

# '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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## Introduction.

The concept of the Moment (*Augenblick*) is a theme with variations which recur throughout the work of various philosophers. My investigation is carried out chronologically, I begin with Søren Kierkegaard followed by Friedrich Nietzsche. These two are recognised as being the source for many major existential ideas and the Moment as found in this thesis is I assert, a core existential idea. Having traced its development through Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger, the concept becomes a 'philosopheme', an inherited conceptual tool of metaphysical thought through which we might consider various elements within historical or contemporary situations. The final two chapters use the Moment in this way to discuss photography and art in particular eras and practitioners. The philosophers I refer to in these chapters, though in much less depth, are Hans-Georg Gadamer, Theodore Adorno, and Ernst Bloch.

Common to philosophers in this thesis are their own personal experiences which underpin the development of their concepts of the Moment. Most markedly Kierkegaard, in a moment of decision speaks out against the Christian Church in Denmark in a series of pamphlets named *The Moment*. What Kierkegaard refers to as 'blessed moments' of his own experience give impetus to his more developed concept of *Øieblikket* (*the moment*). Nietzsche experiences a 'prodigious moment' in his initial conception of the doctrine of Eternal Return and Heidegger speaks of experiencing 'inspired moments' which 'oscillate' in one's Being. The

clarification which comes to one through such Moments must be seized upon and exploited for a genuine knowledge of one's self and one's time.

In Chapter One, I look into Søren Kierkegaard's concept of Moment (*Øieblik*), which Kierkegaard deals with most directly in *Philosophical Fragments* and *The Concept of Anxiety*. Between two existing translations of *Fragments* there is a difference in how the word *Øieblik* is transcribed. Investigating this difference reveals nuances which become crucial to the further unfolding of the concept. Stated briefly they are: the 'Moment' of the Incarnation, the 'moment' of an 'appropriation of the truth' (or conversion) and a third 'replete sense', combining these two in the '*Moment*' expressed as 'the fulness of time'.

The Moment of the Incarnation stands as a prototype or originating moment, others that follow such as individual moments of subjective experience can be thought of as partaking in this original. In considering the relationship between Christ and his disciples and a disciple in the present who undergoes an experience of conversion, Kierkegaard posits a collapsing of the time between the two. Kierkegaard elevates the Moment from ordinary time in its description as an 'atom of time' to an 'atom of eternity'. These ideas of escaping the temporal domain go on to become central to the more developed concept of the Moment. The idea of the fullness of time is related to the Greek *kairos*, the fitting or right time for event to occur. All three of these aspects recur time and again through the various thinkers.

I follow the socratic form which Kierkegaard gave to the *Fragments*

through which he brings us to an understanding of the difference between Socratic knowledge and that which goes beyond it, the 'truth' which is an object of faith. The attainment of this kind of 'knowledge' relies on an experience involving variations of Kierkegaard's concepts of 'Anxiety', the 'absolute paradox' which gives onto a state of wonder, and its culmination in the 'leap of faith'. This 'knowledge' or encounter with something transcendent or eternal is considered attainable only through an experience of the *Augenblick*. Redeployed by succeeding thinkers it features prominently in their notions of the Moment.

Although there is no direct progression of the concept from Kierkegaard to Nietzsche, (unlike the cases of Jaspers and Heidegger, who derive major aspects of their concept directly from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche), there are some striking similarities between their renditions of the Moment. There are also fresh strands which emerge independently in Nietzsche. Both philosophers make use of an 'indirect communication' evidenced by the literary style of their works, which allows seeming contradictions in the development of their ideas.

Chapter Two brings me to Nietzsche's Gateway named 'Moment' in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra (TSZ)*. Here I consider the place of the *Augenblick* in Nietzsche's concept of Eternal Return which Zarathustra encounters as the weightiest thought, as a vision and an enigma. There are parallels between Kierkegaard's unfolding thought in the Socratic form of the *Fragments*, and the progress of Nietzsche's revealing the significance of the



thought of Eternal Return. Included in Kierkegaard's various lesser meanings of moment is that aspect which designates a stage in a progression or process. Nietzsche's gateway Moment as we shall see marks a significant place in a process of death and renewal.

Through the process of a gradual revealing of knowledge, the one who learns is aided by a 'teacher' who also learns by that process. The one who seeks does not know what he seeks and sees the superficial meaning of the idea before properly 'understanding' it. Zarathustra, as both teacher and learner, shows the gateway to the Geist of Gravity who reacts against it, but Zarathustra himself goes on to come to a full understanding of its content. For both philosophers the Moment concerns the decision of human being's existence in its deepest sense, the goal or *telos* is not outside but within oneself. It is a Moment of *krisis* or judgement and concerns a transformation of the individual and the freedom won by self-overcoming.

When the 'truth' or 'knowledge' is discovered Kierkegaard tells us, the moment of time vanishes in the eternal. Common to both philosophers is the notion of time 'nullified' or stopped in a *nunc stans*. Correspondingly, Kierkegaard also speaks of the Moment in terms of *kinesis*, i.e., change as movement, and this chapter questions whether the Moment (gateway) is at rest or in motion, whether we pass through a present 'now' or carry it along with us. Kierkegaard's pause of wonder at the paradox and the clash of past and future in Nietzsche's gateway both give way: to 'faith' for Kierkegaard and to admiration of and devotion to Life for Nietzsche. For both, the Moment

is one of the communication of love.

In this chapter I determine the reason for Nietzsche's choosing the Zoroastrian prophet as his mouthpiece in *TSZ* and point to various influences within it from Zoroastrian texts. What differences there may be between the terms Eternal Return (*ewige Wiederkehr*) and Eternal Recurrence (*ewige Wiederkunft*), are investigated as is the nature of the 'same' (*Gleich*) which returns. Learning with Zarathustra the importance of overcoming the hindrance of 'It was', allows an understanding of this overcoming as a redemption. When Zarathustra experiences the full awakening of the thought of Eternal Return it is expressed in the ecstatic song and dance of the affirmation of Life. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche share the notions of a collision at the limit of reason, its necessary downfall and the emotional upsurge in an intense moment of experience, the relief of whose expression allows the moment to become the past.

Both philosophers are concerned with the communication of a type of 'knowledge' which imparts something 'eternal'. The connection to the eternal must be maintained, for Kierkegaard man must keep reaffirming his relation with God. Although the Incarnation is a 'once and for all' event for all humanity, Christ's blessings are given individually anew in each moment because there is always the possibility of 'falling back'. For Nietzsche, the affirmative possibilities are available not 'once and for all' but 'in every moment' and Zarathustra must keep 'going down' in order to rise.

Chapter Three uncovers the *Augenblick* in the work of Karl Jaspers.

Aspects of the moment which we have encountered in our previous philosophers in Chapters One and Two reappear in Jaspers. Like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Jaspers is also something of an outsider, he does not develop doctrines but strives to elucidate ideas. In play in this chapter is the concept of 'the source' (*Ursprung*) which Jaspers intends in various ways. It can refer to one's 'context', both that of one's own historical situation and origins, but also to the 'context' of the philosophical tradition within which one thinks and appropriates ideas. In this notion can be seen again the collapsing of time, past ideas live again. Further, it can be understood as more than the particulars of our finite existence, but as representing the transcendent 'Existenz' or 'authentic being' itself an awareness of which human being strives toward.

I examine Jaspers' early psychological work, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* where he first gives his attention to the *Augenblick*, tracing it from its origins in Kierkegaard. This work I find an account of how one might be 'in the moment' in two inadequate ways, either only for the sake of one's own future aims or for momentary pleasure. I first discover in this chapter the adjective *augenblicklich* which describes an alternative and authentic way of being 'in the moment', i.e., when it comes to concern one's Existenz. The vanishing temporal moment in Jaspers is described as that which occurs 'athwart of time.'

In Jaspers' later philosophical work, *Philosophy* he unfolds the concept of 'boundary situations'. Such experiences Jaspers informs us,

come to us direct and unmediated from the core of our existence and as such cannot be clarified by scientific thinking. The failure of human understanding in such situations, as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche assert, is a necessary condition of approaching the idea of Transcendence. All that one can do is 'surrender' to the experience of the 'boundary situation' and realise its potential to reveal something which is usually unavailable. As in our previous philosophers, a limit or boundary of possibility is reached and transcended though not without a struggle in which one might suffer a 'foundering'.

I remark in this chapter on Jaspers' appropriation of Kierkegaard's leap, and his extension of it into a process of three leaps. Again the Moment reveals knowledge, or discovers Existenz, not in a temporal instant but in stages of discovery. The knowledge must intimately concern the knower, in the subjective self, or in Jaspers' terms 'soul'. As found in chapters One and Two, ultimately man's existence speaks to him through love.

In an example taken from the *Psychologie* I follow the series of the leap in the case of a particular individual's moment of moral decision and of insight, his 'decision from the source'. As stressed by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, one's attitude to life, how one lives fully 'in the moment' rather than as though in a partial phase of a process is crucial. One's situation changes 'from moment to moment', Jaspers asserts and echoing Kierkegaard and Nietzsche tells us that therefore its possibilities are available 'in every moment'. As in Nietzsche, the acceptance of this is found

in the notion of *amor fati*.

For Jaspers, a cipher (*Chiffer* or *Chiffre*) is that through which we can understand the existential connotations of a subjective and inexpressible experience. Finally in this chapter, I look at Jaspers' elucidation of the notion of the cipher and cipher reading. Understanding the cipher as a metaphysical device by which we can represent and speak of transcendent things which are unavailable as knowledge in a scientific sense, I go on to describe the *Augenblick* itself as one such cipher.

Chapter Four concerns Martin Heidegger's *Augenblick* or 'moment of vision'. I establish that the concept of temporality is integral to the *Augenblick*, human being having its existence inexorably within time. Yet as a 'moment of vision', the *Augenblick* has a necessary relation to some kind of 'insight' (*Einblick*). I find that Heidegger's concept of the *Augenblick* is surrounded in apocalyptic imagery which is in keeping with the mood of eschatological expectation of his time. As in the Moment of Nietzsche there is redemption, Heidegger expects National Socialism to redeem the German nation and spirit from the contemporary world which he considers to be moving progressively toward political and spiritual destruction.

In this chapter I discuss the aspects of apocalypse which impinge on Heidegger's *Augenblick*, and which echo aspects of the *Augenblick* previously identified, briefly: the eschatological moment which comes at the culmination point of a state of crisis must give way to change and the instigation of a new order. This crisis is the concern of the immediate present

and the change which inevitably emerges from such a situation is considered to be imminent. In this lies the idea of the constant presence, the 'now' which carries the potential *Augenblick* with it. The present situation must be transcended and give way to the awaited future. As with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche acceptance of the past is necessary to the present and to the anticipated future. Being 'in the Moment' or in Nietzsche's gateway allows the thinking of the Moment not as the fleeting 'now' but as eternity seen as a 'standing now'. In this way, we are meet again the idea of the *nunc stans*. The presence of a 'visionary', Messianic figure is necessary to the recognition that 'now' is the time. This falls in with the kairotic idea first seen in Kierkegaard, that the right 'man of the moment' must be present.

Heidegger also attempts to make a new beginning in philosophy, to redeem the thinking of Being from its perceived oblivion and the theorising which inhibits a 'primary experience'. As with Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Jaspers, science is seen as the obstacle to gaining philosophical insight into the 'truth' of Being, the 'there' of our 'there-being' or *Dasein*. Heidegger moves to reinstate questioning as the proper attitude for one to carry out such a process of learning. Again there is the idea that one must risk a leap into a new way of being, of discovering the world. Heidegger asserts that there are certain rare moments of a special intensity which, if we are properly 'attuned' and 'resolute', may be seized hold of and exploited for this aim. Often just 'for that moment', he says existence can 'gain the mastery over' the temporal strictures of everyday existence and one can be authentically 'in a moment' (*augenblicklich*).

What is disclosed in this Moment are the possibilities which belong to one's 'ownmost' self, in particular the most certain, that of death. Yet this moment is 'unavailable' to actual experience. By extension the very nature of the Being of human being is momentary and finite existence.

Paradoxically, and in keeping with the nature of the *Augenblick*, the 'saving power' which will redeem the contemporary political world will come from out of the very situation itself. Correspondingly, the revelation of Being comes from out of Being itself. For Heidegger, human being itself reveals the world and is the site of the Moment, there is a relation between this notion and Nietzsche's consideration that human being itself is the bridge. Possibilities recur, they are in a sense constantly there or present.

Related to the necessity of the right man being there, the revelation depends upon the presence of one 'who asks the questions', the learner identified in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Jaspers considered that certain people of an 'epochal consciousness' could have a special insight into their time. Nietzsche speaks of the 'overman' as the one who in the future will comprehend Eternal Return, and Heidegger speaks of 'the coming future ones' who will know how to be authentically 'in the *Augenblick*'. Heidegger redeploys Nietzsche's concept of Return to claim that possibilities recur, from out of Being itself. Human being's existence is momentary but in a momentous way.

Chapter Five sees a change of approach toward the subject of the *Augenblick*. Having traced the development of the concept from

Kierkegaard's theology into existentialism I now use the concept as a conceptual tool. Through it, in this chapter I consider the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson and his work. Cartier-Bresson's book: *The Decisive Moment* with its original French title *Images à la Sauvette* (Images on the run) provides a departure point and a clue. The moment is grasped from within a process. I consider the stance of the photographer who is out to capture an image and the circumstances surrounding its capture, noticing similarities with Heidegger's notions of comportment and attunement. The Moment is a hiatus corresponding to Kierkegaard's pause of wonder which holds possibilities which occur at the right time. The concept of *kairos*, as the right time is met with again and reveals further pertinent nuances. I point also to the surrealist aspects surrounding Cartier-Bresson's seizing a 'moment'. This 'moment' refers to both the seizing and what is seized.

Having discussed the practice of Cartier-Bresson I consider the equipment, or in Heidegger's terms 'gear' (*Zeug*) which is necessary to it in the shape of the, then new, *Leica* camera. I contemplate the place of the 'still' image now, in the age of the moving image, and whether such a still image can hold the 'now' in presence. The concept of the *nunc stans* appears again as the 'captured now' of a photographic image. The photographic still in a filmic sequence will be considered in relation to observations made by the film editor Walter Murch. A discussion regarding the ability of an image to express and represent complex, simultaneously experienced emotions leads to the extension of this question in regard to visual and musical 'imagery',



one of the focal points of the final chapter.

Chapter Six considers a 'decisive epoch' which has a focal point in the year 1910. A period of great social and political upheaval in Europe, impinging on artistic and philosophical aspects of European life, it is full of instances of 'decisive moment' and proves a fertile ground for consideration of the *Augenblick*. With Heidegger and Gadamer I have defined 'historicity' in this thesis as the conjunction of historical events with their individual experiencing. Gadamer calls this experience of historicity an 'existential moment'. I speak of art in this chapter as a means of expressing an 'existential moment'. I consider the documents including works of art which describe the prevailing *zeitgeist* and consider how the 'will to form' expresses the protagonist's relation to the world. I notice certain parallels in the development of abstract art in painting represented by Wassily Kandinsky and of Expressionism in the music of Arnold Schoenberg.

Schoenberg's atonal technique and the 'dissonance' it produces becomes a motif for describing the epoch itself. The present is comparable to the Moment held open in expectation of an impending event. I reflect on the fleeting moment of the *Dada* movement and its antics and consider what might determine whether 'breakthroughs' in art can be considered as revolution or evolution. I elucidate the 'moment of inspiration' as found in Adorno's concept of *Einfall* which incorporates the subjective impulse with its objective 'working out' in a musical composition. I revisit the idea of the authentic, striving and questioning individual. This idea has permeated the

unfolding of the concept of the *Augenblick*, and appears again in the form of those whom Ernst Bloch refers to as 'figures of venturing beyond'. I ask what it is they venture beyond and establish that their impulse is to express the inexpressible subjective and momentary experience of which I have spoken through the cipher of an objective work of art. I come to see with Bloch that it involves a dangerous moment of decision, one which risks one's very self in a 'Faustian Wager'.

## Chapter 1. Of Time and The Eternal, Søren Kierkegaard's Moment (*Øieblik*).

Søren Kierkegaard, as all 'philosophers of the moment'<sup>1</sup> who follow admit, is the first to have elevated the concept of the *Augenblick* from a mere instant in time. For Kierkegaard the moment receives its meaning from Christianity, but it is from Kierkegaard that the moment receives its meaning for existentialism. Although in the notes to Kierkegaard's *Journals*, Howard V. and Edna H. Hong assert that 'direct or extended considerations of this important concept are not numerous in either the works or the *Papirer*'<sup>2</sup>, the concept of the moment seems to permeate much of Kierkegaard's work. He deals with the concept most directly in two particular books: *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy* (1844), a hypothetical work written under the pseudonym Johannes Climacus, and *The Concept of Anxiety, A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin* (1844), psychological rather than hypothetical, written under the pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis and published only four days after *Fragments*. Of these two, I take the *Fragments* as my main point of

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<sup>1</sup> Safranski, Rüdiger, *Martin Heidegger, Between Good and Evil*, Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 180

<sup>2</sup> *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, Editors: Hong and Hong, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and London, 1975, notes to section on Moment/Momentary, p. 207

departure.

In order to elucidate Kierkegaard's 'moment' and its surrounding concepts I have also made use of the Danish text of *Fragments*, *Philosophiske Smuler eller En Smule Philosophi* (henceforth *Smuler*<sup>3</sup>), for reasons to do with translation that will become apparent. I also refer to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments (CUP)* (1846) which, written under his own name rather than a pseudonym, fulfils Kierkegaard's promise to further develop the ideas in *Fragments*. Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, which as Walter Lowrie tells us, rather than being private confessional journals were written for public consumption, provide clues for his reading public. They have provided this text with a valuable expansion of the ideas found in his works. Kierkegaard's written works resist all categorisation, whether that of theologian, philosopher or poet and as Kierkegaard asserts, it is the task of each individual to think, reflect and abstract their 'own actuality'<sup>4</sup>. 'Each generation has its own task'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I want to thank the staff in Interlibrary Loans and Document Delivery at Murdoch University Library for their invaluable help in acquiring necessary books and documents for this thesis, and particularly in relation to their liaising with the State Library in Victoria, whom I also thank, to gain access to the Danish text of *Smuler* which is technically too old to lend.

<sup>4</sup> *The Moment and Late Writings, Kierkegaard's Writings, XXIII*, by Søren Kierkegaard, Editor and Translator: Edward. V. Hong and Edna. H. Hong, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1998, Historical Introduction, p. xiii.

as Haufniensis says, to rework the works of the past according to their present and their future as it appears in that present. When reading Kierkegaard's works one needs to bear in mind the position of each of their pseudonymous authors, some of whose opinions are contradictory. This pseudonymous authorship enables a distancing 'indirect communication', which allows Kierkegaard to assume contrary points of view toward the same questions and explore ideas in a hypothetical manner. Kierkegaard offers an explanation of his use of pseudonyms at the end of *CUP*, asserting that each work is that of its cited author but that the 'responsibility' is his as a 'souffler [prompter]'. He maintains a remote position from his authors, he tells us, having assumed them not from fear of any 'penalty under the law' because he is not aware of having committed 'any offense', but because they are 'essential' to the 'production itself'<sup>6</sup>. The authors are psychologically different individuals and the works are from their own perspective.

The questions raised in *Fragments* are viewed, Johannes Climacus tells us, from 'within a pagan consciousness', the basis from which Climacus

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<sup>5</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety, A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, Editor and Translator: Reidar Thomte, with Albert B. Anderson, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1980, p.9

<sup>6</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Editors and Translators: Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1992, p. 625

develops the 'higher' concepts of Christianity. Climacus' point of view in relation to Christianity is 'lower' than Kierkegaard's, that is, not from a position of faith. He even declares that he is not a Christian. 'Climacus' comes from the Greek: *Klimax* - ladder, and, according to the Hongs, refers to logical or philosophical ladders of thought, or intellectual pursuits.

*Fragments* does indeed follow the form of a logical argument.

The pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis means 'watchman of Copenhagen' indicating that the 'author' is one who is an observer. He is sketched in *The Concept of Anxiety* as something of a spy who imitates the psychological state which he sees in those around him. By doing this he can present himself to an individual as one who also possess this state and thereby offer 'relief and satisfaction'<sup>7</sup> to the individual who will hopefully be persuaded that their state is shared and therefore understood. *The Concept of Anxiety* is a work of psychology, Reidar Thomte in his *Historical Introduction* to the book tells us that Kierkegaard's notion of psychology differs from the idea we have of it in the present day, it is 'a phenomenology' which is 'based on an ontological view of man, the fundamental presupposition of which is the transcendent reality of the individual, whose intuitively discernible character reveals the existence of an eternal

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<sup>7</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, pp. 54-6

component<sup>8</sup>. Unlike *Fragments*, *The Concept of Anxiety* reflects Kierkegaard's personal history concerned as it is with existential anxiety, a state to which he was no stranger. In fact, the Hongs tell us in their notes to the book that the original draft has Kierkegaard's name as author. In *CUP* Kierkegaard tells us that this work is more 'direct', 'and even somewhat didactic', 'Perhaps the author thought that a communication of knowledge might be necessary before a transition could be made to inward deepening'<sup>9</sup>.

Kierkegaard's instructions in *CUP* are that in referring to the texts one should cite the respective pseudonymous author's name rather than Kierkegaard's own. I have endeavoured to follow this instruction. However, taking him at his word that interpretation of the works is the task of each new generation, and assuming that by now it is well known that all the pseudonyms represent aspects of the same Kierkegaard, I have in places used the name 'Kierkegaard' to avoid confusion (mine). I am, however, careful to establish which text various quotes and ideas come from.

I will first discuss '*Øieblik*' as the expression 'in the blink of an eye' before endeavouring to tease out a problem concerning two different translations of the *Fragments* where the word 'moment' is rendered in different and perhaps conflicting ways. The socratic form of *Fragments* is

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<sup>8</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. xiv

<sup>9</sup> Kierkegaard, *CUP*, I, op cit, p. 271

considered next and the way in which Kierkegaard's argument unfolds within the text has some influence on the form of the chapter itself. I will consider the 'reciprocal relation' between 'the god' and human being which, for Kierkegaard is necessary to an understanding of the moment. Following the development of the concept from 'an atom of time' to its elevated sense as the moment of Incarnation and the consequent moment of subjective appropriation, we find its culmination in a more 'replete sense' as 'an atom of eternity' or the 'fulness of time'. The concept of Anxiety is next considered in its fundamental relation to the moment as are the notions of paradox and wonder, transition and the leap of faith. The interpretations of moment, freed for the purposes of reflection from temporal constraints (though always dependent on the temporal) allow Kierkegaard to posit a collapsing of time between that of Christ and his disciples and those who can be called disciples in the present.

The *Fragments* ends in a resolution rather than a finalising conclusion and this leads me to discuss resolution of another kind, that of Kierkegaard himself and his task of thinking of Christianity in a new way. His task comes to a culmination point in the publishing of a series of polemical pamphlets called 'The Moment' toward the close of his life. Finally, a brief description of the 'blessed moments' which Kierkegaard himself experiences early on in his life and which presage the more developed concept.



## The Beautiful Expression.

The word for 'moment' in Danish is *Øieblik* or *Øieblirket* (which includes the article), it is derived from *Øiets Blik* ('a blink of an eye'). The phrase 'in the blink of an eye' illustrates the seemingly instantaneous event when suddenly everything is changed. It is used to designate the fleeting nature of a moment of experience and perhaps we might also consider that it refers to the momentary nature of life itself. It refers also to the suddenness of occurrences, and the complete change of direction or view that these can bring. Unlike the literal 'in the blink of an eye', *Øieblirket* can also mean simply moment or instant in time in a more common and ordinary sense and indeed is so used by Kierkegaard throughout his works. The Latin, '*Momentum*'<sup>10</sup> Kierkegaard tells us, expresses the movement of moments vanishing like all 'now' instants in the succession of time. The Latinate *Momentar* is also found in two places in the Danish text of *Fragments (Smuler)*, where it refers to a moment in the sense of a phase or stage in a progression of something like an unfolding logical argument. *Momentar* is translated in the English text as 'moment' because in English this word can serve for the meaning of phase or stage as well<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p.88

<sup>11</sup> We might mention here Kierkegaard's book title: *Stages on Life's Way*, which describes the transitional process of a developing consciousness through the stages of the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious (in two senses). In other words, these are the individual 'moments'

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Kierkegaard speaks of the phrase thus: The moment 'is a figurative expression and therefore not easy to deal with. However, it is a beautiful word to consider. Nothing is as swift as the blink of an eye, and yet it is commensurable with the content of the eternal'<sup>12</sup>. Such a figure of speech gives pictorial form to the concept but as a metaphor it can go beyond the image, it acquires the power to accumulate meaning in excess of a mere moment of time. Kierkegaard comments that, in contrast to this, 'Greek art culminates in the plastic, which precisely lacks the glance', that is, the more profound 'insight' or 'vision' implicated in this metaphor. This is, he says, because 'the Greeks did not grasp the concept of spirit in the profoundest sense nor therefore comprehend sensuousness and temporality... in striking contrast to Christianity, in which God is pictorially represented as an eye'<sup>13</sup>. We might think of the glance or insight as a direct communication coming to us from the 'eye' of God.

If we take the term 'plastic' art to refer to the rendering of objective representations of the external things in the world then we might assume that by lack of 'spirit', Kierkegaard refers to a lack of a subjective element in Greek art. It is this very subjective element which is key to understanding the

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in the progress.

<sup>12</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. 87

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 87

intention of Kierkegaard.<sup>14</sup> Kierkegaard brings us a new understanding of 'self-concern' which is identified with spirit. As Roy Matinez tells us in *Kierkegaard's Ideal of Inward Deepening*, 'inwardness corresponds to the 'self' and is predicated as infinite', while 'externality corresponds to the 'world' and is qualified as finite.'<sup>15</sup>

### **Moment, moment, *Moment*, A Difference in Translations.**

There are two translations of *Fragments* into English. The first, by David F. Swenson in 1936, was slightly revised by Howard V. Hong in 1962, who added a Foreword and Commentary. It was later re-translated directly from the Danish by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong in 1985. A comparison of the two translations reveals typographical differences in their rendering of the word 'moment'. This in turn raises the question as to whether there are any differences in the interpretation of 'moment' which might reveal a different nuance of meaning, or even that meaning has been

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<sup>14</sup> Kierkegaard refers to Paul's 'poetic' use of the phrase in Corinthians 15:52 where he tells us that 'the world will pass away in a moment (in the twinkling of an eye)' and that this use also 'expresses that the moment is commensurable with eternity, precisely because the moment of destruction expresses eternity at the same moment.' *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 88.

<sup>15</sup> Martinez, Roy, *Kierkegaard's Ideal of Inward Deepening*, *Philosophy Today*, Summer, 1988; 32, p. 110

lost or distorted.

In the Danish language it is the convention to capitalise all nouns. Swenson, in his translation holds over the capitalisation of some nouns which represent important concepts like Faith etc, including some instances of the word 'moment' but not all. Swenson's differentiations designate particular meanings of the moment in certain parts of the text of *Fragments*. The differentiations are: the 'Moment' with a capital 'M' which represents the Moment of Incarnation occurring at an actual point in time, 'moment' without a capital which is one of 'subjective appropriation of the truth', that is a moment of conversion or revelation, and *Moment* italicised and capitalised which might be thought of as some third thing incorporating the two others in a higher concept. The italics are represented in the Danish text by spacing of the letters.

It is generally accepted that there is more than one type of moment in Kierkegaard. There are certainly two: the 'once and for all'<sup>16</sup> moment of the Incarnation, and the subjective moment of conversion. Perhaps a case can be made for the third which forms a synthesis of these two in a higher concept without eliminating either of them and which, as we shall see, the process of Kierkegaard's unfolding thought in the *Fragments* reveals as an aspect of the moment which finds its expression in the phrase 'the fullness of

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<sup>16</sup> Nielsen, H.A., *Where the Passion Is, A Reading of Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments*, University Presses of Florida, Tallahassee, 1983, p. 113

time'. At the base of all of these, the simple moment of time must not be ignored; but it may be going too far to count it as a fourth 'moment'.

In the Hongs' translation we get lower-case 'moment' throughout, including the italicized *the moment*, which includes its article where Swenson's does not. In fact, the Hongs' hold over no capitals at all from the Danish convention, not even for concepts such as 'faith' or 'the god'. In not doing so, the Hongs in a sense, bring us closer to the original text, in that *Smuler* makes no distinction between 'Moment' and 'moment' (although it does use spacing to differentiate '*the moment*'), and we are free to come to our own understanding. However, meaning is neither lost nor particularly distorted by Swenson's distinctions, and although there are occasional places in the text where it seems debatable as to whether a particular use of Moment really refers to the Incarnation itself or to the moment of time in which it occurs, there are none that can't possibly be construed as the Incarnation after a little consideration. However, in making his distinctions, Swenson may risk misrepresenting Kierkegaard's intended meaning in not leaving some things undecided in the text rather than having meaning fixed. In this way its paradoxical and transcendent level is maintained, the either/or question is not answered, and the text in question remains open. It is significant that *Fragments* ends in a 'resolution' rather than a 'conclusion' of the hypothesis. Swenson may also be depriving the reader of the challenge

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of coming to their own understanding of the text; they might enjoy, like Kierkegaard, their concepts being kept 'young and beautiful and lovely to look at'<sup>17</sup>.

The Hong's translation also seems closer to the original in its retention of Kierkegaard's literary device of the repetition of phrases which Swenson has removed in favour of his own wording. Though Swenson's translation is more explanatory, which can be helpful, he imposes his own interpretation, which may be misleading. Sometimes I have been grateful for Swenson's form and sometimes for the Hongs'; unpicking Kierkegaard's meaning is made a little easier having the two versions. Yet we must remember that Kierkegaard does not set out to make things easy to understand. Whether Kierkegaard himself intended any difference of nuance between the moments can only be decided by the individual reader. Kierkegaard comments in the *Journals*: 'Everything essentially Christian has a double meaning [*Dobbeltydigt*], is a redoubling [*Fordoblelse*]. And this is what is so strenuous, also what makes it difficult to have an understanding with others'<sup>18</sup>. So the concept is deepened by the redoubling effect of having more than one layer of meaning. We see this in the very title: *Philosophical Fragments or A Fragment of Philosophy*.

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<sup>17</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, quoted in *The Moment and Late Writings*, op cit, p xxi

<sup>18</sup> *Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers Volume III*, op cit, Section 3664,

Victoria S. Harrison, in *Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments: A Clarification*<sup>19</sup> (1997), relies heavily on Swenson's distinctions, carrying over his three definitions of 'moment' in order to identify three corresponding aspects of Kierkegaard's concept of the 'condition' for faith. She declares that in making these clear distinctions Swenson 'saves the reader a lot of work in ascertaining which concept is intended' and that Swenson's 'system of reference' 'enable(s) Climacus to communicate more easily with his readers.'<sup>20</sup> However, I think we must wonder whether it is correct to base new work on these distinctions, particularly as the Hong's later translation of the work does away with them. Furthermore, in the Hongs' notes to Kierkegaard's *Journals*, we are told that Kierkegaard was not always consistent with the capitalising of nouns even within the conventions of his own language.

The Latinate *Momenter* is also found in two places in the Danish text, *Smuler*. This word means a moment in the sense of a phase or stage in a progression of something like an unfolding logical argument. *Momenter* is translated into the English text as 'moment' because in English this word can serve for the meaning of phase or stage as well. There are phrases in

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<sup>19</sup> Harrison, Victoria S., *Kierkegaard's Philosophical Fragments: A Clarification*, Religious Studies, 33, Cambridge University Press, UK. 1997

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p.458

*Smuler*, such as *Øieblikket i Tiden* or 'Moment in time' which appear in the English as a Moment which at first glance seem like the use of capitals for a moment which is not the Incarnation, but unlike a moment *of* time or instant, it actually can be thought to refer to the moment *in* time, the incarnation. The word 'moment' is also used in the Swenson translation in instances where the *Smuler* itself does not use *Øieblikket* but 'Nu', that is, 'now' or this present moment of time. In these cases it would have seemed judicious for Swenson, with so much resting on the proper understanding of the 'moment', to make this distinction clear by using an alternative word. The Hongs' translation on this occasion uses 'this very instant'.

Only adding to the confusion, there are places where *Smuler* uses *Øieblikket* which Swenson translates as 'instant' not 'moment' (pp. 15-16). Then again, there are places where the *Smuler* uses *Øieblikket* and Swenson renders it 'moment' yet it obviously means an instant of time (p.22), the moment *when* the Incarnation occurs. There is a place where, in relation to the collision of reason with the paradox Swenson renders the sentence: 'all offense is in its essence a misunderstanding of the Moment'<sup>21</sup>. This Moment in *Smuler* is *Øieblikket* spaced out for stress and the Hongs have *the moment* italicised. So, in this instance Swenson has seemingly made a simple mistake. Furthermore, in a draft of this section, noted in the Hong

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<sup>21</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Swenson p.64, Hong p.50



translation, Kierkegaard has: 'in the *moment* of collision of understanding'.

These discrepancies come hand in hand with noted problems concerning the translation of Kierkegaard's concepts into English in general. Kierkegaard chose very precise words in Danish which often do not find an accurate counterpart in English. There is a body of correspondence between Walter Lowrie<sup>22</sup> and Alexandre Dru (who first translated parts of the journals) and Swenson, regarding the 'torment' of the translation process. Lowrie tells of Swenson once asking him how to deal with certain words. Lowrie merely shakes his head, and looks into his eyes 'with silent despair'<sup>23</sup>.

In a footnote to Lowrie's article *Existence as understood by Kierkegaard and Sartre* (1950), he criticises Swenson's translation of Kierkegaard's two separate words for existence (*Tilvaerelsens*, and *existere*) with one English word, effectively clouding the crucial distinction between the two. And in his Preface to *The Concept of Dread* Lowrie quotes the *CUP* regarding the link between Kierkegaard's concepts of Fear, Dread and Despair but specifically states that he does not follow Swenson's translation.

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<sup>22</sup> Walter Lowrie, was one of the first people to translate Kierkegaard's work into English [especially *The Concept of Dread*, later *The Concept of Anxiety*] and has written two authoritative books on his life as well as various prefaces to translations of other of Kierkegaard's works.

<sup>23</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread* Translator: Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1946, Preface, p. viii

He doesn't explain why<sup>24</sup> but it would seem that Swenson's translation of Kierkegaard was already in question. So, how much should we rely on his formulations of the 'moment'?

Swenson himself speaks of his translation of the word 'moment' in his *Something About Kierkegaard*, 1945: 'I am prompted to say a word about *'Momentet'*. This word is not generally identical with the English 'Moment' but rather means phase, part, factor, aspect, or the like.' It can, of course, also mean any of these in English. He goes on say: 'To live *'i Momentet'* [that is 'in the moment'] is to live submerged in some partial phase of a whole, to the exclusion of the rest, or of the control of the whole, ie, to live anarchically.<sup>25</sup> This can also be applied to the case of Time and its moment, but this would be merely a special application, not a general equivalent<sup>26</sup>. Regarding the word *Øieblik* he says that he thinks in some contexts it 'is exactly equivalent to' 'instant', 'but not in all, and particularly not in the context of the rubrics for

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<sup>24</sup> Lowrie also criticises Swenson on other points of phraseology.

<sup>25</sup> Either living in the moment in an 'imperfect sensuality' or engrossed in concern for the future are both ways of missing the significance of the 'moment'. Kierkegaard's figure of the Seducer in *Either/Or*, is a representative of the person who lives 'in the moment' in such a way. One of Kierkegaard's 'stages on life's way' is this aesthetic stage, which may or may not give onto an ethical and then to a religious 'stage'.

<sup>26</sup> Swenson, David, F., *Something About Kierkegaard*, Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1945, pp. 209-210.

the pamphlets of the agitation'. In this use of *Øieblik* Swenson says: 'the stress is not upon the instantaneous, but upon the *present* as filled with significance, e.g. Christianity brought to bear upon the contemporary situation, and through the medium of the pamphlet or newspaper,...' He says: 'It is in this way '*Øieblirket*' is used in the *Smuler*'. Then he adds, 'also: a '*moment*', which is also the 'fulness of time'.<sup>27</sup> Its italicization here is a clue we shall soon follow to trace the meaning of *the moment*, posited as a third thing.

### **The Socratic Form of *Fragments*.**

*Philosophical Fragments* is a thought project, and its form follows the progression of an unfolding hypothesis in a logical form. Through it Climacus, suffers the progress of his thoughts on the question of whether the historical event of the Incarnation can have significance for man's 'eternal consciousness'. In this dialogue with himself he puts up objections which he anticipates from his readers. In order to carry out this project, Climacus adopts the Socratic method. Socrates taught others 'in his own way', he tells us, and that is what Climacus himself claims to be doing by this method. He is satisfying 'claims within himself' as he satisfies those 'that others might have on him'. He is exercising this project of thought for the sake of imparting knowledge but also for the sake of working out knowledge for himself by the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pp. 209-210.

process. This is the Socratic shape of the *Fragments*, Kierkegaard reveres Socrates while wanting to go beyond him. In order to preserve the finely nuanced development of the argument and the emerging concept of the 'moment' within it, yet at the risk of seeming long-winded and repetitive, the following discussion retains something of the movement of Climacus' thought. All progression is a suffering, Climacus says, something to be undergone, and one devotes oneself to the progress of an idea because it is a passion.

The title page of *Fragments* bears an epigraph which lays out the three part question with which the book is taken up and which are resolved in the Moral at the end: 'Can a historical point of departure be given for an eternal consciousness; how can such a point of departure be of more than historical interest; can an eternal happiness be built on historical knowledge?'<sup>28</sup>. That is to say, is it possible that the god who is 'wholly other' can come into time and history at an actual point and impart the truth required for a human being to share in the future eternal life. Can we think about eternal questions from the point of view, not of a Christian or of revelation, but from facts in the world. The fact at issue here is that of the incarnation, which was a fact of history for Kierkegaard .

Can such an incarnation 'really communicate anything eternal - i.e., in

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<sup>28</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, Title page.

the two fold sense of communicate, to make known and to impart its life, that is, as Ozro Jones Jr. in his dissertation *The meaning of the Moment in Existential Encounter according to Kierkegaard*, points out, to pass on knowledge of and to bring one to an understanding of it<sup>29</sup> . These two meanings are important because, according to Kierkegaard, the truth contained in knowledge of something is not the truth imparted by faith to an individual human being. Hence the question is about whether it is possible to base an eternal happiness upon historical knowledge. We might take 'happiness' here in the sense of the Greek *eudaimonia* or personal well-being, even though we are speaking of an historical event. But if we further consider that 'happen' and 'happiness' have the same Old English root in 'happen' meaning 'a stroke of fortune', 'an opportune time' and hence 'happiness' is the result <sup>30</sup>, then we can think of the historical event as a stroke of fortune for human being. This meaning allows us to think of it as something like *Kairos*.

