

Recovering Futurity: Theorizing the End and the End of Theory

Elliot R. Wolfson

It is the distinguishing characteristic of human existence that it is not realized through its mere being, that it “confronts” its possibilities in a very specific way, that it must first seize these possibilities and, in this seizing, live in the shadow of the question concerning its “to what end.” . . . Even when bracketing any thought of purpose, one can still speak of a “to what end,” namely when the “to what end” of existence is grounded in its own being. . . . Nor can the meaning of philosophizing, with regard to the original understanding of philosophizing, be conceived as the realization of a purpose transcendent to it. All genuine philosophizing has found its meaning in itself and grasped it through itself.

—HERBERT MARCUSE, “On Concrete Philosophy”

I begin my reflections on the unveiling of the apocalyptic unveiling with a quote from Hans-Jost Frey that touches on the intricate nexus between language and the possibility of theorizing the beginning or the end:

What, having begun, cannot begin, cannot end. The end would be the chance to begin, which the text endlessly misses by going on. Just as the beginning lies before as well as behind, so does the end lie behind as well as before. Because the end cannot be said, saying can have no end. Where the text ends it is unfinished, because although its end has come it is still unsaid, and when the text says it, it has not yet come to an end, since it is still in the middle of saying that it has. Writing, which must always already have begun in order to be able to say that it has, must always continue in order to be able to say that it is ending. It always ends too early or too late, and therefore does not end at all, for it misses its own end.¹

Frey has deftly articulated the paradox that pertains to both the beginning and the end. To begin, the beginning must have already begun, otherwise it would not be the beginning, but, if this is so, then there is no beginning

that is not prior to beginning. However, that which cannot begin cannot end. To be always beginning, therefore, is to be never-ending. Similarly, to end, the ending must have already ended, otherwise it would not be the ending, but, if this is so, then there is no ending that is not posterior to ending. Time is lived experientially in the moment wedged between the beginning that cannot begin and the ending that cannot end. In every moment, there is a beginning of the end and an ending of the beginning, and hence each moment is identical but distinctive, nay, identical because distinctive.

Time's Linear Circle and Reiteration of the Inimitable

We begin from the premise that the beginning never ends, but only that which ends everlastingly never ends. Utilizing a distinction made by Edward Said, we can say that the point of departure is inaccessible because it is not a transitive property determined by an anticipated end or expected continuity; it is rather a radical and intransitive starting point that has no object other than its own constant clarification and critical undoing.² The beginning is thus “*making or producing difference*; but—and here is the great fascination in the subject—difference which is the result of combining the already-familiar with the fertile novelty of human work in language.”³ By his own admission, Said’s conception is indebted to the circular movement of the Husserlian phenomenological reduction whereby the search for the absolute beginning leads to its own undermining inasmuch as the beginning can show itself sensuously only as the beginning intended in the constitution of the intuitive object that “attains original givenness in and with the *form of a temporal duration*, rendering an encompassing and objective unity possible.”⁴ Even in its immanent essence as an absolute givenness, the beginning is always noetically at a distance from being the beginning of the beginning of being.⁵

The logic of this argument can be adduced further from Husserl’s remark in the lectures on the consciousness of internal time from 1905, “But this *question of origin* is directed towards the *primitive* formations of time-consciousness, in which the primitive differences of the temporal become constituted intuitively and properly as the original sources of all the evidences relating to time.”⁶ Phenomenological—in contradistinction to psychological—apperception is not concerned with the empirical genesis whence the intuitions of objective space and objective time arise but only in the immanent sense and descriptive content of the experiences (*Erlebnisse*) bracketed from the natural standpoint and the ensuing epistemologi-

cal inquiry into the presumed existence or nonexistence transcendent to consciousness. As Husserl boldly states,

We do not fit experiences into any reality. We are concerned with reality only insofar as it is reality meant, objectivated, intuited, or conceptually thought. With respect to the problem of time, this means that we are interested in the *experiences* of time. . . . We seek to bring *the a priori of time to clarity* by exploring the *consciousness of time*, by bringing its essential constitution to light, and by exhibiting the apprehension-contents and act-characters that pertain—perhaps specifically—to time and to which the *a priori* temporal laws essentially belong.⁷

The origin, then, is not an objective time that can be calculated instrumentally by the ego in the world of physical things and psychic subjects,⁸ but rather as the interior time of the eidetic experiences accessible phenomenologically and not psychologically.⁹ When construed from this vantage point, the origin of time can never be something that originates in time, and thus the essence of the *arche* is inessentially *an-arcbic*. Husserl himself, it is worth recalling, defined philosophy more generally—although obviously the standpoint of phenomenology is privileged—as “a science of true beginnings, or origins, of *rizōmata pantōn*.”¹⁰ But the true beginning is the beginning that cannot begin. The constant quest for origin, which is the watchword of phenomenology as the science of pure phenomena, to go back to the things themselves (*zur Sache selbst*), is perforce a retreat to the domain where the very question of origin is interrogated as the origin of the question. At the beginning stands the impasse of the beginning. In lieu of a unitary point whence all things originate, we find a fold, duplicity, contravention, the doubling of infringement that marks the way of the beginning in the beginning of the way.

