic. It reasons that theory, just like philosophy it was designed to replace, tends to overreach itself, with dubious political consequences. The social reality of the advanced capitalist society is more intractable than such theory is willing to concede, and Adorno had a fine dialectical sense for its paradoxes." The attentiveness to suffering and pain in Adorno's utopian speculations is appreciated as well by Ombrosi, *The Twilight of Reason*, 119–47.

1927. Benjamin wrote of representing "history as a trial in which man, as an advocate of dumb nature, brings charges against all Creation and cites the failure of the promised Messiah to appear. The court, however, decides to hear witnesses for the future. Then appear the poet, who senses the future; the artist, who sees it; the musician, who hears it; and the philosopher, who knows it. Hence, their evidence conflicts, even though they all testify that the future is coming."[175] In the continuation, Benjamin notes that the court could not "make up its mind" and thus it was necessary for "new grievances" to be introduced and for new witnesses to come forth, to the point that there was "torture and martyrdom," terms that seem inappropriate to the setting of a trial. Moreover, we are told that the jury did not trust the prosecutor or the witnesses, and by the end, fearing that they might be expelled from their places, the jurors fled and "only the prosecutor and witnesses remain."[176]

It is interesting to cogitate about what inferences may be drawn from the juxtaposition of the specific vocations listed on Benjamin's list of witnesses. A full exposition of this matter lies beyond the main concern of this essay, but I will offer two brief observations. First, the list obliges us to consider the intricate bond between poet and philosopher, since they are distinguished from the artist and musician, inasmuch as the medium for witnessing that they share is language. To be sure, Benjamin sets them apart by speaking of the poet who feels (*es fühlt*) as opposed to the philosopher who knows (*es weiß*), whence we can assume that the linguistic truths expressed by the former well forth from an experience of immediacy, whereas those of the latter are a matter of ratiocination.[177] Even so, Benjamin's celebrated notion of the linguistic nature of all being (*das sprachliche Wesen der Dinge*) and the depiction of the world as symbolic of a fallen state in relation to an

[175] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, 68.

[176] Ibid. It is of interest to recall in this context the following passage from Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 136: "Death, as the form of tragic life, is an individual destiny; in the *Trauerspiel* it frequently takes the form of a communal fate, as if summoning all the participants before the highest court." And compare the distinction between the heavenly and earthly court in ibid., 234: "And while, in the earthly court, the uncertain subjectivity of judgment is firmly anchored in reality, with punishments, in the heavenly court the illusion of evil comes entirely into its own. Here the unconcealed subjectivity triumphs over every deceptive objectivity of justice, and is incorporated into divine omnipotence as a 'work of supreme wisdom and primal love', as hell."

[177] On the meaning of poetic existence in Benjamin, informed by Hölderlin, see Fenves, *The Messianic Reduction*, 18–43, esp. 35–38.

inexpressible *Ursprache*[178] insinuate a more proximate relation between poet and philosopher.[179]

Second, Benjamin speaks of history as a trial in which the human being serves as an advocate for "mute nature" (*stummen Natur*) by bringing a complaint against all creation in general and against the redeemer's non-appearance in particular. The prosecutor, the witnesses, and the members of the jury are all imagined to be present, but the defendant standing trial is the one persona on the scene that is absent. Indeed, the absence of the defendant is precisely what is being judged. I take this to mean that any investigation into messianic speculation must interrogate the deferment of the promise. Benjamin remarks that all of the witnesses testify to the Messiah's coming, but in truth, they accomplish this by testifying to his not having come. Scholem suggested that the aforecited arcanum "constitutes the first evidence of the influence on Benjamin of Kafka's novel *The Trial* . . . This was the beginning of his meditations on Kafka, which were intended as preliminary studies for an essay on *The Trial*."[180] I would add that Benjamin's comment regarding the absence of the promised Messiah (*das Ausbleiben des verheißnen Messias*) is reminiscent of Kafka's parabolic aphorism that the Messiah will come on the day after he has arrived, not the last day but on the very last day,[181] that is, the day after the last, a day that cannot come forth in the ebb and flow of time any more or less than the very first day, the first that would have to come before the first and therefore already be second.[182]

In a similar spirit, Benjamin upheld the notion of an end that can never be achieved insofar as it is the end, and thus he wryly noted that the drawing

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[178] Irving Wohlfarth, "On Some Jewish Motifs in Benjamin," in *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London: Routledge, 1989), 157–215; Eiland and Jennings, *Walter Benjamin*, 88–90. The question of Benjamin's theory of language and the Jewish mystical tradition, particularly as it was interpreted through the lens of Scholem, has been discussed by a number of scholars. For an extensive analysis, see Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane*, 85–153, and see the comments in Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, 11–12, 405–6 n. 78.

[179] Noteworthy are the comments of Hannah Arendt in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 14: "What is so hard to understand about Benjamin is that without being a poet he *thought poetically* and therefore was bound to regard the metaphor as the greatest gift of language. Linguistic 'transference' enables us to give material form to the invisible . . . and thus to render it capable of being experienced" (emphasis in original).

[180] Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*, 145. Scholem's surmise is elaborated in Wohlfarth, "On Some Jewish Motifs," 188–205.

[181] Franz Kafka, *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 81.