Climacus, outlining the 'Project of Thought', wants to go beyond Socratic thinking, to elucidate the boundary of difference between knowledge

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<sup>29</sup> Ozro Jones Jr., *The meaning of the Moment in Existential Encounter according to Kierkegaard*, Temple University, STD, (Dissertation presented to Temple University in partial requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology), January 15th , 1962, p. 7

<sup>30</sup> My thanks to Dr. Paul MacDonald for pointing out this connection.

and faith. To begin, he lays out the difference between the passing on of knowledge by the Socratic way and of truth of the god grasped by faith. The Socratic notion of knowledge was that it was immanent within human being and had been from eternity. Climacus tells us that, in that sense, for the Greeks eternity was the past. Such knowledge could to be drawn out by a teacher who aids the recollection (*anamnesis*<sup>31</sup>) of the knowledge. However, for Christian thought, he tells us, eternity is the future because the truth comes from outside of time in an eternity which only really begins from the moment of revelation of that truth by the teacher who is the god. Such knowledge cannot be passed on by a human teacher by aiding memory like a midwife, but must be brought by an advent of the god into human being's finite world, it must be as it were begotten in a procreative act or event. The Socratic moment is an occasion for the bringing of knowledge to the person who already possesses it, though they may at first be unaware that they do. But as a decisive event, the moment is that of the incarnation, the coming into existence of the god from outside of time and existence. Also, the moment can be thought of as the god himself, [Christ].<sup>32</sup> The incarnation is the historical point of departure for an eternal consciousness of the truth.

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<sup>31</sup> The Greek concept of *Anamnesis* is a re-remembering of something. Knowledge which one doesn't realise one has can be brought back to mind, one can be 'reminded' of it.

<sup>32</sup> We find this idea again in Karl Jaspers.

## The 'Reciprocal Relation'.

There is a 'reciprocal relation' between the teacher and the learner, the teacher is a learner and the learner also a teacher, this constituting the Socratic relationship, the highest possible between human beings. They are equal to and like an echo of each other, Climacus tells us, and therefore there is no moment. But the god does not need this relation, there is no occasion that can have an effect on the god, what could possibly 'move' him whose resolve is from eternity. He can only move himself and by love not by need, 'for love does not have the satisfaction of need outside itself but within.' The god's resolve or love is the motive [the 'basis of movement'<sup>33</sup>] and the goal. When fulfilled in time 'in its most replete sense', he says, 'it expressly becomes *the moment* [Swenson: *Moment*, Smuler: *Øieblikket*]<sup>34</sup> . Here we find a direct link between the notion of fulfilment and *the moment*. Only in love is 'the different' made equal and man acquires the possibility of eternal happiness, an 'eternal consciousness' as Climacus says. It is a new capacity for understanding an 'eternal communication' and a subjective inward relation with 'the god'.

Climacus goes on to ask how the teacher and learner are to meet on a non-Socratic level. The 'elevation of the learner' in an ascent to the god may

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<sup>33</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragment*, Hong, p.25

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25

be too much for the delicate human being, like the gilding of the lily which breaks its tender stem. So it must be brought about by a descent of the god appearing as the equal of the learner. He must come in the form of a servant, not in disguise with a cloak or other garment but must actually put on the form of the servant, as 'his true form'. This is the kind of love, that Climacus speaks of, it wills to be the equal of the beloved, and in his omnipotence the god is capable of this love, of which, he says, Socrates was not capable<sup>35</sup> . Socrates' 'ignorance' is seen as an expression of his equality with and love for the learner. 'This unity was the truth' the unity between teacher and learner can convey the Socratic truth. 'But', Climacus says again, 'if the *Moment* is to have decisive significance then things must be otherwise. What is relayed in the Socratic manner is not the truth but knowledge, the learner owes only the occasion of this truth to the teacher, for he possessed it himself already. The relation between the learner and the god as teacher however, is one of owing the teacher everything. The love of the god must be an aid to the truth in the learner but also a giving birth to the learner as a new person. As the teacher gives birth to the learner he also gives birth to himself, i.e. he comes into existence<sup>36</sup>. Between human beings to 'be of

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<sup>35</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p.32

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, Supplement, p.189



assistance is supreme, but to beget is reserved for the god'<sup>37</sup>. A begetting, from which something springs forth, is an act of creation, not simply creation occurring of itself.

### **An Atom of Time.**

In the initial unfolding of the moment an instant of time is implicated, the instant when a learner or disciple might discover that the truth has been in him since eternity (the past in the Socratic position), yet without the learner being aware of it. This moment is just another moment in time indistinguishable from all other moments of time. It is lost and cannot be located anywhere because, as Climacus says: "The temporal point of departure is nothing, for as soon as I discover that I have known the Truth from eternity without being aware of it, the same instant this moment of occasion is hidden in the eternal, and so incorporated with it that I cannot even find it so to speak, even if I sought it; because in my eternal consciousness there is neither here nor there, but only an *ubique et nusquam*'<sup>38</sup>, that is everywhere and nowhere, it is in no place.

On the Socratic view, Climacus says: 'any point of departure in time [*'Ungangspunkt i Tiden'*] is *eo ipso* something accidental, a vanishing point'

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<sup>37</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p.31

<sup>38</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Swenson, pp. 15-16

(the Hongs have 'vanishing moment'). Such a moment passes in the continuum of time and merely provides the 'occasion'<sup>39</sup> for something else, if this were all, the role of the teacher would end here. However, and here in Swenson is where the moment first acquires its capital letter, to be more than an occasion, Climacus says, 'the Moment in time [*Øieblikket i Tiden*] must have a decisive significance, so that I will never be able to forget it either in time or in eternity; because the Eternal, which hitherto did not exist, came into existence in this moment.'<sup>40</sup> [*Smuler: blev til i dette Øieblik*] If we consider the 'eternal', not as an infinite stretch of time but some realm which is out of time in 'no place', then we can think of this 'coming into existence' as the eternal coming into time, rather than as a coming into 'being'. The moment must be such that the learner would not forget it either as a matter of knowledge or of faith. In the *Journals*, Kierkegaard tells us: 'the moment is really time's atom, but not until eternity is posited, and this is why one may properly say that eternity is always that which has no place'<sup>41</sup>.

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Haufniensis says: Without eternity the moment does not exist in the proper sense, because the nature of time is

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<sup>39</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, p.11

<sup>40</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Swenson, p.16

<sup>41</sup> Kierkegaard's *Journals and Papers*, p. 207

'only that it goes by'<sup>42</sup> . But he rejects notions of time as continuous flow taking a starting point for the moment from Plato who, in his notion of *exaiphnes* (the Sudden), stresses the originating moment of emergence, the coming into presence as though out of nothing. In the *Parmenides* Plato describes 'this strange entity'<sup>43</sup> thus:

'For the moment seems to imply a something of which change takes place in either of two states; for the change is not from the state of rest as such; but there is this curious nature which we call the moment lying between rest and motion, not being in any time; and into this and out of this what is in motion changes into rest, and what is at rest into motion.'<sup>44</sup>

The moment though it cannot be located in time is certainly something and not nothing. When we consider Kierkegaard's definition of temporality it would appear that the actual moment of time is crucial to any elevated sense of 'moment': 'The moment is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of *temporality* is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time'<sup>45</sup> . Our

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, notes, p.821

<sup>43</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, p.83

<sup>44</sup> Plato, *Parmenides* 156d, Translator: B. Jowett, William, Benton, The University of Chicago, Chicago, 1952, p. 505

<sup>45</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. 89

existence as temporal beings requires time, but as '*temporality*' it allows a connection with the eternal. In considering the moment as 'a blink' it is 'a designation of time ... in the fateful conflict when it is touched by eternity'<sup>46</sup>. The touch of the eternal in time is indeed a 'fateful conflict', a contradiction significant to the destiny of human being. It is decisive for man's 'eternal being', because it allows a spiritual existence which an individual can attain in deeply subjective experiences of the moment which can follow. Haufniensis goes on: 'Only when the eternal strikes the stream of time and forms a synthesis of time and eternity does the particular moment gain significance: 'for the moment is really time's atom...'<sup>47</sup>. The atom of time is something infinitesimally small, and 'contentless', that which by its very name is designated as 'indivisible'; it can open to reveal an unsuspected and awful power, the immensity of the eternal.

In our experiences we know that the moment passing in the continuum of time has significance though we cannot point to its 'now'. An event can come to our attention and stand out as a significant moment of emotional upsurge, or we might say, of heightened experience. Climacus tells us, such 'an outburst of emotion, a sigh or a word' can determine a

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.87

<sup>47</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, notes, op cit, p. 821

moment of time as 'more present as something that is vanishing'. An expression of emotion has the 'power to relieve the soul of a burdensome weight, precisely because the burden, when merely expressed, already begins to become something of the past'<sup>48</sup>. The actual moment of time, the seemingly nothing as a vanishing instant is, at the same time, everything and therefore '... the moment is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity. It is the first reflection of eternity in time, its first attempt, as it were, at stopping time...'<sup>49</sup>

Such moments have the effect of nullifying the continuum of time, which is arrested and made to stand still in the moment. In *The Concept of Anxiety* Haufniensis calls this a 'going forth that nevertheless never gets off the spot'<sup>50</sup>. This standing still in the 'now' of the moment suggests the concept of *nunc stans*, the mystical notion from medieval scholasticism of a 'standing present' or 'everlasting now' of eternity as timelessness. Kierkegaard seeks a spiritual truth in the collapsing of the continuum of time. This happens when the eternal enters time, but also in another way. He speaks of the 1843 years that separate the incarnation of Christ and his own present time as if it is no time at all, in terms of Christian faith. If, as

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<sup>48</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. 87

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.88

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p. 86

Kierkegaard says 'faith believes what it does not see' then to consider the moment in its abstraction from time is to believe in this something that we cannot locate.

In reflection the succession of moment after moment can be annulled. The experiences of our life are carried with us into the future, E. L. Allen in *Kierkegaard: His Life and Thought*, (1935) says: 'As an existing person, he [the individual] stores up the past within himself and moves forward constantly into the future'<sup>51</sup> . So that how we choose to act in present situations determines our future being. The moment, he says:

'... is *krisis* - a judgement on time. It brings the present and us who are in it under the constraint and claim of the Absolute, and it opens the future before us as a Promised Land or a waste howling wilderness - as we choose! It thus gives to the future a new significance; the future is as it were the incognito of eternity. ... Here I stand, therefore, an individual human being with a unique life-history. My feet are on the threshold of the future, and God's voice speaks to me here and now. Here, where I stand, I come under his absolute requirement. Am I willing to venture, to risk myself on a new event, something which does not as yet exist but which my own free act will bring about? When I have taken that step forward, I shall be another man, for something out of eternity itself will have become incarnate in me!'<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Allen, E. L., *Kierkegaard: His Life and Thought*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1935, pp 144-145

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, pp 144-145

## **Incarnation and Appropriation.**

The instant in time, then, is an essential element to any elevated sense of 'moment'. It is implicated in the Incarnation whose very significance *is* that it occurs, for Kierkegaard, as an historical actuality. The Moment of Incarnation is, for Kierkegaard, a primary moment, when the totally other, that which cannot be said to exist in time, but in and as eternity, enters time. The god even becomes an ordinary human being through his 'birth' in human form. The eternal as timeless being comes into time and space as 'a specific embodiment of the eternal'<sup>53</sup> in the person of Christ. This for Kierkegaard is a matter of historical fact. The moment or event of the incarnation is pivotal for Kierkegaard, upon this moment all other moments turn. This original Moment of the incarnation enables every following subjective moment of conversion. Kierkegaard himself in the *Journals* refers to this initialising moment as a 'prototype'.

In becoming human the god enables the condition of faith, and bestows the possibility of an eternal state of beatitude, in imitation of the divine condition. The individual moment of what Kierkegaard calls 'subjective appropriation of the truth', (or conversion) carries the possibility of a radical change. A person undergoing such a moment and becoming a disciple of Christ in the present is directly contemporary with the disciples of Christ in

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<sup>53</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, notes, op cit, p. 13

their time. Further, Kierkegaard maintains, such a person is absolutely contemporary with Christ himself, as eternal. The subjective moment of conversion, represents a 'repetition' of the Incarnation. It repeats the 'coming into existence' of the god by believing it despite the time which lies between the events. Such a moment marks a complete and radical turn around in the individual (Greek: *epistrophe*, 'turning about').

When an individual comes into being with the truth, in a moment of subjective appropriation, this moment of truth is contemporary with the originating moment of incarnation, the individual is at this point one with Christ (Kierkegaard goes further to consider Christ himself as the moment). In this way, the eternal touches human being directly. The moment represents, not so much an instant of time but a certain experience of *being* in time.

### **The 'Replete Sense'.**

Victoria Harrison accepts this rendering of *the moment* as something not eliminating either of the other two but uniting them in some higher concept. We begin to see how *the moment* can indeed be so considered in the following passage from *Fragments* which brings us to a definition of *the moment* as the 'fullness of time': 'And now the moment [*Og nu Øieblikket*]<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Kierkegaard, *Philosophiske Smuler eller en Smuler Philosophiske*, C.A. Reitzel, Copenhagen, 1865, p.14



...’, there is no capital ‘M’ here in the Swenson translation because it is still referring to the moment of time in which the event, or advent took place. ‘... A moment such as this is unique. To be sure, it is short and temporal, as the moment is; it is passing, as the moment is, past, as the moment is in the next moment, and yet it is decisive, and yet it is filled with the eternal. A moment such as this must have a special name. Let us call it: *the fullness of time* [*Tidens Folde*].’<sup>55</sup> We notice ‘the fullness of time’ appears with spacing in the Danish indicated by italics in the English text.

In *Galatians* 4:4, we hear that ‘the fulness of the time was come, [when] God sent forth his son ...’ that is, in the Incarnation. To find the other aspect of this italicised moment, that of subjective appropriation or conversion we must read a little further on in the text. Climacus says, that the god’s purpose or ‘resolution’ must be from eternity’, and when ‘fulfilled in time it expressly becomes *the moment*,’ [*Øieblikket*]<sup>56</sup>. The Hong’s use of ‘fulfilled’ in this passage further confirms that *the moment* does comprise a higher concept incorporating the first two meanings.

The god’s purpose, according to Climacus, is to bring the truth to the individual in a subjective moment of appropriation, or conversion. The god’s motive, as we have said, is love which, when fulfilled in time, ‘becomes *the*

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<sup>55</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p. 18, (Swenson, p. 22)

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 25, ( Swenson, p.30)

*moment* in its most replete sense'. The past has built up behind and the present is 'replete' with the significance of the Christian message of the Incarnation which is brought to bear upon the present situation of the individual. Here we find a direct link between the notion of fulfilment and *the moment*. Only in love is the different made equal and man acquires the possibility of eternal happiness, an 'eternal consciousness' as Climacus says. A new capacity for understanding an 'eternal communication' and a subjective inward relation with the god.

One can make this find only in a personal, subjective 'discovery' for (and by) oneself, one cannot learn it from another, or from doctrine. One of Kierkegaard's criticisms of Christianity was that the simple acceptance of church doctrine was not Christianity in the true spiritual sense. The ability to question subjectively is the condition for finding an answer and is also the answer, because this ability is one and the same with the find.

The learner, on discovering that he is in 'untruth', now receives that truth 'and with it the condition for understanding it' which can only be faith, for it is not the kind of knowledge that can be understood by reason alone. 'A change takes place within him like the change from non-being to being', Climacus tells us. He comes into 'existence'[...] in the kind of transition which is a new birth or rebirth, in conversion which we can now think of as including the prototype moment of coming into existence. It is a change from non-being to being in the sense that the eternal has come into the realm of human being. Climacus says, 'In consequence of receiving the condition in

the moment [*Øieblikket*] the course of his life has been given an opposite direction, so that he is now turned about. Let us call this change *Conversion* [*Omvendelse*], even though this word be one not hitherto used; but that is precisely a reason for choosing it, in order namely to avoid confusion, for it is as if expressly coined for the change we have in mind<sup>57</sup>. This is also the place in the text where the word *conversion* itself first appears and it too has italics, which strengthens its link to ‘fullness of time’.

There are questions we might ponder concerning conversion. We might wonder whether it is necessarily the case that conversion is instantaneous or takes place over a transitional period of time; either way, there is a culmination point when the change is irrevocable. We might wonder also whether such a complete change happens once and for all, whether it must be kept up, the moment revisited and the position renewed. In a sense there is a debt owed to the moment which might be neglected and allowed to lapse in which case a re-conversion is possible. Even without a complete falling away the commitment to a new position is a task in itself, it must continually be repeated. William C. Davis, in his *Kierkegaard on the Transformation of the Individual in Conversion*, locates these problems in Kierkegaard's ‘account of the transformation involved in Christian conversion’. The problem is on the one hand whether ‘there is evidence that

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<sup>57</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*: Swenson, op cit, p.23, (Hong, p. 18)

the transformation ... involves an instantaneous alteration in the subject at the deepest level: a change in what the individual *is*’; or on the other hand, whether ‘becoming and being a Christian is ... an endeavour undertaken ‘in fear and trembling’, with the possibility of falling away constantly posing a threat’<sup>58</sup>.

Davis says that the moment at which this occurs, is when the individual becomes a disciple: ‘when the Moment becomes for him decisive for eternity’. Davis uses Swenson’s translation which would indicate - according to the definitions we have decided upon - that the moment in question is that of the Incarnation, rather than of the individual’s becoming a disciple. If we do read this as the Incarnation, then we might interpret it as meaning that the fact of Incarnation provides the opportunity for an individual which is decisive for eternity. Whether the individual takes it up in such a way that it is personally decisive is another matter. However, his argument does not depend only on this one quote, but it does point to the extent of the problems we encounter when trying to decide which ‘moment’ is intended.

If the transformation were a case of ‘once and for all’, then there would be no risk or venture in one’s life as a whole. The possibility of ‘falling back’ is with the individual until life is over, and there is a danger in feeling too complacent. In the *Journals*, Kierkegaard tells us that God is ‘present’ and

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<sup>58</sup> Davis, William C., *Kierkegaard on the Transformation of the Individual in Conversion*, Religious Studies, Volume 28, 1992, p. 145

gives 'new blessings' 'in every moment'<sup>59</sup>, but empirically existing beings are in existence as spirit and 'inwardness' 'only momentarily'<sup>60</sup> and the connection with the truth must be constantly renewed. Such a truth can only be learned from a relation with God and not from a professor as Kierkegaard tells us. One must not be lost in the fleeting and momentary externals of the world, but shun the contemporary world as 'looking like a fool'<sup>61</sup>. Daane in his thesis, tells us:

'The persistent striving of life is an expression of the principle that he also is in want and desire, who possesses, but desires the continuous possession of what he possesses. Illustrated in Christian terms, it is the possession of eternal life, however under the qualifications of a possession within time - of which qualifications death is a grim expression. In the moment of intense passionate striving a man attains to the Infinite, but in the next moment he is under the demands of the temporal, and can only by constant renewal attain to the Infinite.'<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, op cit, entry 2743 'Moment, The Momentary', p.208

<sup>60</sup> Kierkegaard, *CUP*, op cit, p. 191

<sup>61</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, op cit, entry 2742, p.208

<sup>62</sup> Daane, James, *Kierkegaard's Concept of the Moment*, Th.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1947, p. 38

## **Anxiety is the Moment.**

The moment must be such that the learner would not forget it either as a matter of knowledge or of faith. The 'Preceding State' which the learner exists in before learning the truth, is one of being in error or 'untruth' and only existing in the ordinary sense of the word, not at all in the eternal sense. Becoming aware of being in error or untruth is a recognition of the personal, individual obligations, of an inward relation to the god, or in other words, a consciousness of sin. The consciousness of being in error or 'sin' then becomes a presupposition for Climacus from which the problem can be further investigated.

The learner cannot have possessed the truth before the moment of his becoming aware of it (of its coming into existence). He could not even have 'known' it in the sense of being in a state of ignorance of it as it lay immanent within him. He must not even be looking for it, for he does not even know that there is anything to look for. On the Socratic level, ignorance presupposes the knowledge is there but forgotten, available through recollection (*anamnesis*). A seeker can only seek something that already is there to be found. He who would find the truth must not in this sense even be a seeker 'if the moment is to have a *decisive* significance'.<sup>63</sup>

In *The Concept of Anxiety* Haufniensis tells us that man's

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<sup>63</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*: Swenson, op cit, pp. 17-18

unawareness of sin is the root of anxiety. Man is described as being 'innocent' rather than 'ignorant' of it. Before there is the awareness of sin, it is there but hidden. In consequence, man does not know 'Spirit', in other words, there is no manifestation of 'human freedom'<sup>64</sup>. Though his Being unconsciously cries out for the spirit, in his conscious life he is unaware of his great need and therefore suffers a vague but pervasive foreboding: '*This is the profound secret of innocence, that it is at the same time anxiety*'<sup>65</sup>. This unawareness is not oblivion for he cries out for spirit, but, as Haufniensis says, 'the spirit in man is dreaming'<sup>66</sup>. Kierkegaard's psychology has an 'eternal component'<sup>67</sup>: the spirit which lays within him waiting to be awoken, and this in itself is the source of anxiety.

Kierkegaard is the first to identify 'anxiety' existentially, as a fear which has no object. Anxiety is a intimation of the '*nothing*', of finitude in one's very Being which he asserts has been there from the beginning. Anxiety can be described as a feeling of 'dizziness' experienced when one looks '*down into the yawning abyss*' of one's self, and confronts one's own freedom, the

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<sup>64</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, note 46, op cit, p.235

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 41

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 41

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, Historical Introduction, p. xiv

freedom of one's own future possibilities. It resides in the abyss and in the one who confronts it. 'Man', he says, '*becomes a freedom to himself*' and in the moment of that realisation everything is changed. Man yearns for some undefined thing which he is anxious not to miss before having the chance to grasp it.

Haufniensis maintains 'that man is a synthesis of psyche and body that is constituted and sustained by spirit', as a result of the spirit being awakened, he says, 'the difference between oneself and the other is posited'<sup>68</sup>, i.e. the awareness of the self as an individual, as subjectivity, as a result of which, he tells us 'In the individual life, anxiety is the moment' . This phrase, he tells us, is 'a new expression' that says the same as this synthesis, 'but that also points toward that which follows'<sup>69</sup>.

The moment of anxiety is the realisation of the nothing and of the eternal as being the same, because 'if there were nothing eternal in a man, he could not despair'<sup>70</sup> , Haufniensis says, and 'the opposite of despair is believing'<sup>71</sup>. In his discussion on the difficulties of translating Kierkegaard,

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, note 46

<sup>69</sup> Kierkegaard , *Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. 81

<sup>70</sup> Kierkegaard, Søren, *The Sickness Unto Death*, quoted in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed: Robert Bretall, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1946. p.344

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p.351



Lowrie tells us: '... French translators use *angoisse*. These words rightly indicate the distress of the moment, but do not suggest what is essential to the experience Kierkegaard deals with, that it is an apprehension of the future, a presentiment of a something which is 'nothing', that (as he says in the Christian Discourses) it is 'the next day', and, in another place, 'it is fighting against the future,' therefore against oneself - 'and no man is stronger than himself'<sup>72</sup> .

Man, Climacus goes on to tell us, is also a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal<sup>73</sup>. Haufniensis tells us that this 'is not another synthesis but the expression for the first'<sup>74</sup> But 'reason'. he says, is a 'dunce' to allows a synthesis<sup>75</sup> of these two unlike elements. The nature of human existence is temporal and continually changing and man usually lives in 'the imperfection of the sensuous life'; in contrast, the nature of God is eternal and unchanging. But with the positing of spirit 'the moment is present'<sup>76</sup>. 'Only with

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<sup>72</sup> Lowrie in Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, Preface, op cit, p. viii

<sup>73</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p.85

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p. 87

<sup>75</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, op cit, p.43

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. 88

the moment does history begin' Haufniensis tells us, we can understand that he refers to the Incarnation. Also, he says, 'it is here that the higher begins, for at this point the spirit begins'<sup>77</sup>.

In his own life, Kierkegaard lived intimately with anxiety. In a Journal entry for 1837, he speaks of certain presentiments that seem to proceed everything that will happen and of an anxious consciousness by which *'innocent but fragile souls can easily be tempted to believe themselves guilty'*<sup>78</sup>. Kierkegaard was drawn towards yet anxious over Christianity. Lowrie quotes Kierkegaard from the *Journals*, where he equates his own inner anxiety (or 'despair': Lowrie) with 'the consuming power of original sin' which shows itself as a rising suspicion even while 'in the midst of the most favorable circumstances'. It is a despair which in itself can 'affect one more terribly' than any actual fact which might confirm 'the truth of the presentiment'<sup>79</sup>. This is 'anxiety over nothing', it is the very anxiety itself which orients human being to its eternal component.

### **The Paradox and The Wonder.**

With the god coming into existence we arrive at the absolute paradox,

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 89

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p. xii

<sup>79</sup> Lowrie, Walter, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*, op cit, pp. 73-4

Climacus says he himself is 'gripped with a new amazement', 'do we not ... stand here before *the wonder* [*Vidunderet*]'<sup>80</sup>. Such hypothesis as this, he says, could not have a human origin, but is in fact the wonder itself. So the hypothesis, as the development of his project of thought is now the wonder too in the same way that the god's teaching *is* the teaching, the message. This thought project not only involves Kierkegaard's imagination but might require ours too. This to and fro of doubling, redoubling, call and response permeates the text, brings us to the paradox. The perplexity caused by the paradox in turn brings us to a state in which Plato asserts philosophy begins, a state of wonder (*thaumas*).

Climacus presents the absolute paradox as a metaphysical crochet or caprice, that is as a perverse notion, a sudden and unaccountable change of thinking. As a 'caprice' the word is linked to 'sudden start' and is related to the concept of religious awe at the experience of something holy (or numinous<sup>81</sup>). It leaves the reason without any means of broaching the impasse of thought. The understanding might be said to stand agape and

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<sup>80</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, op cit, Hong, p.36, (Swenson (p.45) uses the word '*Miracle*', which brings it into a more Christian language whereas the word 'wonder' restored by the Hongs maintains a link to the Greek concept of wonder (*thaumazein*).

<sup>81</sup> Rudolph Otto in *Das Heilige* (The Idea of the Holy) of 1917, calls the moment: 'the subjective time equivalent of the encounter with the numinous' which refers to 'being filled with both awe and dread, a holy terror in the face of an object of worship.

agog at the paradox, suggesting a physical state, perhaps an unblinking hiatus before the moment.<sup>82</sup> In this state one might experience a suspension of one's habitual beliefs, or one may be astonished that the world appears just as it does and not otherwise. This attitude of surprise or wonder must be maintained and, Climacus says, we should not underestimate its power or importance. At its 'highest pitch' it wills the collision in thought and in turn wills the downfall of the understanding, of itself.

The understanding collides with the unknown and the reason is offended, it is at a standstill, a limit, which there is no reasoning beyond or through. It is only by an act of will that this stasis can be broken. It is not by explaining away the paradox for that would be to explain away the wonder, though the understanding may try to reconcile its thoughts it cannot lose the paradox. This must lead to a wilful 'act of letting go', Climacus says, 'Does it not have to be taken into account, this diminutive moment [Swenson: moment, *Smuler: Øieblik*], however brief it is - it does not have to be long, for it is a *leap* [*Spring*]. However diminutive this moment [Swenson: moment, *Smuler: Moment*], even if it is this very instant, this very instant must be taken into account'<sup>83</sup> Notice that in the *Smuler* the word '*Moment*' is used here and

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<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, Dr. Paul MacDonald points out: 'In Egyptian imagery the gods are pictorially distinct from humans by means of being shown full-face (not in profile); if you were to encounter a god you could tell because gods don't blink'

<sup>83</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p. 43

not *Øieblik*. Yet Swenson, perhaps confusingly, *does* use ‘moment’. The use of ‘*Moment*’ in the Danish indicates, as we have said, a phase or stage of something, here it indicates the brief phase in the process of turning towards the truth. For the final sentence, where the Hongs have ‘this very instant ...’ Swenson has: ‘even if only an instantaneous now, this ‘now’ [*Nu*<sup>84</sup>] must be included in the reckoning.’<sup>85</sup> However, in referring to the act of ‘letting-go’ as a stage in the process of the *leap*, it must also be referring to a moment of subjective appropriation. In this paragraph it is impossible to separate this mere ‘*Moment*’ from the *Øieblik* itself and this again may indicate the futility of attempting to define each occurrence of Kierkegaard’s use of the words.

The paradox resonates in consciousness as an offense: ‘all offense is a suffering’ [*lidende*] an unhappy relation, something to be undergone, a passion in its fuller sense, passive and acted upon<sup>86</sup>. But ‘If the paradox and

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<sup>84</sup> The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament tells us that: *Nu*, ‘now’, or ‘of the moment’ is an Indo-European word and derives from the Latin *novus*, with the connotation of something ‘new’, that ‘was not there before’. This is ‘one of the two most common words for ‘new’ since the classical period’; the other, *kairos*, the derivation of which is ‘uncertain, probably from a root *ken-*, freshly come or begun’. *Kairos* means ‘new’ in the sense of ‘what is new and distinctive’ as compared with other things’. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume III, Editor: Gerhard Kittel, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, p. 447

<sup>85</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Swenson, op cit, p.53

<sup>86</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p.293.

the understanding meet in the mutual understanding of their difference, then the encounter is a happy one'<sup>87</sup>. 'Through the moment [Swenson: Moment, *Smuler. Øieblikket*], the learner becomes untruth' and becomes aware of himself as so being, 'the person who knew himself becomes confused about himself and instead of self-knowledge he acquires the consciousness of sin ... , for just as soon as we assume the moment [Swenson: Moment] everything goes by itself'<sup>88</sup>. This awareness does not reinforce one's self-knowledge but casts doubt on the grounds of one's belief.

It is not in the confrontation with the paradox and the reason, it is not due to the offense caused, that man knows sin or that he has been in untruth, 'all offense is in its essence a misunderstanding of *the moment* [*Smuler. Øieblikket*]'<sup>89</sup>. Offense at the Moment of Incarnation, it seems, leads to the moment of conversion. When Reason yields to the force of passion, it becomes filled with wonder and discovers that '*the Paradox is* the Miracle! [Hong: *the wonder*]' It is the Paradox itself that makes the discovery (and *is* this discovery), Kierkegaard asserts: the Moment itself *is* 'the

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, p.49

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, p.51

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.51

## Paradox<sup>90</sup>

Climacus himself is confronted by these notions, he admits that he 'trembled' as he wrote these thoughts because he could not recognise himself in them. But this confusion is necessary he says, 'in order to be united in some third thing' - 'the understanding surrendered itself and the paradox gave itself'. He quotes Goethe - 'she half dragged him, and he half sank down', 'the understanding lies in that happy passion...' which is faith<sup>91</sup>. Described in *The Concept of Anxiety* as: 'a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy'<sup>92</sup>, this double move cannot be overcome by 'mediation', Kierkegaard says. 'Philosophy mediates, Christianity has the paradox'<sup>93</sup>, philosophy would explain away the paradox, the wonder, and the moment and this should be resisted.

Wonder is described by Climacus as 'the passionate sense for coming into existence, that is, wonder [*Beundring*]'<sup>94</sup>. The Hongs tell us<sup>95</sup> that

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<sup>90</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Swenson, op cit, p. 47

<sup>91</sup> Kierkegaard is fond of analogies concerning love, what he calls 'erotic love', that between two human beings, that which he himself felt he had to forego. In a *Journal* entry Kierkegaard says that if he had had faith he could have married Regine Olsen.

<sup>92</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. 42

<sup>93</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journal and Papers III*, op cit, p.399

<sup>94</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p. 80

*Beundring* is an archaic meaning of 'wonder' literally 'admiration' incorporating the senses of adoration, and devotion through which we can connect it to awe. Wonder is integral to the moment, Climacus asserts, even if an event seems necessary and inevitable. 'Even if what has come into existence is most certain, even if wonder wants to give its stamp of approval in advance by declaring that if this had not occurred it would have to be fabricated'<sup>96</sup> , still we cannot undermine its importance as a stage in the transition to the eternal. The stage of the transition marked by a state of wonder is thus described by Climacus: 'in any progress of this sort there is in each moment [*Smuler: Øieblik*] a pause, (here wonder stands *in pausa* and waits for the coming into existence). This constitutes the pause of coming into existence and the pause of possibility precisely because the *telos* is outside. If only one way is possible, then the *telos* is not outside but in the progress itself - indeed, behind it, just as in the progress of immanence'<sup>97</sup>. For *Øieblik* here Swenson uses the word 'movement' stressing that the moment referred to here is not the one of decisive significance to Kierkegaard, but that which is a stage in a progression. Where the Hongs use 'progress' he

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, notes to Interlude, p. 310

<sup>96</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p. 80

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p. 80



uses 'movement' again. But this discussion properly belongs in the section of the *Fragments* called *Interlude*.

### **Transition and the Leap.**

*The Interlude* in *Fragments* comes as a rest in the progression in Climacus' hypothesis, in the discussion regarding the contemporary disciple as witness to the historical event of the Incarnation and the disciple at second hand. Climacus says 'Stop a moment'<sup>98</sup> [*Stau nu et Øieblik*] (in a common use of *Øieblik*). *The Interlude* is compared to the intermission in a comedy during which the orchestra plays to suggest a passage of time between the events of the action. Yet it is 'not a mere filler between acts'<sup>99</sup>. In this case it represents 'precisely eighteen hundred and forty-three years'<sup>100</sup> that passes between Christ's death and the disciple in the present. Climacus has already indicated that this length of time between is nothing. *The Interlude* gives Climacus the opportunity to speak of the concept of 'coming into existence' outside of his progression of thought. He asks what the past and future mean in relation to the moment of coming into existence; what kind of change it is by which something comes into existence [*blive til*], i.e.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p.68

<sup>99</sup> Nielsen, *Where the Passion Is*, op cit, p. 128

<sup>100</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p. 72

from non-being to being, and when it can be said to occur.

*The Interlude* represents the type of pause in the reckoning that Climacus has spoken of earlier in the anecdote about the sorites paradox. The discussion takes place on the Socratic level of thinking, Swenson signifies this by not giving capitals to the words 'faith' and 'belief' [*Tro*] in this section. In *Smuler* the word '*Moment[er]*' is used here and not *Øieblikket* because *The Interlude* is a stage in the developing argument. Climacus has left off his subject for a while and resumes a Socratic position,<sup>101</sup> in which the goal is immanent within the learner and within the progression, whereas for Christianity the truth or goal is something outside the logical progression, time and human being.

In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Haufniensis speaks of the the term 'transition' as it is used in 'logical and historical-philosophical inquiries' in Hegelian thought. Along with 'negation' and 'mediation', he tells us they are 'principles of motion' and he asserts are unexplained by Hegel, their meanings are therefore 'presupposed', they remain 'secret agents (*agentia* [main springs]) that bring about all movements'<sup>102</sup>. Hegelian logic, concerned though it is with motion 'has never accounted for motion'<sup>103</sup> neither can it

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<sup>101</sup> Nielsen, *Where the Passion Is*, op cit, p. 128

<sup>102</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. 81-2

<sup>103</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers, III*, Section 3294 quoted in Hongs' notes to *The Concept of*

account for transition as Kierkegaard intends it, which is as 'pathetic' rather than 'dialectical' and belongs to the realm of historical freedom. It would, Kierkegaard says in an entry in the *Journals*, 'be significant to compare it with the Aristotelian teaching about *kinesis* (change)<sup>104</sup> and this he does in *The Interlude*.

Greek philosophy had words for different kinds of change: of place, of quantity, of quality, but all these presuppose the existence of that which is undergoing change, it concerns their essence rather than their being: 'This change then is not in essence [*Vaesen*] but in being [*Vaeren*]...' <sup>105</sup> In coming into existence, the change is from non-being to being, and this is the change involved in the god becoming man and again in the learner becoming a new being by rebirth in a moment of conversion and a leap of faith. It is the transition from possibility to actuality <sup>106</sup> .

When reflecting on the fact of something coming into existence, (Climacus uses the example of a star), its being there for our reflection is certain but the point of its having come into existence is uncertain. We can't

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*Anxiety*, op cit, p.241

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.241

<sup>105</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p. 73

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, pp. 73-74

see its becoming, its 'how', that lies in doubt. Therefore, Climacus asserts, a new organ of understanding is needed to provide the mechanism of understanding such a thing - that is belief or faith: 'This is precisely the nature of belief [*Tro*]<sup>107</sup> that it 'believes what it does not see'. The opposite of doubt or uncertainty, Climacus says, is not certainty but belief and 'the conclusion of belief is not a conclusion but a resolution'. This resolution takes place in freedom by an act of will and through a fundamental choice of one's final goal holding one's deepest values.

One must have trust enough to make a 'leap of faith': 'This ... is a pathos-filled transition, not dialectical... a pathos-filled transition can be achieved by every man if he wills it, because the transition to the infinite, which consists in pathos, takes only courage<sup>108</sup>. This transition takes effect in the 'fullness' of time, when the *quantity* of necessity and the impulse to change have built to a 'critical threshold' and must burst into something new. In *The Concept of Anxiety*, Climacus tells us that it is the spirit in man which acts to transform him in himself and produces this critical mass and precipitates the '*qualitative* leap'.

Kierkegaard's theory of transition, then, involves movement or change over time, an 'actual' change, something which is a result of 'historical

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 81

<sup>108</sup> Kierkegaard's *Journals*, in *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. ix

freedom'. The change from unbeliever to believer is brought about through the leap. The sudden leap is in a strange way both cumulative, yet automatic, active and passionate and also passive and acted upon. It is a suspension of the acts of reasoning and deduction, a surrender. To effect this transition to faith, one must take courage and yield. This is what Kierkegaard calls a 'letting go'. That the moment contains irreconcilable contradictions which lead to the 'leap of faith' is crucial to Christianity, whereas if we understand the moment in its contradictions by Hegel's concept of 'mediation' there is no 'moment'.