A similar account, albeit betraying the influence of both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, is offered by John Sallis:

Radical philosophy is a peculiar *return to beginnings*, a turning towards what already determines it. It is a circling which sets out from the beginnings so as to return to them, which it can do only if in its circling it never really leaves them. . . . Radical philosophy, as return to beginnings, is thus simultaneously a turning towards its own beginnings, towards those beginnings with which the return to beginnings is initiated.¹¹

I would only add that this return is a return to the beginning where one has never been because the very notion of beginning, as Sallis himself wrote

elsewhere, is always a “redoubling—which is to say no beginning at all.”¹² The beginning bears the paradox of existing only “after the fact”; that is, its state of having “always already been the beginning” implies that it continuously begins and therefore can never begin.¹³ In Derridean parlance, the commencement is permanently second, an echo, a trace, the “originary iterability.”¹⁴ Only that which is different can be duplicated, since what recurs is the same difference that is indifferently the same.

Perhaps more efficaciously than any other twentieth-century philosopher, Heidegger has expressed the intonation of time—or, to be more meticulous, what he calls the “primordial temporality” (*ursprünglichen Zeitlichkeit*) experienced in the ecstatic unity of past, present, and future, as opposed to the vulgar understanding (*vulgären Verständnis*) of time as the ceaseless succession of nows (*Jetzt-folge*)—as the concurrence of the heterogeneity of the homogeneous and the homogeneity of the heterogeneous. This confluence is expressed as well in spatial terms as “*the primordial ‘outside itself’ in and for itself* [das ursprüngliche “Außer-sich” an und für sich selbst].”¹⁵ That time is extrinsic to itself in the manner of being intrinsic to itself suggests that the temporal flow consists of the return of the same in which the same is the replication of difference.¹⁶ Following this notion of time, thinking itself is best characterized by a circular movement (*Kreisbewegung*) by which one is restored to where one has previously not been. In contrast to the path of philosophy, the pedestrian understanding “can only perceive and grasp what lies straight in front of it: it thus wishes to advance in a straight line, moving from the nearest point on to the next one, and so on. This is called progress [*Fortschritt*].”¹⁷

When viewed from this perspective, even the circular movement is treated in a linear fashion as a “straightforward progression” (*Geradeausgehen*), culminating in reverting to the starting point and coming to a standstill. Inasmuch as progress is the criterion that engulfs the ordinary understanding, the circular motion, which seemingly gets one nowhere but to the place whence one set out, is objectionable. However, a proper comprehension of the “essential feature of the circular movement of philosophy does not lie in running around the periphery and returning to the point of departure [*Ausgangsstelle*]. It lies in that view of the center that this circular course [*Kreisgang*] alone can provide. The center, that is, the middle and ground, reveals itself as such only in and for the movement that circles it.”¹⁸ The linearity of ordinary thinking is linked to the certainty of progress, but the circularity of philosophical thought is bound up with ambiguity (*Zweideutigkeit*) that is not eliminated or leveled by means of the synthetic exoneration of the conflict between thesis and antithesis accord-

ing to the Hegelian dialectic.¹⁹ To move at the *center of philosophizing* is to move in the greatest possible propinquity to the *ambiguity of philosophizing* because this move is always a retracing of one's steps to the beginning of the question that calls into question the question of the beginning.²⁰ The discourse to displace the closed circular movement—and the inferred assumption that the future truth is already determined by the past—must partake of that movement. For Heidegger, the task, as Derrida well understood, is not to escape from this hermeneutic circulation, as vicious as it might seem, but to engage it by going around it.²¹ This is implied in the Heideggerian emphasis on resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*) and authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*):

The experience of the circular closure does not close anything; it suffers neither lack nor negativity. Affirmative experience without voluntarism, without a compulsion to transgression: not to transgress the law of circle and *pas de cercle* but *trust in them*. Of this trust would thought consist. The desire to accede, by this faithful repetition of the circle, to the not-yet-crossed, is not absent. The desire for a new step, albeit a backward one (*Schritt zurück*), *ties and unties* this procedure [*démarche*]. Tie without tie, get across [*franchir*] the circle without getting free [*s'affranchir*] of its law. *Pas sans pas* [step without step/step without not/ not without step/ not without not].²²

With regard to the temporal paradox of the law of the circle—the future signaling the return to where one has never been, the fourfold connotation of the idiomatic expression *pas sans pas*—there is continuity between the so-called earlier and later Heidegger.²³ To cite one relevant passage from *Sein und Zeit*: The three temporal modes are said to commingle around the notion that only the “*being that, as futural* [zukünftiges], *is equiprimordially having-been* [gleichursprünglich gewesend], *can hand down to itself its inherited possibility* [ererbte Möglichkeit], *take over its own thrownness* [Geworfenheit] *and be in the Moment for 'its time'* [augenblicklich sein für “seine Zeit”]. *Only authentic temporality* [eigentliche Zeitlichkeit] *that is at the same time finite makes something like fate* [Schicksal], *that is, authentic historicity* [eigentliche Geschichtlichkeit], *possible*.”²⁴