[182] Blanchot, *The Writing of Disaster*, 143, cited in Wolfson, *A Dream*, 452 n. 157. The comment of Kafka (cited in previous note) and the explication of Blanchot were noted by Comay, "Benjamin's Endgame," 269.

near of surrealism to communism arouses the need for "pessimism all along the line."[183] The failure to arrive at the end has been appropriated by various postmodern thinkers—in no small measure due to the influence of Derrida's notion of messianicity and the emphasis he placed on the future (*l'avenir*) as the dawning of what is to come (*à-venir*) and consequently impervious to a thematics of time[184]—as an indicator of limitless hope. Typical of this stance is Derrida's insistence that the apocalyptic tone—the unveiling of the truth of the end that reveals itself as the advent of the end of truth—rests on the assumption that the end is beginning, that the end is imminent, a point corroborated by the fact that we are all going to die.[185] Nevertheless, the discourse of the end echoes the diction of John's apocalyptic prediction, "you will not know at what hour I shall come upon you" (Rev. 3:3), which is glossed by Derrida, "I shall come: the coming is always to come. The *Adôn* named as the aleph and the tav, the alpha and the omega, is the one who has been, who is, and who comes, not who shall be, but who comes, which is the present of to-come [*à-venir*]. *I am coming* means: I am going to come, I am to come in the imminence of an 'I am going to come,' 'I am in the process of coming,' 'I am on the point of going to come.' "[186]

Even though Derrida states clearly that the "apocalyptic desire" for elucidation or enlightenment consists of the critique that demystifies or deconstructs apocalyptic discourse itself and with it all speculation on vision of the end[187]—indeed the dismissal of a transcendental signifier leaves us with an horizon of temporality in which there is neither arche nor telos, neither foundational beginning nor eschatological ending—his emphasis on the inability of the future to come, its state of always coming, seemingly begets an unbounded optimism, since the future is, in Derrida's own terms, the "monstrous *arrivant*;" that is, inasmuch as the future is unpredictable, incalculable, and nonprogrammable, it is like a monster that is not recognized the first time it appears. Hence, we can welcome the future only as that for which we cannot prepare in the manner that we "accord hospitality

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183 Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, 216.

184 Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 160–61, and references to other scholarly discussions cited on 406 n. 31. To the sources mentioned there, see now the analysis of Colby Dickinson, *Between the Canon and the Messiah: The Structure of Faith in Contemporary Continental Thought* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 43–114. On the privileging of the future in the Derridean conception of temporality, see Joanna Hodge, *Derrida on Time* (London: Routledge, 2007), 91–112.

185 Jacques Derrida, "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy," in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 151–52.

186 Ibid., 153 (emphasis in original).

187 Ibid., 148.

to that which is absolutely foreign or strange."[188] This "waiting for the never enough of time," as one scholar artfully called it,[189] matches the "experience of the impossible" that Derrida assigns to the "deconstructive operation." Performatively, awaiting the future that can never arrive is "the experience of the other as the invention of the impossible, in other words, as the only possible invention . . . Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all; it does not settle for methodical procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail . . . Its *process* [démarche] involves an affirmation, this latter being linked to the coming—the *venire*—in event, advent, invention. But it can only do so by deconstructing a conceptual and institutional structure of invention that neutralizes by putting the stamp of reason on some aspect of invention, of inventive power; as if it were necessary, over and beyond a certain traditional status of invention, to reinvent the future."[190]

Of course, for Derrida, the matter is more complex because the future is precisely what never comes except as what cannot be foreseen, and thus in some sense, it is always coming. Still, there is an indefatigable hopefulness implicit in the description of deconstruction as a means to reinvent the future. Benjamin and the thinkers of the Frankfurt school saw the matter differently, perceiving that the inability for closure also breeds pessimism and despair, a "mistrust in all reconciliation: between classes, between nations, between individuals."[191] We cannot reinvent the future; at best, we can rewrite the story of the past so that we can manage to survive in the present. In the conclusion of the sixth historical thesis, Benjamin observed, "The only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that *even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious."[192] Utilizing the traditional language of Christian soteriology, Benjamin expresses this in the image of the messianic redeemer subjugating the Antichrist. For Benjamin, however, this is a conquest that will

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[188] Jacques Derrida, *Points . . .: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 386–87. See Marko Zlomislic, *Jacques Derrida's Aporetic Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 237.

[189] Zlomislic, *Jacques Derrida's Aporetic Ethics*, 233–39.

[190] Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, vol. 1, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 15 and 23 (emphasis in original).

[191] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, 217. See Paul Mendes-Flohr, " 'To Brush History against the Grain': The Eschatology of the Frankfurt School and Ernst Bloch," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 51 (1983): 631–50.

[192] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, *Volume 4*, 391 (emphasis in original).

necessarily not reach its fruition—the enemy never has and never will cease to be victorious. If the efficacy of the Antichrist were to be subdued, this would beckon the extermination of Christ.

Perhaps even more pertinent is Benjamin's aside in the *Theological-Political Fragment*: "Only the Messiah himself completes all history, in the sense that he alone redeems, completes, creates its relation to the messianic. For this reason, nothing that is historical can relate itself, from its own ground, to anything messianic. Therefore, the Kingdom of God is not the telos of the historical dynamic; it cannot be established as a goal [*Ziel*]. From the standpoint of history, it is not the goal but the terminus [*Ende*]."[193] Departing from Cohen's asymptotic conception of progress towards an end that is endlessly approached but never finally achieved, and the consequent distinction he proposes between eschatology and messianism,[194] Benjamin maintained that history is not advancing towards some goal; the messianic is the terminus that cannot be realized either in the course of a future that is at an infinite distance from the present or even in the intervention of any particular moment at hand. The now is splintered with shards of light but the liberation of these shards can never dissipate the darkness. As Eli Friedlander succinctly summarized Benjamin's view, messianic temporality is "a scheme of actualization" that "does not involve the projection of a utopian end in a more or less distant future but rather the urgent revolution of the present by way of the recognition of its bond with the suffering of the past. The present transformed, what Benjamin calls the Now, rather than any dreams of the future, is the focal point of the messianic passion. This is why Benjamin opposes messianism as he understands it to all utopian or prophetic thinking."[195] Reaching a similar conclusion, Löwy offers the following somewhat sanguine assessment:

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[193] Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 3*, 305; Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, 203. For discussion of this text in light of the two strands of messianic speculation in Jewish sources—one that posits the Messiah as the sole agency of redemption and the other that assumes the Messiah is the consummation of a redemptive process set into motion by human initiative—see Jacobson, *Metaphysics of the Profane*, 24–31.