### **The Collapsing of Time.**

In considering *The Case of the Contemporary Disciple*, Climacus outlines how it is that the god imparts understanding to human being. By Climacus' reckoning, had the god not come, we would not have the paradox of the Moment nor the subjective moment born out of wonder at the paradox either. Climacus describes how the god elicits the love of mankind in an analogy of a king who loves a servant girl but is afraid knowledge of his station in life will scare her away, or cause her to love him for the wrong reason. The god is able to become human (unlike the king who cannot become an ordinary human), but is unable to send anyone in his place (unlike the king, who can send an emissary). The god's *presence* is essential to his teaching (it *is* his teaching, that is the paradox). That the god can be present in time *is* the teaching.

Another person could tell the learner about the teacher and his teaching but only the god himself can provide the condition for understanding it, and understanding the moment as decisive. This person cannot know what the god wants to teach because 'the god's presence is not incidental to his teaching but is essential', the presence of the god in the form not only of a human being but also of a servant 'is precisely the teaching', he can only reveal himself in his divinity by his works <sup>109</sup> . So the teaching gives the condition, the learner sees that this is the paradox, but because he sees it it doesn't mean that he understands it. The teacher can draw 'a curious crowd but neither these nor the city's 'professional teachers' who might want to question him are the learner. If he is the 'news of the day' in the city, subject of idle talk and chatter, he is as learner 'the eternal,' it is 'the beginning of eternity'<sup>110</sup> .

Kierkegaard continues in this vein asking whether there could have been 'more of a contradiction than that the news of the day is the swaddling-clothes of the eternal, is indeed its actual form, just as in this assumed case, so that *the moment* [*Øieblikket*] is actually the decision of eternity!' unless "but that the god provides the condition has already been explicated as the consequence of *the moment* [*Øieblikket*], and we have shown that the

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<sup>109</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p.55

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p.58

moment is the paradox ...'<sup>111</sup>

The impetus for the moment must come from outside. The presence of the god in time and as human being gives a historical point of departure for this 'decision of eternity' and it is as significant for the contemporary disciple as it is for ones in later generations. The centuries between are as nothing because the later disciple 'at second hand' can be in relation to the paradox in the same way as the one who is contemporary with the historical event. It is not a question of distance or closeness to the teacher in time or space, but of understanding.

So how does he come to an understanding of it? Climacus says: 'It occurs when the understanding and the paradox happily encounter each other in the moment (Swenson: Moment), when the understanding steps aside and the paradox gives itself, and the third something, the something in which this occurs (for it does not occur through the understanding , which is discharged, or through the paradox, which gives itself, - consequently *in* something ) is that happy passion to which we shall now give a name, although for us it is not a matter of the name. We shall call it *faith*'<sup>112</sup>. As we can see, Swenson has the Moment of Incarnation here which we could debate because here the but more interestingly now, Climacus names a third

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p. 58

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p. 59

thing, neither the paradox of the temporal meeting the eternal in the Incarnation nor the moment when the truth is subjectively appropriated in conversion but, as he says, in '*faith*'. We might interpret the italicization of this third thing as the our third moment, *the fullness of time* because Climacus goes on to say that 'faith, the object of which is the paradox - but the paradox specifically unites the contradictories, is the eternalizing of the historical and the historicizing of the eternal. Anyone who understands the paradox any other way may retain the honor of having explained it,'<sup>113</sup> Climacus says, but wouldn't necessarily understand it.

Following *The Interlude*, Climacus continues his thoughts regarding the non-contemporary 'Follower' (Hong) or 'Disciple (Swenson) at Second Hand'. Such a person can relate to the reports of the event given by actual contemporaries in the same way as the contemporaries themselves relate to the event itself. He asserts that it is of dubious advantage to be closer to the event because neither being there nor receiving the reports constitutes a true understanding gained through faith. For the secondary follower, even an eyewitness testimony would be no more than a historical report. It could make the person aware of events but not understand them in faith. Faith, Climacus asserts, does not proceed simply as a consequence of awareness, there must be a moment of subjective appropriation. The event itself neither

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p. 61



saves human being once and for all, nor afresh in each generation. These ways of thinking, he says, are quantitative but the change of concern to us is qualitative.

So, the first generation has the advantage of 'having the difficulty present', the awe or 'terror' of it, and 'the latest generation has the advantage of ease. But it is this very ease which 'begets' its own difficulty, corresponding to the difficulty of the terror, and the terror will grip the last generation just as primitively as it gripped the first generation of secondary followers'<sup>114</sup>. 'There is no follower at second hand. The first and the latest generations are essentially alike'<sup>115</sup>.

### **Resolution.**

The progression of Climacus' thought project resolves itself in the *Mora*<sup>116</sup>, which he tells us 'indisputably makes an advance upon Socrates'. 'We have here assumed a new organ: faith'. In becoming aware of themselves as having been in error, or untruth, in a sense that there is something which they lack, a person becomes a 'new creature' to the extent that they are more than they were. They acquire a new 'organ' or mode of

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid, pp. 98-9

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, pp. 104-5

<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p. 111

understanding. This is not only a new knowledge but constitutes a change in the make up of an individual, it is a wholly new ability, a new awareness. Together with this 'new organ', we have 'a new presupposition: the consciousness of Sin', we recognise that we have been in error, Climacus tells us. As a presupposition, this implies that the error is in us from the beginning, though we are 'ignorant' or 'innocent' of it we experience an anxiety of spirit which has no object in the world.

A 'new decision' is assumed, Climacus tells us, which is 'the moment'. In Swenson's translation he designates this as Moment, the Incarnation. This, as we have said, can be thought of as decisive for the 'eternal happiness' of human being because it provides the condition for all individual subjective moments which follow and can only follow from it; the god commits to human being in that moment. Yet, perhaps this ought to be *the moment*, so that it also includes man's committing himself in faith to the god. However, Climacus continues, we have also 'a new teacher', 'the god in time'<sup>117</sup> who comes into time from eternity and supplants the Socratic teacher. Such is the decision 'for eternity', the moment transcends its temporal point of departure and becomes decisive. These aspects and the idea that the god in time is the teacher and therefore the message is from outside of time, constitute the advance that Climacus claims over Socratic thinking.

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<sup>117</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*. Hong, op cit, p. 111

If it is our task to make Kierkegaard mean for us in our time, Kierkegaard's own task was 'translating Christianity whole and entire into terms of reflection ... he would not compromise ... would not yield'<sup>118</sup>. In the *Journals* Kierkegaard expresses the need to understand not what he must know, but what he must do, which is 'to find a truth which is true for me... the idea for which I can live and die'<sup>119</sup>. He makes the discovery early in life that that 'idea' is Christianity and 'what it means to be a Christian - in Christendom'<sup>120</sup>, and from this one point of departure, his Archimedean point, 'to understand a multiplicity of things'<sup>121</sup> .

Kierkegaard is living in a time and place where everyone would be assumed to be a Christian and so the notion of conversion cannot refer to a conversion to Christianity from another religious belief or from no religious belief but rather a return to, or a renewed commitment to, the faith into which one is born. This brought about by an intense experience of a new awareness. It is a very different thing to carry out the public expressions of being a Christian, to having an intimate experience of realisation regarding

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<sup>118</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Moment and Late Writings*, Editors: Hong and Hong, op cit, p. xxx

<sup>119</sup> The *Journals*, quoted in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed: Robert Bretall, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1946. p. 5

<sup>120</sup> *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, Ibid, p. xx

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p. xxi

that faith. Kierkegaard's ambiguous position in pursuing an individual style of philosophical and religious thought against the grain of the time requires effort and risk, 'a taking up of one's cross'<sup>122</sup> and a resolve he says, quoting the German mystic Jakob Boehme, 'in the moment of temptation ... not to have many thoughts, but to hold fast to *one* thought'<sup>123</sup> .

Kierkegaard emphasises that with venture and risk, courage is needed, in thought itself which 'has a certain setting-out-on-an-adventure about it'<sup>124</sup>, and in writing which for Kierkegaard was inseparable from life. A venture then is undertaken in the knowledge of risk and the weighing of decision. To venture too much, Kierkegaard warns, might attract 'punishment', to venture too little by 'weakly' 'coddling' oneself, to crave security is to be untrue to oneself. To not realise potential until too late to be realised, this is to be 'lost forever'. 'At that very moment the eternal in man goes out', but if he can rally before it is too late and 'wake up to himself' perhaps 'faith and confident boldness will rise up in him and he will be able to venture'<sup>125</sup>. What is required is a willingness to strive passionately toward

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, p. xxii

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, p.14

<sup>124</sup> *Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers, Vol. 4.* op cit, p.534

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p.535

something newly realised and fundamentally unknowable in a worldly sense. 'Worldly sagacity stares and stares at events and circumstances', but, Kierkegaard says, the moment never comes unless there is a 'breakthrough of the eternal'<sup>126</sup>. One might need to constantly renew one's efforts in a free act of will. The exercise of this freedom promises the possibility of such a momentous change that one in a sense can become another person, and further, another person with an infinite component. To reiterate what E. L. Allen has said: 'something out of eternity itself will have become incarnate in me!'<sup>127</sup>

In the *Preface to Fragments* Kierkegaard offers an ironic apologia for the book's being produced from outside the realm of legitimate scholarly endeavour. In doing so he identifies himself as an outsider, the implication being that it is the very position outside that enables him to speak of what is of critical importance to the time. He refers to *Fragments* as 'merely a pamphlet', it being 'impossible' that anyone would 'attribute world-historical importance to a pamphlet'<sup>128</sup>, indeed it being considered so would be a

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<sup>126</sup> *The Moment and Late Writings, Kierkegaard's Writings, XXIII, Historical Introduction*, op cit, pp. 338-9

<sup>127</sup> Allen, E. L., *Kierkegaard: His Life and Thought*, op cit, pp 144-145

<sup>128</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, Preface, op cit, p. 6

'danger' to his 'undertaking' and assume its author had more importance than he actually has. Anyone heralding the opening of a new era or epoch, he says, transporting themselves 'into a state of bliss' in their howling and yelling of 'era, epoch, era and epoch, epoch and era, the system' is indulging in 'irrational exaltation'. Such a one lives as if every day were 'one of those that occur only once in a thousand years'. Yet Kierkegaard claims he does not want to abstain from public activity which would be 'an offense' especially in 'a time of ferment'. Though, he says, 'It is not given to everyone to have intellectual pursuits coincide happily with the interests of the public'<sup>129</sup>, he recognises the need to speak publicly on the subject of Christianity. In *Fragments* and *The Concept of Anxiety* (as well as in works contemporary with these), he chooses an indirect method but, as we shall see, there came a time for being direct.

### **The Moment Pamphlets.**

The culmination point of Kierkegaard's own resolve in the matter of speaking out directly in the cause of his idea regarding Christianity came late in his life. He became involved in a public debate over Christianity and the church. Although he avowed 'no talent to write for the instant' on contemporary social concerns for the consumption of what he considers the chattering public and their fleeting interests, he published a series of

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid, p. 5

polemical pamphlets. 'When is the Moment?' is the title of a section in Volume 10, the last in the series published in 1855. The overall title was *The Moment* - sometimes translated as *The Instant*. The act of naming a series of pamphlets in this way even if in 'a lower-level analogy' of 'moment' indicates not a superficial intent but the importance of both the pamphlets and of the concept of 'moment' to his greater body of work. The title, the Hongs tell us, 'was intended to mean a judging of Christendom by the earnestness of the eternal. This judgement could first be expressed when the right man was on hand'<sup>130</sup>. Swenson calls them the 'pamphlets of the agitation'<sup>131</sup> and it is significant that these pamphlets are written under Kierkegaard's own name and not under one of the pseudonyms. They are direct rather than indirect communication. In answer to his own question in Volume 10, Kierkegaard says, 'The Moment is when the man is there, the right man, the man of the moment'<sup>132</sup>. Then 'the circumstances obey' this man. But 'there is nothing more certain of being excluded from ever seizing the moment than worldly

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<sup>130</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, notes, op cit, p. 821

<sup>131</sup> Swenson, *Something About Kierkegaard*, op cit, pp. 209-210

<sup>132</sup> *The Moment and Late Writings, Kierkegaard's Writings, XXIII*, Historical Introduction, op cit, p. 338

sagacity<sup>133</sup> .

### **Kierkegaard's 'blessed moments'.**

In a Journal entry for July 29, 1835 Kierkegaard 'writes of 'blessed moments' such as he experienced as he stood by the sea one evening, birds 'sang their evening prayer ... the few that are dear to me came forth from their graves, or rather it seemed to me as though they had not died'. He describes a feeling of contentment and an intense experience which others have commonly described having in an extraordinary moment:

'as though I were out of the body, wafted with them into the ether above - and the hoarse screech of the gulls reminded me that I stood alone, and everything vanished before my eyes, and I turned back with a heavy heart to mix in the busy world, yet without forgetting such blessed moments. - I have often stood there and looked out upon my past life and upon the different surroundings which have exercised their power upon me ... Seen thus in perspective only the broad and powerful outline showed, and I did not, as so frequently happens to me, lose myself in the moment, but saw everything as a whole and was strengthened to understand things differently, to admit how often I had blundered, and to forgive others.'<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, pp. 338-9

<sup>134</sup> The Journals, in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, op cit, p.3-4



This moment, with its essential inner and, we might say 'irrational' experience of a loss of self in relation to the spatial and temporal world seems to prefigure the fuller and more considered concept of 'moment' which we have investigated here. That Kierkegaard also has experience of a revelatory moment leading to a conversion event is evident from journal entries. This revelation, we might more accurately say, *re-converts* him to Christianity with new vision. In the *Journals* he describes having lived 'for several years a disorderly life, in revolt against his father and against God', but making a 'gradual return in the direction of 'his old home'. A culmination point is reached on his 25th birthday, 5 May, 1838, in a reconciliation with his father, 'followed a few days later' by an event significant enough that Kierkegaard marks the very time of day at which it occurs: 19th May at 10.30 am 'by a very striking and effectual experience of conversion'<sup>135</sup>. His phrasing of this as a 'return' to his 'old home' characteristically has a double meaning. i.e. Kierkegaard reconciles with his actual father and also returns to the church and to God, whose 'divine fatherly love'<sup>136</sup> constitutes an "Archimedean point" 'outside the individual's actuality and abstracting ideal

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>136</sup> Cited in *The Moment and Late Writings, Kierkegaard's Writings, XXIII, Historical Introduction*, op cit, p. xii

thought<sup>137</sup> . In the Historical Introduction to Hong and Hong's *The Moment and Late Writings*, the 'Archimedean point', is described as 'the fulcrum outside time and finitude whereby time and finitude can be moved. For Kierkegaard that 'Archimedean point' was the changeless love of God for every human being<sup>138</sup> . Having failed to 'find himself' in the dissolute outside world, he suffers a 'shipwreck' which turns him 'towards the highest things, the absolute', and such a moment 'bursts upon him in all its fullness but also in the responsibility which he feels he has.'<sup>139</sup> From this time on, as Kierkegaard writes, his obligation is to his own task, as we have said, of 'translating Christianity' into reflection or perhaps rather self-reflection. Such a point 'outside time' and the finitude of existence allows a new perspective regarding one's existence understood in a deeper, inner sense.

Kierkegaard does not discuss this revelation directly elsewhere, he even at times seems to mock such an idea. In *The Book on Adler*, Kierkegaard criticises Adler's use of his own revelatory experience to make a show of piety which backfires on him, for 'To chase after the applause of the moment is like chasing one's own shadow. It eludes the one who chases

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, p. xiv

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, p. xiv

<sup>139</sup> *The Journals* (1834-1842). July 19- August 6, 1840, Translator: Alexander Dru., in *Anthology*, op cit, p.13

after it'<sup>140</sup>. For Kierkegaard one's subjective experience is between oneself and God initiated only by God and is not something from which one can draw general truths about Christianity or church doctrine. Such an experience can have no meaning for any other person, it does not happen as the direct consequence of human thinking or suggestion and Kierkegaard does not use it to attempt to convert others who must find their own 'moment'.

In the following century Kierkegaard's texts are 'recognised for their essential modernity'<sup>141</sup>. We will see how the idea of the moment and its constituent aspects runs through the thinkers who follow even up to that period known as 'high modernity' almost a century later, especially in the case of the 'moment'. The moment carries with it other concepts which themselves become important to the existential philosophers who follow. We will find the emphasis on the individual self, on existential freedom and decision, on will and on the notion of existential anxiety. We will see the direct adoption of the new and significant meaning which Kierkegaard gives to existence, the primacy of individual action over reflection, passion over reason as being essential to understanding. We will encounter the ambiguities, contradictions and antinomies inherent in all concepts and which enable the springing forth of new concepts. Not least, the necessity of the

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<sup>140</sup> *Journals and Papers*, section 2741 Moment/Momentary, op cit, p. 207

<sup>141</sup> *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, Introduction, op cit, p. xviii

presence of the right 'man' of the moment is evident, 'Most men' Kierkegaard asserts, 'think, talk, and write as they sleep, eat and drink, without ever raising the question of their relation to the idea; this only happens among the very few and then that decisive moment has in the very highest degree either the power to compel (genius), or it paralyses the individual with anxiety (irony)'<sup>142</sup>.

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid, *The Journals*, p. 12

## Chapter 2.

### The Gateway named 'Moment'. The place of the *Augenblick* in Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of Eternal Return.

There is no evidence that Friedrich Nietzsche was aware of the work of Kierkegaard and there is therefore no direct progression of the concept of the Moment from that uncovered in the work of Kierkegaard to that which appears in Nietzsche. However, there are certain resemblances between them. Arising in both cases from the personal subjective experiences of both philosophers, the concept concerns the seizing of the insights gained and the application of its particular knowledge to one's life decisions. In both cases the Moment is elevated from the ordinary temporal stream to a relation with the eternal. The knowledge is imparted by a 'teacher' to one who learns. The learner at first hears but does not fully understand the revelation. Within this process the teacher is also learning. A similarity here is with the notion of the Moment as part of a process.

Kierkegaard discusses the Moment in terms of *kinesis*, or change through movement, insight comes during the stages of the development of the concept. For Nietzsche's Moment also, Zarathustra's realisation is a gradual process. The image of the Gateway which we shall look into itself requires the notion of a movement through. Kierkegaard's pause of wonder at the paradox can be compared to the clash of past and future in the gateway. Here arises the notion that we carry the 'now' or present along with

us. The possibilities of a 'decisive moment' are there within every moment, they are within human being itself as a nexus of past and future and of the site of all its possibilities.

For Kierkegaard, Christ's blessings are available in 'every moment' for the individual who is ready to receive them and learn the 'truth'. This phrase 'in every moment', as we shall see, is key to Zarathustra's understanding of Eternal Return. This concept in the form given to it by Nietzsche is unique, it provides fresh aspects of the Moment taken up in later philosophers<sup>143</sup>. In this chapter then, I consider the 'gateway' named '*Augenblick*' (Moment) as it appears in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche particularly in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883) (henceforth *TSZ*), where it is a central aspect in the doctrine of Eternal Return (*ewige Wiederkehr*) or Eternal Recurrence (*ewige Wiederkunft*) of the Same. *TSZ* is the text in which the doctrine reaches its culmination point for Nietzsche. In the figure of Zarathustra himself and his discovery and eventual teaching of the meaning of the doctrine of Eternal Return we can see the progress of Nietzsche's own coming to terms with this thought which, we are given to understand, arose from a revelatory moment of its own. This doctrine brings together other main concepts in his works, the concepts of Becoming, Will to Power and the Overman (*Übermensch*). To conclude I come back to Nietzsche himself and his own 'prodigious

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<sup>143</sup> However, it may be possible to trace elements even of this idea in Kierkegaard in his consideration of 'repetition' in the book of that name and in *Either/Or*.

Moment<sup>144</sup>.

Nietzsche's poetic, almost intoxicated language in *TSZ* plays constantly with interconnected imagery, not least where it centres on the name inscribed above his gateway: *Augenblick*. Instances of related words abound in the text: *Blick* (glance) which is equated with 'visions' and hints of ecstatic visionary states within *TSZ*. We find *Augenblinzeln*<sup>145</sup> (wink), *ein Augen-Blick* (a twinkling of the eye), and *Blitzen* (lightning), as the flash of insight leading to the affirmation of and desire for the return of every thing down to the smallest moment: '*ein Husch*', literally 'whoosh'. The imagery in *TSZ* is overwhelmingly of nature, of its cyclical form and the oppositions and ambiguities it embodies. Nature is often personified together with Life itself and it is they who perform these glances, winks and flashes. In doing so they indicate their reciprocal relation to Zarathustra, and by extension describe the deeply intimate, indeed immanent way in which Nietzsche sees man as 'in' the world.

Related to the image of the gateway moment, are those of bridges and tightropes and rainbows, arcing metaphors which serve the purpose of spanning a divide, and of maintaining the tension between one realm and

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<sup>144</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science*, Translated by Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books Edition, Random House, New York, 1974, section 341, p.273

<sup>145</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Also sprach Zarathustra, Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*, Philipp Reclam jun., Stuttgart, 1994.

another. This extends to images of things which are 'crooked'<sup>146</sup>, those which curve up and those which curve back on themselves and form the all important circle. These include Zarathustra's experiences of 'going down' (*Untergang*) or 'going under' (*Untergehen*), of demise and death, followed by ripeness bursting into new life. Images of light and brightness, sun and open sky are set against their opposites of darkness, heaviness, and obscuring cloud. A central motif of Zoroastrianism is the conflict between good and light, darkness and evil.

It is possible to find many images and such devices as the personification of elements in *TSZ* that can only have been derived from Nietzsche's familiarity with the newly translated texts of Zoroastrianism in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, in parts the very tone of *TSZ*, resembles the declamatory tone of the *Gathas* of Zoroaster himself, his exhortations and prayers of worship to the gods. I shall point to these elements as I go along and refer to certain Zoroastrian texts and rites as reconstructed by scholars of Zoroastrianism which suggest that much of the imagery in *TSZ* attributed to Christianity bears more evidence of influence from Zoroastrianism. It appears that rather in the same way that Zoroaster himself pieced together a

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<sup>146</sup> The often recurring word 'crooked' is, in the German, *krümmen*: to bend as in the arch of a cat's back, a curved surface, also to bend like a river, to wind like a street or path, to writhe like a worm, to be like a man doubled -up.



religious doctrine from selected older beliefs and his own revelation, so Nietzsche utilised aspects of ancient mythology, religion and cosmogony, and also the language of physics, science and cosmology to explore and develop a doctrine based on his own revelation of Eternal Return.

I will consider whether there is any important difference in the two terms 'Eternal Return' and 'Eternal Recurrence' and wonder also what 'Same' it is that comes again. I will describe the thought of Eternal Return as the vision and the weightiest encounter, its overcoming in the enigma of the Snake, and the full awakening of the thought in Zarathustra. We will find the affirmation of the doctrine of Eternal Return leads to the affirmation of Life itself and the acceptance of personal fate ('*amor fati*') in which lies its redemptive quality. The doctrine is a thought experiment, but, if entertained fully, it has the same power to shatter us as it would have if we believed it to be true. The moment becomes a site of decision not only in the sense of whether one comes to a resounding affirmation of life but also in the sense of its marking a point of difference and change. It is a site of judgement and of will, not only in the decision to accept the doctrine and will life, its temporal character and its possibilities, but as the force of will to power that comprises how we exist in the world. We could think of will to power as a life-force. Indeed Nietzsche understands life itself as will to power.

Nietzsche first mentions the idea of Eternal Return in *The Gay Science*, written in 1881. In this year, Nietzsche tells us the thought first burst upon him and made its indelible impression. Although in *The Gay Science*

Nietzsche speaks of a 'moment', the image of the gateway which allows the possibility of a fuller expounding of its meaning does not appear until *TSZ* in 1885-7. Perhaps its meaning had not fully revealed itself to Nietzsche until he wrote *TSZ* two years later. As 'something' says to Zarathustra when he is sent back into solitude having approached the gateway for the first time as a mere observer: 'O, Zarathustra, your fruits are ripe but you are not yet ripe for your fruits!'<sup>147</sup> It is in *TSZ*, then, that the doctrine achieves its full description and comes into the realisation of its significance and point of entry, the gateway named '*Augenblick*' (Moment). Zarathustra approaches the gateway more than once before the particular moment of the doctrine's revelation. The idea is brought to account by a process which has its own comings and goings, or returns; the thought is brought to fruition through the unfolding narrative.

The idea itself has a deep resonance for Nietzsche and he considers it with great seriousness as *if* it were actually true. To reap its effect we also must enter into belief of it if only for a moment. The thought of Eternal Return struck Nietzsche profoundly in that moment on the mountain, perhaps not quite 'out of the blue', however. Rüdiger Safranski in his biography *Nietzsche* tells us that even as a schoolboy Nietzsche learned about the notion of circular time in 'well-established philosophical and religious tradition found in

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<sup>147</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Penguin Classics, London, 1969, pp. 168-9

Indic myths, in the philosophy of the pre-Socratics and the Pythagoreans'<sup>148</sup>. Nietzsche's early essay *Fate and History* (1862) 'contained allusions to perpetual cycles of time presented in the image of a cosmic clock: 'Does the eternal becoming never reach an end? ... Hour by hour, the hand of the clock moves along, only to begin its passage all over again after twelve; a new cosmic era dawns''<sup>149</sup> .

Safranski tells us Nietzsche sought to temper his attraction to the mythological and 'his tendency to improvisation' by imposing 'regimes'<sup>150</sup> upon himself. Yet despite describing how Eternal Return might actually work in terms of physics, its importance lay in the experience of a profound human encounter with the thought, this being the only true way in which it can be understood. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche tells us that physics is 'only an interpretation and arrangement of the world'<sup>151</sup> intended for the satisfaction of our own requirements. Eternal Return is not put forward as a metaphysical or cosmological doctrine for this is not Nietzsche's way. It is Nietzsche's

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<sup>148</sup> Safranski, Rüdiger, *Nietzsche, A Philosophical Biography*, translators: Shelley Frisch, W.W.Norton and Company, New York, 2002, p.180-181

<sup>149</sup> Nietzsche quoted in Safranski, *Ibid*, p.223

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, p.32

<sup>151</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Penguin Classics, London, 1990, section 14, pp. 44-5

personal progress and suffering which produces and informs the ideas. For him feelings of rapture and moments of inspiration could be reached through art, words and music which he considered capable of giving access to and conveying the deepest of feelings, the profoundest ideas. It is often in the songs within the narrative of *TSZ* that we find the expression of its meanings.

Nietzsche chooses the figure of Zarathustra (Greek: *Zoroaster*), the Iranian prophet and founder of the ancient Persian religion, Zoroastrianism. He was in fact, as Mary Boyce tells us in *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practises*, 'the only founder of a world religion who was both priest and prophet'<sup>152</sup>. In *The Western Response to Zoroaster*, J. Duchesne-Guillemin explains that 'Iranian philology' had a part to play in all the competing schools 'in the science of religions' in the mid-nineteenth century, these included 'the 'naturalistic school' a 'combination of Vedic philology and comparative linguistics'<sup>153</sup>. However, he tells us that the prophet never became a popular figure in Europe, and he finds it 'significant that the only literary work that calls him by his real name, Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1885-7, should present a picture of him which is the almost exact opposite of truth',

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<sup>152</sup> Boyce, Mary, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practises*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1979, p.18

<sup>153</sup> Duchesne-Guillemin, J., *The Western Response to Zoroaster*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, p.23

although Nietzsche was 'not at all ignorant of the real Zoroaster'<sup>154</sup> .

In regard to this accusation we might compare a statement in Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*: 'I do not know what sense classical philology could have in our time if it were not untimely - that is to say, working against the time and thereby upon the time and, let us hope, in favor of the time to come'<sup>155</sup>. This passage is quoted by Richardson in order to find what Nietzsche might have meant when he asserts through Zarathustra that we must will the past. Richardson finds that the idea of 'a noble (distant) past is to be used as a model for improving the present'. A. MacIntyre agrees with this view, that the 'contemporary Nietzschean ... is condemned to an existence which aspires to transcend all relationship to the past'<sup>156</sup>, even though arguing that Nietzsche has 'misunderstood the past he favors'<sup>157</sup>. However this may be, Nietzsche's view seems to be that the works of the past should inform the future, and this allows him some license in

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p.21

<sup>155</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Untimely Meditations/II/F*, quoted in Richardson, John, *Nietzsche's System*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1996, p.114, and footnote 84.

<sup>156</sup> Richardson, John, *Nietzsche's System*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1996, , p.114, footnote 84

<sup>157</sup> MacIntyre, A., *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981, p.122

interpretation of his sources whether from Zoroastrianism or elsewhere.

Nietzsche does have a precise reason for using Zarathustra in the way he did which he lays out in his later work *Ecce Homo*, in a tone which

Duchesne-Guillemin describes as one of complaint:

‘I have not been asked as I should have been asked, what the name Zarathustra means in precisely my mouth, in the mouth of the first immoralist: for what constitutes the tremendous uniqueness of that Persian in history is precisely the opposite of this. Zarathustra was the first to see in the struggle between good and evil the actual wheel in the working of things: the translation of morality into the realm of metaphysics, as force, cause, end-in-itself, in *his* work...’

It was Zarathustra, after his revelation, who taught that contrary to an earlier belief, it was an ethical judgement at death which decided which souls would go on to Paradise and which would go down to ‘a hell of torment’<sup>158</sup>, and not ‘favour bought of the gods’ through the making of sacrifices and offerings to the relevant gods. It was Zarathustra who Nietzsche asserts :

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<sup>158</sup> Boyce, Mary, *A History of Zoroastrianism, Volume 1 The Early Period*, E.J.Brill, Leiden/Køln, 1975, p. 237

'... *created* this most fateful of errors, morality: consequently he must be the first to *recognise* it. Not only has he had longer and greater experience here than any other thinker - the history is indeed the experimental refutation of the proposition of a so-called 'moral world-order'- what is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, upholds truthfulness as the supreme virtue - that is to say, the opposite of the *cowardice* of the 'idealist', who takes flight in face of reality; Zarathustra has more courage in him than all other thinkers put together. ... The self-overcoming of morality through truthfulness, the self-overcoming of the moralist into its opposite - *into me* - that's what the name Zarathustra means in my mouth'<sup>159</sup>.

Nietzsche takes on the heroic stance of 'the first *immoralist*'<sup>160</sup> (elsewhere 'a-moralist') confronting morality itself and other thoughtlessly accepted ideals and values. For him, 'values do not exist', this is what is referred to as Nietzsche's 'perspectivism'<sup>161</sup>. Values are invented by valuers not discovered in the world and are therefore dependent on 'the nature of those doing the valuing'<sup>162</sup>. Ultimately values come from within an individual who is 'powerful

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<sup>159</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Ecce Homo*, Penguin Classics, London, 1992, pp. 97-8

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, p.97

<sup>161</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Introduction, *op cit*, p.19

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid* p.20

enough for the task'<sup>163</sup> of creating them. God is dead, and 'without God the only possibility of greatness is in its creation'<sup>164</sup>. There is no 'beyond' or behind of metaphysics. This use of Zoroaster, Duchesne-Guillemin tells us, 'became part of an attempt to emancipate modern man from Christianity'<sup>165</sup>, particularly in its monotheism. He tells us that dualism in religious belief 'emerges as an answer to the problem of evil'<sup>166</sup>, how can one God create both good and evil, must there not be a separate source of evil?

Zoroastrianism is a cosmic dualistic system which admits of a place for both good and evil and their on-going conflict. It is distinctive in that these are considered equiprimordial in this system, unlike other forms of cosmic dualism where evil is derivative and subordinate<sup>167</sup>. The struggle in 'the wheel' of things proscribes the possibility of a stable moral ideal 'world-order'. But it takes a certain courage to accept this and to proclaim it as a truth, rather than hiding behind idealism. In self overcoming born of the personal struggle

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p.23

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p.26

<sup>165</sup> Duchesne-Guillemin, op cit, p.22

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p.1

<sup>167</sup> My thanks to Dr. Paul MacDonald for this important distinction.



within an individual between an inherent good and evil, one 'creates truth'<sup>168</sup>.

By this way of thinking, Zarathustra, (and hence Nietzsche), is supremely moral in his rejection of the idea of a moral ideal toward whose attainment we ought to strive. There is no attainment of any ideal, only the striving is of worth. There is no end, no ultimate purpose outside of our world, 'no God as eternal existing ground of the world, no state of rest, no nirvana'<sup>169</sup>. For Nietzsche all these ideas lead to the nihilism which he considers defines his age, denying the value of this world by giving it to another. It is the 'weak men' like the Schopenhauerian pessimists and the 'afterworldsmen'<sup>170</sup>, the believers in an after life, whom he considers perpetuate false values and false hope. Against them, he believed himself to be one of the few courageous men with the strength to break 'old law tables', and to replace them with new thinking about the meaning of 'values'. The 'first immoralist' is, Nietzsche says, 'one who first creates truth', who is 'a world-ruling spirit' who is himself 'a destiny'<sup>171</sup>. We can legitimately read Nietzsche himself through his character Zarathustra. In *Ecce Homo*

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<sup>168</sup> Richardson, op cit, p.66 ftnt 103

<sup>169</sup> Stambaugh, Joan, *Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1972, p.4

<sup>170</sup> Such as Kierkegaard

<sup>171</sup> Nietzsche quoted in Richardson, footnote 103, op cit, pp. 66-67

Nietzsche goes on to ask: 'Have I been understood? - I have not just now said a word that I could not have said five years ago through the mouth of Zarathustra'<sup>172</sup>.

In the same way, Nietzsche considered the world itself as not directed to any final end, there being no teleological 'once and for all'<sup>173</sup>; with no stable state, time goes on and things recur. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes the 'vehemence of this invasion' of the thought of Eternal Return, he approaches it with serious respect and initially with some sense of 'helplessness'<sup>174</sup>.

Nietzsche entertains extremes of thought, turning an idea over to look boldly and with courage at its other face, realising that the two aspects belong to the same idea. He feels that he possesses the particular strength required to face this doctrine through which one can, in some way, overcome oneself.

John Richardson in *Nietzsche's System*, perhaps controversially, assigns a metaphysics or ontology to Nietzsche despite Nietzsche's insistent denial of these. Nietzsche's ontology, he asserts, is based on becoming rather than being, for Nietzsche 'being is becoming' and 'the theory of becoming is a theory about reality'<sup>175</sup>. That reality is temporal, and

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<sup>172</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, op cit, p.103

<sup>173</sup> Stambaugh, op cit, p.4

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p.4-5

<sup>175</sup> Richardson, op cit, p.74

Richardson argues that temporality is explicit in Nietzsche's important claims and implicit in 'other ideas'<sup>176</sup> such as will to power. Also, despite Nietzsche's attacks on teleology, which Richardson tells us were 'often and emphatic'<sup>177</sup>, Nietzsche 'uses the notion' of will to power 'to propose a new telic system as essential to all things'<sup>178</sup>. As 'wills to power' the essence of all things 'is a striving to grow or develop, but this growth never culminates in any stable end', beings are 'essentially changing.' Richardson refers us to Nietzsche's *Will to Power* 1064: "In a determinate moment of force, the absolute conditionedness of a new distribution of all its forces is given: it cannot stand still. 'Alteration' belongs to the essence, therefore also temporality'<sup>179</sup>.

The overcoming of oneself then can be seen in this context, Richardson says Nietzsche's 'distinction among master, slave, and overman crucially refer to how this will and these persons are 'in time''<sup>180</sup>. There is not necessarily a linear progression from one to the next of these three 'types', it is rather a dialectical progression, one can shift between types. These terms

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid, p. 71-2

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, p.21 footnote 10

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 76

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, p. 75

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 73

are not judgements of individuals by Nietzsche, he does not necessarily favour the 'master' type. Rather, they are necessary fluctuating states of being between changing types. But ultimately Nietzsche does posit an ideal future person who, as 'a structuring of drives, ... differently resembles each of his predecessors'<sup>181</sup>; he is a 'synthesis' of the 'master' and 'slave' types, the Overman<sup>182</sup>. Nietzsche considers human being to be in a state 'between animal and Overman'<sup>183</sup>, human societies are in a constant movement of rise and decline. Richardson analyses Nietzsche's concept of becoming as 'process' of force, as 'contextual' within temporality, and as 'intentionally' directed toward a future goal. This theory underlies Nietzsche's doctrine of Eternal Return as we shall see. However, as my focus is on the Moment, I begin at the gateway itself, symbol and written sign of the *Augenblick*.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p. 68

<sup>182</sup> Sheridan Hough who also does not see the *Übermensch* 'as a separate, 'superhuman' entity', equates it directly with 'an ecstatic moment (*Augenblick*) in the experience of the free spirit'. This moment she describes as one of 'of supreme blessing and self-acceptance is also a supremely receptive moment.' in *Nietzsche's Noontime Friend, The Self as Metaphoric Double*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1997, Preface, p.xxv

<sup>183</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, op cit, p.43

## The Gateway.

It is not simply a 'gate', but the 'gateway' (*Torweg* or *Thorweg*) which suggests a point of entry into something, it has the connotation of transition, of movement through. Several questions might be asked: When does the gateway appear and how can it be entered? What or where does it give access to and what or where from; is there a toll on the way through? Noticing that there is a gateway may not necessarily allow us access to it. Hugh J. Silverman points out, in his article *The Inscription of the Moment: Zarathustra's Gate* that another word for 'gate' is 'bar'<sup>184</sup> in the Northern English of Yorkshire which refers to a gate into a city. Such a gateway gives passage beneath its fortified walls, it might often be closed and disallow any entry or passage through. Then of course, there will be a time when it is open and the opportunity for entry is there for those allowed admittance, then it is for the individual to choose whether to enter. A gateway has a dual aspect, it seems to allow for movement in both directions, which side might be the starting point and which the destination is not clear. Initially the destination itself is not clear either. However, whichever side we are on, it takes us to the other side.

The gateway in *TSZ*, Zarathustra says lies on the 'roads' between

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<sup>184</sup> Silverman, Hugh, J. *The Inscription of the Moment: Zarathustra's Gate*, *International Studies in Philosophy* XXIV/2, p.58

past and future. If we think of ourselves as 'on' this road through life, the gateway would seem to intercept us, (as death intercepts us). If on our road of life we move from past to future, we might assume a one-way journey because time is irreversible despite the fact that we can, in a sense, bring the past back into the present by remembering or by inheriting its products. This is one way in which we can think a continual to-ing and fro-ing across the 'divide' of the present destroying the one-way movement. But continuing our linear line of thought, we can think of the future as passing through our present on its way to becoming the past. If, according to the doctrine of Eternal Return, the past will return in the future and, in turn, become present again, our to-ing and fro-ing becomes cyclical.