In some measure, Heidegger's early thought bears affinity to Husserl's description of the “eidetic laws of compossibility”—the “rules that govern simultaneous or successive existence and possible existence together”—anchored in the motivation of the transcendental sphere, as opposed to causation, structured as the “universal *unity-form of the flux*,” that is, the “*formal regularity pertaining to a universal genesis*, which is such that past,

present, and future, become unitarily constituted over and over again, in a certain noetic-noematic formal structure of flowing modes of givenness."²⁵ The ego transcendently constitutes itself for itself in the unity of its history, and in that constitution are contained the constitutions of all the objectivities, whether ideal or real, transcendent or immanent, that exist for that concrete and monadic ego. Heidegger translated Husserl's insight into his own conceptual and terminological register: The authentic temporality of *Dasein*—the finitude that makes possible the destiny of our historicity—is distinguished by the resoluteness of claiming the present moment as the realization of the future recuperating the past. In that respect, the resoluteness “becomes the *repetition* [Wiederholung] of a possibility of existence that has been handed down.”²⁶ That the repetition is deemed a “handing down” (*Überlieferung*) does imply that *Dasein* can relapse to the possibilities of where it has been, but this does not mean that there is an exact duplication of the past.

The authentic repetition of a possibility of existence that has been . . . is grounded existentially in anticipatory resoluteness [*vorlaufenden*]; for in resoluteness the choice is first chosen that makes one free for the struggle over what is to follow [*kämpfende Nachfolge*] and fidelity [*Treue*] to what can be repeated. The handing down of a possibility that has been in repeating it, does not, however, disclose the *Dasein* that has been there in order to actualize it again. The repetition of what is possible neither brings back “what is past,” nor does it bind the “present” back to what is “outdated.” Arising from a resolute self-projection, repetition is not convinced by “something past,” in just letting it come back as what was once real. Rather, repetition *responds* to the possibility of existence that has been-there. But responding [*Erwiderung*] to this possibility in a resolution is at the same time, *as a response belonging to the Moment*, the *renunciation* [Widerruf] of that which is working itself out in the today as “past.” Repetition neither abandons itself to the past nor does it aim at progress. In the Moment, authentic existence is indifferent to both of these alternatives.²⁷

The resolve to live momentarily (*augenblicklich*), to be responsive to the moment, depends on repetition, but an indispensable component of that repetition is renunciation of the past. Authentic existence entails being in the moment that is forged neither by retroaction nor by prolepsis but by repeating what is unrivaled with regard to the truth of what was once real. To leap to where one is no more is to retreat to where one is yet to be.²⁸ In the lecture course “Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleich-

nis und Theätet,” offered in the winter semester 1931–32 at the University of Freiburg, Heidegger writes:

For in *genuine* historical reflection we take just that distance from the present which allows us room to leap out [*binauszuspringen*] beyond our own present, i.e. to treat it just as every present as present deserves to be treated, namely as something to be *overcome* [*überwunden*]. Genuine historical return is the decisive beginning of authentic *futurity* [*Zukünftigkeit*]. . . . In the end it is *historical* return which brings us into what is actually happening *today*. In the end it is also only a self-evident and therefore doubtful everyday opinion which takes history as something “past.”²⁹

Striking a similar note, Heidegger writes in a notebook entry from autumn 1932: “What truly remains in history is the unique [*Einzig*]—*unrepeatable* [*Unwiederholbare*]—at once necessary; what can be ‘repeated’ in the extrinsic sense [*äußeren Sinne*]—does not *abide*—instead, it vacillates and has no unassailable necessity. It is altogether something else to repeat what is unique [*das Einzige wiederholen*]—i.e., to carry out a proper necessity—and not just calculate [*ausrechnen*].”³⁰ Contra intuitively, uniqueness is not antithetical to repetition. Indeed, Heidegger insists that the mandate is to *repeat what is unique*. How does one repeat what is unique such that what is repeated remains in the status of being unique? As he put it in a second passage from the notebooks written at a later date, for the common understanding of the masses the notion of sameness (*das Selbe*) is set in opposition to what is novel, but “creative individuals” are committed to the “mystery” (*Geheimnis*) of sameness “in its ever-originary essentiality” (*immer ursprünglichen Wesentlichkeit*).³¹ In a third passage, Heidegger opines that the assumption that what is most common is the universal and its universalization arises “from the incapacity to experience the ever-incomparably unique in the same [*das jeweils Unvergleichbare Einzige im Selben*] and to maintain it in its mystery.”³² A similar idea is expressed in the observation in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, composed between 1936 and 1938, that every essential occurrence of the essence of being “is determined out of what is essential in the sense of the original-unique [*Ursprünglich-Einzigen*].”³³ The upheaval in thinking that Heidegger sought to spearhead rests on this hermeneutical foundation: As opposed to the conservative wish to preserve *what was begun in the wake of the beginning*, the more revolutionary and genuine relation to the beginning demands acting and thinking *from the perspective of the future*, since the beginning is always a recurrence of difference

and hence requires the “renunciation of the crutches and evasions of the habitual and the usual.”³⁴