[194] Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, trans. with an introduction by Simon Kaplan, introductory essay by Leo Strauss, introductory essays for the second edition by Steven S. Schwarzschild and Kenneth Seeskin (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 49: "An important moment already comes to the fore, which lays down the bridge between the root of monotheism and its peak formed by Messianism: *the distinction between eschatology and Messianism*" (emphasis in original). See ibid., 290.

[195] Friedlander, *Walter Benjamin*, 193.

> Walter Benjamin was far from being a "utopian" thinker. Unlike his friend Ernst Bloch, he was preoccupied less with the "principle of hope" and more with the urgent necessity of organizing pessimism; interested less in the "radiant future" and more in the imminent dangers looming over humanity. He is not far from a tragic world-view . . . the deep sense of an unbridgeable abyss between the authentic values one believes in and empirical reality. However . . . a fragile utopian dimension—because it is entirely shot through with romantic melancholy and the tragic sense of defeat—is present in his work. Against the dominant tendency in the historic Left, which has often reduced socialism to economic objectives of concern to the industrial working class—itself reduced to its male, white, "national," stably employed fraction—Benjamin's thinking enables us to conceive a revolutionary project with a general mission to emancipate.[196]

I would add that Benjamin does not guarantee that the revolution of the present will ever succeed to overpower societal inequality once and for all. Rebellion is not a remedy for the despondency endemic to being human. There is no way out of the abyss but through being ensconced in the abyss, no ascent but through descent, no memory of forgetfulness but through the forgetfulness of memory, no recuperation from alienation but through the alienation from alienation.[197]

Utopian Hope and Disenchantment of the Image

The implications of the dark utopianism were drawn overtly by Adorno, whose decidedly secular politics and aesthetics were rooted in what has been called the *Jewish passion for the impossible*,[198] a fidelity to the ideal of redemption that assumes the form of its refusal—in the traditional idiom, the Messiah can be present only in the absence of being present. In the first section of the introduction to *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno put his finger on the conceptual quandary and pragmatic ineptitude that envisaging a perpetually deferred future inescapably entails: "Theory cannot prolong the moment its critique depended on. A practice indefinitely delayed is no longer the forum for appeals against self-satisfied speculation; it is mostly the pretext used by executive authorities to choke, as vain, whatever critical thoughts the practical change would require."[199]

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196 Löwy, *Fire Alarm*, 112.
197 Wohlfarth, "On Some Jewish Motifs," 165.
198 Josh Cohen, *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2005), 33.
199 Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 3.

An analysis of Adorno's critical theory is clearly beyond the scope of this essay. However, I will focus briefly on one crucial aspect of his thinking, which likely bears the influence of Cohen's Neokantianism, the conjunction between the motif of messianic yearning and the apophatic injunction against images (*Bilderverbot*):[200] just as the latter translates philosophically into "an extreme ascesis toward any type of revealed faith,"[201] an atheistic contention dogmatically expressed as the "one who believes in God cannot believe in God"[202]—any positive representation of God, consequently, capitulates to conceptual idolatry, the absolutization of the finite as infinite and the invocation of truth as falsehood[203]—so the valid redemptive response involves turning away from redemption. Musing about the Augustinian ideas of progress, redemption, and the immanent course of history, Adorno makes the following observation that, in my judgment, can be applied more generally to any teleological conception of the historical justified by appeal to transcendence whether sacralized or secularized: "If progress is equated with redemption as simple transcendent intervention, it surrenders any comprehensive meaning with the dimension of time, and evaporates into ahistorical theology. But the mediation with history threatens to make it an idol, and with the absurdity, both in reflection on the concept and in reality, that—what inhibits progress—is what counts as progress. Auxiliary constructions of an immanent-transcendent concept of progress condemn themselves through their very nomenclature."[204]

The essence of the messianic ethos lies in the fact that the God of Judaism, in contradistinction to ancient mythological deities, confronts nature as nature's other and hence there is always the chance that the status quo of the world order might be perturbed. But this very scenario is

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[200] Elizabeth A. Pritchard, "*Bilderverbot* Meets Body in Theodor W. Adorno's Inverse Theology," *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002): 291–318. Pritchard, 291–92 n, 2, reviews previous scholars who discuss negative theology and the ban of images in Adorno. The negative redemption implied by the *Bilderverbot* is explored by Glazer, *A New Physiognomy*, 60–63. See also Düttmann, *The Memory of Thought*, 58–61, 70–87. On the critical theory of the Frankfurt school as a form of Jewish negative theology, see additional sources cited in Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 264 n. 29.

[201] Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. and with a preface by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 142. See also Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 17.

[202] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 401.

[203] Düttmann, *The Memory of Thought*, 56–58, 96–97; Hent de Vries, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*, trans. Geoffrey Hale (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 601–6, 629–30.