We, in the present, are the hub of this movement whether linear or cyclical. The present would seem to be carried with us as we move from our past toward our future, in the present (in us) the past and future meet. We describe ontic time, as consisting of past present and future. In our everyday experience of time there is no locatable 'now' that can be isolated and held on to<sup>185</sup>. There can be no 'gap' as such between past and future. It is not something self-sufficient but in a continual temporal flux and in the context of the rest of time, seemingly moving toward something. Yet there is something

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<sup>185</sup> As both Plato and Aristotle pointed out, and as we saw in the previous chapter, such a point is nowhere in the sense that it belongs to neither opposing state and is nothing of itself either.

identifiable and nameable as a moment when we come to consider our existence within time. We have already established that the gateway represents the moment by the name above it: *Augenblick*.

*Augenblick* in its English translation of 'the blink of an eye' suggests both the present perceived as swiftly passing and also speaks of some remarkable and sudden experience. An important event comes to presence, it draws our attention to it. In certain intense experiences, our perception of everyday temporality can be altered, it is common to note that in sadness or boredom or even in trauma, time seems to lengthen; in exciting and sudden experiences time might seem to pass swiftly. And so the ordinary present moment is elevated to a rich ontological concept: *Augenblick*, one which we can use for interpreting our existence and the chances and choices offered at certain decisive moments. The literal translation of *Augenblick* in German is 'glance of the eye'<sup>186</sup> which opens its meaning further to allow for 'seeing', in the sense of understanding and directedness toward some object or idea. Its connotation of 'vision' can also suggest the visionary 'seeing' which can

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<sup>186</sup> In a footnote to the *TSZ* text, Hollingdale tells us that the usual translation of *Augenblick* is 'moment' and that it is only 'by a quibble' that '*Augenblicke*' can also mean 'glances of the eyes', Nietzsche's wordplay, he says 'is lost in translation'. What is lost here is the possibility this opens to an interpretation of *Augenblick* as a moment of apprehension, in that we can take 'glance' in the sense of 'seeing' and take 'seeing' to mean 'knowing'. See William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye, Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, State University of New York Press, 1999 McNeill's book fully explores this meaning of the *Augenblick*.

accompany an ecstatic experience.

The idea we have of the gateway then, is of a site of passage from one place to another. Considering Nietzsche's decision to use the figure of Zarathustra as his voice for expounding the doctrine of Eternal Return in *TSZ*, and we can make an interesting comparison with the Zoroastrian *Chinvato Peretu*, Bridge of the Requiter, also known as Bridge or Crossing of the Separator. This bridge separates life and death and is the place of individual moral judgement, 'where each soul must depend, not on power or wealth of offerings in the life it has left behind, but on its own ethical achievements'<sup>187</sup>. The soul's 'thoughts, words or deeds' are weighed in the scales of justice, if the good weigh heavier than the evil deeds the soul is met by 'a beautiful maiden' and led across a broad bridge up to 'Paradise' on high. This maiden (*daena*, or double<sup>188</sup>) 'represents the personification of the soul's 'own conscience'. If, in the scales, the evil weighs heavier the soul is met by 'a horrid hag', 'the bridge contracts to the width of a blade-edge' and the hag scoops up the soul in her arms and 'plunges it down to hell' in the abyss below. A kind of limbo exists for those whose deeds just balance called the 'Place of the Mixed Ones' where those souls lead a grey

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<sup>187</sup> Boyce, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practises*, op cit, p.27

<sup>188</sup> Thanks to Dr. Paul MacDonald for pointing this meaning out to me.



existence, lacking both joy and sorrow.<sup>189</sup> This judgement is not final, the moment on the Bridge is not an eschatological one, for the dead await a further, final judgement<sup>190</sup> .

The bridge then crosses over the boundary between life and death, it is a site of moral judgement between good and evil and an event of decision between heaven and hell. Although a bridge crosses a boundary and a gateway stands at a boundary, they both mark a point of transition from one side to another. The gateway, like the bridge, marks a point of moral decision or judgement. They both, in a sense, span an abyss. The bridge spans hell and the gateway spans the present moment of Zarathustra's abysmal thought of Eternal Return. Goetz Richter, the translator of Eugene Fink's *Nietzsche's Philosophy*, renders 'at the gateway' as 'on the gateway'<sup>191</sup> which the German allows (*Ich sitze am Thorwege*), and which might allow us to link the image of the gateway and the Bridge of the Requirer. However, there are too many differences to be able to say that the image of the gateway in *TSZ*

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<sup>189</sup> Boyce, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practises*, op cit, p.27

<sup>190</sup> Boyce in *A History of Zoroastrianism*, op cit, p.233, tells us 'There is no trace in Zoroaster's own utterances' of when this 'will be brought to pass; but in the *Gathas*, as in the Christian gospels, there is a sense of urgency, of the end of things being at hand.' and see Zaehner, Robert Charles, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1975, p. 308 : 'An eschatological mood is prevalent '

<sup>191</sup> Fink , Eugene, *Nietzsche's Philosophy*, Continuum, London, New York, 2003, p.77

could derive from the Bridge of Zoroastrian texts.

One difference we can point to is that although the gateway is a passage between one realm and another, it remains in this world whereas the bridge, if we take it as the bridge of judgement at death, takes one from this world to another. However, both of these phrases suggest that progress through or across is yet to be made, the moment is still pending. Further complexities surround these images, Zarathustra says that human being is a bridge or rope (*Seil*: tightrope, highwire), between two states, 'man is a bridge and not a goal'<sup>192</sup>. Human being is both the bridge between man and Overman and those who pass over the bridge: 'You are only bridges: may higher men than you step across upon you! You are steps: so do not be angry with him who climbs over you into *his* height!'<sup>193</sup>. Zarathustra does not say that human being itself is the gateway, but he does say that man connects the future and past<sup>194</sup> and that happens in the gateway.

Zarathustra's gateway is a boundary marked by a 'boundary-stone'<sup>195</sup>, on which the name *Augenblick* is inscribed. All these boundary stones will

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<sup>192</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 215

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, p. 293

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p. 239

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, p. 210

one day lose their weight, Zarathustra tells us. Perhaps this might be taken as a suggestion that there will come a time when we will no longer need a marker to know the *Augenblick*. Then, the notion of transcendence between an earthly and a spiritual realm will lose its meaning, and we will no longer need a scale to determine good and evil because their differences will be overcome. We will come back to this notion, but for now, written in stone: *Augenblick* is the name of this boundary.

To return to *TSZ*, we find first mention of the gateway in the section called 'Of Manly Prudence'; here, Zarathustra is found 'at' the gateway sitting and waiting. Whether we take the translation of 'on' or 'at' the gateway, Zarathustra is neither entering nor crossing, he is, as yet, merely an onlooker, an observer:

'I sit at the gateway and wait for every rogue and ask: who wants to deceive me? This is my first manly prudence: I let myself be deceived so as not to be on guard against deceivers'<sup>196</sup>

Zarathustra cannot here 'enter' the gateway, he must 'go down' again and return to the gateway repeatedly before realising its significance or being able to engage fully with its content.<sup>197</sup> He awaits 'man' because it is only from

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid, p. 164

<sup>197</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, op cit, p. 91: 'If one has character, one has also one's typical experience, that always recurs.'

his level that a progress can be made, forward into the future of human being and upward to the higher notion of what human being can become, the Overman. Willing his own 'deception', Zarathustra wants to begin his progression from the human level, from the 'rogue' of mankind, the 'weak' creatures against whom he expresses great disgust. Yet he knows this 'going down' (Greek: *katabasis*<sup>198</sup>) is necessary, that being 'gladly ... deceived occasionally and settling for a little intoxication and effusive enthusiasm' by 'narcotic consolations' assures 'the capacity for constant change'<sup>199</sup>. One should not be on one's guard against change because it is a far better thing than stasis. The deceivers do not only deceive others, but are self-deceivers.

Zarathustra must take on the 'bad' traits of human being and endure them, it is necessary to will to become truly human<sup>200</sup> before one can will otherwise. He must wait for 'rogues' before he can arrive at the '*Übermensch*'; the time is not yet 'ripe'. Zarathustra's will is 'two-fold', it glances up and down at once from the site of his own possibilities. His

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<sup>198</sup> In Greek thinking, 'the process whereby Pythagoras, Zalmoxis and others were reborn as semi-divine beings (quasi-immortal) - it is a stage in the development of prophecy and ultimately *theosis*.' My thanks to Dr. Paul MacDonald for this information.

<sup>199</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Translator: Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books Edition, Random House, New York 1974, pp. 98-99

<sup>200</sup> Stambaugh, *op cit*, p. 53

'glance plunges into the heights' because he has a vision of something higher to strive toward, but, he says, 'my hand wants to hold on to the depths and lean there - that, that is *my* abyss and my danger.'<sup>201</sup> The 'abyss', the danger of being drawn down into it and the decision to go further are all his alone. But Zarathustra is not yet at the event of the deepest experiencing of his vision, nor is he yet the type of person who *can* experience its 'highest insight'<sup>202</sup>.

### **The Thought as Vision.**

The next time Zarathustra is at the gateway is in the section called: 'Of the Vision and the Riddle'<sup>203</sup>. This time he arrives there in the company of the Spirit (*Geist*) of Gravity, a creature 'half dwarf, half mole'<sup>204</sup>. It is at this point that the name of the gateway is brought to the attention of the dwarf: 'The name of the gateway is written above it: 'Moment.' ' The importance of its being 'written' or inscribed is investigated by Silverman<sup>205</sup>. Indeed, writing was

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<sup>201</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, op cit, p.164

<sup>202</sup> Richardson, op cit, p.71

<sup>203</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, op cit, p.176

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, p. 177

<sup>205</sup> Silverman, *The Inscription of the Moment*,

of great importance to Nietzsche, Safranski tells us how, in early autobiographical sketches, Nietzsche wrote with 'life force', and finally 'he wrote to stay alive'<sup>206</sup>. Something which is inscribed is, in a sense, written so as to be conspicuous, to be recognised and taken note of. Words inscribed in stone such as 'law tables' and commandments, are durable. This gateway it seems, must endure through eternity. The word inscription can also refer to the point where one geometric figure touches on another without intersecting. Perhaps we can think of the gateway as the inscription of past and future, two eternal roads abutting but not intersecting.

It is 'written into their stones and into the sides of their summits' that 'The highest must arise to its height from the deepest.'<sup>207</sup> Zarathustra has climbed a difficult mountain path in solitude, a path forcing upward with effort 'despite the spirit that drew it downward, toward the abyss, the Spirit of Gravity, my devil and archenemy.'<sup>208</sup> Paradoxically, Zarathustra is in solitude yet also said to be in the company of the Spirit of Gravity. Perhaps the dwarf represents Zarathustra's own gravity of spirit which has not yet left him, or is an instance of a spirit akin to the slinking 'demon'<sup>209</sup> which Nietzsche

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<sup>206</sup> Safranski, op cit, p.25

<sup>207</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, op cit, p.174

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, p177

<sup>209</sup> Giles Frazer remarks on the similarity to the eschatological expectation of the moment

introduces into our 'loneliest loneliness'<sup>210</sup> when the doctrine is first glimpsed in *The Gay Science*.

I make a slight diversion here to talk about gravity and weight. 'Gravity' can of course be interpreted in two ways, Nietzsche is referring to the weightiness or seriousness (*gravitas*) of the thought of Eternal Return and the way in which its seriousness in the guise of the dwarf weighs heavily on Zarathustra's shoulders, and how its weight is intended also to burden us. As Giles Fraser, in *Redeeming Nietzsche* suggests, there are questions about our individual life that recur to us periodically in reflective moments such as whether one might do something differently if given the chance again. 'If we grant for a moment that the eternal recurrence is a cosmological possibility'<sup>211</sup>, that this moment of my writing and thinking about eternal recurrence has already occurred countless times; 'and this slow spider that creeps along in the moonlight', we realise how weighty this question is. Fraser considers whether the individual's questioning constitutes a 'test' different from that of Eternal Recurrence because it concerns the repetition of a single past, one's own past, whereas Eternal Recurrence concerns the

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which will come like 'a thief in the night' from Matthew 24:42-51, in *Redeeming Nietzsche, On the Piety of Unbelief*, Routledge, London and New York, 2002, p. 116

<sup>210</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, op cit, sect 341, p.273

<sup>211</sup> Frazer, Giles, op cit, p. 113

coming of an infinite number of pasts. Yet does this really make any difference? It would seem not to when we hear Zarathustra say: 'if ever you wanted one moment twice, if ever you said: 'You please me, happiness, instant, moment!' Then you wanted *everything* to return!'<sup>212</sup> And when we consider that the becoming individual is part of the becoming process of the world as a whole.

Fraser speaks of the loss of weight<sup>213</sup> brought about by another of Nietzsche's concepts, the death of God. Fraser tells us that 'on one level Nietzsche celebrates the liberation from oppression brought about by the death of God. Nonetheless he fully appreciates that this freedom is, potentially, just as hard to bear ... nothing seems to matter quite as much as it did, 'without 'the weight of divine judgement... on each and every human choice.' This gravity must be restored somehow, Nietzsche must find some

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<sup>212</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.330

<sup>213</sup> Fraser uses Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* to look into the question of the weight of moral decision. In Fraser's reading communist Czechoslovakia represents 'a place of oppression' or 'weight' while Western Europe is a place without the oppressive presence of the state, and yet, because of that, a place where things don't matter as much. Liberated from the 'weight' of communist oppression, Kundera seems to say, 'one's emotional and spiritual life lacks gravity'. Another reading of this novel, however, might suggest that when Thomas flees Czechoslovakia his personal relationship takes on the weight of mutual responsibility. Whichever reading one prefers, as Kundera says, the weightiness of burdens is 'simultaneously an image of life's most intense fulfilment'.



way 'of generating gravity, of introducing judgement, without returning to divine judgement or divine weight.' This, Fraser tells us, is 'the purpose of Eternal Return.'<sup>214</sup>

To return to the gateway. The German *Geist* can be taken to mean both 'spirit' and 'intellect'<sup>215</sup>. The dwarf represents one interpretation of and reaction to the gateway from a heavy and 'ponderous'<sup>216</sup> perspective. He will not give up old beliefs too soon and has not the courage to be a creator, to think for himself; he has no vision. He pours 'leaden thoughts'<sup>217</sup> into Zarathustra's mind, telling Zarathustra that as a 'stone of wisdom' he has thrown himself high 'but every stone that is thrown - must fall!'. Under the force of gravity a stone falls down, 'it will fall back upon you!' says the dwarf, a warning that man cannot progress, that he is not 'becoming'. As Fink tells us:

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<sup>214</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit,, p. 115

<sup>215</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, see note 241 p. 234. *Geist* can mean both spirit and intellect in German and in *Human All Too Human* , p. 59 it also carries a nuance of morality and intellect. We will return to the discussion of this word in the following chapters.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid, sect 241, p.171

<sup>217</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.164

'All human projects must finally sink. An infinite ascent is not possible, because this is prevented by infinite time ... Just like gravity which exhausts the finite power of the thrower and destroys it ultimately, the infinite power of time exhausts and destroys all the powers of human self-overcoming which follow its path.'<sup>218</sup>

And Zarathustra's wisdom will rebound<sup>219</sup> on him, and crush him. The dwarf becomes silent but for Zarathustra this oppressive silence is worse than being alone oppressed by his own dreams and thoughts, 'wearied by his sore torment.'<sup>220</sup> Zarathustra carries the thought of Eternal Return in 'the abyss of himself'<sup>221</sup> but has not yet confronted it. Courage itself at last bids him stop and confront the dwarf, for the courage 'that attacks' is 'the best destroyer'<sup>222</sup>. Old values and nihilistic thinking can be destroyed. 'This courage kills death and facing life itself expresses a will to repetition'<sup>223</sup>. Zarathustra rallies

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<sup>218</sup> Fink, op cit, p.74

<sup>219</sup> 'krümmen': bent as in 'doubled up'

<sup>220</sup> A torment reminiscent of the Iranian ordeal by molten metal, incorporated into Zoroaster's notion of the final end of human being and the Last Judgement. See Boyce, *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, p.27

<sup>221</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.178

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, p.178

<sup>223</sup> Fink, op cit, p.75

himself to the challenge declaring: 'You! Or I!' Zarathustra, telling the dwarf that he is the stronger of the two for the dwarf could not, if he knew it, endure his 'abysmal thought' the point of entry of which they now arrive. The dwarf jumps to the ground, relieving Zarathustra of his weight. Zarathustra is making a return to the site, and yet it is as though it is for the first time that they halt by 'a' gateway. It is note worthy that this is 'a' gateway, not necessarily 'the' gateway of Zarathustra's last arrival. That seems to be now forgotten. Is there a sense in which the gateway is always there at any point on the path appearing when it is discovered, that we carry along with us the possibility of the gateway in the same way as we do the present of time, until they become noticeable as the Moment (*Augenblick*). The possibilities of the *Augenblick* reside in every moment.

The gateway, Zarathustra can now describe as having 'two aspects. Two paths come together here: no one has ever reached their end. This long lane behind us: it goes on for an eternity. And that long lane ahead of us - that is another eternity. They are in opposition to one another, these paths; they abut on one another: and it is here at this gateway that they come together'<sup>224</sup>. 'Eternity' here does not mean something other-worldly that comes into play when time ends, or refer to a realm that we enter when our temporal life is over. Nietzsche is referring to the infinity of time within which finite

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<sup>224</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.178

temporal events occur.

Mary Boyce describes how the Zoroastrian theology distinguishes between two types of time, 'unlimited time, that is, eternity, and limited or bounded time, within which the events of cosmic history take place'<sup>225</sup>. Time (*zurvan*), can be used as a noun but in a later period of Zoroastrian belief it came to also represent 'a god personifying what this means'. Boyce explains: 'The proto-Indo-Iranians ... had the capacity to personify what would now be termed abstractions, and to apprehend them as strong, ever-present divinities'. And so 'time' could be construed as 'a divine personality', and in the same way, other 'lesser 'abstract' divinities', such as 'Courage' which constitute qualities of various persons such as 'kings, heroes and prophets'<sup>226</sup> can be hypostasized<sup>227</sup>. Having this 'divinity' is dependent,

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<sup>225</sup> Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, op cit, p.230

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, p10

<sup>227</sup> There were also 'cult-gods' (Fire, the Waters, Haoma and *geush urvan*, or soul of the Bull) 'there were 'nature' gods, who personified some physical phenomenon: Sky and Earth... Sun and Moon ... two gods of the Wind,' note how Nietzsche speaks to the Sun and Sky later on as if they were persons or gods. Also the description of the world: 'possessing waters', the river 'held to pour down from a huge mountain at earth's centre into a great sea; 'Vourukasha', 'Of Many bays'' from the sea 'other rivers flow out and carry water to every land ... a mountain ... rose in the ... centre, and the sun ... revolved around it', sounds very like the world which Nietzsche's Zarathustra inhabits.

however, on their being true to *asha*, the 'natural law' which ensured that existence continue in an orderly way'<sup>228</sup>. We have established two different ways in which we consider 'time', we might substitute the deity for the concept; Time within which human events occur with their own temporal character. Fraser points to the difference in this way: 'The distinction that is often used to distinguish between the time of clocks and calendars and the theologically charged 'opportune' time is that between *chronos* and *kairos*, (*chronos*-time refers to the regular flow of measured time, and *kairos*-time to times-of-opportunity or times-of-decision-making)'<sup>229</sup>. Or, as stated in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*: 'As regards *Kairos* and *Chronos*, the one denotes time as the external framework within which all human action takes place, the other time in so far as it is ours, ... time in relation to the content which we give it, the moment which is decisive for each action'. This includes the idea of fate and can sometimes have a nuance of a 'propitious hour in the religious sense'<sup>230</sup> .

Zarathustra wonders further: '... if one were to follow them further and ever further and further: do you think, dwarf, that these paths would be in

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<sup>228</sup> Boyce, Mary, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, op cit, p 7

<sup>229</sup> Frazer, *Redeeming Nietzsche*, op cit, p.117

<sup>230</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume III*, Editor: Gerhard Kittel, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, p. 456

eternal opposition?’ Will these roads always be in opposition, or is there some concept by which we can unite them, for, if these roads are eternally opposed, how can they ever come together to form the circle of return? The past and future are absolutely different as ‘ends’. The past is finished and closed to further change but the future’s end is always still pending. The difference between end as *terminus* and as *telos* comes to light again here and infers a difference of will, one wills the future but cannot in the same way will the past because it can no longer be effected. Forever incompatible, paradoxically ‘(t)he incompatibles meet at their borders’<sup>231</sup>. Only in the moment can their contradiction be resolved, this is something we discover in a later chapter of *TSZ*, ‘On Redemption’. For now Zarathustra ‘approaches time immanently. Time is conceived as a sequence of moments’<sup>232</sup> .

Robert Gooding-Williams in *Zarathustra’s Dionysian Modernism*, asserts that the ‘contradiction’ of the paths of past and future implies that ‘if a moment has passed away into the past then it is not a future moment (a moment yet to occur), and that no future moment has passed away into the past’<sup>233</sup> . Zarathustra’s perspective of the present moment, Gooding-Williams

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<sup>231</sup> Fink, op cit, p. 76

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, p.76

<sup>233</sup> Gooding-Williams, Robert, *Zarathustra’s Dionysian Modernism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2001, p. 217

tells us, is that past and future are seen as 'spatially continuous extensions' of the 'place' of the moment, '*not* as existing 'before' and 'after' the present moment'<sup>234</sup> . This perspective is of a 'perpetual, or eternal 'now' relative to which neither earlier nor later moments exist. The present is 'mobile', a *nunc stans*.

Meanwhile, the *Geist* of Gravity representing the abysmal thought, cannot deal with the idea, he reacts against Zarathustra's words: 'Everything straight lies ... All truth is crooked, time itself is a circle.' The 'dwarf or mole' is a creature of the earth and oppressed by 'gravity', his response is in keeping with this. Fink tells us that 'the answer from the dwarf is, from Nietzsche's point of view correct; however, it is also much too simple'<sup>235</sup>. This is not merely an idea of the circularity of time we can observe in the world with its seasonal changes. The dwarf has reached the limit of his understanding and cannot go further but Zarathustra will yet go higher in his thinking and, paradoxically, deeper in his engagement with the thought.

In considering the 'reaction' of the dwarf, we might draw here on Richardson's description of Nietzsche's 'psychological types'. The dwarf is a figure which might be seen to represent the 'slave' type, an earlier stage in the becoming of human being as it progresses toward the higher state of the

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid, p. 219

<sup>235</sup> Fink, op cit, p.76-77

Overman. The 'slave aims at passive happiness'<sup>236</sup> Richardson tells us, which seems to be what the dwarf is aiming at here, his response is 'reactive' like the 'slave' type itself. His reply is too easy, he wants to rest on old ideas. In the same way in which things are in flux and constant change according to Nietzsche's theory of becoming, so each human type is in the process of change and therefore does not display all the aspects of the type all together. That would be to end its life of possibilities, to make it a finished thing or being and bring it to an end. The dwarf is a necessary character in Zarathustra's unfolding understanding of Eternal Return, for, 'must there not exist that which is danced *upon*, danced across? Must there not be moles and heavy dwarfs - for the sake of the nimble, the nimblest?'<sup>237</sup>

At the gateway Zarathustra continues, he has shown the dwarf the roads and now he brings his attention to the gateway: 'Behold this Moment!' he goes on, from which an 'eternal lane runs *back*' if, as Zarathustra says, 'an eternity lies behind us. ... Must not all things that *can* happen *have* already happened, been done, run past?', all possible finite temporal events must have already come into being if the past stretches back eternally. To bring this notion closer, he asks the dwarf to consider that 'if all things have been here before:... Must not this gateway, too, have been here - before?'

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<sup>236</sup> Richardson, op cit, p.62

<sup>237</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, op cit, p.215



Not only the past but this present moment itself, and even the future which comes toward it must already have been here and been forgotten.<sup>238</sup>

‘And are not all things bound fast together in such a way that this moment draws after it all future things? *Therefore* - draws itself too?’, Zarathustra asks. It seems to pull itself from out of the future, it comes constantly, continually offering its possibilities<sup>239</sup>, ‘in every moment’.

‘For all things that *can* run *must* also run once again forward along this lane. And this slow spider that creeps along in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you at this gateway whispering together, whispering of eternal things - must we not all have been here before? - and must we not return and run down that other lane out before us, down that long, terrible lane - must we not return eternally?’<sup>240</sup>

At the mention of returning eternally, the substance of the gateway moment is revealed, there is a howl of a dog<sup>241</sup>, the vision is broken, the

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<sup>238</sup> See Klossovski, Pierre, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, Athlone, London, 1997, on the necessary function of forgetting and *anamnesis* for the revelation of Eternal Return.

<sup>239</sup> [And if we recognise its possibilities it will draw us too in order to enter it, to cross over its abyss.]

<sup>240</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, op cit, p.178

<sup>241</sup> Hollingdale has a theory that the dog is from a childhood memory of Nietzsche, of a dog’s howling alerting him to an accident which had befallen his father and from which he died insane. Thinking that perhaps ‘events recurred within historical time’ Nietzsche

dwarf and the gateway and the glimpse of recurrent things, for now, disappear. Even though Zarathustra has put forward the thought, it is still like a dream to him. It is still not the right time of its culmination in him. The German *Gesicht*, apart from meaning vision, can also mean 'aspect' or 'face', the eternity of time has shown its two 'aspects' of past and future, its 'face' is return or recurrence, the vision in which it is shown to Zarathustra holds the insight that *everything* recurs, even recurrence itself. The gateway holds all of eternal recurrence, all of eternity in the Moment.

'And are not all things bound fast together?' Zarathustra asks. As we have said in our introduction, this doctrine draws together Nietzsche's other main concepts, those of Becoming, Will to Power and the Overman. Underlying all of these is the language of science, mythology and religion. Richardson tells us Nietzsche adopts terms from physics in order 'to build on the sense they have there'<sup>242</sup>. These are 'the drive [*Trieb*] or force [*Kraft*] as the typical unit of his will', from *Nachlass* material, Richardson quotes

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became afraid he too would die insane. However, it seems to me just as likely that the dog is taken from an early myth regarding the Chinvato Bridge. An 'old belief in some dangerous crossing-place, possibly of an underground lake or river' which predates the Zoroastrian bridge, involves 'a pair of 'four-eyed' dogs by whom the spirit must pass', they are the guardians of Paradise. 'In Iran too ... the place of the dogs is at the Cinvato Peretu' [Boyce, *History*, op cit, p. 116]

<sup>242</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 619 quoted in Richardson, op cit, p. 21

Nietzsche as saying: 'Everything is force'<sup>243</sup>. Nietzsche's notion of 'becoming' encompasses not only the unfolding of the world, the progression of the human race, its societies and the individuals within it, but also the way in which individuals live life; it is their moral will. Ethical conduct is judged on the Bridge of the Requirer, and in the gateway Moment.

Commentators<sup>244</sup> differ as to whether Nietzsche believed there to be scientific evidence for Eternal Return as a cosmological possibility, Joan Stambaugh tells us that Nietzsche approached the thought as a 'fact belonging to physics'<sup>245</sup>, before succumbing to the event of his profound inner experience of it. Yet later, in a fragment from 1885 in *Will to Power*<sup>246</sup> Nietzsche suggests that scientific explanation is a deception, despite the laws of physics such Eternal Return is an impossibility. As well as by 'rogues' we can also be deceived by 'the lawfulness which we see' in 'force' as 'a primal law'<sup>247</sup>. Scientific explanation can rob the inner experience of its impact, of its 'power'. Though cognisant of the 'physics' that might allow for

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<sup>243</sup> *Kritische Studienausgarb* /10/1[3], quoted in Richardson, *Ibid*, p. 21

<sup>244</sup> see Richardson, p. 283

<sup>245</sup> Stambaugh, *op cit*, pp. 33-4

<sup>246</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Editor: Walter Kaufmann, Random House, (no date), p. 547

<sup>247</sup> Nietzsche, *Nachlass, XII*: 58-9, quoted in Stambaugh, *op cit*, p. 51

Eternal Return, it is still the experience of entry into the gateway or moment that he, Nietzsche/Zarathustra awaits.

However, the underlying theory is that there is a limited quantum of force, energy or matter in the universe and unlimited time in which all possible 'constellations' of matter and therefore 'all possible events pertaining to both the animate and inanimate realms, have already taken place, and they will recur ad infinitum'<sup>248</sup>. Safranski quotes from Nietzsche's notebooks, the only substantial passage containing statements on Eternal Return found in later writings and which, he asserts, show that Nietzsche believed there to be physical evidence of the concept of Eternal Return:

'The world of forces is not subject to any standstill; because otherwise it would have been reached, and the clock of existence would stand still. The world of forces therefore never reaches a state of equilibrium. It never has a moment of respite; its force and its movement are equally great at any given moment. Whatever condition this world may reach, it must have reached it already; not once but innumerable times. ... Humanity! Your whole life becomes like an hourglass, always being inverted and always running out again - one vast minute of time in-between until all conditions under which you arose converge once more in the revolution of the world'<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Safranski, op cit, p. 228

<sup>249</sup> Nietzsche quoted in Safranski, op cit, p. 228

The terms 'clock', and 'hourglass' show us again that Nietzsche speaks about our existence within time, positing the 'possibility' of Eternal Return within ontic time. Yet, the same notion of 'force' is used to describe how human being itself moves toward the goal of becoming Overman, and within human being, how the becoming individual person can become 'what they are'. Life itself is the unfolding 'force'.

Zarathustra tells us, echoing Heraclitus, ' ... he is not believed who says 'Everything is in flux' (*Im flux* - in German 'river' and 'flowing'), he is contradicted by 'simpletons' who say 'the planks over the stream are values in place and bridges, concepts, all 'Good' and 'Evil': all *firmly fixed!*'<sup>250</sup> . But for Nietzsche, as it will be for Zarathustra, ' ... Have not all railings and gangways fallen into the water and come to nothing ...'<sup>251</sup> . Even the notion of 'value' shifts, the 'immoralist' denies any divide between notions of what constitutes good and evil, and evil must be incorporated into life, for 'to renounce false judgements, would be to renounce life'<sup>252</sup>.

### **The Vision as Enigma.**

The Geist of Gravity, unable to accommodate Zarathustra's thought,

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<sup>250</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 218

<sup>251</sup> Ibid, p.219

<sup>252</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, op cit, sect 4, p. 34

disappears and the symbol for the Moment, the gateway disappears with him. Zarathustra finds himself alone. He asks himself 'Had I been dreaming?', the vision is changed, he now sees a 'shepherd writhing, choking, convulsed', with a black snake 'hanging out of his mouth. Zarathustra tries to pull it out, but his efforts only make the snake bite harder. 'Then', he relates, 'a voice cried from me: 'Bite! Bite! Its head off! Bite! ... my horror, my hate, my disgust, my pity, all my good and evil cried out of me with a single cry'<sup>253</sup>. This is the voice of Zarathustra's horror, and of his 'disgust at man' which 'choked' him. It is his disgust at the pessimism of the 'prophet'<sup>254</sup> who said 'nothing is worthwhile', knowledge chokes''<sup>255</sup>, and at the idea that even the small men recur. In *Twilight of the Idols*, a footnote tells us that *Gewissenshisse* is an 'ordinary term' in German meaning 'conscience bites'<sup>256</sup>. The voice of Zarathustra's conscience, of decision and of will tells him to bite the head off the snake of knowledge, the heaviest, 'suffocating'<sup>257</sup> thought literally sticking in his throat. Robert John Ackermann tells us in

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<sup>253</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.180

<sup>254</sup> Schopenhauer.

<sup>255</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.235

<sup>256</sup> Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols, Maxims and Arrows*, Penguin, 1982,

<sup>257</sup> Fink, op cit, p.78

*Nietzsche, A Frenzied Look*, that the knowledge which the snake represents is 'conventional wisdom', and the snake, 'a symbol of the hierarchical rationality of learning and conventional morality'<sup>258</sup>. The snake which Zarathustra first encounters, in the *Prologue*, in the company of his eagle is coiled and therefore, Ackermann asserts, represents 'a form of knowledge without a privileged point'<sup>259</sup>.

Zarathustra listens to the voice of his horror and acts<sup>260</sup>. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he says: 'Somebody who wills gives orders to something in him that obeys'<sup>261</sup>. It is his will that enables the head of the black snake of horrific thought to be bitten off. But the shepherd must do this for himself, Zarathustra cannot help by pulling at the snake which only bites harder. The image also gives us the symbol of the horror of time biting into or eating itself in a perpetual self-consumption, an 'endless self-annihilating repetition of the

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<sup>258</sup> Ackermann, Robert, John, *Nietzsche. A Frenzied Look*, The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1990, p. 48

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, p. 57. Ackermann also notes that Nietzsche would have known 'from his sources' that in 'the religion of the historical Zarathustra, light, represented by an eagle, and dark, represented by a dragon, are in conflict'. Yet in this benign image of animals usually found struggling against one another, 'they function as patient and attentive interlocutors of Zarathustra'.

<sup>260</sup> As later he listens to the thought itself, or tells it to listen...

<sup>261</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *Nietzsche's Repudiation of the Will*, in *Critical Assessments*, FN, Vol... p.9

same content'. This is a truly nihilistic thought, with time indifferent to any event return is a vicious circle; our own footsteps wipe out the past, replacing them with the same. Time devours itself over and over in a 'meaningless, atomistically discontinuous becoming, a concept Nietzsche himself discussed and rejected in his earlier works as the self-consuming of time, Chronos who devours his own children?'<sup>262</sup> .

Zarathustra calls upon those around him to:

'Solve for me the riddle (enigma) that I saw, interpret to me the vision of the most solitary man! For it was a vision and a premonition: what did I see in allegory? And who is it that must come one day? Who is the shepherd into whose mouth the snake thus crawled? Who is the man into whose throat all that is heaviest, blackest will thus crawl?'

The one who is bitten and bites back, overcoming the 'snake', is the shepherd, and a shepherd is one who is 'over' (*Über*) men like a carer. He is the one who must grapple with the thought of Eternal Return and overcome it by his own actions. Zarathustra aids him in this. Yet it is Zarathustra himself who struggles with the thought, as only a prophet can grapple with his own message. Can it be that Zarathustra is helping himself in the person of the shepherd? He who can learn to overcome the thought is the future *Übermensch*, at play here we have the two senses of *Über* as 'over' and 'above'. The Overman may become the 'one of great health' which suggests'

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<sup>262</sup> Stambaugh, op cit, pp. 32-3



Fraser tells us 'internal transcendence'<sup>263</sup> . Ackermann asserts that the shepherd is 'surely a vision of Nietzsche himself as a young professor, being choked by the knowledge represented in the snake symbol .... Biting off the head of the snake eliminates the symbol of rational structure, leaving a snake like Nietzsche's positive coiled snake that flies with his eagle'. Ackermann says this scene is 'the remembrance by Nietzsche of his own past. The transformed, laughing shepherd is the author of *Zarathustra* and the image of the new affirmation'<sup>264</sup>.

Whoever the shepherd represents, he bites the snake and undergoes 'an existential transformation'<sup>265</sup>, he is 'surrounded with light, *laughing!*' as no man had yet laughed, Zarathustra describes it as 'no human laughter, it is the 'superhuman lightness of laughing'<sup>266</sup>. Gravity is overcome by a mood of levity, by the laughter of man transformed. 'And now' Zarathustra says 'a thirst consumes me, a longing that is never stilled' it is his longing for this laughter and he exclaims 'how do I endure to live! And how do I endure to die now!' between life and death: 'Thus in symbols everything called to me: 'It is

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<sup>263</sup> Fraser, op cit, p.79

<sup>264</sup> Ackermann, op cit, p. 57

<sup>265</sup> Fink, op cit, p.78

<sup>266</sup> Ibid, p.78

time!' But I - I did not hear: until at last my abyss stirred and my thought bit me'<sup>267</sup>. Zarathustra has never yet dared to 'summon' this thought to mind, 'it has been enough that I carried you with me!'. His thought was within him but not yet awoken. Now he has thrown off the heaviness of the thought in the shape of the dwarf and overcome himself so far but must yet go further; he says, 'overcome myself in that which is greater; and a *victory* shall be the seal of perfection!'. He must overcome himself in accepting the thought and therefore overcome himself as a man, on the way to becoming the *Übermensch*.

We have said that time and the thought of Eternal Return are represented by the snake, but further, what has choked Zarathustra, is his 'great disgust at man', it 'crept into my throat: and what the prophet prophesied: 'It is all one, nothing is worth while, knowledge chokes me'<sup>268</sup>.

The thinking of the doctrine as pessimism chokes, considering recurrence as the undifferentiated return of all things, great and small, even small men with weak thoughts that seem to mean that 'nothing is worthwhile. This too must be overcome, 'he succeeds in affirming eternal return when he bites off the head of the snake' spitting out nausea 'over the sickness of others' and 'also

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<sup>267</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 183

<sup>268</sup> Ibid, p. 235

Zarathustra's own sickness' and yet he expects 'to repeat again and again this becoming sick for the sake of creating a still higher health'<sup>269</sup>. Human being's struggle between sickness and health belong to the flux of becoming, dissolution must also be accepted if man is to achieve a 'still-higher synthesis'<sup>270</sup>

I want to pause here to discuss what the difference is, if any, between 'return' and 'recurrence' and what exactly might be meant by the 'Same'.

### **Eternal Return (ewige *Wiederkehr*) or Eternal Recurrence (ewige *Wiederkunft*) of what 'Same' (*Gleich*)?**

In German the words for both return and recurrence begin with the prefix *wieder*, (again or back). Return is *Wiederkehr*, *Wiederkunft* recurrence<sup>271</sup>. Nietzsche himself used both these terms interchangeably, Stambaugh says, though 'he uses *return* in most of the crucial passages'. That may be because he wanted the hardest sense of the doctrine to be engaged with, and as I hope to show, the word 'recurrence' gives us a way of

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<sup>269</sup> Richardson, op cit, p.138

<sup>270</sup> Ibid, p.139

<sup>271</sup> Stambaugh, op cit, p.30 asserts that Nietzsche uses these terms the other way about: *Wiederkunft* for return and *Wiederkehr* for recurrence, however a comparison of the English translation of the text of *TSZ* and the German in the *Reclam* edition does not bear this out. Neither is it mentioned by Richardson.

considering a more benign model of the thought. Stambaugh herself uses the word 'recurrence' more frequently in dealing with cycles as such because the word 'return', she says, seems too general to express Nietzsche's basic idea of constant coming again and again. We might bear this in mind as a hint, return is a general idea, recurrence more particular.