In much the same cadence, Heidegger writes in another section from the *Beiträge* that the wish to traverse the course of the question of being (*Seinsfrage*), in the hope of retrieving the lineage of antiquity, can be fulfilled if one comprehends that the matter of repetition means “to let the same, the uniqueness of being, become a plight again and thereby out of a more original truth. ‘Again’ means here precisely ‘altogether otherwise’ [“Wieder” besagt hier gerade: ganz anders].”³⁵ *Prima facie*, one would not expect the concept of “the same” to be glossed as “the uniqueness of being” (*die Einzigkeit des Seyns*), since sameness, by definition, is demonstratively opposed to uniqueness. However, in Heideggerian terms, there is no opposition, for to attend to the same, which he contrasts with the identical, one must heed that which is recurrently different. This hermeneutical assumption furnishes the rationale for the pattern of time that posits the “same” as unique and the “again” as altogether otherwise. In *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Heidegger writes that to “stand with Being” means “nothing less than to repeat and retrieve [wieder-holen] the inception [*Anfang*] of our historical-spiritual *Dasein*, in order to transform it into the other inception.”³⁶ The repetition of the novel is the basis for the phenomenological nexus that Heidegger establishes between time (*Zeit*), eternity (*Ewigkeit*), and the moment (*Augenblick*): “The eternal is not the incessant [*das Fort-währende*]; it is instead that which can withdraw [*entziehen*] in a moment so as to recur [*wiederzukehren*] later. What can recur: not as the identical [*das Gleiche*] but as the newly transforming [*Verwandelnde*], the one and the unique [*Eine-Einzig*], i.e., being, such that it is not immediately recognized, in this manifestation, as the same [*das Selbe*].”³⁷ Conspicuously suggestive of Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same, Heidegger insists that eternity is not set in opposition to time; it is rather that which withdraws each moment to recur. What recurs is not the identical but the same, that is, the unique being that is always—originarily—different.

In his exposition of Trakl’s poem “*An einen Frühverstorbenen*,” Heidegger notes that the premature death of the child Elis, which symbolizes the “stranger called to go under,”³⁸ reveals the wisdom about time fully expressed in the last line, “Golden eye of the beginning, dark patience of the end” (*Goldenes Auge des Anbeginns, dunkle Geduld des Endes*):

Here, the end is not the sequel and fading echo of the beginning. The end—being the end of the decaying kind—precedes the beginning of the unborn kind. But the beginning, the earlier earliness, has already

overtaken the end. That earliness preserves the original nature—a nature so far still veiled [*verbüllte*—of time. This nature will go on being impenetrable to the dominant mode of thinking as long as the Aristotelian concept of time, still standard everywhere, retains its currency. According to this concept, time—whether conceived mechanically or dynamically or in terms of atomic decay—is the dimension of the quantitative or qualitative calculation of duration as a sequential progression.³⁹

Already in *Sein und Zeit*, as we saw above, Heidegger contrasts the primordial temporality and the vulgar understanding of time. The latter coheres with the Aristotelian perspective insofar as time is viewed as the succession of interchangeable now-points. As long as this perspective prevails, the true nature of time is veiled. The deeper phenomenology of time rejects the calculative approach, and hence we can reverse the timeline: The end precedes the beginning, and yet the beginning overtakes the end. The time swerve is open at both termini, and hence the end cannot be ascertained from the beginning nor the beginning from the end; the reversibility of the circular linearity implies not closure but an ever-changing fluctuation, an indeterminacy that destabilizes the model of an irreversible succession proceeding unidirectionally from start to finish.

Endlessly Speaking of the End of Speaking

From the beginning, then, we can discern the end, albeit from an inverse perspective. That is, the end can only be imagined as the terminus that can never be terminated. In that respect, the unending end—the end that has no ending to being the end—is the mystery that marks the horizon of our delineating the limit of language. As Frey insightfully remarked, *Because the end cannot be said, saying can have no end*. This subtle insight underscores the complex intertwining of the apophatic and the kataphatic: There is no end to speaking precisely because the end cannot be spoken. The paradox is especially pertinent in the written text. We cannot speak of textual closure—a book may be sealed but the text remains open—because even at the conclusion the text is unfinished and what has been said therein remains unsaid. To speak of the unsaid does not mean to speak about the silence of not speaking but rather to speak of what is still to be spoken. Just as there is no way to speak of the beginning that has not already begun and therefore cannot end, so there is no way to speak of the end that has not already ended and therefore cannot begin. Language, therefore,

can begin and end, but it cannot either terminate speaking of the beginning or commence speaking of the end. From the inability to control the discourse about beginning and end, it is impossible, as Frey observed, to imagine a sense of a whole, and beginning and end are reduced to arbitrary markers.⁴⁰