[204] Adorno, "Progress," 58.

self-negating, since every undermining is subject to being undermined. Adorno insists that the *negation of negation* should not be equated with positivity—in simple arithmetic terms, minus times minus is a plus—a move he sees as the "quintessence of identification," which obscures the nonidentical that arises from the "negation of particularities," the negation of the negated that remains negative.[205] The function of the negative dialectic is to alter the direction of conceptuality by giving "it a turn toward nonidentity," which is to say, to ascertain the "constitutive character of the nonconceptual in the concept."[206]

In another passage in *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno identifies *cognitive utopia* as the use of "concepts to unseal the nonconceptual with concepts."[207] When placed in this utopian light, the endeavor of philosophy as self-critique is to include nonconceptuality within the purview of conceptual knowledge, to defy the dominating spirit of the identity principle of reason—the sine qua non of philosophical thought insofar as thinking cannot occur without it[208]—and its invariable apportioning of injustice to the nonidentical.[209] "Disenchantment of the concept" may be deemed the "antidote of philosophy,"[210] but there is no way to the nonconceptual except through the conceptual, no way to the nonidentity of the other but through the identity of the self. "Philosophical reflection makes sure of the nonconceptual in the concept . . . It must strive, by way of the concept, to transcend the concept."[211] Progress, therefore, is dialectical—not in a Hegelian sense—inasmuch as "one moment changes into its other only by literally reflecting itself, by reason turning reason upon itself and emancipating itself, in its self-limitation from the demon of identity."[212] The paradox at play here is expressed concisely by Adorno in an essay on the experiential content of Hegel's philosophy, "Only through reflection can reflective thought get beyond itself."[213] Hence, the "work of philosophical

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[205] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 158.
[206] Ibid., 12.
[207] Ibid., 10.
[208] Adorno, "Progress," 67.
[209] Ibid., 60.
[210] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 13.
[211] Ibid., 13–15. See Axel Honneth, *Pathologies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory*, trans. James Ingram (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 26–27.
[212] Adorno, "Progress," 63.
[213] Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, with an introduction by Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jeremy J. Shapiro (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 73.

self-reflection" consists, pace Wittgenstein,[214] in "uttering the unutterable,"[215] or literally, in the need "to say what will not let itself be said" (*was nicht sich sagen läßt*),[216] the nonlinguistic and nonsignifying moment of language, the imageless image,[217] the "mimetic consummation" of the "true language of art," exemplified in music, a language whose "expression is the antithesis of expressing something."[218] The sociopolitical context for Adorno's view is spelled out in the following comment in the lecture on metaphysics he delivered on July 20, 1965: "I believe that culture's squalid and guilty suppression of nature—a suppression which is itself a wrongly and blindly natural tendency of human beings—is the reason why people refuse to admit that dark sphere . . . If what I have tried to explain—in extreme terms—about the concept of culture is true, and if it is the case that philosophy's only *raison d'être* today is to gain access to the unsayable, then it can be said that Auschwitz and the world of Auschwitz have made clear something which was not a surprise to those who were not positivists but had a deep, speculative turn of mind: that culture has failed to its very core."[219]

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[214] For a comparative analysis of Adorno and Wittgenstein on the theme of saying the unsayable, see Roger Forster, *Adorno: The Recovery of Experience* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 31–56.

[215] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 9.

[216] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negativ Dialektik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), 21, translation in Forster, *Adorno*, 32. In light of this need to say what will not let itself be said, it is of interest to consider the following exposition of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron* in Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una Fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1998), 230: "Aaron, the man of images and mediation, has to sing in the opera, but makes use of language without images. Moses, on the other hand, who represents the principle of the ban on images, does not sing in Schoenberg, but just speaks. The only way in which he can dramatize the Old Testament taboo is by making him communicate in a manner which is not really possible according to the biblical story."

[217] Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, 123: "Philosophy as a whole is allied with art in wanting to rescue, in the medium of the concept, the mimesis that the concept represses, and here Hegel . . . disempowers individual concepts, uses them as though they were the imageless images of what they mean. Hence the Goethean 'residue of absurdity' in the philosophy of absolute spirit. What it wants to use to get beyond the concept always drives it back beneath the concept in the details." As Dallmayr, *Life-world*, 49–50, noted, following Hermann Mörchen, the aversion to representational thinking was shared by Adorno and Heidegger.

[218] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. with introduction by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 112. Compare the description of Bloch's understanding of music in Richter, *Thought-Images*, 77, as "the prime sphere in which we encounter the general other-directedness of signification, an other-directedness that music shares with other forms of signification but which it stages in music-specific ways, that is, beyond any obvious model of referentiality and prestabilized norms of meaning."

[219] Theodor W. Adorno, *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 118.

In accord with this logic, we can say that the possibility of redemption is bound inescapably to the impossibility of its actualization. Adorno thus identified the prototype of the "utopian stance toward thought" with the "interpretative stance in philosophy" because the latter leads us to break through the surface of all phenomena by assuring the mind that "what exists is not the ultimate reality—or perhaps we should say: what exists is not just what it claims to be."[220] Translated politically, just as the negative deportment of the hermeneutical condition means becoming conscious of the shortcomings and fallibility of existence, so one must harbor a basic suspicion regarding the tenability of envisioning any social change that would bring about a final resolution. Expressed in a different terminological register, Adorno wrote:

> The concept of progress is philosophical in that it contradicts the movement of society while at the same time articulating it. Social in origin, the concept of progress requires critical confrontation with real society. The moment of redemption, however secularized, cannot be erased from it. The irreducibility of the concept to either facticity or the idea, suggests its own contradiction . . . Progress means: humanity emerges from its spellbound state no longer under the spell of progress as well, itself nature, by becoming aware of its own indigenousness to nature and by halting the mastery over nature through which nature continues its mastery. In this it could be said that *progress only comes about at the point when it comes to an end* . . . All the same, a theory of progress must absorb that which is sound in the invectives against faith in progress as an antidote against the mythology which is its malaise . . . It is a part of the dialect of progress that those historical setbacks instigated by the principle of progress . . . also provide the condition for humanity to find means to avoid them in the future. The delusion of progress supercedes itself.[221]