Another related word is 'repetition' (*Wiederholung*), which Stambaugh tells us Nietzsche 'almost never used' though it 'would have been less ambiguous' to do so 'if he had meant the exact repetition of all things ... in a determined series'. Nietzsche does in fact stress this aspect in some places, the same events in the same sequence. He does this when he wants the hardest sense, that which is most confronting and conducive to reflection to be considered. She says '*recurrence* is closer in meaning to *repetition* than is *return*'<sup>272</sup>, and recurrence suggests a continual series rather better than return which could mean to come back just once. However, the distinctions between 'return' and 'recurrence', Stambaugh says, are 'more sharply drawn in English' than in German and so do not figure too importantly in considerations of what Nietzsche himself meant<sup>273</sup>. As Nietzsche made no distinction between 'return' and recurrence' Stambaugh asserts it will not

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<sup>272</sup> Stambaugh, op cit, p. 30

<sup>273</sup> Stambaugh acknowledges the problem of the contradiction regarding spatial and temporal metaphors involved in Eternal Return, see p.106.

help us to do so either. But it seems there are distinctions which can be made.

One rather too easy definition might be to say that return is spacial, things return, recurrence is temporal, events recur. Anything including a person can return, turn about and go back to an original place or state; it is the same thing, the identical thing, that goes out as comes back in a completion of a movement. Stambaugh tells us a 'person cannot 'recur' home; an event cannot 'return', in the sense of going back to its original state'<sup>274</sup>. However, an event such as a festival or birthday *can* be said to return each year, we wish people 'many happy returns!'. Or perhaps it is rather the time for the event which returns though its content and detail differs. Events recur, they have 'run through their course' and occur or happen again, anew and perhaps many times but are not necessarily the same. We might say the festival returns in order to have another occurrence. A further complication arises when we remember that Zarathustra describes the eternal 'roads', which is a spatial metaphor, but he is referring to the past and future which are temporal. Richardson tells us that Nietzsche has an 'inclination to treat time as real: 'Space is like matter a subjective form. *Not* time'. The temporal then, is objective. Recurrence, (*Wiederkunft*) has the added dimension of the future (*künftig*). In phrases such as '*das künftige*

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<sup>274</sup> Stambaugh, op cit, p. 30

*leben*', which means 'the next life', the next or future life is usually assumed to be *some* kind of life but different from this life. '*Meine künftige Frau*', means 'my future wife', this woman will always be a future wife until marriage, it is her not-yet-realised condition.

Stambaugh says both words convey 'the quality of being unfinished and the quality of being interrupted. What has finished, ... reached its end, does not come again' and yet it would seem that Eternal Recurrence is exactly that, whole and once completed events are not 'once and for all' but come 'again and again', because there is no 'end'. 'Return' can indeed suggest a finished action. Then again she says 'What persists without interruption cannot come again, because ... it... never gets away from itself'<sup>275</sup>, it always is the same as itself. This seems to be pointing back to our considerations of Nietzsche's 'power ontology'<sup>276</sup>. Nietzsche's objection to Being<sup>277</sup> was that it referred to a stable state, but thinking of Being as becoming, as continual overcoming enables us to attribute an 'end' which is *telic* to Recurrence while finding that Return is as fixed as Being, i.e., Being whose 'end' is terminal. Perhaps we can think of Return as the circularity of

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<sup>275</sup> Ibid, p.30-1

<sup>276</sup> Richardson, op cit, p. 85

<sup>277</sup> Ibid, p. 68

Time itself, within which a sequence of events recur in continual renewal.

But what began it all? Was there an initial run of events and things following one another and then the whole sequence in the same order beginning again when all available permutations had been exhausted? But in that case how can anything new ever occur? This seems to imply that everything is already determined and leads to fatalism and nihilism, Nietzsche denies this deterministic view in order to have the doctrine yield an affirmation.<sup>278</sup> To help us with this seeming *impasse* where nothing new can occur, Fink asserts that ‘one could equally say this: all is still to be done, whatever we decide now, we will need to decide over and over again. Every moment has an importance which extends beyond any individual life... The importance of eternity rests in the moment.’<sup>279</sup>

Whatever, the distinctions between ‘return’ and ‘recurrence’, Stambaugh says, what is important is that amongst myths concerning circularity, Nietzsche is unique in his insistence on the fact that what comes again is the ‘Same’. Nietzsche did demand that the doctrine of Eternal Return

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<sup>278</sup> Interestingly, Boyce, in *Zoroastrians Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, op cit, p.11-12, describes the Zoroastrian cosmogony in which ‘the world was brought into being motionless and unchanging’, with a first, single animal, a first man and a first plant, after the sacrificing of these first to be created, ‘more plants, animals and men came into existence’.

<sup>279</sup> Fink, op cit, p.78

of the Same be taken literally in order to have its full effect. Nietzsche says the 'same' (*Gleich*) returns, and this word in German also means 'identical' so that the strict interpretation of this doctrine is that the selfsame identical things, events and 'we' return. It is this, most extreme element of the hypothesis which must be entertained, otherwise it loses all its strength. The model of recurrence which we have described is a more easily acceptable doctrine, allowing as it does for something coming again with variations because the future still holds possibilities not yet realised<sup>280</sup>. Time continues the same as ever, events are constant in their recurrence, what is constant can also be said to be the same. Stambaugh asserts, as does Fink, that what returns, what is the 'Same' is time itself rather than any content of time. The moment returns with its possibilities, indeed it is there as possibility in every moment. Human being is, in a sense, itself the moment or bridge because it is only through human being that time comes into question. In the gateway Moment, time is elevated to the importance of the eternal.

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<sup>280</sup> In Kundera's novel, *Immortality* (Translator: Peter Kussi, Faber and Faber, London, 1991, p.7) recurrence and becoming are represented by the repeated gesture of a wave of the arm adopted by a series of characters. At various times in the narrative it aroused an '*immense, inexplicable nostalgia ... and 'longing'*', a yearning, for something undefined. All the occurrences of the use of the gesture come as a surprise: 'That instant when Agnes suddenly, without preparation, lifted her arm in flowing, easy motion was miraculous... an unforgettable moment'. The gesture can be inherited involuntarily, or purposefully chosen and adopted. In each recurrence the gesture remains the same but changes in its significance to a each new user and in its meaning to each new recipient of its communication.



## The Hindrance and Redemption of 'It was'.

The element of time which is a 'hindrance' to eternity is the past, the 'It was'. There is a revulsion toward it, perhaps a bitter resentment (Nietzsche uses the French word '*ressentiment*'), until it is accepted. But further it must also be *willed*, willed to happen just as it did, again and again. This also forms part of the chapter 'Redemption' (*Erlösung*), which more properly means 'release'. One is freed from the hindrance of the past: 'To redeem the past and to transform every 'It was' into an 'I wanted it thus!' - that alone do I call redemption!'<sup>281</sup>. It overcomes the hindrance of the past self in order to be the creator or 'poet' of one's own fate. The uncertainty of chance is replaced with the certainty of joy, and the anticipation of the future: 'I walk among men as among fragments of the future: that future which I scan'. It is Zarathustra's aim to 'bring together what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance'.

What will come is a return, it is already one's own 'it returns to itself'<sup>282</sup>; and one's own self comes home after it has 'long been abroad and scattered'<sup>283</sup>, we can think of this as a 'coming into one's own'. On Zarathustra's 'way' it his own feet which extinguish the path behind: 'no one

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<sup>281</sup> Fink, op cit, p.161

<sup>282</sup> Silverman, *Zarathustra's Gate*, op cit, p.54

<sup>283</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.173

shall steal after you here!'. It is his own path, only his. 'Your foot itself has extinguished the path behind you, and above that path stands written: Impossibility.'<sup>284</sup> This second inscription, Silverman takes to refer to the same gateway, Moment, and to Nietzsche's recognition of the impossibility of the doctrine of Eternal Return. Yet it stands above the path 'behind' Zarathustra, it tells us primarily that it is impossible to go back in time. One cannot change the past but one can overcome it by willing its return and it is only the Moment which enables this. 'The determined, immovably fixed past is not subject to any effort of the will' but, '(o)ne can change one's will to sublimate that which cannot be changed'<sup>285</sup>. This inability of the will to will backwards is its suffering and its punishment, Zarathustra says: 'Alas the stone 'It was' cannot be rolled away: all punishments too must be eternal!'<sup>286</sup> This seems to support the claim that the inscription 'impossibility', written in the stone which cannot be moved refers rather to the impossibility of changing the past than the impossibility of Eternal Return. The impossibility of willing backwards leads to *ressentiment* and a 'perspective of revenge'<sup>287</sup> in human being.

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid, p.174

<sup>285</sup> Fink, op cit, p.76

<sup>286</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 162

<sup>287</sup> Gooding-Williams, op cit, p. 207

Gooding-Williams claims this as the second of three kinds of redemption in *TSZ*, which Zarathustra aims to 'reconcile'.

The first redemption according to Gooding-Williams is from the past which man is 'bequeathed' as the 'fragments' which make him what he is, i.e., a result of 'the play of accidents'<sup>288</sup>. What is inherited is already created; Zarathustra teaches that 'individuals will re-create themselves'<sup>289</sup> in the future. The second redemption is as we have said, the 'redemption of human will in perspective of revenge'<sup>290</sup>, the will's lack of creative power regarding the past means that this is not a 'creative redemption'. The will in this situation aims to free or redeem itself: 'out of wrath and ill-temper, the will rolls stones about and takes revenge upon him who does not, like it, feel wrath and ill-temper'<sup>291</sup>. This is, Gooding-Williams tells us, a 'prereflective will' which, in order to redeem itself, 'constructs a reflective, theoretical view of human existence' which brings a new understanding of redemption.

Existence, Zarathustra tells us in 'On Redemption', is punishment and misery. According to Gooding-Williams this is a result of existence being tied

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid, p. 206

<sup>289</sup> Ibid, p. 206

<sup>290</sup> Ibid, p. 207

<sup>291</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, pp. 161-2

to temporality, the unchangeable suffering caused by the past is what is eternal about it. Zarathustra's view becomes that 'revenge is rooted in the human experience of time'<sup>292</sup>, and along with change and loss these things are essential to life. The passing of time itself is to blame. The Schopenhauerian notion, however, that release from this suffering 'demands renunciation', or, as Zarathustra says, that 'willing become not-willing'<sup>293</sup> does not lead to the third redemption. That can only be achieved by the will becoming its own liberator, by redeeming the past 'creatively' and as Gooding-Williams says, to 'bring *itself* joy'<sup>294</sup>. The third redemption then is '*the redemption of the will through the act of willing backwards*'<sup>295</sup>.

### **Convalescence and Awakening.**

Perishing and coming again makes creators of those who will it, and this existence as willing is 'the will to power, the unexhausted, procreating life-will'<sup>296</sup>, Zarathustra says this is the secret which Life itself told him:

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<sup>292</sup> Gooding-Williams, op cit, pp. 209-210

<sup>293</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 162

<sup>294</sup> Gooding-Williams, op cit, p. 211

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid*, p.212

<sup>296</sup> Fink, op cit, p.137

'Behold,' it said, 'I am that *which must overcome itself again and again*'<sup>297</sup>. It is Life itself which is the same, comes continually, and continually changes and grows. Stambaugh tells us Will to Power is 'according to Nietzsche the essence of Life', he says '*This world is the Will to Power - and nothing else!* And even you yourselves are this Will to Power - and nothing else!'<sup>298</sup> It is not a goal toward which the will strives but something essential and empowering, 'it has to do with a continual, ever-increasing affirmation.'<sup>299</sup> The concepts of Will to Power and Eternal Return are 'inseparable'. Will to Power is the driving thought of Eternal Return (although as Stambaugh points out some commentators think them mutually exclusive) it is the 'virtue' in which the force is continually active. Will to Power works through every moment. Through Zarathustra, Nietzsche says 'Power' is a 'new virtue' around which is 'a wise soul' and around that in turn 'the serpent of knowledge'<sup>300</sup>.

When Zarathustra was a convalescent he spoke of his disgust<sup>301</sup> at the idea of 'eternal recurrence even for the smallest! that was my disgust at all

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid, p.138

<sup>298</sup> Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, op cit, 1067

<sup>299</sup> Stambaugh, op cit, p.15

<sup>300</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 180

<sup>301</sup> Richardson speaks of 'nausea' in this regard.

existence!<sup>302</sup>, that man himself was too small and weak a thing to desire its return, is part of the thought which is overcome:

‘Precisely the least thing, the gentlest, lightest, the rustling of a lizard, a breath (*ein Hauch*), a moment (*ein Husch*), a twinkling of the eye (*ein Augen-Blick*) - little makes up the quality of the best happiness.’<sup>303</sup>

*Ein Husch*, translated by Hollingdale as ‘moment’, more accurately means ‘shoo’, or ‘whoosh’. Swiftly passing, fleeting and momentary things, things ‘little’ in every way are to return. In *Will to Power*, in a piece from the Spring - Fall period of 1887, the thought of Eternal Return has changed, Nietzsche gives precedence to that which is eternally returning not eternally remaining the same: ‘Against the value of that which eternally remains the same ... the value of the shortest and the most transitory, the seductive flash of gold on the belly of the serpent *vita*.’

The convalescent Zarathustra begins to grow stronger, to overcome his weak and nauseous sickness, he possesses the courage for this. In this section of *TSZ*, the theory of Eternal Return is stated again. Zarathustra rises from his bed after seven days laying as if dead. He awakes but sees his

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<sup>302</sup>Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 236

<sup>303</sup> Ibid, p.288

'abysmal thought' still lying there. He bids it: 'Up, abysmal thought, up from my depths! ... And once you are awake you shall stay awake for ever'<sup>304</sup>. Zarathustra with new power has become 'the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle - I call you, my most abysmal thought!'<sup>305</sup> and the thought answers him and speaks<sup>306</sup>. Zarathustra speaks to and listens to his thought at the same time. Do we not engage with our thoughts in this way? This 'abysmal thought' which he has not yet fully engaged with has lain asleep in him, but now he awakes and wants to awaken the thought fully too. (We can hear in this an echo of Kierkegaard's existentially awakened spirit which makes man 'a freedom to himself'.) With words Zarathustra makes thought into idea, he rouses it with 'Listen!' because the thought must gather itself together in him before he can speak it. It is time for the thought to take shape, to come to consciousness.

### **Dear Dead Glances.**

In 'The Funeral Song', Zarathustra sings to his past moments of vision:

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid, p. 232

<sup>305</sup> Ibid, p.233

<sup>306</sup> Stambaugh, op cit, p.44

'O, you sights and visions of my youth! O, all you glances of love (*ihr Blicke der Liebe alle*), you divine momentary glances (*ihr göttlichen Augenblicke*)! How soon you perished! Today I think of you as my dead ones.'<sup>307</sup>

These 'glances' of youthful insight, by which we might take Zarathustra to refer to heightened moments of erotic or 'religious' experience, are swiftly over and moved into the past. These now 'dead ones' that he addresses have had to pass. 'Dear' to him and close though they remain they must perish and he must learn to will it, that everything is impermanent, continually perishing and coming again. Referring to these youthful moments Zarathustra considers himself a 'most-to-be-envied man', because, he says: 'I *had* you and you still have me'. These passing experiences perish but leave their impression. They return here in recollection, he inherits them as memory and they still have a grip on him in this present. Zarathustra refers to himself as 'heir and heritage of your love, blooming to your memory', he is both the one who inherits the moments and he is that which is inherited, the moments themselves which have shaped him. And Nietzsche's revelatory experience at Sils Maria, has, in the unfolding of the doctrine of Eternal Return through Zarathustra come into bloom. Zarathustra is himself a bridge between past and present, and it is he who allows the flow back and forth. Zarathustra accuses these dear dead glances and moments of unfaithfulness

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<sup>307</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.133



because they pass as all things do. He has not as yet 'learned another name' for them, he has still not yet discovered the meaning of his vision. He has determined that they return and that they are promised to one another 'for tender eternities', and that they will always recur together, yet there are further heights to achieve.

He realises that for now they are killed by his enemies, the weak and pessimistic men who would say that nothing is worthwhile in life as all things pass away. A glimpse of eternity came to him 'hardly as the twinkling of divine eyes - as a moment!'. The 'joyful wisdom', he says, has fled in the face of his enemies, he 'stood prepared for the finest dance: then you murdered my ecstasy with your tones!'. Yet this youthful intimation of a 'joyful wisdom' when his 'purity' spoke to him has made its mark. Zarathustra approaches the culmination of the affect of his vision, saying 'All creatures shall be divine to me ... All days shall be holy to me'.

Fink asserts that Nietzsche fails to elucidate his doctrine of Eternal Return through *TSZ*, that it is a mood (*Stimmung*) in the sense of a 'fundamental attunement'<sup>308</sup>. This attunement is perhaps 'a precondition of understanding the Eternal Return more primordially.'<sup>309</sup> In order to convey

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<sup>308</sup> Fink, op cit, p.80

<sup>309</sup> Ibid, p.80

such an attunement, Nietzsche via Zarathustra, resorts to the imagery of ecstatic experience: 'I know how to speak the parable of the highest things only in the dance' Zarathustra says, 'and now my greatest parable has remained in my limbs unspoken!' Yet, 'How did my soul arise again from these graves?' he asks, 'something invulnerable, unburiable is within me, something that rends rocks: it is *my Will*.'<sup>310</sup> He has had a fleeting glimpse of the meaning of his own eternity, and the section in *TSZ* which follows is called: 'Of Self-Overcoming'. The sense is not merely a moral one, since the will to power as life force runs through everything, life ends and rises again, it never really leaves. And since we have, through Fink, utilised some terminology of Martin Heidegger in this 'primordial' and 'fundamental attunement', we might also use Heidegger's phrase which describes this as the 'life force in all life'<sup>311</sup>. Even individual human beings are part of this continual coming, overcoming and coming back again.

### **Ecstasy, Affirmation, and *The Honey Offering*.**

From this point on *TSZ* has more and more elements and imagery which are suggestive of ecstatic states. Earlier in the text we have had

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<sup>310</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.135

<sup>311</sup> Martin Heidegger quoted in Allison, David, B., *The New Nietzsche*, in *Why Nietzsche Still? Reflections on Drama, Culture and Politics*, edited by Alan D. Schrift, University of California Press, California and London, 2000, p.75

instances of flying, (Zarathustra's 'shadow', has been seen coming 'through the air'<sup>312</sup>), there have been periods when Zarathustra has lain 'like a dead man'<sup>313</sup> which describe out of body experiences and trance-like swoons common to hallucinogenic drug use (or the sickness that Nietzsche himself suffers). There is a loss of self signified by Zarathustra's trance-like 'swoons', followed by a further 'loss', in a total absorption in the world, an ecstatic 'disindividuation'<sup>314</sup>. On the subject of ecstasy, David B. Allison in *Musical Psychodramatics, Ecstasis in Nietzsche*, tells us that it plays 'a principal role in Nietzsche's accounts of politics, art, myth and religion' and resonates, 'in his accounts of a joyful wisdom, the Eternal Return, the will to power, and the overman.'<sup>315</sup> Allison explains:

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<sup>312</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.152

<sup>313</sup> Ibid, p.233

<sup>314</sup> Allison, David, B., *Musical Psychodramatics, Ecstasis in Nietzsche*, in *Why Nietzsche Still?* op cit, p.73 also 'the deep ritual significance of this ... Dionysian transformation'

<sup>315</sup> Ibid, p. 66

'because our ecstatic response is of such a nature that we feel positively transfigured by the experience, an experience characterized by loss of ego and by a suspension of ordinary object relations, the very distinction between subject and object becomes blurred and attenuated, if not entirely suspended. The distinction that supports ordinary intentional experience, between the objective and subjective genitive, simply does not obtain in the ecstatic state'<sup>316</sup>.

With this in mind we go on to find Zarathustra has become the lightest of dancers, the sky has become 'a dance floor for divine chances' and Zarathustra is the dancer upon this dance floor of chance<sup>317</sup>. In 'The Second Dance Song'<sup>318</sup> Zarathustra directly addresses Life: 'Lately I gazed into your eyes, O Life ... At my feet ... you threw a glance, a laughing, questioning, melting tossing glance (*Blick*)'. This glance of life's eye is a look and a communication. Life has thrown him a challenge together with the question of whether he can accept it and with a humorous but warm, even loving attitude. Zarathustra calls the 'small men' 'accusers of life', but Life itself 'overcomes them with a glance of its eye (*Augenblinzeln*)'. Although in the English translation of *TSZ* the word *Augenblinzeln* is rendered 'glance of the

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid, p. 69

<sup>317</sup> When Zarathustra, (p.233) wakes from seven day 'swoon', he hears the noise of his animals and says: 'How sweet it is, that words and sounds of music exist: are words and music not rainbows and seeming bridges between things eternally separated?'

<sup>318</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 241

eye', that is usually the literal translation of *Augenblick*. What is being conveyed is still a 'look' and a communication, but it is a lighter hearted knowledge now rather than a heaviness of thought.

Life 'impudently' asks Zarathustra 'Do you love me?' and it asks this with a wink (*Augenblinzeln*). A wink is a cheeky kind of communication which suggests a hint (*Wink*) at something yet to be said, or understood between them. Life bids him wait, first it has its own accusing to do and it accuses Zarathustra of not loving it enough because he is planning to leave it soon. But Zarathustra is not one of the 'small men', he speaks into the ear of Life, telling her that he also knows something. And Life is amazed and says: 'You know *that*, O Zarathustra? No one knows that' and, the text says, they gazed at one another, this suggests a look of love. Zarathustra says 'Life was dearer to me than all my Wisdom had ever been'<sup>319</sup>.

It would seem that Zarathustra has revealed to Life his knowledge of Eternal Return together with its 'same' which returns, life itself. This shared knowledge melds them together as 'both proper ne'er do wells and ne'er do ills. Beyond good and evil ... Therefore we must love one another!'<sup>320</sup>.

Nietzsche the 'great immoralist' speaks through Zarathustra saying that when

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid, p. 243

<sup>320</sup> Ibid, p. 241-2

man as the creator, 'breaks the law-tables and the old values'<sup>321</sup> they are hated by the 'spiritually limited'<sup>322</sup>, the so-called 'good' who '*cannot* create: they are always the beginning of the end ... But he who discovered the country of 'Man', also discovered the country of 'Human-future'<sup>323</sup>.

If we think, as Richardson does, that despite Nietzsche's rejection of the idea of teleology, we can interpret his concept of Will to Power as an intentional 'directedness toward some end'<sup>324</sup>, and that all things 'are connected not by mutually affecting one another in the manner of mechanical causes but by giving meaning to one another, as voices in a conversational web'<sup>325</sup>, then we can think of life itself as Will to Power. 'Only where life is, there is also will: not will to life, but -so I teach you - will to power!'<sup>326</sup> . Power 'is a movement of growth or enhancement'<sup>327</sup>, it 'does not belong to the world

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid, p.229

<sup>322</sup> Richardson, op cit, p. 67

<sup>323</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.230

<sup>324</sup> Richardson, op cit, p.21

<sup>325</sup> Ibid, p.108

<sup>326</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.138

<sup>327</sup> Richardson, op cit, p.24

of being but to that of becoming<sup>328</sup>, of growth, 'the unexhausted, procreating life-will'<sup>329</sup>. Richardson points out that what is important for Nietzsche is the idea of 'growth from cycle to cycle' not merely habitual repetition, but periodic cycles like the natural seasonal world which continues to grow while in a process of waxing and waning. Finitude must be 'overcome', not by an after-life but within this world's life. Fink points out that it would be 'a denial of finitude' to look to metaphysics for transcendence. For Nietzsche infinity is not a metaphysical beyond, 'the world is the infinite' and 'it does not transcend things. It is immanent within them and embraces them'<sup>330</sup>.

We find here a communing with life, the intimate reciprocal relation is such that life itself speaks to Zarathustra and also listens because now Zarathustra has something to say back to life, they echo one another, life discovers and lives man and visa versa. Such should be the bond between man and world, Nietzsche elsewhere criticises the word 'and' standing between these two. Safranski speaks of the young Nietzsche's 'awful dreams' which 'refer to the notion that we do not so much live life as get lived by it...'<sup>331</sup> Here we find the idea that life has some end (*telos*) of its own to

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid, p.63

<sup>329</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.137

<sup>330</sup> Fink, op cit, p. 85

<sup>331</sup> Safranski, *Nietzsche, A Philosophical Biography*, op cit, p. 38

which it moves. The boundaries between different types of being are melted away, we are as alike other human beings as we are the unconscious elements of the world, the 'dead stones', all things share in return:

'All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love; if ever you wanted one moment twice, if ever you said: 'You please me, happiness, instant, moment!' then you wanted *everything* to return!'

At the gateway we enter the moment, the communicatory 'glances' of knowledge and we might say also that in the moment of 'affirmation' of the doctrine we have entered into the gateway like an agreement, into a contract with the idea or thought. In doing so one has accepted life itself even in the shape of return. If it is an 'ethical imperative' to live as if each day recurs, one must ask oneself whether one would want this particular moment countless times again and could live it such a way that one accepts it 'without horror'. In this way our present moment, our temporal existence which is crucial to becoming and will to power, is elevated to the 'dignity of the eternal', by us and from us, not by or from a God. One should not strive to be released from eternal recurrence, it is precisely that which must be affirmed and willed.

A result of this affirmation of life is an overcoming of, even a longing for, death as part of eternity: 'when, well of eternity! ... when will you drink my



soul back into yourself?'<sup>332</sup>, because, paradoxically it is destruction which allows creation, perishing which brings life again and suffering which is necessary to becoming. Contradiction and opposition are necessary, 'Evil is man's best strength', Zarathustra says, as essential to good as woe is to joy. And men 'must perish' as life necessarily becomes harder - 'only thus does man grow to the height where the lightning can strike and shatter him: high enough for the lightning!'<sup>333</sup>

Lightning (*Blitz*) can be taken to mean also to look or glance<sup>334</sup>, *Blitzen* 'to flash' in the flashing glance lays the communication of an insight (*Einblick*). The imagery of nature here brings clouds which obscure the clear sky and the sun of noon, but, like the full ripe globes on the vine they burst and 'give birth to lightnings'<sup>335</sup>, revelations and Yes -saying.

In the section of *TSZ* called 'The Seven Seals' or 'The Song of 'Yes and Amen', Zarathustra refers to himself as 'a prophet ... that wanders between past and future like a heavy cloud', he is himself the cloud which will

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<sup>332</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 289

<sup>333</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.299

<sup>334</sup> 'The in-turning of the flash of the truth of being is insight [*Einblick*]', William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye, Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1999, p. 216

<sup>335</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 300

give forth its insight, and it is he who lies between past and future, in this, his present, his gateway and Moment. Here he is 'ready for lightning (*Blitze*)', for its flashes which reside in the cloud's 'dark bosom', he and the cloud are heavy with seed, they are 'pregnant with lightnings (*Blitzen*) which affirm Yes!'. Zarathustra is 'ready for the prophetic lightning-flashes (*zu wahrsagerischen Blitzstrahlen*)' which will make him the prophet or teacher of Eternal Return, 'Oh', he says 'how should I not lust for eternity and for the wedding ring of rings - the Ring of Recurrence!'

Strength lies in being hardened toward the truth of the perishing of everything, of man and world alike. Nietzsche differentiates between what he calls 'Turkish fatalism' in which man might 'give up weakly and stand before the future with folded hands because he cannot change anything...' and '*amor fati*' or 'love of fate', we in fact become our fate (change is the reality we inhabit). In the opening of *The Gay Science*, from New Year's day 1882 Nietzsche writes:

'Amor fati: may that be my love from now on! I want to wage no war against the ugly. I do not want to accuse, I do not want even to accuse the accusers. May looking away be my only form of negation! And, all in all: I want to be at all times hereafter only an affirmer (*ein Ja-sagender*)!'<sup>336</sup>.

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<sup>336</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, op cit, p. 276

Zarathustra seems to rise and fall, to be near death and then live again, sleep and wake, go amongst men and back into solitude, these are also returns. But Zarathustra has reached the ripeness of his thought: 'he comprehended in a glance all that had happened between yesterday and today'. Between the past of yesterday and the future of tomorrow lies the present time and it is in this present moment that Zarathustra has 'become ripe', he says 'my hour has come! This is *my morning, my day begins: rise up now, rise up, great noontide!*'<sup>337</sup>. At the sun's zenith, the brightest time of day he clearly understands the revelation, and that it belongs along with life to his own fate. Through his courage he attains the 'victory' of 'the seal of perfection'. Zarathustra's experience has replaced the importance of time with eternity, all this happens in the Moment, on 'entry' into the gateway, it is the shape of eternity which is circular and the shape of perfection:

'What? Has the world not just become perfect? Round and ripe? Oh, golden ripe ring (*Reif*)'<sup>338</sup>, the German *Reif* can be taken to mean both ripe and ring. Closing the narrative at its point of ripeness in a ring, Zarathustra says that both the joy felt in affirmation and assimilation<sup>339</sup> of Eternal Return

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<sup>337</sup>Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 335

<sup>338</sup>Ibid, p. 288

<sup>339</sup> Stambaugh speaks of a 'relation of increase', in Will to Power and the Same of Eternal Return: 'It points to a dimension in which the More becomes an assimilating power' and in the corresponding footnote: assimilating - *Gleichen, gleich* - same. 'which makes possible

itself and also the woes of life must be willed to return: 'you everlasting men, loved it eternally and for all time: and you say even to woe: 'Go, but return!' *For all joy wants - eternity!*'. Joy itself is circular: 'it wants itself: it bites into itself, the will of the ring wrestles within it'. Now it is joy in the thought of Eternal Return which bites into itself as the snake bit earlier. This profusion of imagery surrounding the completion and fulfilment of the return culminates in another song - a 'roundelay'. These are short, simple songs with a refrain, Zarathustra's dance is now a ring dance whose meaning is: 'To all eternity!' - sing you Higher Men, Zarathustra's roundelay!' which ends: 'For *all joy wants - eternity!*, *Wants deep, deep, deep eternity!*'<sup>340</sup>

To love one's own fate, is to be a soul which 'plunges into becoming' with its 'current and counter-current and ebb and flow', its own heights and abysses, one which embraces everything that belongs to its existing and 'which out of joy hurls itself into chance'<sup>341</sup>. By owning all that has and may happen, Zarathustra has overcome the possibility of accident, for, he says, 'what *could* still come to me that was not already my own?'. In an earlier chapter of *TSZ*, entitled 'Redemption' Zarathustra says 'when my eye flees from the present to the past, it always discovers the same thing: fragments

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Eternal Return as *Seligpreisung* ('intense, joyful affirmation') op cit, p. 16

<sup>340</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p. 333

<sup>341</sup> Ibid, p. 225-6

and limbs and dreadful chances - but no men!'. His view of the past has changed since then, having overcome fatalism through '*amor fati*', chance is no longer 'dreadful', it is 'redeemed' and it is man who is the redeemer.

In the chapter 'The Honey Offering'<sup>342</sup> Zarathustra, in reply to his animals' enquiries regarding his happiness says that it 'is heavy and not like a liquid wave: it oppresses me and will not leave me and behaves like a molten pitch'<sup>343</sup>. Like the molten pitch of Zoroastrian trials and torments. His animals describe him as growing 'sallow' from 'sitting in your own pitch!' But he replies - 'Truly, I spoke slander when I spoke of pitch. What is happening to me happens to all fruits who grow ripe. It is the *honey* in my veins that makes my blood thicker, and my soul quieter'. Zarathustra's animals advise him to climb a mountain, which he agrees to do but saying 'take care I have honey ready to hand there, yellow, fine, ice-cool golden honey in the comb. For I intend to offer the honey offering.'<sup>344</sup>

There seem to be intimations here of the Zoroastrian Haoma rite. The Haoma plant was pounded to produce an 'elixir' which could be taken neat, but usually it seems, it was 'mixed with honey' or with 'milk' which word may

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid, p. 251

<sup>343</sup> Ibid, p. 251

<sup>344</sup> Ibid, pp. 251-2

actually refer to 'ox-flesh'. Haoma is a narcotic plant used ritually in Zoroastrian ceremonies and in fact the sacrificial rite of the Haoma plant was probably a central sacrament of the Zoroastrian liturgy.<sup>345</sup> The plant ritual seems to have been 'associated with' orgiastic 'intoxication'<sup>346</sup>. Zaehner tells us that 'With regard to the haoma rite as practised by the Zoroastrians themselves we read: 'All other intoxicants are accompanied by Fury (*aeshma*) of the bloody spear, but the intoxication produced by the Haoma is accompanied by Truth and joy: the intoxication of Haoma makes one nimble.'<sup>347</sup> Nimble enough no doubt to enable 'moles and heavy dwarfs' to be 'danced upon, danced across'<sup>348</sup>. Joy is a key factor in the experience of eternity in *TSZ*.

Boyce describes the 'peak of Hara' in Zoroastrian belief as being of 'inestimable benefit to the world, bestowing on it the life-giving sun and waters'. The deity Haoma 'is said to worship Mithra 'on the highest Peak on high Hara', called the 'chief of summits' this came to represent the place from where good souls began their 'upward journey' to heaven. On this peak, then

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<sup>345</sup> see Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, op cit, pp. 85-96

<sup>346</sup> Ibid, p. 38

<sup>347</sup> Ibid, p. 90

<sup>348</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.215

'is said to rest one end of the Cinvato Peretu, the Chinvat Bridge; and when ... the crossing of this bridge came to be regarded as depending solely on an ethical judgement, the Peak itself received yet another name, ... the 'lawful summit' and 'souls are judged at that place.'<sup>349</sup> What seems to be happening in *TSZ* is a preparation by Zarathustra for a ritual on the mountain summit where he reaches the final peak of ecstasy, at the place from where one crosses the bridge of judgement. Perhaps we might think of Zarathustra arriving again at the gateway, this time, at last, properly prepared to enter.

### **Back to Nietzsche, The 'Prodigious Moment'.**

Human being is inescapably in the world, that is why he seeks to 'get out of it', to transcend it in the mind. With all this discussion of ecstatic states surrounding the work of Nietzsche, might we suspect incidents of such experience in himself. Nietzsche's revelatory experience of Eternal Return finds its significance in hindsight, as Safranski tells us, Nietzsche found that it was not in 'the grip of the event' but later in 'the moment of composition' that 'significance might emerge.'<sup>350</sup> Not fully trusting the actual moment of inspiration 'he knew that he was slipping away from himself in the

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<sup>349</sup> Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism, Volume 1*, op cit, p.137

<sup>350</sup> Safranski , op cit, p.28-9

experienced moment and could discover himself only in retrospect<sup>351</sup>. Yet for Nietzsche the experience was all, the fount:

‘- Has anyone at the end of the nineteenth century a distinct conception of what poets of strong ages called *inspiration*? If not, I will describe it. - If one had the slightest residue of superstition left in one, one would hardly be able to set aside the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely medium of overwhelming forces. The concept of revelation, in the sense that something suddenly, with unspeakable certainty and subtlety, becomes visible, audible, something that shakes and overturns one to the depths, simply describes the fact... a thought flashes up like lightning... An ecstasy whose tremendous tension sometimes discharges itself in a flood of tears ... a complete being outside of oneself ... in which the most painful and gloomy things appear, not as an antithesis, but as conditioned, demanded, as a necessary colour within such a superfluity of light ... all existence here wants to become words ...’<sup>352</sup>

Nietzsche experienced his intellectual crises as realities and with emotion and commitment, as passions. In posthumously published notes<sup>353</sup>, he writes: ‘I speak only of things I have *experienced* and do not offer only events in the head’. Nietzsche experienced the events he describes, they

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid, p.30

<sup>352</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, op cit, pp. 72-3

<sup>353</sup> Quoted by Hollingdale, Introduction to *TSZ*, p.11-12



were not an after effect of experience but the experience itself for him and 'in the final analysis' he says, 'one experiences only oneself'<sup>354</sup>. Nietzsche's initial mention of his experience as 'the heaviest weight' appears in *The Gay Science*:

'What if one day or one night a demon slinked after you into your loneliest loneliness and said to you; 'This life, as you live it now and as you have lived it, you will have to live once more and countless times more. And there will be nothing new about it, but every pain and every pleasure, and every thought and sigh, and everything unspeakably small and great in your life must come back to you, and all in the same series and sequence - ... Wouldn't you throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and damn the demon who spoke this way? Or have you ever experienced a prodigious moment in which you would answer him: 'You are a god and I have never heard anything more godlike!...'<sup>355</sup>

*TSZ* can be seen to represent the resolution of the intellectual crisis Nietzsche was suffering in 1881. He writes to Peter Gast of new ideas which must keep him going for a few years more, they are new also in their level of intensity and he speaks of making 'direct attempts to go beyond the nihilist conclusions of the past five years without being obliged to retract any of them'. As with the rigidifying effect of *ressentiment* of the past, which one

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<sup>354</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, op cit,

<sup>355</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, quoted in intro to *TSZ*, op cit, p.19

must go beyond, not only affirm but will again, he surpasses the past without retraction.<sup>356</sup>

Such is Nietzsche's intensity of feeling over the doctrine that he felt it filled him 'with a *glimpse of things which put me in advance of all other men.*' Yet his thought always comes back to man. Man strives toward the Overman but must keep plunging down again because it is by his self-overcoming that the figure of the Overman can emerge. Man must overcome himself and that takes courage, Nietzsche says one must philosophise with 'a hammer', and Zarathustra extolls us to 'be hard'. The development of Nietzsche's thought is brought to fruition through the narrative of *TSZ*, and Zarathustra speaks for Nietzsche himself, both come to teach the doctrine. If recurrence is of all things, then not only every moment but this revelatory gateway Moment and the teacher of the doctrine also will return. Man comes to himself as recurrence, 'Where could future and past be closer together than with you?'<sup>357</sup> Zarathustra asks; man himself is the bridge between past and future, is 'the moment'.

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid, p.17

<sup>357</sup> Nietzsche, *TSZ*, op cit, p.239

### Chapter 3.

#### Karl Jaspers' "pure eye" of the fleeting moment'.

In uncovering the *Augenblick* in the work of Karl Jaspers, aspects discovered in our previous philosophers reappear. Jaspers is directly influenced by both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. He attributes his own ideas to the culmination of those of these previous philosophers and immediately we recognise in this idea Kierkegaard's collapsing of time between significant events. With both his predecessors he shares the notion of striving toward a goal which resides within oneself as one's 'source', for Kierkegaard it is existence in its relation to the eternal, for Nietzsche Life in its eternal perishing and becoming. Jaspers takes Kierkegaard's idea of existence to form his own term for this transcendent source: Existenz.

Jaspers follows Kierkegaard in considering how one can live properly 'for' or 'in the moment'. The idea of being 'in the moment' for Nietzsche we have seen demonstrated as the necessity of being in the gateway. In Jaspers we discover this idea as an adjective '*augenblicklich*' which describes the authentic way of being in the moment when it concerns one's Existenz. Again, in such a Moment the temporal instant vanishes and understanding is reached across time. As for both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche the understanding reaches a limit which causes its downfall and requires surrender and a leap of faith. Kierkegaard leaps to faith, Nietzsche to an acceptance and affirmation of Life, Jaspers to a philosophical faith.