In traditional Jewish theorizing about time, the sign of the end that has commanded much attention through the generations is the eschaton, the omega that complements the alpha of creation. I do not think it would be unreasonable to consider eschatology as a form of speculating about mortality writ large, moving from the ontic-existential anxiety of the individual with the looming certainty of death to the ontological-historical trepidation of the larger human community with either the impending uncertainty of the ecological demise of the planet or the possibility of mass destruction even greater than we have witnessed heretofore. The apocalyptic secret orients one to the decisive interval in time, the future, the breaking point of the limit, the end close at hand that persists as what is always most distant. Ingrained in the texture of Jewish apocalyptic is the structure of secrecy as the mystery of the future, which originates in the past, revealed in the present as not being present. What is yet to be, accordingly, reverts to what has already been, but what has already been issues from what is yet to be. Apocalyptic hope—the hope that renews itself sporadically as the hope that is deferred perpetually—stems from this linear circularity, the infinite negativity of time, the impossible possibility that makes it always possible that the future that is coming threatens not to be the future for which one has hoped. The paradoxical nature of time thus entails that what recurs is what has never been. The delay of the end's materialization is precisely what secures the potency of its constant instantiation. The continual stay of the moment, the not yet that is resolutely yet not at hand, is what eternalizes the temporal and temporalizes the eternal. The exposure of the secret of the end as the end of the secret—sometimes expressed as the unveiling of the truth without any garment, the seeing of the face without any mask—in the present bridges the rupture between past and future by imparting hope in the return of what is not to come, the quintessential event of the nonevent.

Contrary to the commonplace understanding, the apocalypse is not about the end of the old world or the beginning of a new world but rather about the end of the end and the beginning of the beginning. As David Leahy put it,

We are dealing not with beginning now of the world, not with the creation of the world, but with the beginning of the beginning now of the

world, not merely with the beginning, but with the beginning of the beginning. We are dealing not with the final now of the world, not with the end of the world, but with the end of the final now of the world, not merely with the end, but with the end of the end.⁴¹

The now of the apocalypse, on this score, is deemed “the first now of the world. Then the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth is the beginning of the universe now beginning. . . . For the first time the I now speaking is apocalyptic.”⁴² Implicit in this turn is the collapse of the temporal divide for the “not-yet is absolutely now.”⁴³ To heed the imperative of the apocalyptic is to discern that *tomorrow is now because now is tomorrow*, but an absolutely new beginning logically necessitates an absolute ending of the beginning that is now ending. Naturally, Leahy is attentive to this logical possibility, and thus he argues that “this beginning of fully apocalyptic thinking is anticipated in previous conceptions of mind in the history of thought. But precisely because previous thought *anticipated* this beginning of an essentially new form of mind its actuality before now is precluded.”⁴⁴

With all due deference to Leahy, I would argue that the pure immediacy of now entails the reiteration of the new that renders the supposition of an absolute novum untenable. Nuancing and further complicating the argument, I would contend that what was before can never be retrieved except as that which has not yet taken place. Here it is apposite to invoke again Heidegger’s insistence that repetition is the perpetuation of the identical in a manner that is always different;⁴⁵ that is, to repeat is not the continuation of what has been but the retrieval (*wieder-holen*) of the inception that is “begun again more originally [*der Anfang ursprünglicher wieder-angefangen wird*], and with all the strangeness, darkness, insecurity that a genuine inception brings with it.”⁴⁶ Alternatively expressed, the event of being is calibrated from the standpoint of the originality and uniqueness of being itself—the aggregate that is entirely fragmentary inasmuch as “what is as a whole, as what is, itself demands a grounding in openness,”⁴⁷ and, as such, the totality is what it is in virtue of what it is to become—and hence every occurrence is a recurrence of what is yet to be in the fullness of the grounded essence of what has been.⁴⁸ Heidegger speaks often of the leap (*Sprung*) that initiates the beginning (*Anfang*) constantly surpassed by the “other beginning” that must always be first, the beginning that begins before the beginning that is unfailingly second,⁴⁹ the beginning in which “the truth of being must be ventured as grounding, as inventive thought of *Da-sein*.”⁵⁰

In “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes,” Heidegger wrote of the leap as the “suddenness of the beginning” (*Unvermittelte des Anfangs*) that is “always a leaping-ahead [*Vorsprung*], a leaping-ahead in which everything to come is already leapt over [*übersprungen*], even if as something veiled. Concealed within itself, the beginning contains already the end.”⁵¹ To the extent that the leap at the beginning is a leap-ahead, the end can be said to be comprised in the beginning. Heidegger distinguishes the “genuine beginning” and that which is “primitive” on the grounds that the latter has no future “because it lacks the bestowing, grounding leap and the leap-ahead.”⁵² One might suspect a form of temporal determinacy implied in the statement that “everything to come is already leapt over.” But, in fact, what Heidegger intends is just the opposite: The unpredictability of the future is upheld by the fact that the having-been in the present is grounded as what is to come; the past is molded by the future that is molded by the past. The distance between the terminus ad quo and the terminus ad quem is bridged by the creative leap, which Heidegger identifies as the poiesis of art, an act that allows truth to arise (*entspringen*) by bringing something into being from the origin (*Ursprung*) by means of the endowing leap (*stiftenden Sprung*).⁵³

