

'In the Blink of an Eye'

An Investigation into the Concept of the 'Decisive Moment' (*Augenblick*) as
Found in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Western Philosophy.

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Declaration.

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any education institution.

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Abstract.

'In the blink of an eye' is a figurative expression which, in its most basic interpretation describes the experience of a fleeting but momentous event. It comes, however, to represent an encounter with the 'eternal'. That it can contain these antithetical elements points to the abidingly paradoxical nature of the *Augenblick*. In this thesis we follow the development of the concept from its roots in the theology of Søren Kierkegaard and the myth of Friedrich Nietzsche, to its existential elucidation nearly a century later in the work of Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger. In the final two chapters of this thesis, the *Augenblick* is viewed as an inherited conceptual tool for metaphysical thought. We apply it to the consideration of an historical epoch of great social change and to certain works of art which express its *zeitgeist*. This well-used metaphor is a living idea, it continues to gather meaning to itself.

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