Again this happens in a process; in Jaspers, Kierkegaard's leap becomes composed of stages in the progression of overcoming the limit and finding that every moment holds the possibilities which concern one's existential being. The notion seen in Nietzsche of *amor fati*, as acceptance of, even love of the fate which a Moment might hold for one, is met with again in Jaspers' work.

Jaspers discusses the *Augenblick* most thoroughly in chapter one of *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919), where he traces its origin in the thinking of Kierkegaard, and considers how the *Augenblick* can be thought in two contrasting ways, that is, as everything or as nothing. How one thinks of the *Augenblick*, or rather how one acts 'in the *Augenblick*' is an indication of one's attitude to life itself. This section in *Psychologie* is prior to the development of the concept of boundary situations which follows in chapter three. The *Psychologie* Jaspers referred to as a work of his youth, yet it contains the seed of his later thinking, and as Edwin Latzel shows in his detailed analysis in: *The Concept of 'Ultimate Situations' in Jaspers' Philosophy*<sup>358</sup>. Between these two works, the concept of boundary situations changes only in its categorical organisation, i.e. which of the boundary situations are instances of the general or specific type. This early work of

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<sup>358</sup> Latzel, Edwin, *The Concept of 'Ultimate Situation' in Jasper's Philosophy*, in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, The Library of Living Philosophers*, Editor: Paul Arthur Schilpp, Tudor Publishing Company, Northwestern University, New York, 1957

Jaspers is primarily one of psychology while the later works are of philosophy, and yet the two disciplines are hardly separable in a philosophy which concerns, the 'existential elucidation' (*Existenzerhellung*) of Being. From Jaspers' psychology emerged his philosophy, what he calls in *Existenzphilosophie*, 'Existenz Clarification'.

The concept of 'boundary situations' (*Grenzsituationen*) comes to its fullest explication in volume two of the three volume *Philosophie* (1932), entitled *Existential Elucidation* (*Existenzerhellung*). These 'situations' are variously referred to in translation and commentaries as: 'borderline', 'ultimate', 'limit', 'frontier'<sup>359</sup> or, as we find them in E. B. Ashton's translation of Jaspers' *Philosophie* 'boundary situations', my preferred reading. Boundary situations can be either general ones concerning one's 'historically definite Existenz', i.e. one's beginning and chance events, or specific situations of death, suffering, struggle, and guilt. Of these I will be concentrating mainly on the general boundary situations, although 'particular boundary situations ... affect each individual as general ones within his specific historicity of the moment'<sup>360</sup>, it would take us too far from our main topic of the *Augenblick* to discuss certain specific or 'particular' boundary situations in this chapter.

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<sup>359</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Truth and Symbol*, from *Von der Wahrheit* (1947), Translator: Jean T. Wilde, William Kluback and William Kimmel, Vision Press Limited, London, 1959, p. 33

<sup>360</sup> Jasper, Karl, *Philosophy II*, Translator: E. B. Ashton, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1970, p. 184

In relation to the boundary situation and the *Augenblick* I discuss Jaspers' appropriation of Kierkegaard's leap, and his assimilation and extension of the concept. In the light of this I go on to discuss an example from the *Psychologie* of an individual's moment of moral decision and moment of insight. Our being as 'accidental' produces the phenomenon of chance which offers human being 'choice', which in turn offers the opportunity to make those choices one's own. In one's 'historical freedom', choice is an act of will and a leap of faith.

According to Jaspers, what human being wants and strives toward is an awareness of Being. Such a move in the thinking of Jaspers is allowed by boundary situations. What the *Augenblick* ultimately represents, that which is at the base of the individual experience of such a moment is the movement from ordinary empirical existence to the transcendent Existenz. In the final sections of his *Philosophy*, Jaspers asserts, 'all great metaphysics ... has been *an articulated reading of the cipher script*, an explicit statement of what being says in existence'<sup>361</sup>. Jaspers elucidates the notion of the cipher (*Chiffer* or *Chiffre*) and cipher reading in *Metaphysik*, the third volume of the *Philosophy*, which speaks of the attitudes and ideas 'which converge upon

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<sup>361</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Philosophy III*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1971, p. 188

God or, as he would say, upon Transcendence<sup>362</sup>. The cipher is a metaphysical device by which we can represent and speak of those things which, as transcendent, have no actuality and are not available as knowledge in a scientific sense. In the final section of this chapter I will attempt to describe the *Augenblick* as one such cipher.

### **The Source (Ursprung).**

Jaspers' concept of the 'source' (or 'origin') is one of his several ideas which cannot be definitively described. In play in this discussion is the 'source' thought in various ways. In one way it means context, both that of one's own historical situation and origins, and of the philosophical tradition within which one thinks and appropriates ideas. When Jaspers elucidates the boundary situation of our own beginning in *Philosophy*, he is speaking of an unidentifiable 'first beginning' beyond our birth in that 'unlimited process of' evolution. He says, 'my beginning' is one in which 'I know that I have already been'. We owe to our background what we are while knowing that it 'moves beyond' our 'visible horizon'<sup>363</sup>. The source, even as context is more than the particulars of our finite existence, it is Existenz itself as an 'indefeasible dark

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<sup>362</sup> Wallraff, Charles, F., *Karl Jaspers An Introduction to His Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1970, p. 8

<sup>363</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 189

source of authentic being”<sup>364</sup>. As such it is that which ‘comes from beyond that makes its appearance within the world”<sup>365</sup>.

This source is not reached by methodical enquiry, it can only be approached indirectly, it is that to which human being proceeds in philosophising. But at the same time Jaspers stresses that it is ‘not a goal but a *source*’, it is a source ‘to which I transcend when I come to myself philosophically’<sup>366</sup>. The source, then, is also the self to which one can come in philosophical contemplation. The possibility of reaching one’s own ‘self-being’ is, Jaspers says, a potential ‘which I never made’, it was always already there. It is this background, not simply that of our birth that is ‘something in which I either keep faith with myself or deny and lose myself’<sup>367</sup>.

In existential decisions regarding what one does and what one is, which arise from certain boundary situations, one comes to one’s own source. In the chances and choices of the process of becoming, it is the

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<sup>364</sup> Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*, p. 83, quoted in Wallraff, op cit, p. 102

<sup>365</sup> Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube*, p. 119, quoted in Wallraff, op cit, p. 101

<sup>366</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 103

<sup>367</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 189



source which one aims for, as an authentic awareness of Being, or Existenz itself. 'Choice' is not simply that which emerges from a conflict of interests between which we must decide, it is 'an expression of my own innermost self - at once assertive and revelatory'. The freedom in which choice is made, Jaspers refers to as 'a free source [*freier Ursprung*]'<sup>368</sup>; in making choices I change my situation in the world 'but also create my own being continuously in my historical situation', in its changing from moment to moment. In this way one creates oneself, one *is* one's own source. 'It is not that I must act in a certain way because I am here and of such and such a nature. Rather I know that in my acts and my decisions I am the source at once of what I do and of what I most basically *am*'<sup>369</sup>. What one must or ought to do is communicated through the voice of conscience (*Gewissen*), which acts as a 'communication of myself to myself; an appeal to my empirical existence from the source of my self-being. No one is calling me; I am calling to myself'<sup>370</sup>. The source, then, is that from which we emerge and that toward which we aim. Transcendence (*Transzendenz*), is one of the two modes of Being that surrounds us (the other is World); it is 'The source and the goal out of whose depths alone we really become authentically human'<sup>371</sup>.

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid, p. 160

<sup>369</sup> Ibid, p. 160

<sup>370</sup> Ibid, p. 23

<sup>371</sup> Jaspers, *Rechenschaft*, 264, quoted in Schilpp, *Glossary*, op cit, p. xvii

## Philosophical Sources.

In *Existenzphilosophie* of 1941, Jaspers tells us that the perennial philosophical questions as 'formulated by Kant are 1. What can I know? 2. What shall I do? 3. What may I hope for? 4. What is man?' These questions are transformed, 'reborn for us in changed form and thus become comprehensible to us anew in their origin'. They are transformed 'due to our finding ourselves in the kind of life that our age produces'<sup>372</sup>, and they are from a 'source within the historical tradition'. We exist within this context and 'within the conditions of the time'<sup>373</sup>; and we must 'appropriate' this 'historical foundation' if what is handed down to us can have its 'rebirth' in the thinking we generate and be relevant to our own contemporary existence. But philosophising must also come from our own source, in that way 'all appropriation of tradition', Jaspers tells us, 'proceeds from the intentness of our own lives'<sup>374</sup>. One makes the tradition one's own, it is in 'practice', Jaspers says, that philosophy can 'become real' in 'the living appropriation' of the contents of philosophical texts. It never becomes 'real' or 'living' in mere 'theoretical contemplation' and indifferent apprehension. Knowledge must

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<sup>372</sup> Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie*, in Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, Meridian, Penguin Books, England, 1989, p. 166

<sup>373</sup> Ibid, p. 161

<sup>374</sup> Ibid, p. 160

‘concern the knower’, only in this way can its contents have what Jaspers calls a ‘resurrection’, a rising again in contemporary minds concerned with contemporary issues. Each age must come to its own understanding of how the history of philosophy bears on its own ‘fundamental problem of our philosophizing’; it ‘appropriates its history’<sup>375</sup>. In this way can it be properly assimilated in what we might think of as a return with variations appropriate to its time and to the individual philosophizing. Each individual in their own time must make their own response. ‘My own being can be judged by the depths I reach in making these historical origins my own’<sup>376</sup> .

‘It might seem to us’, Jaspers says, ‘that the truth of present-day philosophy manifests itself less in the formation of new fundamental concepts... than in the new sound it makes audible for us in old thoughts’<sup>377</sup> . The thoughts that constitute the unique product of Jaspers’ thinking are his ‘special contribution to existentialism’<sup>378</sup>: the boundary situation and the idea of the Encompassing. These join with the inherited ideas of the ancient philosophers, those whom Jaspers refers to as the ‘few great minds’, among

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid, pp. 160-1

<sup>376</sup> Ibid, p. 161

<sup>377</sup> Ibid, p. 161

<sup>378</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 142

whom are, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. In *Existenzphilosophie*, Jaspers speaks of 'The philosopher's invisible realm of the spirit', 'a hidden, non-objective community to which every philosophizing person secretly longs to be admitted'<sup>379</sup>. Institutions and doctrines, he asserts, cannot provide the 'freedom' necessary for philosophical discovery, 'only as an individual can man become a philosopher'. Jaspers himself does not develop doctrines, the struggle for truth to him was not in order to find an absolute truth, rather the very struggle is itself the truth. He did not wish to tell others how to live but how to become oneself: 'The essence of philosophy is not the possession of truth but the search for truth'<sup>380</sup>.

In philosophy's 'realm of the spirit', Jaspers says, 'we become companions-in-thought through the millennia, become occasions for each other to find the way to truth from their own source', although we 'cannot present each other with ready-made truth'<sup>381</sup>. Of the great philosophers, Jaspers says, their philosophies 'permeated their lives and comes to life

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<sup>379</sup> Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie*, op cit, p. 163

<sup>380</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Way to Wisdom, An Introduction to Philosophy*, Translated by Ralph Manheim, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1954, p. 12

<sup>381</sup> Ibid, p. 163

again in those who hear what they have to say'<sup>382</sup>. The great philosophers, he says are an encouragement to us but also, they 'make us humble'. They did not seek disciples, 'but men who are themselves'<sup>383</sup>. 'It is in their company' Jaspers tells us, 'that we can attain to what we ourselves are capable of being'<sup>384</sup>. Through these philosophers, 'we can enter into the core of philosophy'. The moment of philosophical insight brings together the philosophers of the past and those who follow them, transcending their actual concrete temporality, they become 'eternal contemporaries'<sup>385</sup>. We will recognise in this phrase another instance of the 'collapsing of time' which we considered in relation to Kierkegaard's unfolding of the 'moment', of the way in which for Kierkegaard the disciple at second hand is a 'contemporary' of the first disciples of Christ, despite the millennia that intervene. Here, however, in contrast to being a relation to 'the god', it is a rebirth and a resurrection of ideas joining with new ideas.

But this is not always straight forward. There is the difficulty of the communication of ideas which cannot be found by scientific methodical

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<sup>382</sup> Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers I*, p. xi, quoted in Wallraff, op cit, p. 18

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, p. 18

<sup>384</sup> Ibid, p. 18

<sup>385</sup> Ibid, p. 18

process. For a philosophy of existence this is its boundary situation. For this reason, indirect communication, as Jaspers tells us, '... is deliberately employed by philosophers like Socrates, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche who prefer the struggle for truth to possession of the truth, and dare not presume to tell their companions what to believe. Having no absolute truths to offer, they say nothing in a straightforward fashion, but 'merely stimulate people and make them attentive, unsettle them by rendering everything problematic, and refuse to provide any precepts, regulations or doctrines about how they ought to live'<sup>386</sup>. Kierkegaard time and again said he had no 'authority', in the sense that he could only speak from his own experience. Nietzsche tells us how badly a pupil would repay a teacher if he did not go beyond him and that he who calls himself his disciple never understood him.

Jaspers considers Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to be 'the two 'great exceptions', even 'destinies'. From them he takes over the stress upon the contingent existence of the individual and the deep conviction that philosophy must always remain an expression of the individual personality'<sup>387</sup>. Evident in Jaspers' concept of Existenz is the new meaning which Kierkegaard gave to the notion of existence, and is attested to by Jaspers in his *Reason and Existenz* of 1935: 'Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche questioned reason from

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<sup>386</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, p. 376-77, quoted in Wallraff, op cit, p. 140

<sup>387</sup> Hoffman, Kurt, *The Basic Concepts of Jaspers' Philosophy*, in Schilpp, op cit, p. 95

the depths of Existenz<sup>388</sup>.

It was the years of the First World War, Jaspers tells us in his *Philosophical Memoir*, that 'brought me an illumination by Kierkegaard. To him I owe the concept of 'Existenz'<sup>389</sup>, which ever since 1916 has governed my understanding of what until then I had been restlessly striving for<sup>390</sup>.

Walter Kaufmann in *Life at the Limits*, locates the place in Nietzsche where Jaspers sources his 'limit situations', in section 15 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's boundary points (*Grenzpunkte*) are expanded into

*Grenzsituationen*:

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<sup>388</sup> Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz, Five Lectures*, Translator: William Earle, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1956, p. 25

<sup>389</sup> In one instance 'existence' (in Danish *Tilvaerelse*), denotes the ordinary use of the German *Dasein*, without the later emphasis given to it by Heidegger; in its deeper meaning for Kierkegaard, existence (*Existens*) carries the connotations which give Jaspers his concept of Existenz.

<sup>390</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Philosophical Memoir in Philosophy and World, Selected Essays and Lectures*, Translator: E. B. Ashton, Regenery Gateway, Washington, D.C., 1963, p. 301

'Science, spurred by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly toward its limits where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck. For the periphery of the circle of science has an infinite number of points; and while there is no telling how this circle could ever be surveyed completely, noble and gifted men nevertheless reach, e'er half their time and inevitably, such boundary points (*Grenzpunkte*) on the periphery from which one gazes into what defies illumination. When they see to their horror how logic coils up at these boundaries and finally bites its own tail - suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, tragic insight which, merely to be endured, needs art as a protection and remedy.'<sup>391</sup>

The term shipwreck (*Scheitern*), also 'becomes one of Jaspers' key terms'<sup>392</sup>, and incidentally, we meet the snake again here, this time as 'logic' or, as Jaspers might say, 'reason', biting its own tail.

As indicated earlier in regards to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, the moment is something which can be considered in terms of their own life experiences which lay behind their ideas, and so it is with Jaspers. In *Existenzphilosophie*, outlining the course of his development in philosophy, he tells us that from his schooldays, he 'was guided by philosophical questions'. He sought guidance for 'self-improvement' in philosophy through 'the fundamental experiences of Being'. In 1913 he qualified as a lecturer in

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<sup>391</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, quoted in Kaufmann, *Life at the Limits, Photographs and Text*, Readers Digest Press, New York, 1978, pp. 92-3

<sup>392</sup> Kaufmann, *Ibid*, p. 93



psychology. Up until this time his life was, as he describes it, 'a spiritual striving', intent on his own life: 'on the high moments of intimate communion with those closest to me. Contemplation of the works of the spirit, research, continual intercourse with things timeless, were the purpose and meaning of life's activities'<sup>393</sup>. He was not concerned with the political happenings in the world, though in common with Kierkegaard, subject to certain presentiments: 'momentary forebodings of possible distant dangers'. These presentiments were borne out in 1914 with the outbreak of the First World War ending a 'naive' and 'paradisiacal' period of life. Philosophy, he tells us 'with its seriousness, became more important than ever'<sup>394</sup>, and through the rise and destruction of the Nazis when Jaspers was considered an enemy of the state he never stopped his philosophical enquiries. In his *Self-Portrait* of 1966/7<sup>395</sup> Jaspers relates how he comes to see that a philosopher cannot but concern himself with everything', including the actualities of concrete political existence.

Jaspers' thoughts on philosophy, its origins in early thinkers and the boundaries that it approaches inform us as to how boundary situations and

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<sup>393</sup> Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie*, op cit, p. 160

<sup>394</sup> Ibid, p. 160

<sup>395</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Self-Portrait*, in *Karl Jaspers Today*, Edited by Leonard H Ehrlich and Richard Wisser, University Press of America, Washington, D.C., 1988.

moments of insight lie at the very heart of philosophising. In his *Way to Wisdom (Einführung in die Philosophie)* (1950), Jaspers tells us that philosophising issues from an 'inner drive'<sup>396</sup> of individual human being toward the Transcendent. He does not speak of transcendence in a religious sense. In fact he does not agree with many tenets of the Christian church. He does not believe in revelation and therefore we cannot consider the *Augenblick* in Jaspers' work as gaining significance from an experience of revelation or conversion as we can with Kierkegaard. But what Jaspers does speak of is 'philosophical faith' and this as 'the source that has lived as long as men have been thinking'<sup>397</sup> .

'Philosophy is thinking by which I become aware of Being itself through inner action; or rather it is the thinking which prepares the ascent to Transcendence, remembers it, and in an exalted moment accomplishes the ascent itself as a thinking act of the whole human being.'<sup>398</sup>

The insights into Being to which these can lead are not definable or explicable through scientific knowledge, but are rather an awareness in which

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<sup>396</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Way to Wisdom*, op cit, p. 24

<sup>397</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, Translator: E. B. Ashton, Collins, London, 1967, Preface, p. viii

<sup>398</sup> Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie*, op cit, p. 172

authentic being is awakened to itself. Such awareness is an idea which 'turns us about'<sup>399</sup>, and as we have seen, this phrase indicates a 'conversion'<sup>400</sup>. As well as these philosophical insights regarding Being, one can come to insights and decisions regarding the conduct of one's own life; these two aspects are irrevocably linked and can only come from one's own 'source'.

It is important to remember however, that this does not deny any place to the importance of contemporary life in the present. This 'realm of the spirit' and the 'life of truth' that philosophers can have within it does not remove them from the world, but makes them 'effective for serving' the 'historical present'. Our present experience is made up of the experiences of those that came before, and new events which occur - 'those which become a living experience for the first time this very day.'<sup>401</sup> 'Kierkegaard located consciousness both of the Source which is so indispensable to us today,' Jaspers tells us, 'and of our own historical situation.'<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, op cit, p. 34

<sup>400</sup> Ibid, p. 60

<sup>401</sup> Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie*, op cit, p. 163

<sup>402</sup> Ibid, p. 164

## **Augenblick in Psychologie der Weltanschauungen.**

I turn now to the concept of *Augenblick* and the section in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, where Jaspers looks into 'self-reflective attitudes' (*Selbstreflektierte Einstellungen*), and the 'reflective and immediate attitude', of 'the moment (*Augenblick*)'<sup>403</sup>. Jaspers elucidates the puzzling, 'riddled nature'<sup>404</sup> of the *Augenblick*, which can be both everything and nothing. The more 'rational' and knowledgeable in a scientific sense that human being becomes, Jaspers asserts, the more the idea of *Augenblick* grows in importance. Human being becomes more 'inclined to make every momentary experience, every temporally determined reality a means for something else, for something in the future or for something whole.'<sup>405</sup> Against the defining and limiting knowledge of scientific thought, human being strives for another kind of knowledge. The more human being feels a lack of such knowledge, the more dissatisfied we become. In its confinement to historical context human being strains against its limits seeking something more meaningful from the present moment. We look beyond ourselves to the future, we seek

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<sup>403</sup> I am extremely grateful to Professor Horst Ruthrof for his translation of this section of Jaspers' *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Verlag Von Julius Springer, Berlin, 1925, pp. 109-117 and pp. 334-335. Footnotes refer to the German text.

<sup>404</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie*, op cit, p.112

<sup>405</sup> Ibid, p. 108

absolutes and ideals which go beyond our concrete reality. The spirit (*Geist*<sup>406</sup>) in man, Jaspers tells us, looks for totalities, consciousness tends toward completion, toward making things 'whole'.

The soul, Jaspers tells us, is temporal, 'it is forever merely fragmentary and finite' yet it 'needs the reality of the temporal present'. Wallraff tells us that when Jaspers speaks of the soul it is as 'a basic core in man which lies beyond all that the social sciences can discover, viz., what is called the soul, mind, ego, psyche, or innermost self'<sup>407</sup>. 'Soul' is another of Jaspers' concepts which does not lend itself to a final definition. In *Philosophy*, Jaspers describes the soul as something which can be 'educated', and because of this a person can 'prepare the ground for a future freedom which is viewed as possible'<sup>408</sup>. The soul seems to be that which

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<sup>406</sup> One could enter into lengthy discussion here regarding the meaning of *Geist*. Olson notes the 'essential ambiguity' of the German word and its derivatives, and how it 'has been particularly troublesome to English translators' due to its 'evasive but altogether essential metaphysical nuances', but not simply relating to 'ghosts' or 'apparitions'! Nor simply 'mind or 'intellect' either, *Geist* can take in a variety of meanings pertaining to humanity, seen in such phrases as 'kindred spirits', 'a spirited attempt', 'the spirit of the times' (*Zeitgeist*). But summed up by Olson as, for Jaspers, 'the 'nameless unconditioned' which is the source and goal of transcendence and value as experienced in a particular existential 'situation''. (Alan M. Olson in *Jaspers Critique of Modernity*, in *Karl Jaspers Today*, op cit, 1988)

<sup>407</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 34

<sup>408</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 186

can mediate between human being in its finite existence and the transcendence of Existenz, as such it represents the inner self which in authentic being constitutes one's individuality. It is the problematic discrepancy between the limiting temporal realm we inhabit with its 'passage of time' in which, Jaspers says, the soul 'is clamped (*eingeklemmt*<sup>409</sup>)', which gives rise to 'the consciousness of a whole'<sup>410</sup>. The problem of the passage of time inhibits the way we can think of the moment. But when we become aware of and experience the moment in its 'infinity', the soul 'can grow beyond time' towards 'eternity and timelessness'<sup>411</sup>.

Jaspers reiterates Kierkegaard's thinking as it emerges from the Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of time and of the moment in its 'paradoxical nature' and as an 'unimaginable' transition 'from the singular to the manifold, from movement to motionlessness and vice versa'. He points out the three worldviews (*Weltanschauungen*<sup>412</sup>) of time from which Kierkegaard draws out his moment<sup>413</sup>, that is, the Platonic, the Jewish and

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<sup>409</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, op cit, p. 109

<sup>410</sup> Ibid, p. 108

<sup>411</sup> Ibid, p. 109

<sup>412</sup> Ibid, p. 109

<sup>413</sup> This reliance on concepts of time is possibly why Martin Heidegger criticised Kierkegaard for not sufficiently escaping the temporal in relation to the *Augenblick*.

the Christian. As we have said it is primarily from the Christian thinking that the moment becomes thought of as a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal<sup>414</sup> and eventually gains its existential significance when we find that its psychological importance is in the experience of the temporal moment as 'an event'<sup>415</sup>. The moment thought in this way, 'as filled with content' Jaspers tells us, 'is the experienced source of what is unique, of the leap, of resolution'<sup>416</sup>. It becomes an 'irrevocable' event and 'the medium of historicity'<sup>417</sup>.

'The metaphysics of time moves in pictures and thoughts which repeals time in favour of eternity, which is not timeless like transcendental forms, not the endless succession of the temporal, the empty eternity, but the fulfilled eternity, an absolutely paradoxical, unimaginable concept, towards which our intentionality is directed along various pathways.'<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> And yet this idea can be extrapolated from Nietzsche too.

<sup>415</sup> Jaspers also points out here that Kant grasped the moment 'as a form of experience [*Anschauungsform*] within which we inevitably see all objectivities: time has empirical reality but no existence in itself; rather, it is a form of concrete existence in our subject-object split.'

<sup>416</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie*, op cit, p. 109

<sup>417</sup> Ibid, p. 109

<sup>418</sup> Ibid, p. 111

The actual experience of the *Augenblick*, Jaspers says, 'cannot be grasped because in it lies eternity'. But to look toward it can teach human being something important about 'attitude' to life. In order to see what a person's attitude to life is, one must 'see how he lives it in the *Augenblick*', Jaspers asserts. The lived and really experienced *Augenblick* is a reality of our psychic life, it is 'the last' in the sense of being the limit or the utmost. It is, Jaspers says, 'blood-warm, immediate, living, corporeal' that is, it is present in the flesh, bodily present, it is alone 'concrete', the totality of the real. (*'Der gelebte Augenblick ist das Letzte, Blutwarme, Unmittelbar, Lebendige, das leibhaftig Gegenwärtige, die Totalität des Realen, das allein Konkrete.'*<sup>419</sup>)

In the instant or 'temporal moment' (*Zeitmomente*) one can lose oneself in past and future, but human existence and the absolute is in the end only found in the *Augenblick*. Past and future are 'dark uncertain abysses (*Abgründe*)', Jaspers says, they are 'time without end while the *Augenblick* can be suspension of time, the presence of eternity'. The temporal moment is autonomous, it 'wants for nothing', and it always vanishes. It represents a mere means 'to be sacrificed for something in the future'. With the term *Augenblick* 'we tend to indicate' or express 'something heterogeneous', that which is at the same time both fulfilled and empty. In

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<sup>419</sup> Ibid, p. 112



the self-reflective attitude the conflicting demands on one are, on one hand to register the *Augenblick* as an indifferent moment and on the other to see everything in it. 'The temporal atom is nothing, the *Augenblick* is everything' (*das Zeitatom ist zwar nichts, der Augenblick aber alles*<sup>420</sup>.)

Usually, human beings experience only moments of time (*Zeitmomente*), Jaspers tells us, they don't always experience the *Augenblick*. In this 'contrast' of warring attitudes lies 'a double meaning (*doppeldeutiger*)'. (We might remember here Kierkegaard's statement that 'everything essentially Christian has a double meaning [*Dobbeltydigt*], is a redoubling [*Fordoblelse*]). In one view the focus is toward the future, the present is merely the means to it and is 'given up in respect of what has to be achieved' either in terms of goals in this life or 'in favour of some future life'. The command is: - 'Live!'. The present seen in this way does not have any significance in itself. In the contrasting view, the focus is on an 'Epicurean aesthetic celebration' of the *Augenblick* as a 'singular and separate moment', in this attitude the *Augenblick* is directed toward a totality. The command is: '*Carpe Diem!*' and demands a view of the *Augenblick* as a self-sufficient experience, 'entirely concluded in the temporal present'. The Epicurean attitude, however, is to seize the day because there is 'no certainty of

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<sup>420</sup> Ibid, p. 112

tomorrow', enjoyment must be experienced now<sup>421</sup>. Jaspers refers to Kierkegaard's quoting of the Epicureans, saying that if one has participated in the *Augenblick* in the sense of 'moments of intensive living', then one has really lived and 'other hapless people', those only concerned with 'running forward in life' will 'envy you'. But this interpretation of the *Augenblick* Jaspers says, makes it into an 'abstraction'<sup>422</sup> because it lacks a connection with eternity and even marks 'a fear of eternity'. These two contrasting ways of interpreting the moment are means to goals that concern finite temporal existence. Neither of them reach a depth of existential significance which demands an authentic engagement with the moment and a committed response to it. However, there is a sense that one can 'seize the day' proper, by recognising and courageously grasping the possibilities that occur and being authentically concerned to make them one's own.

One who is a mere observer, Jaspers tells us, will not have 'realised the contrast of the temporal moment and the *Augenblick*', of immediate experience and reflection, unlike one who has experience of being 'in the

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<sup>421</sup> In *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard asserts that the Sophists were able to 'repose' in living in the moment because 'it lacked a comprehensive consciousness, lacked the eternal moment'.

<sup>422</sup> In *The Concept of Anxiety* Kierkegaard refers to 'the case of Don Juan' where 'In a perversion of the moment there then arises an enjoyment of isolated moments'.

*Augenblick (augenblicklich)*<sup>423</sup>. What is meant by living ‘in the *Augenblick*’ might be understood as being either authentic or inauthentic in attitude. The corresponding phrase ‘living *for* the moment’ usually indicates a life lived with no concern for the effects of one’s actions on tomorrow. Sometimes this can be good advice directing one away from the hazards of too much reflection, which Jaspers points to as a danger in the first leap. However, as Jaspers points out, the word ‘*augenblicklich*’ conveys the meaning of ‘to be like the *Augenblick*’, or to be the same as (*gleichgültigen*) the *Augenblick*, that is, being valid by the very same name as *Augenblick*. Considered in this way it allows an understanding of the absolute and authentic way in which one can be involved in such fundamental experience<sup>424</sup>.

Jaspers tells us that the *Augenblick* is ‘a medium for all liveliness and therefore infinitely manifold in its formulations (*Gestalten*)’, ‘from the poorest to the richest, from the simplest to the most intricate’, ‘everything that is truly alive in us is subsumed in the *Augenblick*’, or somehow ‘stems from *Augenblicken*’. The meaning of the *Augenblick* ‘dissolves’ for the one who is ‘indifferent’ to it in its immediacy, for them it is ‘not yet real’<sup>425</sup>. In reflection,

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<sup>423</sup> To have such an experience, Jaspers says does not suggest ‘any disease of the faculty (*keine Erkrankung der Fähigkeit*)’!

<sup>424</sup> Can we say now that the ‘Same’ of Nietzsche’s Eternal Return is the *Augenblick* itself?

<sup>425</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie*, op cit, p. 115

'initially the tendency is toward this indifference', one is 'inclined to declare the *Augenblick* to be nothing' and 'to subordinate it to the indifferent' moment 'within the temporal process'<sup>426</sup>. As we have seen, Jaspers asserts that the stress of contemporary thinking is on 'rational' knowledge which creates situations 'in which man yearns for the fulness of the *Augenblick*'. Now 'the *Augenblick* appears as something possible' and 'on account of the reflex attitude it affirms, we have a realisation of it as *Unergründlichkeit*, of it being such that it is impossible to find its ground, there is no 'discovering its ground, in its infinity, its creative power'<sup>427</sup>. So often in life, 'one works, reflectively achieves, dares things in the consciousness of the preparation of those *Augenblick*, the quality and significance of which are unknown'. Yet living in the consciousness that they are possible, Jaspers says, 'fulfils the hoping soul' and 'thus psychic life', that is, the life of the soul. So the life of psyche is 'a pulsating in which the highest peaks are rare *Augenblicke* and the depths mere moments in time.' In both cases the *Augenblick* is a means to something. By means of reflection, the *Augenblick* can come to be experienced as above time, 'as fulfilled (*erfüllt*) and fulfilling (*erfüllend*)'<sup>428</sup>.

All that is living and vital, all that can be said to *be* is subjectively

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<sup>426</sup> As the Geist of Gravity does in *TSZ*.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid*, p. 115

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid*, p. 115

experienced in the *Augenblick*, while 'as a metaphysical idea' it is only 'a meagre and abstract objective expression', it is in reflection that the *Augenblick* can be filled 'with new powers', but this 'only makes sense for the living human if the reflection really achieves the power (*Kräften*)'. To grasp (*Erfassung*) an understanding 'of the psychological nature of the *Augenblick* which however one can only describe and not determine', one must be able to see the 'certain abnormalities of the experiencing of the *Augenblick*' of *which we have spoken*, which 'through a deficit show us drastically what is there but is not noticed in its taken-for-granted-ness, (*Selbsverstandlichkeit*)'.

There is tension between the desire for the sensual present moment and the demand to bring to actuality 'the most expanded version' of the moment, to move from 'the narrowest to the broadest' understanding of the *Augenblick*. But the *Augenblick* in its broadest understanding 'fails (*versagt*) again and again through the power of the sensual present' which overtakes it. This 'power', as indicated by the use of the German word '*geistige*', has both a spiritual and a 'mental' principle. How much of this power is actual in the psychology of human beings, Jaspers tells us, 'shows itself only in certitude and reliability' in the immediately present *Augenblick*.

### **The Boundary in *Philosophy*.**

Volume II of *Philosophy* is named *Existential Elucidation* (*Existenzerhellung*), and it 'elucidates the potentialities of man, and appeals

to him to exercise his freedom in actualizing them<sup>429</sup>. We begin with what Jaspers describes as 'situations'. For Jaspers, we in our concrete existence (*Dasein*), are already in the situation of being 'always in situations'. Situations are a '*sense-related reality*', not simply a 'reality governed by natural laws' but both psychological and physical 'in one'<sup>430</sup>. Situations change, that is how they exist and how we recognise that they concern us as the reality of the existence which we have 'a stake in'<sup>431</sup>. One situation arises from another, they are linked but we cannot be completely aware of how their connections work. Once we begin to consider them the very act of consideration comes into play to effect them also, especially when they come to our attention as boundary situations. The 'concrete reality of existence' is that we are not alone in situations, 'other subjects, their interests, their sociological power relations, and their combinations' have their bearing on one's situation. Whether as 'advantage' or 'obstacle', opportunities arise from accidents and from the 'chances of the moment'. Most of the time we must accept these as 'given', yet there can be a chance of 'transforming them', in some cases we can create situations for ourselves in order to pursue a goal.

This being 'in situations' is what it is for a person to exist. Situations,

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<sup>429</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 8

<sup>430</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 177

<sup>431</sup> Ibid, p. 177

Jaspers tells us are either 'general and typical or historically definite and unique'. Typical situations come from particularities of our existence, from the common everyday context that we share with our fellow human beings. But 'absolute singularity shows up only in retrospect - at the crucial point of our concern with a unique world situation, for example, with a chance that will never recur'<sup>432</sup>. In reflecting upon it, we can recognise a situation as being decisive for us, one that concerns us personally in our individual human being and also, inevitably for Jaspers, as part of a community, in communication with other human beings. In either case, whether general and everyday or singular, we cannot 'know' the situation we find ourselves in 'as a whole', there is always something outstanding.

Unlike the continually changing situations of ordinary everyday existence, those which arrest our attention as exceptional and bearing most intimately upon our existence are the boundary situations. These '*never change, except in appearance*'. Fundamentally they remain the same, belonging as they do to existence itself while an individual's experience of them will vary, immersed as they are in the reality of their own time and place. These fundamental, unchanging situations fall into categories both general and specific. The first one Jaspers speaks of is the general boundary situation of confinement within our historical definition and beginnings,

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<sup>432</sup> Ibid, p. 177

including that 'first beginning'<sup>433</sup> of which we have spoken in the first section of this chapter.

Every individual exists within their own psychological, physiological, sociological, cultural and, 'historical' dimensions. Even though some may yearn for another era in the past or imagine their own future utopia, these are still seen from the perspective of present possibilities. Being so concretely within one's 'specific place and time' constricts the 'individual's opportunities for action, but also the possible ways in which he can view his world'. When considering limitation in this way 'we approach what Jaspers calls 'historicity' (*Geschichtlichkeit*)<sup>434</sup>. Of course, as we have said, this does not preclude our appropriation of past philosophies into our present thinking.

We cannot avoid boundary situations, unless we ignore them altogether, closing our eyes and minds to them and never therefore reaching the depth of experience they can offer. 'Situations like the following: that I am always in situations, I cannot live without struggling and suffering; that I cannot avoid guilt; that I must die' are, if we experience them meaningfully, 'like a wall we run into, a wall on which we founder'<sup>435</sup>. Jaspers' term

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid, p. 189

<sup>434</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 144

<sup>435</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 178



foundering' (*Scheitern*), as Johannes Thyssen tells us in '*The Concept of 'Foundering' in Jaspers' Philosophy*', 'signifies the fruitlessness of all endeavors to reach, from a finite basis such as consciousness-as-such or even from self-sufficient *Existenz*, a satisfactory access to Being, i.e., to arrive at the absolute'<sup>436</sup>. This foundering represents a failure of human understanding and is a necessary condition of approaching the idea of Transcendence. Our understanding, as Jaspers says in *Way to Wisdom*, is 'attuned to the practical', it resists certain ideas and is thrown into doubt by them, it 'even shipwrecks itself'<sup>437</sup> against them.

What we *can* do is make these situations 'lucid', Jaspers tells us, 'but without explaining or deducing them from something else'<sup>438</sup>. Science would seek to clarify them, he says, they cannot be clarified though they can be *illuminated*. They come to us direct and unmediated from the core of our existence. All that we can do is 'surrender' to them, not in a negative way but by taking them for what they are; the situations which suggest something, that something outstanding which we can know, though it lays beyond 'an

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<sup>436</sup> Thyssen, Johannes, *The Concept of 'Foundering' in Jaspers' Philosophy*, in Schilpp, op cit, p. 312

<sup>437</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Way to Wisdom*, op cit, p. 31

<sup>438</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 178

existing consciousness<sup>439</sup> and as such is usually unavailable. The word 'boundary' he says, 'implies that there is something else'<sup>440</sup>. What is this something else of our existence? It is that which Kierkegaard pointed to, Existenz itself as the origin or source.

We can relate this idea of unavailability to the *Augenblick* itself, as something that we cannot make concrete either by defining it or locating it in time or place. We do not always think of each moment of existence, only when a moment takes on particular significance and extraordinary meaning. Even then, like all boundaries that remain boundaries and all horizons that remain horizons, it draws away from us as we advance upon it. 'The meaningful way to react to boundary situations is ... not by planning ... to overcome them but by the very different activity of *becoming the Existenz we potentially are*; we become ourselves by entering with open eyes into the boundary situation'<sup>441</sup>. What is necessary, Jaspers tells us, is a state of 'unconditionality', we must enter the situation without reservation, making and owning to our decisions, indeed our life itself must be 'guided by something unconditional which can only spring from the *decision*'<sup>442</sup>. We

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid, p. 179

<sup>440</sup> Ibid, p. 178

<sup>441</sup> Ibid, p. 179

<sup>442</sup> Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie*, op cit, p. 177

become 'in time', in the concrete present of our actions and decisions, the person that we are 'in eternity'<sup>443</sup>.