It is in this sense that Heidegger, partially thinking in the wake of Hegel, can arrogate the transposal of the speculative statement that the result is the beginning: “The beginning must really be made with the result, since the beginning results from that result.”⁵⁴ We must nevertheless distinguish Heidegger’s conception from the uroboric nature of the Hegelian dialectic whereby the end is contained in the beginning as the latter’s necessary outcome, since in the end the absolute returns to itself as it was in the beginning. Badiou correctly noted that buttressing this dialectical movement is the “theological circularity which, presupposing the absolute in the seeds of the beginning, leads back to this very beginning once all the stages of its effectuation, its alienation, its-going-outside-itself, and so on, are unfolded. Thus, the dead Son reintegrated into the divisible immanence of the Father *completes* the world-concept of the Christian God, which is the holiness of the Spirit.”⁵⁵ For Heidegger, by contrast, the realization of the beginning in the end does not presume that the end is nothing but the circular rotation back to the beginning. On the contrary, in a manner more consonant with the Jewish apocalyptic sensibility, the beginning whither one returns in the end is not the beginning whence one set forth toward the end.

Ironically, my contention is supported by Heidegger’s comment in the rectoral address concerning the inauguration of Greek science in rela-

tion to the mission of the German university in the twentieth century: “The beginning *exists* still [*Der Anfang ist noch*]. It does not lie *behind* us as something long past, but it stands *before* us. The beginning has—as the greatest moment, which exists in advance—already passed indifferently over and beyond all that is to come and hence over and beyond us as well. The beginning has invaded our future; it stands there as the distant decree that orders us to recapture its greatness.”⁵⁶ Heidegger urged his listeners to understand that only by obeying the decree to win back the greatness of the beginning will the pursuit of knowledge again become the means to fulfill the spiritual essence of the German people. However, he already insinuated at this fateful moment that the beginning is a future that has passed *over and beyond all that is to come* and therefore cannot be retrieved as the culmination coiled in the commencement.

In the summer course of 1934, several months after assuming the rectorship, Heidegger elaborated on this theme by noting that the essence of being human is determined from that which is essential in the historical moment, but the latter is experienced on the basis of the self-decision (*Selbstentscheidung*) to become who we want to become in the future, and hence the past—what Heidegger names the “beenness” (*Gewesenheit*)—determines itself from our future. However, as Heidegger is quick to point out, this determination from the future “is not subject to a prediction [*Voraussage*]; it cannot be invented and concocted in a freely suspended manner. It determines itself, rather, from that which essences from earlier on.” We come to the structural circularity that induces Heidegger’s temporal understanding of tradition (*Überlieferung*) and historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*):

That which essences from earlier on determines itself from the future; the future determines itself from what essences since earlier. . . . That which essences from earlier on has its peculiarity to it in that it has always already grasped over [*hinweggegriffen*] every today and now: It *essences as tradition*. . . . That which essences comes up toward us [*kommt auf uns zu*] in this reaching over [*Übergriff*] from the future [*Zukunft*].

The future comes only to one capable of taking over (*zu übernehmen*) the tradition instead of being lost in the bustle of today. We should not conceive of the past as a present that is no longer nor of the future as a present that is not yet; there is only one “*originally singular and proper time*” (*ursprünglich einzige und eigentliche Zeit*): the future of the beenness into which we are thrown ahead (*Vorausgeworfensein*).⁵⁷ The tensiveness of time implied in the ever-evolving tradition consists of a simultaneity of past,

present, and future, which I suggest is a hallmark of the temporal swerve at play in the *Lebenswelt* of Jewish apocalypticism.⁵⁸

Coming to the End and the Fragmented Whole

Any thinking that attempts to grapple with the endtime in an age inundated by severe fragmentation needs to engage the problem of the viability of system and the incommensurability of truth that defies incorporation into totality. In contrast to the eminently reasonable observation of Frey that the fragment has meaning only when it is brought into context with the sense of a whole that cannot accommodate it, since the fragment by definition is incomplete and thus is precisely what lacks context,⁵⁹ I would submit that the complete incompleteness of the fragment is determinative of the incomplete completeness of the whole. The understanding of the fragment vis-à-vis the whole does not compromise the fragmentariness of the fragment. On the contrary, the fragmentary nature of the fragment is enhanced by the fractional and disjointed nature of the infinite totality. Closer to this ideal is Frey's own observation that the openness of the fragment "leads to a higher closure. If understanding the fragment from inside is now impossible, it becomes nonetheless possible to understand it through the external circumstances that have prevented its completion. . . . Although the fragment is now no longer treated as whole, it is treated as part of the larger structure of meaning from which it cannot be detached."⁶⁰ Needless to say, Frey differs to the extent that he posits a finite whole instead of an infinite whole that includes everything and outside of which there is nothing. But the understanding of infinity that I am proffering closes the gap because wholeness implies not an all-encompassing unity of enduring substances but an elaborate web of interrelated processes in which every part can be read as a metonymy for the continually evolving disarray of the whole.⁶¹