In the end, there is no way to speak of the end that would not conjure the end of speaking. Notably, in *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno characterizes hope as an act of transgression against the Jewish ban on images, a ban that was extended to pronouncing the ineffable name. To endorse the possibility of hope is on a par with erecting images and/or mentioning the name, antinomian gestures that counter the indifference of the temporal world "deeply embedded" in the "metaphysical truth" that "vainly denies history."[222] Particularly influenced by Scholem's approach to the mystical

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[220] Theodor W. Adorno, *History and Freedom: Lectures 1964–1965*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Rodney Livingston (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 138.

[221] Adorno, "Progress," 59–65 (emphasis added).

[222] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 402. Compare ibid., 297–98: "What would be different, the unperverted essence, is withheld from a language that bears the stigmata of

phenomenon as innately nihilistic,[223] Adorno presumed a heretical theology common to the kabbalah and to Christian mysticism—such as that of Angelus Silesius—that espoused a doctrine "of the infinite relevance of the intra-mundane, and thus the historical, to transcendence."[224]

Bracketing the accuracy of Adorno's claim, he looks to the allegedly heretical theological underpinnings of mysticism to find within tradition a challenge to the metaphysical supposition of a separation of the intra-mundane realm and the transcendental. But the very emphasis on turning back to the historical without recourse to metaphysical transcendence leaves the former without the possibility of ultimate perfectibility. Curiously, in its aniconism, Judaism plays a pivotal role in the disavowal of metaphysics. Thus, in the *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, Judaism is described as the religion in which the "idea of the patriarchy is heightened to the point of annihilating myth" and in which "the link between name and essence is still acknowledged in the prohibition of uttering the name of God." The eschatological quality of resisting the eschaton is related to the "disenchanted world" of Judaism that "brooks no word which might bring solace to the despair of all mortality . . . The pledge of salvation lies in the rejection of any faith which claims to depict it, knowledge in the denunciation of illusion."[225] The critical utopia[226] imagined by Adorno is one whose possibility is impossible and therefore possible. Progress is thus not a "conclusive category. It wants to disrupt the triumph of radical evil, not to triumph in itself . . . Then,

existence—there was a time when theologians would speak of the 'mystical name.' " For discussion of Jewish name mysticism in Adorno, see Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Adorno's Kabbalah: Some Preliminary Observations," in *Polemical Encounters: Esoteric Discourse and Its Others*, ed. Olav Hammer and Kocku von Stuckard (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 61–62; Glazer, *A New Physiognomy*, 52–55.

223 Wasserstrom, "Adorno's Kabbalah," 62–64. See also Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond*, 244–46. The influence of Scholem is also evident in Adorno, *Metaphysics*, 108, where he contests the commonplace assumption that mysticism places primary emphasis on the unmediated experience of the divine. The study of mystical texts indicates rather that the experiences are "very strongly mediated by education. For example, the intricate interrelationships between gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, the Cabbala and later Christian mysticism give rise to an area of historicity which is equal to anything in the history of dogma. And it is certainly no accident that the corpus in which the documents of Jewish mysticism are brought together more or less disconnectedly, the Cabbala, bears the title of tradition." Adorno proffers that the emphasis in mystical sources is on topoi of religious experiences, which are often mediated by sacred texts, and not on immediate vision or pure subjectivity. Much of my scholarly work on Jewish mysticism has sought to challenge the polarization of experience and interpretation that is so endemic to Scholem's approach.

224 Adorno, *Metaphysics*, 100.

225 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 17.

226 The expression was coined by Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 42: "The German Idealism of the Jews produces the ferment of a critical utopia."

progress would become transformed into resistance against the ever-present danger of regression. Progress is precisely this resistance at all stages, not the capitulation to advancing through their course."[227] In the concluding aphorism of *Minima Moralia*, he writes:

> The only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption . . . It is the simplest of all things, because the situation calls imperatively for such knowledge, indeed because consummate negativity, once squarely faced, delineates the mirror-image of its opposite. But it is also the utterly impossible thing, because it presupposes a standpoint removed . . . from the scope of existence . . . Even its own impossibility it must at last comprehend for the sake of the possible. But beside the demand thus placed on thought, the question of the reality or unreality of redemption itself hardly matters.[228]

Adorno's utopianism encompasses a *noneschatological eschatology* or a *nonteleological teleology*—the "renunciation of redemption in exchange for the appearance of redemption," according to Agamben's gloss on Taubes's characterizing this passage as promoting an "aestheticization" of the messianic that assumes the form of an *as if* construction[229]—and hence he rejected any culmination in the geopolitical arena that might divert one from the ongoing critical enterprise, which brings to light the contradictions and fissures integral to conceptual thought. In the wake of the Holocaust, the only credible philosophical thinking is the mandate to contemplate reality from the standpoint of a redemption whose reality or unreality cannot be substantiated, to cultivate a knowledge that is both the simplest of things and utterly impossible, a knowledge marked by a negativity that yields the mirror image of its opposite, that is, a philosophy whose possibility is predicated on its very impossibility. The demand placed on thought is such that the impossibility must be contemplated for the sake of the possible but the possibility of the possible cannot be contemplated except from the standpoint of the impossible.