When we are involved in our ordinary everyday existence, we do not consider the boundary situations, we know them 'only externally', and objectively. But 'when we are ourselves', when we are authentic, 'they can make us aware of being', as Existenz we can feel 'their reality'. 'To experience boundary situations' Jaspers says, 'is the same as Existenz'. This movement from existence to Existenz 'happens in a *leap*; a mind which merely knows about boundary situations may, in historic, singular, noninterchangeable fashion, come to be fulfilled. The boundary thus plays its proper role of something immanent which already points to transcendence'<sup>444</sup>. Jaspers says, that in this 'sphere' which is that of 'historical freedom', the transition which we spoke of earlier in relation to Kierkegaard is no longer merely a quantitative but a qualitative change. In seeing this Kierkegaard posited the only means of making this change, which Jaspers now takes up, is through a leap: 'the new enters with a leap (*einem Sprung*)'<sup>445</sup>.

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<sup>443</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 192

<sup>444</sup> Ibid, p. 179

<sup>445</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie*, op cit, p. 110

## The Leap.

‘Everything depends on the leap to this other way of thinking’<sup>446</sup>

Jaspers says, because each time we approach questions at the limits of empirical knowledge or of logical thinking we find no definitive answers. That is, ‘until the final question meets with ... the silence of fulfilment, in which man’s own essence can speak directly to him through his inmost self, through his own demands, through reason, through love’<sup>447</sup>. Jaspers utilises Kierkegaard’s concept of the ‘leap of faith’ which spans the boundary of understanding that confronts us in the ‘absolute paradox’ of the ‘moment’. Kierkegaard’s leap is, as we have seen in chapter one, one of faith in relation to religious belief and concerns an afterlife, while Jaspers’ leap relates to faith in philosophical thinking and to a finite temporal life. The leap of faith represents a qualitative transition from non-being to being, or, from unbeliever to believer and as such represents a ‘rebirth’ from one form of existence to a higher form of existence. This leap is both active and passive, depending on both an act of will and an act of ‘letting go’, it is a combination of a conscious act of volition and choice and of the risky move of ‘closing

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<sup>446</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman. A Short Course in Philosophical Thinking*, Harcourt Brace and World Inc., New York, 1965, Foreword, p. xvii

<sup>447</sup> Ibid, p. xviii

one's eyes and leaping'<sup>448</sup>. This is how it can be a leap of faith, or a leap to a position of faith. It can only be an act of an isolated individual self and represents a decisive move for one's eternal being. Jaspers appropriates Kierkegaard's leap and develops it into three progressive leaps which, as will be seen, lead from mundane existence in the world to existential philosophising and contemplation as possible Existenz, and ultimately 'to *real Existenz in boundary situations*'<sup>449</sup>. These three leaps 'are tied to each other' not in a linear, one-directional 'ascending' series; 'They alternately engender each other.' However we may consider Jaspers' leap, whether as three leaps or as three stages in one leap, it does not change the significance of the concept.

To begin the process, Jaspers speaks of the 'Desultory Genesis of Existenz'<sup>450</sup>, in everyday life we skip from one thing to another in a seemingly irregular or even erratic course with little fixed plan or purpose, unmethodically. There is an indecisiveness to actions, an indifference to their outcome. 'Desultory' can also refer to events which are occasional and disconnected, and describe a way of being as if 'a feather for each wind that

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<sup>448</sup> Ferreira, Jamie, M., *Faith and the Kierkegaardian Leap, The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, pp. 214-5

<sup>449</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 181

<sup>450</sup> Ibid, p. 179

blows'<sup>451</sup>. Importantly, it can refer to things occurring randomly in isolation, and it is in solitude that Jaspers asserts there originates a crucial shift in being. Jaspers calls this 'absolute solitude' of contemplation 'the eye of an existence (*Sie ist Auge eines Daseins*)', it is 'the first leap in which this existence transcends itself'<sup>452</sup>.

The 'genesis' of the first leap is from within our ordinary existence. We are immersed in the world but in contemplative thought, we can be in the world and 'at the same time' somehow 'outside' of the world, the world and 'my own existence' can fade away. We reach an 'Archimedian point' where we 'see', where we 'know what is'. We can objectify our own existence and 'even *face my own existence as if it were a strangers*', we seek to 'know the whole'. Being looks for 'a way to get there' to the place 'outside' which it does not occupy. This overcoming of my being 'occurs in absolute *solitude*.' The affect of it is that the happenings of the world and my existence in it becomes 'doubtful' and 'fades away'. Though seemingly standing outside the world, paradoxically I stand: 'so closely before myself as if I were an isle of safety in mid-ocean, a place from which I aimlessly gaze upon the world as

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<sup>451</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Winters' Tale*, Editor: J. H. Pafford, The Arden Shakespeare, Act II, Scene III, p. 51. Leontes is pulled hither and thither between possible courses of action in his indecision as to which one to take. He finds himself in this position through his own hasty and jealous misunderstanding.

<sup>452</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 180

on a billowing atmosphere without limits.' The contemplating self feels free of concern and secure in a 'supporting' objective knowledge of things in the world.

This solitude of the self, when it is 'detached from any situation, is like the pure eye that meets no other eye and looks upon all things, but not into itself', Jaspers tells us. This calm and unconcerned place concentrates the reflecting self to 'a mere point', it is undisturbed by any thoughts, 'other than the calm of its vision'<sup>453</sup>. Here we find the metaphors of the eye and of vision representing the contemplation or reflection<sup>454</sup> of a self-satisfied 'knowing' regard. But having taken this first leap one is still in the everyday situations of existence although differently involved now since one is '*a possible Existenz*' (my italics). This gaze at 'reality' prepares the way for a different knowledge, one 'which in existence opens my mind to boundary situations; for fleeting moments only can it be a pure eye'<sup>455</sup> (*es kann bloßes Auge nur in vorübergehenden Augenblicken sein*<sup>456</sup>). This knowledge cannot be grasped

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<sup>453</sup> Ibid, p. 180

<sup>454</sup> 'Contemplation' can have the connotation of meditative, religious musing on present and future possibilities, while 'reflection' suggests a mirror reflecting an image back toward itself, the element of looking back at the past from the present comes into reflection, perhaps of the retrospective realisation of the meaning of a certain moment.

<sup>455</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 180

<sup>456</sup> Ibid, p. 204

except briefly, seen only in glimpses, it cannot be held in time but belongs to eternity 'outside the limited temporality of the historical moment'<sup>457</sup> or 'athwart of time'(in *Querstellung zur Zeit*)<sup>458</sup>. In this glimpse which transverses<sup>459</sup> time as it takes its usual direction, the way in which we notice time goes awry.

Solitariness can be a comfortable and homely feeling, yet at the same time it can verge on loneliness and harbour a desire to escape it, a yearning toward some undefined thing. This tension in the first leap means that we cannot remain in this moment, it cannot be sustained. It cannot be considered objectively by consciousness-as-such, and the intimation it contains of a different knowledge can not be communicated between one person and another. It is a swift but vital experience, a penetrating and clear glimpse so to speak, from which we can turn back or look further. This glimpse is a moment of insight, from this point (*Punkt*), existence looks 'for a way to get there', to Existenz. In this boundary situation we have moved from the leaping with no fixed plan to the leaping toward Existenz. It may seem that the movement is not yet complete and so this 'pure eye' cannot be

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<sup>457</sup> Schilpp, Glossary, op cit, p. xvii

<sup>458</sup> Thyssen, Johannes, *The Concept of Foundering*, The Library of Living Philosophers, p. 301

<sup>459</sup> We might mark the similarity of description in Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety*, p. 89, where he says that the moment occurs where 'time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time'.



the *Augenblick* we seek, but we can get over this difficulty if we consider that this first leap is the crucial 'genesis', if taken and not retreated from, it takes in the second and third leaps.

In *Way to Wisdom*, Jaspers describes the threefold meaning of the 'unconditional imperative' which 'has reality in the man who follows it in faith and awareness ... it cannot be proved [or] shown to exist'<sup>460</sup>. We can think that from now on due to what amounts to an act of faith, the remaining leaps are incorporated in this fleeting moment, there is no going back if Existenz is to be reached. The danger is, that if this leap is not connected to following leaps, Jaspers says, it will 'go astray', this leap may become "the hard-self-centeredness of unconcern", it may become knowledge without being'<sup>461</sup>. The first leap begins in questioning contemplation and, Jaspers tells us in summing up the leaps, 'in view of the dubiousness of all things, takes me from mundane existence to the *substantial solitude of universal knowledge*'<sup>462</sup>, it 'leads me to philosophize in world images'<sup>463</sup>. One wants to make sense of the world but when confronted with the 'dubiousness' of

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<sup>460</sup> Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, op cit, pp. 57

<sup>461</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 182

<sup>462</sup> Ibid, p. 181

<sup>463</sup> Ibid, p. 182

existence, one is anxious over what really matters, 'what counts in existence'. What 'counts' and what the boundary situation threatens, is 'universal knowledge' which we trust.

From this 'lonely punctuality of having stepped outside, I take my second leap to elucidation'. Punctuality is another telling choice of word. It underlines how this state of contemplation brings to a pause or punctuates the usual course of life being simply lived. 'Thought pauses enquiringly. It comes to a halt before Being'<sup>464</sup>, Jaspers tells us echoing Kierkegaard in his 'wonder'. From the Latin *punctum*, it allows us to think it as a point of focus. Further there is the element of being on time or 'timely' in 'punctuality', suggestive of the sense of *kairos* as the right time. If one retreats from this first leap, one loses the moment. If one does not retreat, the second leap takes us to philosophising and the realisation that a boundary situation represents a possibility which concerns my own self, such a realisation would 'hit the essence of my being'. The world has become more than just an object of knowledge, it also contains 'one's 'own shaken self'.

One's foothold is no longer sure, it is as if the ground, so to speak, is pulled out from under one's feet. The situation becomes one's 'object again' yet not as a 'transparent' situation that knowledge can get one through and leave behind. This has become a situation of another order, one which 'I

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<sup>464</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy and the World, Selected Essays*, op cit, p. 125

*cannot get out of*, a situation which 'I cannot see through as a whole'. The boundary situation is one which I 'cannot knowingly control I can only grasp existentially'. It is no longer a question of being in a situation and in existence but of being Existenz - 'something to be or not to be'. There is no 'valid knowledge' which is the goal of this contemplation in 'the solitude of cognitive self-being', the leap to 'the consciousness of its possible Existenz' aims at elucidating 'the nontransparent boundary situations'<sup>465</sup>. Having come up against the fact of one's 'necessary involvement in the world' through philosophical contemplation, and failed in the face of it, we have arrived with the second leap at transparency, at the '*elucidation of possible Existenz*'. The concept of becoming transparent (*transparent werden*), expresses Jaspers' view 'that empirical being is capable of letting Transcendence 'shine through'<sup>466</sup>. The danger in this second leap, if it loses its relation to the others, is that the solitariness from which it emerges may become a seclusion in which one revels 'in the possibility of all realities; merely conceiving existentialities without being prepared for Existenz'; Jaspers says one may 'become shameless'<sup>467</sup>.

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<sup>465</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 181

<sup>466</sup> Thyssen, op cit, p. 306

<sup>467</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 182

We discuss boundary situations as 'possible Existenz', contemplating and reflecting, but not as Existenz itself. We have laid the ground for, but not yet reached an 'existential realisation'; though we are 'ready for the leap', Jaspers says, we are 'not yet leaping'. The 'real and finite' situation is lacking. Boundary situations can be grasped objectively like any existing situations, but 'to become boundary situations proper they need a unique translation, a realisation in personal existence that will make an Existenz sure of itself and will mark its appearance'. It 'involves Existenz as a whole' and there can be 'no substitution' for this. 'I am no longer an individual finitely concerned with particular situations; I grasp the boundary situations of existence as infinitely concerned Existenz. This is the third and crucial leap: *the leap in which possible Existenz becomes real*<sup>468</sup>. One can now live 'philosophically as Existenz'<sup>469</sup>, but the danger here is that 'a direct reality of Existenz without a clear transcendence may radically shatter and submerge me in bewildering passions'<sup>470</sup>.

Each form of the leap precipitates a change in how one sees one's life, Jaspers says, 'I say 'I myself' in a new sense, the leap marks a conscious, inner move from a 'heretofore' to a 'hereafter'. There is a

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid, p. 181

<sup>469</sup> Ibid, p. 182

<sup>470</sup> Ibid, p. 182

boundary marked in time between the being which one is before and the being which one is after the leap is complete. The leap brings one to a new awareness of oneself 'as my own creature'<sup>471</sup>. It originates with oneself, as 'my beginning' but one in which 'I know that I have already been.' The potential, Jaspers says is one 'which I never made', it has laid immanent within, as though there as possibility in every moment, but awaiting the moment of its fulfilment.

'After the leap', Jaspers tells us, there 'prevails' an 'insoluble duality' of being in between two states, in the world, yet also as Existenz. I could choose to 'favor one side or the other' of the duality and 'lose the boundary situation; either I step out of the world altogether in an incommunicable, wordless mysticism, or I plunge altogether into the world, in factual positivism'<sup>472</sup>. Jaspers tells us that in existence we 'pass through both mystical and positivistic moments'<sup>473</sup>, following our remarks on Jaspers' mediating role of the soul we might imagine it at work on this duality. One is constantly thrown, or 'recoils' 'back into the duality where 'Everything in the world is a matter of complete indifference, and everything in the world may

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<sup>471</sup> Ibid, p. 181

<sup>472</sup> Jaspers *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 183

<sup>473</sup> Ibid, p. 183

acquire decisive importance<sup>474</sup>. We noted in *Psychologie* how Jaspers maintains that the way in which one is *augenblicklich*, whether with an attitude of indifferent superficiality or of authentic responsiveness, gives an indication of one's attitude to life. This life necessarily concerns both our temporal finite existence with its concrete situations and also the transcendent Existenz which we might glimpse in the *Augenblick*. 'Existentially I am supratemporal by staying squarely temporal as a phenomenon', Jaspers says. But in the moment when time becomes 'not of the essence', then Existenz takes on 'the absolute weight of decision'. Is the *Augenblick*, and is life itself 'everything or nothing'? 'Impassioned action unites with a feeling of 'Nothing means anything; - but so that I become more, not less, serious in action'<sup>475</sup>.

### **Decision from the Source.**

We will now return to Jaspers' *Psychologie* to consider an example he gives there of a man in a certain decisive situation and consider it in the light of the elucidation of boundary situations and the leap. In the first boundary situation we are always 'in a particular situation'<sup>476</sup> and within that situation

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid, p. 183

<sup>475</sup> Ibid, p. 183

<sup>476</sup> Ibid, p. 183

we are always historically defined. As these change in ways we can have no control over, one particular situation can come to the fore as decisive. Having reflected on one's new position and hopefully reached some elucidation, a decisive resolution might come seemingly from 'out of the blue'. The 'historicity' of our existence constrains us, yet we do not acquiesce. Human being does not submit to or rest within its limitations, it cannot but strive against them. One reason for our state of 'unrest' is that our future is 'uncertain' directed as it is, Jaspers tells us, by 'opportunities and chances', and by 'resistances'. Resistances are the 'given data' of one's life and the will of other individuals which limit one's freedom and possibilities but which can be challenged and conquered. They include the 'material' we put to our purpose, or cultivate and also the 'conditions for the life' one wants which we also cultivate, though one's life might take a direction one didn't expect.

Faced with possibilities which arise by chance or by accident one has to make choices. We cannot actualise all of the possibilities which might belong to us, some of them will never 'get the chance' to become available for choosing, they will never occur. Aware, however, that 'what is up to me still lies ahead'<sup>477</sup>, one has freedom to actively create opportunities and to make future events turn out according to one's will. Jaspers' example quoted in Wallraff (in relation to the notion of 'source'), concerns the nineteenth

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid, p. 183

century German physicist, Franz Neumann, who 'had to decide whether he ought to adopt the life of a farmer in order to remain with and care for his mother, or to leave his mother to pursue a demanding career in science'<sup>478</sup>. A real possibility has arisen for him, that of changing the situation into which he is born and by which he is 'constrained'. In this state of uncertainty, one's own historical existence might be brought into question; the world itself might seem uncertain and one's foothold unsure. Our existence itself becomes a boundary which 'reveals the *dubious character of the world's being, and of my being in the world*'<sup>479</sup>. In reflecting on such a dilemma, on one's place in the world and at this boundary, consciousness might deepen and one could become aware of 'being at large as historically phenomenal'. This, Jaspers refers to as the 'the universal boundary situation of all existence' in which can be felt 'absolute historicity'<sup>480</sup>.

When we come up against a boundary situation it throws not only our empirical and everyday existence into question but gives us 'a perspective in which we ask about existence as a whole and conceive it as possible or

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<sup>478</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 177, note similarity of ethical question in Sartre, whether to leave one's mother and join the resistance or stay and care for her.

<sup>479</sup> Jasper, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 184

<sup>480</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 184



impossible'<sup>481</sup>. It is not regarding everyday decisions that human beings reach this impasse, but in relation to decisions which concern the 'world in which they commit sins, fall in love, say prayers or join the communist party'<sup>482</sup>. They are decisions which involve a personal judgement regarding how one ought to conduct oneself, what one ought to do and how one ought to live. As Wallraff puts it, individuals 'must decide here and now how to live and what to live for '<sup>483</sup>. In this boundary situation, the historically defined individual in the world turns to reflect on his situation as an individual within 'a world at large'<sup>484</sup>. He 'orients' himself to this wider world from which an opportunity has arisen, presenting him with a choice. We can identify here the point of solitary contemplation which constitutes the first leap.

It is a difficult choice over which, we are told, Neumann 'spent many difficult hours trying to reach a decision'<sup>485</sup>. We can imagine Neumann 'shaken' in the face of his dilemma and 'failing' against it. Here, we have the second leap in which Neumann's 'necessary involvement in the world' moves

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid, p. 184

<sup>482</sup> Iris Murdoch quoted in Wallraff, op cit, p. 12

<sup>483</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. xi

<sup>484</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 184

<sup>485</sup> *Psychologie* p. 335, quoted in Wallraff, op cit, p. 177

him from contemplation of the situation to a realisation of his existence as 'possible Professor', that this moment is decisive to his very being. Using Jaspers' metaphor, we might see him in the 'shipwreck' of 'foundering' (*Scheitern*). For Jaspers, this failure as 'factual foundering' (*faktisches Scheitern*), needs interpretation. What it refers to, Thyssen tells us, must be 'understood existentially as a cipher'<sup>486</sup>. That is to say, the notion of 'foundering' is a cipher through which we can understand and communicate this otherwise indescribable experience in which one feels as if one has been 'hit'<sup>487</sup> in the essence of one's being, or lost one's entire strength in the face of such an experience. This 'failure' in the boundary situation allows not only a decision regarding one's own life. If one does not remain secluded, revelling in all one's possibilities, it provides the opportunity for authenticity. If one makes that decision, one also makes the third leap to living 'philosophically as Existenz'<sup>488</sup>. If not overtaken by the 'bewildering passions' that we have previously mentioned, but seeing clearly toward transcendence, one can now reach Being itself, as the source.

Although we emerge from a background that we have, by chance, inherited, there are also unexpected events which occur; accidents can befall

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<sup>486</sup> Thyssen, op cit, p. 312

<sup>487</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 180

<sup>488</sup> Ibid, p. 182

us which might bring good or bad results. Regarding the accident of meeting for instance, Jaspers says, 'My love for the companion of my life depends upon the accident of our meeting in existence'<sup>489</sup>. 'What I become, what tasks I set myself, depends upon opportunities'. What ensues can mark a change in the way a person sees themselves. When faced with a decision, we are guided by 'laws and customs' of our social situation to a certain extent but ultimately 'each individual is thrown back upon his own resources and forced to make his own decisions'<sup>490</sup>. The course taken is mine but not 'up to me alone', we might consider ourselves as unavoidably prey to accident and chance and allow them to overtake us. But it would seem an 'unbearable boundary situation' to think of oneself as such a 'plaything' of 'blind

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<sup>489</sup> Ibid, p. 190. And see Jaspers' description of his 'accidental' meeting in 1907 of Gertrud Mayer, which was he says, 'as if lightening had struck, and something had been decided in one moment for all time [*in einem Augenblick etwas endültig entscheiden sei*]: that persons met each other in this world who, as it were, fused together within the phenomenality of time as if they had always been bound together'. The ensuing relationship, Jaspers tells us, marks a change in himself, from the kind of man who searches only for truth academically, to one who also pays attention to the more human affairs of life. (*Self-Portrait*, in *Karl Jaspers Today, Philosophy at the Threshold of the Future*, Editors: Leonard H. Ehrlich and Richard Wisser, Centre for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 15)

<sup>490</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 167

chance<sup>491</sup> .

One can miss chances, some will pass unnoticed and some will be noticed but not recognised as significant. Some, whose potential we can see will still not be taken up, in a variety of ways one can fail to seize the moment. Jaspers asserts that in our reflections regarding chance, we make use of 'mythicizing' concepts such as luck and fate which are not subject to reason but are necessary 'functions of the metaphysical elucidation of Existenz in boundary situations'<sup>492</sup>. We think of chance as 'lucky or unlucky', either as a circumstance of Fortune itself or an 'quality' of an individual who might be favoured by fortune (Latin: *fortunatus*). Or luck 'may have to be seized' in action rather than waiting passively for it. One use of the term *Kairos* implies 'he who grasps the helm firmly in a moment of fate, forces fortune'<sup>493</sup>. Jaspers tells us this constitutes a 'split' or 'dichotomy' between the outward circumstances under the guidance of Fortune and one's self, between these two one takes 'a standpoint'<sup>494</sup>.

These views of chance and luck are directed at goals within finite

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<sup>491</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 190

<sup>492</sup> Ibid, p. 191

<sup>493</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume III*, Editor: Gerhard Kittel, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, p. 456

<sup>494</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 191

existence and limited by the dichotomy between circumstances and the self. The split can be 'voided' by an inward adoption of the 'fortuities'. This brings us, in Jaspers' explication, to *amor fati*. In realising that the individual and the circumstances belong together and that this fate is not an 'external one', results in the more 'profound idea of my *fate*'<sup>495</sup>. The 'historical definition' in which, as we have said, one is 'immersed' can only belong to the individual existing within it. This historic definition is 'not definitive, and neither, in it, am I' but 'I am in the form of becoming in time the man that I am in eternity'<sup>496</sup>. My fate belongs to me and 'I love it as I love myself for only in my fate can I be existentially sure of myself'<sup>497</sup>. Realising this, one is no longer at the whim of Fortune or chance or accident. As Nietzsche's Zarathustra said, 'The time has passed when accidents could befall me; and what *could* still come to me that was not already my own?'<sup>498</sup>. This sense of fate in historicity comes, Jaspers says, when we take 'concrete existence seriously'<sup>499</sup>.

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<sup>495</sup> Ibid, pp. 191-2

<sup>496</sup> Ibid, p. 192

<sup>497</sup> Ibid, p. 192

<sup>498</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Penguin Classics, London, 1969, p. 173

<sup>499</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 192

But we must not forget the danger we spoke of in relation to the first leap. Reflections might come between 'me and my sense of fate', thinking of fate in 'universal' terms may make our particular situation something 'merely individual and private', and unimportant in itself. Or we may become self-important if we think that fate favours us in the particularities of existence. It is not the particularities as such that have 'existential relevance'. We must realise the absolute particularity of our existence in union with Existenz, in order for the idea of our fate to become 'real as Existenz'. It is the '*indissoluble union of particularity and Existenz* which we elucidate in the historic consciousness of *amor fati*'<sup>500</sup>.

We might try to free ourselves 'from random chance by the idea of necessity', so that our existence does not seem arbitrary, Jaspers says. We might try to evade or 'outwit' some perceived necessities but if it seems this cannot be done, when 'necessity turns absolute' then 'it is as unbearable as chance'<sup>501</sup>. Then we might try to free ourselves from the idea of 'inexorable necessity by turning again to the idea of the possibility and opportunity of chance'<sup>502</sup>. To escape from this circularity, requires us to recognise the situation as concerned with more than our finite existence, to recognise it as

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<sup>500</sup> Ibid, p. 192

<sup>501</sup> Ibid, p. 190

<sup>502</sup> Ibid, p. 190

a boundary situation, Jaspers says. This much 'must be obvious before possible Existenz can shift to another consciousness'<sup>503</sup>. It is not then '*pure chance*' which appears as the 'historically definite' 'but a *phenomenon* of this accidental being'. What appears then, one cannot 'grasp intellectually' for it transcends 'any comprehensible thought, but one can experience it or 'feel sure of' it, Jaspers says '*as eternity in time*'<sup>504</sup>. 'Existenz cannot be aimed at directly or actualised by some deliberate methodical procedure' it is not something one plans for, it is 'not a goal but a *source*'<sup>505</sup>. In this 'transcending I experience myself - shaken, first, and then *as one with chance*, which I take to be *mine*'<sup>506</sup>. Chance is mine to the extent that I am my chances.

Wallraff tells us that for Neumann, 'suddenly the awareness that farming was impossible for him came to him as though from an unknown source'<sup>507</sup>.

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid, pp. 190-1

<sup>504</sup> Ibid, pp. 190-1

<sup>505</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 101

<sup>506</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, pp. 190-1

<sup>507</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 177

‘I know such moments (*Momente*), as they have turned up in my life, when all of a sudden the decision matured and was there, and then I find it hard to understand why it had not appeared this way long ago, as I so faint-heartedly loitered about the certain ending. Such moments (*Augenblicke*) then happen to me without my own doing, from the outside as it were, much like a voice external to myself, which speaks so lucidly and intelligibly. The solution could not be forced, and when it came it did so suddenly and inexplicably. When the circumstances are unthinkably complicated the resolution is experienced by the individual as almost miraculous as a gift.’<sup>508</sup>

It is noteworthy that the German text allows us to see a distinction between *Momente* as temporal occurrences in finite existence and *Augenblicke* as those moments which become recognised as decisive<sup>509</sup>, elevated in their significance and allowing a communication with Existenz. Intriguingly, the moment is ‘like a voice’ which comes from ‘outside’ rather than inside as we might expect if Neumann was referring to an inner voice. There is a

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<sup>508</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie*, pp. 334-5. I would like to point out that although Wallraff translates a small amount of this statement of Neumann’s in order to make his point, that this more extensive quotation was translated by Professor Horst Ruthrof. His translation not only gave me the opportunity to show the difference between ‘*Momente*’ and ‘*Augenblicke*’ here, but is altogether a more beautiful translation.

<sup>509</sup> A non-biblical use of *Kairos* has a positive sense that one should: ‘Know the critical situation in your life, know that it demands a decision, and what decision, train yourself to recognise as such the decisive point in your life, and to act accordingly.’, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume III*, Editor: Gerhard Kittel, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, p. 455



confusion of subject and object<sup>510</sup>, because it is neither, or it is beyond this distinction, it is given.

In *Philosophy II*, Jaspers tells us that conscience comes as a voice, this voice does 'not exist at every moment' but comes at the 'turning point' of decision. One emerges from this turning point 'as a gift' to oneself<sup>511</sup>. The voice of conscience is a 'communication of myself to myself; an appeal to my empirical existence from the source of my self-being. No one is calling me; I am calling to myself'<sup>512</sup>. In responding to this call by resolutely committing oneself to action, one is answering to a moral imperative, not based 'upon formulas, conventions, and norms' but in 'the consciousness of the absolute earnestness of Existenz'<sup>513</sup>. 'Moral resolutions of this kind are phenomenologically or experientially immediate but logically and psychologically mediate'<sup>514</sup>, Jaspers says. This means that their affect is felt in the 'momentary' experience, but they are also interpretable; they can be

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<sup>510</sup> For Jaspers, one of the boundary situations is the antinomical structure of man and especially where it concerns the subject/object 'dichotomy'.

<sup>511</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 234

<sup>512</sup> Ibid, p. 234-5

<sup>513</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie*, p. 335, quoted in Wallraff, p. 178

<sup>514</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 179

made sense of, be submitted to one's will and their meaning can be found in retrospect.

On a surface view, perhaps Neumann ought to carry on with his profession and help his mother by avoiding change. But we can see Neumann's choice as, in a sense, the only choice available. The only person we can become is the person we are, 'we become ourselves by entering with open eyes into the boundary situation'<sup>515</sup>. Neumann, we might say, educates his soul to this new person he has discovered in himself. Kurt Hoffman in *The Basic Concepts of Jaspers' Philosophy*, calls the moment 'the authentic instance ... of transfiguration'<sup>516</sup> by which, we might understand a change of appearance. One sees oneself in a new perspective, realising a new aspect not before recognised and seeing possibilities one never expected. One sees one's world in terms of before and after.

Neumann cannot isolate his whole decision in one instant of time but can identify its emergence over a period of time as a transitional state. We have seen this indicated by the series of three leaps culminating in that sudden realisation and decision. We can still say that 'the new enters with a leap'<sup>517</sup> without the concept of *Augenblick* being hampered by ordinary

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<sup>515</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 179

<sup>516</sup> Hoffman, *The Basic Concepts of Jaspers' Philosophy*, op cit, p. 102

<sup>517</sup> Jaspers, *Psychologie*, op cit, p. 109

conceptions of time. Whether such a decision actually involves an immediate realisation or whether it involves a prolonged period of consideration, the arrival at the solution, when it occurs, has less reality as a temporal present moment than it does as the *Augenblick*. As noted earlier, Jaspers says, 'The metaphysics of time moves in pictures and thoughts which repeals time in favour of eternity'<sup>518</sup>. How can one convey to other Existenz such a subjective experience, which reveals its meaning only in the 'pictures and thoughts' of the one having the experience? That it cannot be defined is a feature which it holds in common with other key terms in Jaspers' philosophising, which have 'a clear use; but ... no clear, distinct, objective content'<sup>519</sup>.

### ***Augenblick* as Cipher.**

Thyssen tells us that 'Jaspers' metaphysics reaches its climax in the deciphering or 'reading" of cyphers'<sup>520</sup>. It is 'the last great theme', in his *Philosophy* 'unifying the whole in a new climax'<sup>521</sup>. Jaspers tells us: 'We call

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<sup>518</sup> Ibid, p. 111

<sup>519</sup> Earle, op cit, p. 10

<sup>520</sup> Thyssen, op cit, p. 297

<sup>521</sup> Ibid, p. 312

the metaphysical objectivity a cipher because it is the language of transcendence, not transcendence itself<sup>522</sup>. In existence consciousness-as-such cannot hear or understand this cipher language because it speaks of things that cannot be objectively or scientifically known<sup>523</sup>. It is only as Existenz in 'absolute consciousness' that it can 'accost' and communicate with an individual as a direct language. This happens 'at a singular historic moment'<sup>524</sup>, such as the one we have investigated in this chapter. When an experience 'becomes transparent', Jaspers tells us, 'it turns into a cypher' and one finds 'present fulfilment' rather than the 'abyss' of the 'desperate shortcoming, when the experience'<sup>525</sup> relates only to existence. Through ciphers we can experience Being itself, they provide the 'signa' or 'indices'<sup>526</sup> for 'transcendental' Being.

Having had such an experience, and returned to the 'present sensory

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<sup>522</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy, Vol. III*, op cit, p. 113

<sup>523</sup> 'God' is a cipher for Transcendence; *Existenz*, Jaspers says, is an index, 'it names without characterizing'. 'Freedom' is also a cipher.

<sup>524</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy, Vol. III*, op cit, p. 113

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid*, p. 114

<sup>526</sup> Latzel, op cit, p. 203

reality', we find that its content cannot be demonstrated, and it is something that cannot be known in empirical terms. But the 'not-knowing' of this experience is not 'the negative limit of my experience of mundane things' but it is rather a 'fulfilled not-knowing'. One returns it seems to an altered reality, not 'as a content of existence ... but to reality as a cipher'<sup>527</sup> and with a new drive toward finding 'my own experience of true being'<sup>528</sup>. What is heard, so to speak, in the immediate experience of a decisive present moment is 'audible' as an 'echo' of a language of transcendence. It can only be passed on to other Existenz in a 'second language', 'a narrative, an image, a form, a gesture'. This, Jaspers asserts, is how languages are created, 'images and thoughts' are 'intended to convey what has been heard'<sup>529</sup> in the language of being. The language we use, in which we seek to communicate these momentary experiences, is a 'second language'. Its conveyable content 'can be replenished by relating back to its source'<sup>530</sup>. Each new experience of an *Augenblick*, might be thought to replenish its meaning content and keep the word alive in language.

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<sup>527</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy, Vol. III*, op cit, p. 114

<sup>528</sup> Ibid, p. 115

<sup>529</sup> Ibid, p. 115

<sup>530</sup> Ibid, p. 113

'The ciphers that we have learned to employ derive in large part from our historical situation'<sup>531</sup>. Each individual having such an *augenblicklich* experience can relate it to this well-used expression which necessarily has its root in ordinary everyday temporal existence. 'In the blink of an eye' is an analogy for the sudden and decisive moment of change. As Jaspers puts it, one '*reads the original cipher-script by writing a new one*'<sup>532</sup>. In the *Augenblick* we have a figurative descriptive phrase we might almost say an 'image', for it symbolises an inexpressible experience. Such experiences are an object of yearning, they are something which is desired but cannot be defined, that is why they are such a enduring subject of contemplation. Jaspers asserts that scientific knowledge, 'by draining appearances of their magic, only makes these cyphers clearer and richer and more immediately effective by contrast. Science can neither create nor destroy them'<sup>533</sup>.

The *Augenblick* represents 'a metaphysical speculation' which becomes part of a 'third language' that of 'philosophical communication'<sup>534</sup>, in which cipher language is interpreted and spoken. One way in which to speak

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<sup>531</sup> Wallraff, op cit, p. 186

<sup>532</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy, Vol. III*, op cit, p. 117

<sup>533</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy is for Everyman*. op cit, p. 9-10

<sup>534</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy III*, op cit, p. 114

this language is 'to transcend in reminiscence and foresight, pondering the origin and the end'<sup>535</sup>. As birth and death this 'origin and the end' represent the outer limits of our existence; as the beginning of, and the goal or purpose of our acts, they represent the inner limits of thinking and planning. In the wider aspect, they represent the world and its horizons within which we come to be. When we are between these two at any point we consider ourselves standing in our present moment, they mark the boundaries of our past and future. 'Remembrance and foresight alone give me access to being', when remembrance of the past and foresight of the future meet in my present speculations, they permeate one another and the present, 'no longer remains simply the present; if I read the cipher in a foresight permeated by remembrance, it becomes present eternity'<sup>536</sup>. We can take the *Augenblick* as a cipher which gains meaning through historical use. Only in 'fleeting moments' through 'temporal ciphers' of 'decision, resolve, probation, or fidelity'<sup>537</sup> is a 'knowledge' of transcendence as 'a glimpse of eternity present'. Only in Existenz, can it be grasped, as Jaspers says, 'athwart its present temporality'<sup>538</sup>.

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid, p. 118

<sup>536</sup> Ibid, p. 181

<sup>537</sup> Ibid, p. 191

<sup>538</sup> Quoted in Thyssen, op cit, p. 301

To conclude, Jaspers tells us 'Philosophy means to be on the way', and 'this on-the-wayness' as 'man's destiny in time - contains within it the possibility of deep satisfaction, and indeed, in exalted moments, of perfection'. This possibility, 'never resides in formulable knowledge, in dogmas and articles of faith, but in a historical consummation of man's essence in which being itself is revealed'<sup>539</sup>. Philosophical questions emerge from practical life situations, and therefore 'their form is at any given moment in keeping with the *historical* situation'. This situation is part of a tradition whose earlier questions are 'still ours' and are partly 'identical with the present ones'. Questions are more enduring and essential than any answers, yet they are nonetheless subject to change and infinitely concerned with the contemporary situation in which we make them our own 'by translation'<sup>540</sup>.

Jaspers' earliest thinking which, as we have seen, he describes as free from political attitude, gives way to a position in which he sees philosophy as important to 'the contemporary environment, ethical and political'<sup>541</sup>. How does the tradition of philosophical thinking especially in

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<sup>539</sup> Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom*, op cit, p. 12

<sup>540</sup> Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie*, 1989, op cit, p. 166

<sup>541</sup> Huber, Gerhard, *The Significance of Jaspers' Philosophy for Our Time*, in *Journal of British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol 17, no. 1, January 1986, p. 13



regard to the *Augenblick* bear upon our time? We have presented here, the way in which the *Augenblick* can be nothing or everything. In *Existenzphilosophie*, Jaspers tells us that 'the alternative 'nothing or everything' stands before our age as the question of man's spiritual destiny'<sup>542</sup>.

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<sup>542</sup> Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie*, 1989, op cit, p. 165

**Chapter 4.**  
**Martin Heidegger's *Augenblick* as 'moment of vision', and the  
Redemption of Being.**

Our investigations into Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Jaspers has shown that the concept of the Moment is elevated from the moment as an ordinary instant of time. Yet the temporal domain is an inescapable basis for human experience and it is especially so in Martin Heidegger's work. The present is primary as every moment holds existential possibilities in imminence. We will find the aspects of redemption in the Moment previously discovered in Nietzsche. The crisis point or limit of understanding again precipitates us into the Moment proper. There is a giving way to radical change by a leap to a connection with a transcendent and eternal 'truth' or knowledge. Again, it is not a scientific knowledge but one which concerns one's very existence.

As *kairos*, this event occurs at the right time and crucially, as Kierkegaard stressed, with the right man present in the correct attitude. This attitude for Heidegger is one of attunement and resoluteness. The one who discovers knowledge in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche is described in Heidegger as the one who asks the question. Jaspers followed Kierkegaard in discussing how one lives appropriately 'in the moment'. The Moment is a site of the decisions involving one's actions time in an historical sense and those decisions which concern one's existential self. Heidegger appropriates Nietzsche's concept of Eternal Return to describe the transcendent being

from out of which beings and events recur.

Heidegger's early lecture courses at Marburg University include *The History of the Concept of Time* in 1925 and *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* of 1927 which constitute transitional texts bearing the beginnings of ideas, including that of the *Augenblick* which find fruition in *Being and Time* in 1927. Heidegger's concept of the *Augenblick* continues to develop throughout the course of his work. The word has an everyday sense in German of simply 'moment', which Heidegger uses until Division II of *Being and Time* where he discusses the ontological significance of temporality<sup>543</sup>.