In line with François Laruelle, I would argue that thinking from the perspective of the One does not imply systematic totalization but rather generic fluctuation, that is to say, the generic is rooted in and must always be tested against the unassimilability of the particular.⁶² The surmise regarding repeated structures does not imply that the plurality should be subsumed monolithically under the stamp of immutable essences. The perception of totality that the structure sanctions is a unity embodied in multiplicity, a one that is unremittingly configured by the manifold, "a One which does not unify but which remains in-One,"⁶³ that is, a "unity-becoming"⁶⁴ through the array of the many rather than through the unification of the one.

NOTES

1. Hans-Jost Frey, *Interruptions*, trans. and with an introduction by Georgia Albert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 23.
2. Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 72–73.
3. *Ibid.*, xvii.
4. Edmund Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, rev. and ed. Ludwig Landgrebe, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks, introduction by James S. Churchill, afterword by Lothar Eley (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), 157.
5. Said, *Beginnings*, 48–49.
6. Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893–1917)*, translated by John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1990), 9. For an alternative version, see Edmund Husserl, *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, ed. Martin Heidegger, trans. James S. Churchill, introduction by Calvin O. Schrag (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 28.
7. Husserl, *On the Phenomenology*, 9–10. Compare Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, 28–29.
8. Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. Lee Hardy (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1999), 33.
9. *Ibid.*, 35.
10. Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. with an introduction by Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 146.
11. John Sallis, *Phenomenology and the Return to Beginnings* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003), 17.
12. John Sallis, “Doublings,” in *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 120.
13. Frey, *Interruptions*, 23. See my similar formulation of the paradox of the temporality of the beginning in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Alef, Mem, Tau: Kabbalistic Musings on Time, Truth, and Death* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), xiii, 131–32.
14. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, introduction by Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (New York: Routledge, 1994), 163. See citation and discussion of some other Derridean sources on the nature of the beginning in Elliot R. Wolfson, *Giving beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 184–85.
15. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. and with a foreword by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), §65, 314; *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1993), 329.

16. The view I have expressed here resembles the Deleuzian interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence. See Wolfson, *Giving beyond the Gift*, 12; idem, "Retroactive Not Yet: Linear Circularity and Kabbalistic Temporality," in *Time and Eternity in Jewish Mysticism: That Which Is Before and That Which Is After*, ed. Brian Ogren (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 31–33. A similar interpretation of Nietzsche's eternal return and its relationship to the moment as a subversion of the metaphysical motif of presence is offered by David Wood, *The Deconstruction of Time* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 11–35, esp. 26–30.

17. Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 187; *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt—Endlichkeit—Einsamkeit* [*Gesamtausgabe* (hereafter cited as *GA*) 29/30] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 276.

18. Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 187; *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 276.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 183; *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 272.

21. Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 32.

22. *Ibid.*, 33.

23. See Wood, *Deconstruction of Time*, 217.

24. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §74, 366; *Sein und Zeit*, 385.

25. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 75.

26. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §74, 367; *Sein und Zeit*, 385.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Heidegger returned to this theme in the 1955–1956 lecture course at the University of Freiburg on the Leibnizian *principium rationis* that “nothing is without reason” (*Nichts ist ohne Grund*). See Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 89 (*Der Satz vom Grund* [*GA* 10] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), 132): “Nevertheless the history of Western thinking shows itself as the *Geschick* of being when and only when we glance back upon the whole of Western thinking *from the point of view of the leap* and when we recollectively preserve it as the *Geschick* of being that has-been. . . . The leap leaves the realm from which one leaps while at the same time recollectively regaining anew what been left such that what has-been becomes, for the first time, something we cannot lose. That into the leap anticipatorily leaps is not

some region of things present at hand into which one can simply step. Rather, it is the realm of what first approaches as worthy of thought. But this approach is also shaped by the traits of what has-been, and only because of this is it discernible.”

29. Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Cave Allegory and Theaetetus*, trans. Ted Sadler (New York: Continuum, 2002), 7; *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet* [GA 34] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), 9–10.

30. Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings II–IV: Black Notebooks 1931–1938*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 144; *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)* [GA 94] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014), 196.

31. Heidegger, *Ponderings II–IV*, 257; *Überlegungen II–VI*, 353.

32. Heidegger, *Ponderings VII–XI*, 201; *Überlegungen VII–XI*, 260.

33. Heidegger, *Contributions*, §29, 53; *Beiträge*, 66.

34. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Questions of Philosophy: Selected “Problems” of “Logic,”* translated by Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 38; *Grundfragen der Philosophie: Ausgewählte “Probleme” der “Logik”* [GA 45] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), 40–41.