One can discern in this description of the impossible possibility of the end a phenomenological recasting of the rabbinic obligation to wait temporally for a redemption that cannot take place in time. The waiting provokes the longing for the advent of the nonevent, the present that Levinas identifies as the "mastery of the existent over existing," an occurrence that

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[227] Adorno, "Progress," 69–70.
[228] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 247.
[229] Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, 74–75; Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 35.

"can no longer be qualified as experience," a phenomenon that is, technically speaking, "beyond phenomenology."[230] I have discussed the minutiae of Levinas's messianism elsewhere and do not intend to repeat my analysis here.[231] Suffice it to note my conjecture that the shift from Messiah as a distinct person to messianism as a personal vocation for all humanity is an outcome of the diachronic conception of temporal transcendence as a movement toward infinity expressed in the "ethical adventure of the relationship to the other person,"[232] a course set forth by a "pluralism that does not merge into unity."[233] For Levinas, there is no presumption of an abolition of human misery and affliction. As I noted above, that there can be no climax to the historical process portends that the possibility for salvation is always real. The hope of the "temporal transcendence of the present toward the mystery of the future"[234] depends on letting go of the conviction that an eschaton may be reached and a new era without hardship ushered in. Messianic awakening consists of being liberated from this expectation and realizing that the consummation of the end is in waiting for the end to be consummated, a truism that exposes the secret of the nature of time.[235] To wait for the Messiah, in other words, is not to wait for something or someone; it is to wait for the sake of waiting, and hence it induces the patience that is the *length of time*, "an awaiting without anything being awaited, without the intention of awaiting . . . Patience swallows its own intention; time is attested in being deferred [*se réfère en se déférant*]. Time is deferred, is transcended to the Infinite. And the awaiting without something awaited (time itself) is turned into responsibility for another."[236] Levinas's view is expressed aphoristically by Blanchot, "In waiting, there is always more to await than there are things awaited . . . Waiting is a wearing down that is not worn out."[237] As Levinas well understood, the Jewish messianic ambition is precisely this *wearing down that does not wear out*, a hope that grows stronger the more it is unfulfilled. The time of the Messiah, consequently,

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230 Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 54.

231 Wolfson, *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 113–20. Some of that discussion is reworked here. For a list of other scholarly discussions of messianism in Levinas's thought, see ibid., 380–81 n. 214.

232 Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 33.

233 Ibid., 42.

234 Ibid., 94.

235 Emmanuel Levinas, *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*, trans. Gary D. Mole (London: Athlone Press, 1994), 143.

236 Levinas, *God, Death, and Time*, 139.

237 Maurice Blanchot *Awaiting Oblivion*, trans. John Gregg (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 59. On the inherent sense of waiting and Jewish messianism, see also text of Blanchot referred to above, n. 182. Compare Romano, "Awaiting," 47–51.

bespeaks the mystery of time more generally, the "*not yet* more remote than a future, a temporal *not yet*, evincing degrees in nothingness."[238]

In the final analysis, Levinas's diachrony is a phenomenological translation of the paradox that has impacted Jewish messianism through the centuries: the coming of the Messiah is the impossible possible, that which is possible because it is impossible—the Messiah who has come can never be the Messiah one believed is coming. Messianic time is the moment in time that is outside of time, the moment that cannot be gauged quantitatively, no matter how refined our tools of analytic computation, and hence there is no way to think of its occurrence but as the occurrence of what cannot occur save in the nonoccurrence of its occurrence. The nonoccurrence in no way affects the belief in the possibility of the eruption of the future; on the contrary, insofar as that eruption is contingent to the time that cannot materialize in time, the nonoccurrence is, strictly speaking, what guarantees its occurrence.

Not Yet Now and the Nothingness of the Future

Let me conclude by citing the following passage from Bloch's *The Spirit of Utopia*, written between 1915–1916, published in 1918 and then with revisions in 1923:

> Yet—*and this is of decisive importance*—the *future*, the *topos of the unknown within the future* . . . is itself nothing but *our expanded darkness*, *than our darkness in the issue of its own womb*, *in the expansion of its latency* . . . That means: the final, true, unknown, superdivine God, the disclosure of us all, already "lives" now, too, although he has not been "crowned" or "objectivated"; he "weeps," as certain rabbis said of the Messiah, at the question, what is he doing, since he cannot "appear" and redeem us; he "acts" in the deepest part of all of us as the "I am that I shall be," as "darkness: of the lived God," as darkness before his self-possession, before his face that will finally be uncovered, before the departure from the exile of true essence itself. So it seems, indeed it becomes certain, that this precisely is hope, where the darkness brightens. Hope is in the darkness itself, partakes of its imperceptibility, just as darkness and mystery are always related; it threatens to disappear if it looms up too nearly, too abruptly in this darkness.[239]

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[238] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 264 (emphasis in original).

[239] Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 201.