35. Heidegger, *Contributions*, §33, 58; *Beiträge*, 73. For a previous discussion of this aphorism, see Wolfson, *Giving beyond the Gift*, 243–44; idem, “Retroactive Not Yet,” 33–34.

36. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, new translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 41; *Einführung in die Metaphysik* [GA 40] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 42. See Elliot R. Wolfson, “Revealing and Re/veiling Menahem Mendel Schneerson's Messianic Secret,” *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts* 26 (2012): 33–34, and the sources that treat the paradox of the repetition of the origin in Heidegger cited op. cit., 34n35. See also Wolfson, *Giving beyond the Gift*, 442–43n116.

37. Heidegger, *Contributions*, §238, 293; *Beiträge*, 371.

38. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 174; *Unterwegs zur Sprache* [GA 12] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), 50.

39. Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, 176; *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, 53.

40. Frey, *Interruptions*, 24.

41. David G. Leahy, *Faith and Philosophy: The Historical Impact* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 146.

42. *Ibid.*, 146–47.

43. David G. Leahy, *Beyond Sovereignty: A New Global Ethics and Morality* (Aurora, Colo.: Davies Group, 2010), 232.
44. Leahy, *Faith and Philosophy*, 147.
45. Heidegger, *Contributions*, §28, 52, §39, 65; *Beiträge*, 65, 81–82.
46. Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, 4; *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, 42. On the paradox of the repetition of the origin in Heidegger, see Paola Marrati, *Genesis and Trace: Derrida Reading Husserl and Heidegger* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 109–13. On the “politics of repetition” in Heidegger, see Miguel de Beistegui, *Thinking with Heidegger: Displacements* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 49–60. See also Calvin O. Schrag, “Heidegger on Repetition and Historical Understanding,” *Philosophy East and West* 20 (1970): 287–95. On repetition and the experience of poetic language, see William S. Allen, *Ellipsis: Of Poetry and the Experience of Language after Heidegger, Hölderlin, and Blanchot* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 25–57.
47. Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 48; *Holzwege* [GA 5] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), 64.
48. Heidegger, *Contributions*, §29, 53; *Beiträge*, 66.
49. Heidegger, *Contributions*, §117, 180; *Beiträge*, 228–29.
50. Heidegger, *Contributions*, §117, 181; *Beiträge*, 230.
51. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 48; *Holzwege*, 64.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, 49; *Holzwege*, 65–66.
54. Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, 53; German text, 120.
55. Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. and introduction by Bruno Bosteels (London: Continuum, 2009), 19.
56. Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 32; *Die Selbstbehauptung der Deutschen Universität: Rede, gehalten bei der feierlichen Übernahme des Rektorats der Universität Freiburg i. Br. am 27.5.1933; Das Rektorat 1933/34: Tatsachen und Gedanken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 12–13.
57. Martin Heidegger, *Logic as the Question concerning the Essence of Language*, translated by Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 97–98; *Logik als die Frage nach dem Wesen der Sprache* [GA 38] (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998), 117–18.
58. See Elliot R. Wolfson, “Gazing beneath the Veil: Apocalyptic Envisioning the End,” in *Reinterpreting Revelation and Tradition: Jews and Christians in Conversation*, ed. and introduction by John T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M., and Hayim Goren Perelmuter (Franklin: Sheed & Ward, 2000), 77–103, esp.

83–86. The simultaneity of the three tenses has figured prominently in my conception of the linear circularity or circular linearity of time, elicited from a philosophical reading of kabbalistic symbolism, and especially as it relates to the compresence of past, present, and future implied in the Tetragrammaton. See Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), xvii, xxviii–xxxi, 38, 88, 428–29n336; *Alef, Mem, Tau*, 69–70, 93, 108–10, 132, 166; *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 85, 99, 127, 164, 277–79, 287–88, 396n66; “Eternal Duration and Temporal Compresence: The Influence of Ḥabad on Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” in *The Value of the Particular: Lessons from Judaism and the Modern Jewish Experience—Festschrift for Steven T. Katz on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Michael Zank and Ingrid Anderson, with the editorial assistance of Sarah Leventer (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 195–238.

59. Frey, *Interruptions*, 25.

60. *Ibid.*, 26.

61. *Ibid.*, 27: “Wholeness is the order in which everything has its place and in which nothing is missing or excessive. Inside the order of the finite whole everything is a part, which means that everything is recognizable in its relationship to the whole and is therefore read as a metonymy for the whole.”

62. François Laruelle, “The Generic as Predicate and Constant: Non-Philosophy and Materialism,” in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (Melbourne: Re.press, 2011), 237–60, and compare the analysis in Anthony Paul Smith, “Thinking from the One: Science and the Ancient Philosophical Figure of the One,” in *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*, ed. John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 19–41.

63. François Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5.

64. *Ibid.*, 43.