The revolutionary politics proffered by Bloch is plagued by two conflicting tendencies—the emphasis on the Western category of the telos, the omega point at the end of history that pulls human emancipation forward—expressed specifically as the triumph of Marxism—and the subversive power of the utopian spirit to break into history disruptively, the radical disjunction that is the essence of the not-yet of the future.[240] Bloch's thought is both thoroughly messianic, inasmuch as his thinking is typified by a defiant desire not to accept unjust suffering, and thoroughly gnostic, inasmuch as he accepts forlornness as the indigenous state of the human condition. The petition to overcome moral injustice is not bolstered by naïve buoyancy but is born from awareness of inexorable torment. There is no recourse to a benevolent God, no pledge of a transcendent light extinguishing darkness. The darkness is defeated by political activism that accepts the perdurance of the darkness it seeks to defeat. The hope of which we may speak is positioned in the place "where the darkness brightens," that is, the *hope is in the darkness itself*. Bloch does grant that the secret "quite precisely never stands in the dark, but rather is called to dissolve it; *thus does the darkness of the lived moment awaken in the resonance of the amazement that comes over us*."[241] Hope must lift itself out of the darkness of the now but the reciprocal connection between the two makes it impossible to imagine one without the other. This, I suppose, is what Bloch meant when he used the term *revolutionary gnosis* in the 1963 Afterword to *The Spirit of Utopia* to characterize his thinking. "The world is untrue," he writes, "but it wants to return home through man and through truth."[242] From that perspective, what is not yet true is the actuality that looms in the potentiality of what has already come to be untrue; the end restores us to the beginning, in terms apposite to both the inceptual thinking of kabbalistic theosophy and the Schellingian system of transcendental idealism, the pleromatic void where absolute necessity is indistinguishable from pure possibility, the dark ground of the present that is the propulsion of the nascent past toward an inveterate future. As Habermas incisively put it, "Bloch's basic experience is of the darkness, the open-endedness, the longing proper to the lived moment, proper to the nothingness of the mystic that is

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[240] See Tom Moylan, "Bloch against Bloch: The Theological Reception of Das Prinzip Hoffnung and the Liberation of the Utopian Function," in *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*, 96–121, esp. 112.

[241] Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, 202 (emphasis in original).

[242] Ibid., 279.

hungering for something . . . In this primordial hunger, the knot of the world presses toward resolution and, as long as it is unresolved, at each moment casts life back to its beginnings."[243]

With his denial of the world as God's creation and his avowed atheism, Bloch was at odds with the fundamental theological presuppositions of Judaism. Even so, due to his indebtedness to Jewish thinkers, perhaps prompted by the kabbalistic themes of exile and redemption mediated through Schelling,[244] but influenced especially by Cohen's idea of the messianic future as an "aspiration for infinity"[245] that degrades and destroys the "present political actuality,"[246] he developed his principle of hope and the epistemology of the not yet. To cite one evocative passage:

> The Authentic or essence is that *which is not yet, which in the core of things drives towards itself, which awaits its genesis in the tendency-latency of process*; it is itself only now founded, objective-real—hope . . . The tomorrow in today is alive, people are always asking about it. The faces which turned in the utopian direction have of course been different in every age, just like that which in each individual case they believed they saw. Whereas the *direction* here is always related, indeed in its still concealed goal it is the same; it appears as the only unchanging thing in history. Happiness, freedom, non-alienation, Golden Age, Land of Milk and Honey, the Eternally-Female, the trumpet signal in Fidelio and the Christ-likeness of the Day of Resurrection which follows it: these are so many witnesses and images of such differing value, but all are set up around that which speaks for itself by still remaining silent.[247]

Like the Marburg thinkers, Bloch accords a privileged position to the future as the truest dimension of time that transmutes history from an

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[243] Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, 68.

[244] Ibid., 38–40. Habermas speaks about Bloch's "Marxian appropriation of Jewish mysticism" as the culmination of a process that began with Benjamin, who sought to synthesize historical materialism and kabbalistic mysticism (38). Habermas suggests, moreover, that the Lurianic myth of the world arising from the divine contraction, exile, and restoration informed the fundamental axiom of Bloch's speculative materialism: matter is in need of redemption (39). Finally, it is proposed that Bloch was influenced by Schelling, who "had brought from the spirit of Romanticism the heritage of the Kabbalah into the Protestant philosophy of German Idealism," and hence "the most Jewish elements of Bloch's philosophy . . . are at the same time the authentically German ones" (40). See the expanded discussion of this theme in Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, 67–69, and see below, n. 249.

[245] Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 248.

[246] Ibid., 291.

[247] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1373–75.

empirical to an ideal construction.[248] The future inspires hopefulness in the present as the nothingness of what is not yet formed—indeed as future it can become actual only by never becoming actual, since the future, by definition, is what is still to be actualized—and therefore to speak for itself it must remain silent.

This is the intent of the aforementioned comment from *The Spirit of Utopia* that the Messiah cannot appear and thus he acts in the deepest part of us as the "I am that I shall be." Bloch has creatively interpreted the name of Yahweh revealed to Moses at the theophany of the burning bush, *ehyeh asher ehyeh* (Exod. 3:14), the most peculiar of names that does not name any being that is actually present but only the potential for future becoming. In *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch traces the consciousness of "utopia in religion" and of "religion in utopia" to this biblical narrative and the revelation of the name of the "original God of exodus," the "God of the goal," the Deus Spes (God of hope) as opposed to the Deus Creator (God of creation):

> For the Yahweh of Moses, right at the beginning, gives a definition of himself . . . which makes all statics futile: 'God said unto Moses, I will be who I will be' (Exodus 3,14) . . . Eh'je asher eh'je . . . places even at the threshold of the Yahweh phenomenon a god of the end of days, with futurum as an attribute of Being. This end- and omega-god would have been a folly in Delphi, as in every religion where the god is not one of exodus. However, God as time is in tension with God as beginning or origin, with which the Egyptian-Babylonian influenced teaching of the creation in the Bible begins . . . So Deus Spes is already laid out in Moses, although the image of a last leader out of Egypt, i.e. of the Messiah, does not appear until a thousand years later; messianism is older than this religion of the Messiah.[249]

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[248] Cohen, *Religion of Reason*, 249: "The ideality of the Messiah, his significance as an idea, is shown in the overcoming of the person of the Messiah and in the dissolution of the personal image in the pure notion of time, in the concept of the *age*. Time becomes future and only future. Past and present submerge in this time of the future. This return to time is the purest idealization" (emphasis in original).

[249] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1235–37. In that context, Bloch, clearly influenced by Scholem, upholds the kabbalah, which he calls a "gnostic mysticism," as collapsing the difference between the Deus Creator and the Deus Spes, the God of the beginning and the God of the end, the alpha and the omega. The teaching of Isaac Luria, in particular, is mentioned by Bloch as an illustration of this collapse: "The world came into being as a contraction (tsimtsum) of God, is therefore a prison from its origin, is the captivity of Israel as of the spiritual sparks of all men and finally of Yahweh. Instead of the glory of the alpha or morning of creation, the wishful space of the end or day of deliverance presses forward; it allied itself to the beginning only as to a primal Egypt which must be set aside. Little though such ramifications of Mosaism accord with the solemn hymn of Genesis, they correspond precisely to the original God of exodus and the Eh'je asher eh'je, the God of the goal." See Bouretz, *Witnesses for the Future*, 468–71.

Commenting again on this name in *Atheism in Christianity*, Bloch is explicit about his indebtedness to Cohen's musing on hope and the openness of the messianic future:

> Hence, the singularly unsensual idea of God in the Bible, so foreign to the ancient concept of presence; hence too the difference between epiphany and apocalypse, and between the mere anamnesis of truth (re-membering, circular line) which stretches from Plato to Hegel, and the eschatology of truth as of something still open within itself, open with Not-yet-being. The basic sense and direction of this biblical thought appears again in Hermann Cohen's eschatology, which has its roots in and takes its power from *Messianism*; although he shares the attitude that will always so "reasonably" surrender the eschatological in its struggle versus antiquity, for the sake of Future-being. "This is the great cultural riddle of Messianism: all the nations put the golden age in the primordial past; the Jews alone hope for man's development, hope in the future" (*Religion der Vernunft*, 1959, p. 337).[250]

Bloch rightly goes on to note that the messianic ideal articulated by Cohen stems from the time of *ehyeh asher ehyeh*, that is, the time of the *ultimatum* that lies within the *Novum* and breaks through into the *Futurum*.[251]

Tellingly, Levinas discriminates Heidegger's privileging the ecstasy of the future in his notion of being-toward-death and the nothingness of the future in the Marxist utopianism of Bloch: "The nothingness of the utopia is not the nothingness of death, and hope is not anguish . . . But it is not death that, in Bloch, opens the authentic future, and it is relative to the future of utopia that death itself must be understood. The future of utopia is the hope of realizing that which is not yet."[252] In passing, I note that this is another striking example of Levinas offering a critical caricature of Heidegger based exclusively on his early work.[253] Lyotard already perceptively deduced that the "moment" in Heidegger's thought that is most contiguous with the thought of "the jews" relates to the fact that after the turn (*Kehre*) Heidegger would have readily admitted that the "only thought adequate to the disaster is that which remains available to the waiting for God." Specifically in the poems of Hölderlin, Heidegger finds evidence of the "interminably deferred." Through the "art of waiting" the poet becomes

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[250] Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*, with an introduction by Peter Thompson, trans. J. T. Swann (London: Verso, 2009), 44–45.

[251] Ibid., 46.

[252] Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 37–38.

[253] In my chapter on Levinas in *Giving Beyond the Gift*, 90–153, I offer numerous other examples of this tendency. See above, n. 44.

the "guardian of the memory of forgetting. Here, as in Wiesel, the only narrative that remains to be told is that of the impossibility of narrative."[254] Surely, there is a bitter irony, and no small measure of audacity, to speak of Heidegger and Wiesel in one breath. But we should not throw out the baby with the bath water: Lyotard has a point in seeing in Heidegger a distinctively Jewish understanding of the moment as the time of waiting for what can be fulfilled only by not being fulfilled.

More importantly, Levinas neglects to emphasize that Bloch was keenly aware of the fact that the utopian hope renews itself sporadically as the hope postponed unremittingly. Gerhard Richter well expressed this overlooked point: "For Bloch, this thinking of the futurity of futurity is invested with the hope of the 'not-yet' (*das Noch-nicht*)—not a naïve or childish form of wishful thinking in an administered world of reified relations in which such thinking would be utopian in the worst sense, but with an abiding intuition that the non-self-identity of thoughts and actions, their internal self-differentiation, is more than a hermeneutic or administrative problem to be overcome in the name of implementing meanings and systems. The not-yet also signals a nameless otherness that, precisely by being at odds with itself and never coming fully into its own, promises an anticipatory glimpse, the Blochian *Vorschein*, of what still remains to be thought and experienced, of what has not yet been foreclosed."[255] We cannot avoid the predicament that is at the heart of this nonprogressive utopianism or nonteleological eschatology: if the end can only be imagined as the terminus that can never be terminated, the very source of hope is a source of despair. Not yet may not be enough to sustain confidence in the one who is coming or in a moment of reckoning and rectification. Neither pessimism nor optimism seems suitable to brand this bestowal of hope through its suspension. Maybe it is hopeless to imagine letting go of the inclination to hope, but then, we would do better to think of hope in Levinasian terms as an awaiting without an awaited, an awaiting with no anticipation, an awaiting wherein we can no longer sever present and future, since the future becomes present as the present that is the future that is both present and not present, present as not present, not present as present. Expectation as such can never be fulfilled but it is precisely because this is so that the expectation propels us to speak of an end that will not succumb to the end of speaking.

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[254] Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts, introduced by David Carroll (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 79.

[255] Richter, *Thought-Images*, 76.

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