It is here that the translators mark a deepening meaning of *Augenblick* and address the word's more literal German meaning as 'glance of the eye', from then on it is rendered as 'moment of vision'<sup>544</sup>. As such the term is as necessarily related to some kind of sight or insight (*Einblick*) as it is to the temporal experience of a sudden and fleeting yet momentous event. Further to this, as William McNeill in *The Glance of the Eye* (1999), says it involves Aristotle's concept of *theoria*<sup>545</sup>, whose original sense is of 'seeing' or 'pure

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<sup>543</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, Translators: John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Blackwell Publishers, 2000, Sect 65. H323, p. 370.

<sup>544</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 376. It should be noted that Joan Stambaugh's translation of *Being and Time* has *Augenblick* throughout as simply 'moment'.

<sup>545</sup> Considered 'in relation to those moments against which *theoria* delimits itself in

beholding', philosophy has traditionally used the concept of 'seeing' as 'knowing'. Throughout Heidegger's work the concept is informed by his glancing back to Aristotle; however, this aspect is outside the parameters of this chapter, though it is fully explored in William McNeill's book.

Although Heidegger in his analytic asserts that we cannot discuss particular actions of individual *Dasein* 'in any particular case'<sup>546</sup>, it seems pertinent to involve a discussion of Heidegger's own particular situation and choices in and of 'his time'. In this discussion it is necessary to refer to the actual historical events of Heidegger's own contemporary situation caught up as it is within an apocalyptic *zeitgeist*. Unfortunately, commentary on Heidegger's political stance often overwhelms discussion of his ontology, his allegiance to National Socialism in the 1930s and the new beginning he perceives it holding for Germany is well documented. More interesting is the new beginning in philosophy Heidegger wants to make by a return to ideas regarding being, to which he asserts, human being has become oblivious. Heidegger's concern is always with our 'Being-in-the-world', where 'world' is that which surrounds human being as a whole. It is not this world as opposed to the heavenly realm, nor is it 'the 'worldly' as opposed to the spiritual'<sup>547</sup>. Yet

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establishing its definitive primacy, namely, *praxis* and *poiesis*'. McNeill, William, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle and the Ends of Theory*, State University of New York Press, 1999, Preface, p. ix

<sup>546</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 434

<sup>547</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Letter on Humanism*, in *The Existentialist Reader: An Anthology of Key*

this is not to say that there is no 'spiritual' element to Heidegger's thinking as we shall see, and his ontology can be seen as redemptive even though grounded in the world.

Apocalyptic themes pervade the philosophy of Heidegger in relation to the *Augenblick*. They are grounded in the idea that the social and political situation of a time is one of crisis which appears to move inevitably toward total destruction. The culmination point of the state of crisis, the eschatological moment, cannot but give way to change and the instigation of a new order, as such it is, one might argue, the central concept of apocalypse. The crisis is the concern of the immediate present and the change which inevitably emerges from such a situation is considered to be imminent. The present situation cannot be held onto, it must be transcended and give way to the awaited future. Heidegger elevates the ordinary present to an authentic Present which involves the futural impetus of *Dasein*. This impetus compels us through life and onto ever new projects, it arises in Moments, and there are some rare moments of a special intensity which we may seize hold of and exploit.

There is also an intimation that only a few 'select' people can have access to what this *Augenblick* holds. For apocalyptic thinking, the presence of a 'visionary', Messianic figure is necessary to the recognition that 'now' is the time, a fitting person who is properly situated, who recognises and is prepared to seize the possibilities that the present harbours. The *Augenblick*

is linked to Heidegger's concept of 'attunement', particularly 'anxiety' and 'profound boredom'. While one lives, a moment is just another instant in the flow of time. It is necessary to feel arrested in the moment, to be able to be astonished by the very fact of something's existence, in fact, by existence itself. In this way, a moment might seem to stand out in intensity rather than blindly passing, such a moment is not 'given', it must be sought or discovered. In the correct 'attitude', that of maintaining a 'mood' or 'attunement', a moment can be accessible. Then 'all at once' it is as if the atmosphere around things has changed and one can see the world as one has never *seen* it before.

By being 'resolute' one can be brought back from being 'lost' in the 'they'; back to one's authentic self and be properly *in* the moment (*augenblicklich*) as a state of being. Resoluteness is the authentic counterpart to being irresolute which, as in the case of inauthenticity is the usual way of being in the world. But from out of this very irresoluteness and inauthenticity comes the possibility of reclaiming oneself, of coming into one's own. Similarly, it is from the critical state of danger which Heidegger sees his contemporary world to be suffering that the 'saving power' emerges.

Heidegger draws on Nietzsche's concept of Eternal Return to speak of an eternal quality of transcendent Being out of which human beings come forth into presence in a momentary yet momentous way. In the recently

translated *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*<sup>548</sup> of 1936-8, *Augenblick* refers to the 'event' (*ereignis*) of this coming to presence. The thinking of Being in this way Heidegger asserts, heralds a new epoch in philosophy. The sudden and decisive yet enigmatic *Augenblick* is a concept which itself returns. In the *Augenblick*, then, *Dasein* can become *augenblicklich*; in *Contributions* Heidegger speaks of a further condition, that of *Dasein*'s being essentially Momentary (*augenblicklichkeit*). One might 'own up to' or take responsibility for this state of being. At the same time one might 'come into one's own', in the sense of being fulfilled or receiving what one is owed; perhaps being brought into the condition of the fulfilment of the promise of the *Augenblick*.

### **Temporality.**

There are various possible sources from which Heidegger develops his concept of *Augenblick*, amongst which are Edmund Husserl's work on the phenomenology of the consciousness of inner or internal time<sup>549</sup>; the moment of Kierkegaard; and Jaspers' work in relation to the limit situation which informs Heidegger's thinking on being-toward-death<sup>550</sup>. Husserl, by his

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<sup>548</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, Translators: Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999

<sup>549</sup> Husserl, Edmund, *On The Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*, Kluwer, 1991

<sup>550</sup> William D. Blattner, *Heidegger's Debt to Jaspers' Concept of the Limit-Situation*, in *Heidegger*

distinction between the German words: *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnisse* makes possible a differentiation between 'objective time', and that 'time' of lived experience. *Erfahrung* from its root *Fahrt* meaning 'path', Husserl used to refer to the 'outer experience', or the specific activities one engages in, e.g., the fact that one goes to a cafe and has coffee. *Erlebnisse* from *Leben* meaning 'life', refers to what he called 'lived experience', and signifies the intensity of a moment, for instance, the 'immediate' experience of one's first mouthful of that hot strong coffee at one's favourite cafe.

Husserl spoke of past and future as belonging to our experience of ordinary or 'outer time', using 'retention' and 'protention' for the corresponding aspects pertaining to 'inner time'. The 'retention' of passing time informs our expectations of an unfolding event, 'protention' is the projected completion of our expectations, of this unfolding. Together these form a synthesis which constitutes our horizon of expectations which, if thwarted gives a shock of the unexpected - a moment standing out in intensity. This temporal unfolding is not divided into individual instants with each 'now moment' separate from the next, they are in a continuum. They evolve, each instant falls away as another arises, cohering in the present experience. Within this phenomenological horizon is included all of the aspects of an object in space or an event, those which pass and also those

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*and Jaspers*, Editor: Alan M. Olson, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1994, pp.153-165



not-yet-known, they remain undetermined, until they occur, if they occur.

Heidegger redeploys Husserl's phenomenology of inner time experience to encompass our human 'being-in-the-world'. He understands human being as a 'nexus' of lived experience and he recognises the priority of the 'lived' world (*Lebenswelt*), and the importance of its three temporal dimensions, or, in his words *ecstases* in which we, as temporal beings exist all at once. In using the word 'ecstases' Heidegger points to the way in which the three elements of past, present and future stand out, rather than being part of the ordinary 'levelled off'<sup>551</sup> sequence of 'now' moments<sup>552</sup>. We actively draw on our past and project ahead of ourselves into the future, to enable our present, and it is our being concerned with the present that constitutes our Being. For Heidegger temporality holds the meaning of the Being of *Dasein*, he says: 'we shall point to *temporality* as the meaning of the Being of that entity which we call 'Dasein''<sup>553</sup>. Husserl's 'now' moment is a 'passive' synthesis rather than 'active', the ego is the recipient, it does not actively take part. But in seeing a possibility of seizing an opportunity in a Moment, we

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<sup>551</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 377

<sup>552</sup> Heidegger is not here using this word to speak of a state of ecstasy or a visionary trance although the language may hint at it.

<sup>553</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 38

begin to mark the Moment as decisive, it is transformed into something which can shape one's past and future. We might say it brings the ability to 'preconstitute' and 'precapitulate'<sup>554</sup> our future, if we are able to think of it as extending itself out from the ordinary temporal reach of our notions of time.

Any abstraction of a concept of the Moment remains rooted in the temporality which we are. Any understanding derived from such a Moment serves to advance *Dasein's* enquiry into its own Being. As transcendent beings we move beyond our factual existence which precedes and conditions 'essence'<sup>555</sup>. Through uncovering of the inner-time-consciousness of *Dasein's* Being-in-the-World, Heidegger hopes to penetrate into the 'inner heart of time', his project is to move from the Being of time to the time of Being. By discovering Time as meaning in this way, Safranski asserts, can 'sharpen our sense for the throbbing heart of Time, for the 'moment''<sup>556</sup>The concept of Moment may be crucial to this move. Both ordinary time and what Heidegger, referring to the inner experience, calls 'originary time', are crucial

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<sup>554</sup> These two terms are the inventions of Dr. Paul MacDonald, formed from "reconstitue" and "recapitulate", they are the future-oriented terms for constituiton in advance and capitulation in advance.

<sup>555</sup> In Sartre's reversal of Descartes' finding, he states that 'existence precedes essence', as unfinished projects our essence cannot be known in advance.

<sup>556</sup> Safranski, *Martin Heidegger, Between Good and Evil*, op cit, pp. 172-3

to the comprehension of a Moment. But most importantly, if time is understood in the ordinary way, that is with the 'now' as the present without its "Ecstatico-horizonal" structure, Heidegger says, 'there is in principle no prospect that *in terms of this kind of 'now'* one can clarify the ecstatico-horizonal phenomenon of the *moment of vision* which belongs to temporality, or even that one can derive it thus'<sup>557</sup>. This is because 'temporality temporalizes itself *primarily* in terms of the *future*'<sup>558</sup>, he says, and this future aspect as we shall see is crucial to the *Augenblick*.

While extracting the phenomenon of the *Augenblick* from the now of Husserl, Heidegger purports to go beyond it. He also distances himself from his other source in Kierkegaard. Heidegger recognises that 'Kierkegaard is probably the one who has seen the *existentiell* phenomenon of the moment of vision with the most penetration'<sup>559</sup>, that is he has seen the possibility it contains of realising an understanding of oneself through existing itself and that 'What we here designate as 'moment of vision' is what was really comprehended for the first time in philosophy by Kierkegaard'<sup>560</sup>.

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<sup>557</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p.479

<sup>558</sup> Ibid, p. 479

<sup>559</sup> Ibid, p. 497, note iii, from p. 338

<sup>560</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Fundamental Concept of Metaphysics*, p.150

Nevertheless, Heidegger criticises Kierkegaard for failing to escape temporality, for not being 'successful in interpreting it existentially'. He asserts that Kierkegaard 'clings to the ordinary conception of time, and defines the 'moment of vision' with the help of 'now' and 'eternity''. This seems rather harsh, even 'short-sighted and unjustified' as Otto Pöggeler notes in his article *Destruction and Moment*<sup>561</sup>, when we consider how central to the Being of *Dasein* Heidegger says temporality is. *Dasein* is constituted by time; temporality gives meaning to beings whose world it mediates: 'the primordial ontological basis for *Dasein*'s existentiality is temporality'<sup>562</sup> .

But 'when Kierkegaard speaks of 'temporality'', Heidegger says, 'what he has in mind is man's 'Being-in-time' ... Time as within-time-ness knows only the 'now'; it never knows a moment of vision. If, however such a moment gets experienced in an *existentiell* manner, then a more primordial temporality has been presupposed, although existentially it has not been made explicit'<sup>563</sup> . According to Heidegger, 'Kierkegaard grasped the *existentiell* problem of existing, but the existential problematic remained ...

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<sup>561</sup> Pöggeler, Otto, *Destruction and Moment*, translator: Daniel Magurshak, in *Reading Heidegger from the Start. Essays in his earliest thought*, Editors: Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren, State University Press of New York, New York, 1994

<sup>562</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p.277

<sup>563</sup> Ibid, p.497

foreign to him.<sup>564</sup> However, as Pöggeler points out, Kierkegaard develops his Moment from 'the Aristotelian description of the transition from possibility to actuality as *kinesis* and does not present time as a series of now-points'. Furthermore, Pöggeler asserts that Heidegger 'does not sufficiently take into account' the fact that Kierkegaard 'proceeds from open Socratic questioning to faith'<sup>565</sup>, so that the basis of his development of the Moment is different to Heidegger's.

Yet, Heidegger asserts that Kierkegaard's comprehending of the Moment, although itself has not been properly understood, is a 'decisive point' in his philosophy which presents human being with 'the possibility of a completely new epoch of philosophy'<sup>566</sup>. We will return to discussion of this later in the chapter. Meanwhile, the last word here goes to Kierkegaard, who, in the *Journals*<sup>567</sup> does say that 'it would be an absurdity [*Absurditet*] if a period of time should determine the absolute relation to the absolute, and that fact manifests itself as absolute, precisely by its not being dependent on

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<sup>564</sup> Heidegger quoted in Pöggeler, op cit, p. 150

<sup>565</sup> Ibid, p.438, note 14

<sup>566</sup> Heidegger, *Fundamental Concept of Metaphysics*, op cit, p.150

<sup>567</sup> Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, Hong, Supplement, p. 214

time, even though it is historical'<sup>568</sup> .

***Augenblick*, as 'moment of vision'.**

Further concepts which underpin Heidegger's *Augenblick* are, as Hans Ruin tells us in *Enigmatic Origins: Tracing the Theme of Historicity through Heidegger's Works*, the Greek concepts of *exaiphnes* as sudden and radical change, 'a word that formerly stressed the originating moment of emergence, a coming into presence as though out of nothing ... the sudden onset of a mighty fire, a sudden igniting or flaring up, a coming into the light that brings its own illumination with it '<sup>569</sup>. And *kairos* as the fitting time for action, with the sense of all the elements being present, the time, the place, and the means, which includes the presence of the right person. With the right conditions and the 'vision' of those who can recognise the time and hear the call, action can be taken and a new beginning instigated. Ruin cites Walter Bauer who among the four uses of this *kairos* distinguishes one for 'time in general; for the right or profitable time; for a fixed point in time'. But most significantly for this chapter, he also distinguishes one as an 'eschatological' concept in

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<sup>568</sup> Ibid, p. 214

<sup>569</sup> McNeill, op cit, p. 116-7 footnote 28, and see Ruin, Hans, *Enigmatic Origins: Tracing the Theme of Historicity through Heidegger's Works*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, Stockholm Studies in Philosophy 15, Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1994, footnote re: Illiad, Cf. Liddell and Scott, 1989, p. 582

which it signifies the last day, the time of the return of the Lord. It is the moment when this time will come to an end<sup>570</sup>. Ruin also tells us that this 'is perhaps the first use in Greek of the literal equivalent to the German *Augenblicke*'<sup>571</sup>.

*Augenblick* translates into English as the 'blink' or 'twinkling of an eye', (Ruin proposes "gaze of the eye' but with the connotation of a twinkling"<sup>572</sup>), or simply 'moment' in everyday use. 'In the blink of an eye' carries the dimension of an experience of temporality as fleeting and momentary, with the inference of something momentous occurring. More than an experience of a sudden event, the moment holds a change more far reaching than the next 'now' moment of time, rather a radical turn about from one 'world' or view to another becomes possible. It implies a temporal passing away or transcendence. For Heidegger, the futural impetus of our Being, which compels us through life and onto ever new projects, arises in moments, and there are some rare moments of a special intensity which we may seize hold of and exploit. There is also an intimation that only a few people can have access to what this *Augenblick* holds.

While one lives, a moment is just another instant in the flow of time. It

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<sup>570</sup> Ruin, op cit, p.180

<sup>571</sup> Ibid, p. 180

<sup>572</sup> Ibid, p. 176

is necessary to feel arrested in the moment, to be astonished by the very fact of something's existence, by existence itself. It enables a moment to stand out in intensity rather than blindly passing, such a moment is not 'given', it must be sought or discovered. In the correct 'attitude', that of maintaining a 'mood' or 'attunement', a moment can be accessible. Then 'all at once' it is as if the atmosphere around things has changed and one can see the world as one has never *seen* it before. The term *Augenblick*, Heidegger says, 'must be understood, in the active sense as an ecstasis'<sup>573</sup>. It is necessary to realise that Heidegger is using this word in his particular sense, and he is not meaning a state of ecstasy as a visionary trance. For Heidegger it is a standing out from the ordinary temporal dimension in the sense of how temporal modes come to our attention.

As stated earlier, the translators of *Being and Time* highlight the literal meaning of *Augenblick* as 'glance of the eye', rendering it 'moment of vision', thus pointing to its relation to sight or insight (*Einblick*). The existential significance Heidegger gives to 'sight' therefore, over the other senses, is that which can reveal 'accessible' entities 'unconcealedly in themselves', it gives 'access to entities *and to Being*'<sup>574</sup>. We perceive both beings and Being itself. Sight is 'grounded primarily in understanding' of which, Heidegger tells

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<sup>573</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 387

<sup>574</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 187



us, 'intuition' and 'thinking' are both derivatives<sup>575</sup> .

The 'vision' into Being attained in the *Augenblick* reveals *Dasein* in its 'ownmost' possibilities of Being. In the *Augenblick*, Heidegger tells us, there is a possibility that, 'just for that moment' *Dasein* can be 'in a Moment' (*augenblicklich*) 'for its time'. At this point in *Being and Time* we find the concept has developed into an *augenblicklich* state of Being. The concept continues to deepen along the way of Heidegger's thinking, a decade later he is using the term *augenblicklichkeit* to speak of the essence of momentary being itself. In the phenomenon of the 'moment of vision', Heidegger says, nothing actually occurs, but it may be seen as an authentic present place where *Dasein* can 'encounter for the first time what can be 'in a time' as ready to hand or present at hand'<sup>576</sup>, i.e. that which can be grasped and used. It represents the opening of the 'own-most' possibilities of human being rather than the revelation of an eternal, universal truth; a realisation of 'the fundamental possibility of *Dasein's* existence proper'. Based in factual existence, *Dasein* can experience an extraordinary and 'totalizing' sense of Being.

A 'moment of vision' cannot be derived from a ordinarily present 'now' without the unity of its corresponding 'ecstases' of future and 'having-been'.

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<sup>575</sup> Ibid, p. 187

<sup>576</sup> Ibid, p. 338

*Dasein's* 'facticity' includes its existence as 'projection', that is it has the possibility of 'projecting' its future possibilities and this comes fully into its own in the 'moment of vision'. There is a special character of the 'Present' which enables the 'moment of vision', which not every present moment has. Heidegger exploits the German for present, *gegenwart* which, by hyphenating 'gegen' and 'wart' becomes 'waiting-towards'. Of the three temporal 'ecstases' which Heidegger says are equiprimordial, he maintains that the future has priority. *Dasein* is 'futural being', leaning toward what is to come. It is this momentum or impetus toward change or what change might bring, that denotes our particular type of being as that with a propensity to hope.

There is an important paragraph in *Being and Time*, which encompasses aspects of the *Augenblick* pertinent to this discussion and which Heidegger italicises throughout:

Only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially **futural** so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factical there by shattering itself against death - that is to say, only an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordial in the process of **having-been**, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be **in the moment of vision** for 'its time'. Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate - that is to say, authentic historicity.<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid, p. 437

In this compact description, Heidegger speaks of the futural character of *Dasein*, which allows sight of the limit of its finitude, this knowledge can bring a most significant change to *Dasein*'s being when the fact of its own death is 'accommodated'. The effect is of 'freeing' *Dasein* to realise the magnitude of its 'having' finitude as an inheritance. This paragraph speaks of the way in which *Dasein* 'has' its future and its past along with it. The 'facticity' of human being for Heidegger is that it is 'thrown' into its world, but can overcome this by being *in* the moment (*augenblicklich*). By Being *in* the moment of vision for 'its time', Heidegger describes *Dasein*'s ownmost and intrinsic temporal being, but also the time of the lived experience of events in history. Both the factual events in the continuity of history and the experiencing of those events constitute being-historical itself, which he elsewhere refers to as 'historicity' (*Geschichte*). In speaking of this, Heidegger differentiates between the 'fate' of individual *Dasein*, and the 'destiny' of a people. The word 'destining' (*Geschick*) as we can see is, in the German related to historicity and is used by Heidegger to indicate 'the changing happenings and experiences of *Dasein*'s historicity, as they are revealed in their unfolding. It refers to their fitness or aptness' to our being and our adapting ourselves to them, 'That which has the character of destining moves, in itself, at any given time, toward a special moment that

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sends it into another destining, in which, however, it is not simply submerged and lost'<sup>578</sup>.

### **Heidegger 'in time'.**

Heidegger perceives his contemporary world to be moving progressively toward 'total destruction' both politically and spiritually<sup>579</sup>. As early as 1910 - 12 Heidegger is already talking of the moment. As a seminarian in a Catholic institution regarding a modern world outside in its fascination with speed and novelty, Heidegger laments the superficiality of concerns of what he calls the 'they' by which he means the general 'mass' of people. He considers contemporary human being to have 'become bored with themselves', and characterises their way of looking at the world as mere inauthentic<sup>580</sup> 'curiosity'. If, he says, one of these superficial characters,

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<sup>578</sup> Heidegger, *The Turning in The Question Concerning Technology and other essays*, translator: William Lovitt, Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1977, p. 37

<sup>579</sup> Heidegger is not referring to 'spirit' in a theological sense but rather to the stance of man inexorably *in* the world.

<sup>580</sup> The terms authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) and authentic (*eigentlich*) are intended by Heidegger to convey more than their usual senses of 'really' or 'genuine', although they do retain something of these meanings. Other translations reflect a sense of ownership and self-possession and also of 'appropriation', perhaps 'taking to oneself', 'taking to heart' or 'coming into one's own' even. (see footnote in *Being and Time*, H5, p. 24) There is a relation between authentic or *eigentlich* and *eigen* (own) which is lost in translation.

were, 'in a moment of Christian grace, to become conscious of the Big Lie of his rootless life, the altars of the false gods would be shattered'<sup>581</sup>. In such a moment he asserts, what is revealed to a person might change them radically and turn about the direction of their inclinations and thought. Such a conversion entails the redemption of self from the superficial world of everyday concern.

By 1919 Heidegger, following his experiences at the front in World War I, is writing in a letter to his friend Elizabeth Blochmann of having experienced 'inspired moments which 'vibrate'' or oscillate in one's Being. A tone of religious mystery surrounds his description of these moments, these 'high tension intensities of meaningful life'<sup>582</sup>. He writes, 'we must be able to live in continuity with' them and they must not be simply noted as occurring, we must incorporate them into the flow of life; the clarification which comes through them to us must be seized upon and exploited for a genuine knowledge of one's self. Being makes itself clear to us 'primordially', through basic intuition in these moments, before theorising and discourse take over.

Heidegger's impression of the decadent modern world is strengthened by the 1930s. A new order is necessary to shatter and replace old values both in politics and philosophy itself. In 1933 Heidegger makes his own

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<sup>581</sup> Quoted in Rüdiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger, Between Good and Evil*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1998, p. 21

<sup>582</sup> Ibid, p. 102

decision to action which will be a point of discussion and contention for the rest of his life and after. Having, as he claims never been politically active until this time he begins to consider the political situation and that of the universities and students as hopeless. Four months after Hitler is named Chancellor of the Reich, he takes up the position of rector at the university of Freiburg. He delivers the famous rectorial address in which he speaks of the 'greatness and glory of this dawn,' of the Reich (kingdom) and states that: 'The *Führer* himself and he alone *is* the present and future of German reality and its rule'. Hitler is the man of the moment of decisive change, one of whom Heidegger asserted were only a few insightful men who could recognise this opportunity in its fullness of possibilities. National Socialism was the political mechanism which would redeem the German people and its heritage.

His becoming rector he claims as 'an attempt to stem the coming development by means of constructive powers which were still viable'<sup>583</sup>. He acts as he apparently sees fit in the situation at hand, to rescue the university from possible interference by party functionaries, and to get back to 'the rootedness of sciences in their essential ground'<sup>584</sup>. Heidegger had hope in

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<sup>583</sup> ONLY A GOD CAN SAVE US: *Der Spiegel's Interview with Martin Heidegger*, Translators: M P Alter and J D Caputo, *Philosophy Today*, Winter number 4, 1976, p. 268

<sup>584</sup> Petzet, Heinrich Wiegand, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929 - 1976*, Translators: Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and

the young students, that they were the ones who could understand the 'alert readiness' he was advocating. 'Academic pursuit must become once again a venture'<sup>585</sup>, he says. He wanted to lead 'science' back to its original ground in the ancient heritage of Greek philosophy, and thus back to a 'rigour of questioning'<sup>586</sup>.

The apocalyptic politic of fascism appealed to Heidegger's notion of heritage and tradition. In National Socialism he saw a chance of a radical new beginning for Germany and for the institution of the university, 'because he believed that it could give rise to an internal as well as external regeneration of the Germans.'<sup>587</sup> Heidegger seems to have had a sense of having reached a decisive moment of history with the men proper to this *kairos* present: Hitler for Germany and Heidegger himself for the university. Although the values of the modern world were lost one could make a new beginning, not from complete destruction but by reaching back to certain revered traditions.

The fascist politic is apocalyptic in style, to quote David Cooper in his book *Thinkers of our Time. Heidegger*, it sees politics:

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London, 1993, p. 30

<sup>585</sup> Ibid, p. 29

<sup>586</sup> Ibid, p. 27

<sup>587</sup> Ibid, p. 31

'as the arena where big, radical decisions are called for in a struggle against the forces responsible for a crisis of civilization - decisions that can only be made by the few men, or single man, with an insight into the caesura, the moment of destiny, that has been reached, and with the will and power to carry it through'<sup>588</sup>.

In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, based on his lecture courses of 1935, Heidegger directly relates the question of Being to the destiny of Europe, 'where the destiny of the earth is being decided - while our own historical being-there proves to be the centre for Europe itself.'<sup>589</sup> He says 'The spiritual decline of the earth is so far advanced that the nations are in danger of losing the last bit of spiritual energy that makes it possible to see the decline'. He describes 'the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the transformation of men into a mass, the hatred and suspicion of everything free and creative'<sup>590</sup>. This is 'how is it with being'.

Heidegger sees the forgetfulness of being as the cause of the decline of both human being and nations. But when the question is entered into, there can be a 'privileged, unique relation' between the question and the

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<sup>588</sup> Cooper, David, *Thinkers of our Time. Heidegger*, The Claridge Press, London, 1996, p. 49

<sup>589</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Yale University Press, USA, 1987, p. 42

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38



questioner who is thereby opened up 'as a whole'<sup>591</sup>. One can catch a view of oneself as this questioning being in the very act of its questioning. Thus, Heidegger asserts, 'one kind of essent persists in coming to the fore, namely the men who ask the question'<sup>592</sup>. This interrelation Heidegger sees as an occurrence which is 'a privileged happening that we call an *event*.'<sup>593</sup> And we shall soon see that for Heidegger, the notion of 'event' has its own intrinsic significance to the *Augenblick*. This question with its 'hidden power', Heidegger says:

looms in moments of great despair, when things tend to lose all their weight and all meaning becomes obscured. Perhaps it will strike but once like a muffled bell that rings into our life and gradually dies away. It is present in moments of rejoicing, when all the things around us are transfigured and seem to be there for the first time, as if it might be easier to think they are not than to understand that they are. The question is upon us in boredom, when we are equally removed from despair and joy and everything about us seems so hopelessly commonplace that we no longer care whether anything is or is not - and with this the question 'Why are there essents rather than nothing?' is evoked in a particular form.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid, p. 4

<sup>592</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>593</sup> Ibid, p. 5

<sup>594</sup> Ibid, p. 2-3

By the 1950s the danger reaches its apotheosis in the epoch of modern technology whose exploitative essence, as that which imposes the ordering and stockpiling of resources has its detrimental effect on human being itself. Technology, Heidegger asserts, renders human being as merely another resource, or 'standing reserve (*Bestand*)'<sup>595</sup>. This is, for Heidegger, the reason for the endangered state of human being and its root lies in their having forgotten the meaning of Being. The meaning is, in fact, so deeply lost and completely forgotten that it is consigned to 'oblivion'; human being no longer even remembers that there is anything there to remember.

### **Beginnings.**

Heidegger's desire is to break new ground, or rather to break up the old ground and begin anew the thinking of Being. This, though is not a superficial and fleeting new, but one with the solid heritage of past traditions so important to Heidegger. He announces his project as a new beginning for philosophy marked by a return to a more original thinking regarding Being, one he asserts that has been lost or neglected since the Greeks considered it. He sees his overall project to be that of rescuing the thinking of Being from contemporary ways. Heidegger comes to see his philosophical task as a turning point, everyday real life, actual historical events of the world must inform philosophy. The 'facticity' of human being in the world becomes his

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<sup>595</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and other essays*, Harper and Row

declared focus.

The state of upheaval in Germany between the two World Wars gave rise to a revolutionary impulse and a mood of eschatological expectation. There emerged many prophets and charismatics. Safranski describes how almost every major town had one or more “saints of inflation”, ‘eager to save Germany or the world in the streets, in the woods, in market squares, in circus tents, and in the smoke-filled back rooms of bars.’<sup>596</sup> Max Weber spoke against the ‘steel capsule of modern ‘rationalized’ civilization’<sup>597</sup>, which robbed human being of the ability to make its own value judgments and decisions and left no answer to the meaning of one’s life. And yet, ‘perhaps only needs the person who can ask ‘the right question’.’<sup>598</sup>

Heidegger is a master of questioning. The mood of the time matched his own stance of making ever new beginnings in philosophy. His first postwar lecture, *The Idea of Philosophy and the Worldview Problem* given in the emergency semester of 1919, went a step further than Weber and addressed the very fact that we make value judgments and form views of the world at all. This is the famous ‘Lecturn lecture’ where Heidegger speaks of a

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Publishers, New York, 1977, p. 17

<sup>596</sup> Safranski, *Between Good and Evil*, op cit, p.92

<sup>597</sup> Weber in Safranski, p. 97

<sup>598</sup> Safranski, *Between Good and Evil*, op cit, p. 90

'primary experience', and by the method of his speaking shows that what is significant is the 'primary' or 'original' experience, 'which presents itself to me directly, without any mental detour via a grasping of things. Living in an environment, it means to me everywhere and always, it is all world, it is worlding'<sup>599</sup>. It is necessary to reach behind the perception of the world before theory destroys the 'primary experience' in its self-transparency. This phenomenological experience enables one to see the world as if one had just been born into it. Heidegger says that in this choice between theory and transparency one can make the decision to make a leap 'into another world, or, more accurately, a leap into the world altogether'. In taking the leap of faith one can experience a moment which contains an 'almost divine promise.'<sup>600</sup> But what is contained in the promise remains a mystery unless one risks the leap.

Heidegger becomes known for this lecture as 'the little magician from Messkirch', and as Hannah Arendt writes on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, the rumour spread that: 'Thinking has come alive again; the cultural treasures of the past, believed to be dead, are made to speak, and it turns out that they produce things altogether different than it had been presumed that they said. There is a teacher; one can perhaps learn thinking. The secret

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<sup>599</sup> GA 56/57, 71-72, quoted in Safranski, pp. 94-95

<sup>600</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

king reigned in the realm of thinking, a realm that is entirely of this world, but is so concealed in it that one is never quite sure whether it exists at all...'<sup>601</sup>.

Pöggeler, traces the Moment from the concept of destruction in Heidegger, whose lecture courses and 'letters to Karl Löwith manifest rejection, the desire to clear away, and dissatisfaction with everything. Such destruction nevertheless fell in with Edmund Husserl's philosophy, which wanted to allow nothing but 'the things themselves' (*die Sachen selbst*) to speak.'<sup>602</sup> Safranski calls Heidegger's provocative stance at this time with his talk of the 'primal intention of life', 'a dadaist episode in philosophy'. He reacts against 'sham profundity' and advocates the everyday experience as 'primary' and in his explications it becomes 'mysterious and adventurous...'<sup>603</sup>.

We might ask what it is that is revealed in this primary experience. Heidegger's concern is always for the question of Being and his project is its constant uncovering, this very 'questioning' he says, 'is the piety of thought'<sup>604</sup>. On one level, in his phenomenological analytic of Being in *Being*

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<sup>601</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *For Martin Heidegger's Eightieth Birthday*, Translator: Lisa Harries, in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism. Questions and Answers*, Editors: Günther Neske and Emil Kettering. New York: Paragon House, 1990, pp. 207-17.

<sup>602</sup> Pöggeler, op cit, p. 137

<sup>603</sup> Safranski, op cit, p. 99

<sup>604</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and other essays*, Harper and Row

*and Time*, Heidegger uses the term 'disclosure' to speak of the way in which things come to our attention or are 'revealed' as that which can be grasped and used. But, for *Dasein* as an entity for whom Being is always in question, or as Heidegger puts it 'is an issue'<sup>605</sup>, there might be, in *Dasein*'s looking further as it were, the chance to catch sight of the very 'there' (*Da*) of our 'there-being' (*Dasein*). What is revealed is a 'vision' of Being itself, and an insight into the truth of Being.

For Heidegger, the very way that human being is in the world is a 'revealing'. *Dasein*'s course through life is not revealed as a fated 'inevitable course' but as 'destining' (*Geschick*), which describes how all things come to presence or are brought forth from out of Being itself and are caught sight of by *Dasein*. He posits the possibility of a 'more original revealing' and that human being can be called by 'a more primal truth'<sup>606</sup>. Heidegger's project is to retrieve thinking from philosophy which he considers has become 'science', fixed and frozen by theoretical considering which denies the 'direct experience' in which the world and Being is held open and in question. He wants to get back to 'the essential ground'<sup>607</sup> of the thinking of Being which he attributes to ancient Greek philosophy, back to a 'rigour of

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Publishers, New York, 1977, p. 35

<sup>605</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 171

<sup>606</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, op cit, p. 28

<sup>607</sup> Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929-1976*, op cit, p. 30

questioning'<sup>608</sup> which can reveal 'accessible' entities 'unconcealedly in themselves', by a direct 'pre-theoretical' disclosure it gives 'access to entities *and to Being*'<sup>609</sup>. This revelation of Being leads to a consideration of the apocalyptic elements which are becoming obvious in Heidegger's thinking. The literal meaning of apocalypse, from the Greek *apokalupsis*, is that of unveiling, in the sense of revelation.

### **Apocalypse 'in the Twinkling of an Eye'.**

Ancient apocalyptic texts were motivated by socio-political situations, especially situations of political oppression, usually when an oppressive regime was coming to an end. Most of them, though not all, had an eschatological character.<sup>610</sup> Apocalyptic imagery gets redeployed at various periods of history to speak of contemporary situations, as such it carries secular and historical rather than religious significance. Such a moment within history demands a commitment followed by whatever action is necessary in the situation. It is a moment full of opportunity for humankind to fulfil its destiny. The urgency of a contemporary situation fills the present with critical significance.

In 1909 Albert Schweitzer in *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*,

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<sup>608</sup> Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Yale University press, New Haven, 1959, p. 27

<sup>609</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 187

<sup>610</sup> I am grateful for this observation to Dr. Paul MacDonald of Murdoch University.

describes the contemporary Jewish world of Jesus as one well acquainted with suppression and dominated by a foreign power. Their holy books, he says, 'were almost all concerned not with the mysteries of internal prayer or personal salvation but with the promises made by God that he would deliver the nation from this captivity or that'<sup>611</sup>. Their hope was toward a free and peaceful Jewish state, not that of individual bliss in an otherworldly future life, but of the present Jewish Society living in peace obeying its own laws and worshipping its own God. The community would be altered almost beyond recognition, but on earth and in time. It is in Christianity that the apocalyptic expectation changes to that of the appearance of a new spiritual kingdom following the eschatological event of Last Things. Brought about by the direct intervention of God, it initiates an inner, spiritual transformation of an individual.

The event of the moment itself, according to *Corinthians* 15:52, arrives 'in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed'. This phrase as a visual and temporal metaphor both names and describes the concept. Such a figurative expression points to its harbouring meaning in excess of a mere moment in time, it describes the moment of something happening suddenly and swiftly, bringing about a change which is momentous and

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<sup>611</sup> Brabazon, James, *Albert Schweitzer. A Biography by James Brabazon*, G P Putnam's Sons, New York, 1975, p. 125



decisive. Existential analysis uncovers 'the conception of man' which underlies the eschatological message' and affirms the 'relevance of individual human will and decision'<sup>612</sup>. The urgency caused by the apocalyptic message comes to concern one's individual decision, one might live not 'as though the kingdom of God is at hand' but in order not to miss a decisive moment in life. This is one focus of Heidegger's moment, but it also unfolds into the decision which concerns the destiny of a whole people and ultimately to become the site of decision or will, as that which defines the essence of beings as a whole.

The different understanding of apocalypse in Judaism and Christianity give on to different concepts of redemption<sup>613</sup>. The Christian view has a future-temporal characteristic which concerns the spiritual salvation of chosen human beings leading to their eternal life. The other is of a transformation of the world as it is known to bring about a new historical epoch in the present, a return to a remembered, or imagined, idyllic life. Although often used interchangeably, there is an important distinction between redemption and salvation. On the one hand, to redeem is to claim

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<sup>612</sup> *Apocalyptic and the New Testament, Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, Editors: Joel Marcus and Marion L Soards, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 24*, J.S.O.T Press, Sheffield, 1989, p. 28

<sup>613</sup> Rowland, Christopher, *Apocalypse Theory and the Ends of the World*, Editor: Malcolm Bull, Blackwell, Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA, 1995, p. 41

back what one is owed or what one has given, such as a promise, something that one once was, in a sense, in possession of. In terms of a promise it entails the fulfilment of an obligation; one has a part to play. To 'deem' is to judge something to be a certain way, to make an assessment and therefore to, as it were, 're-deem', suggests a reassessment of some 'situation'.

On the other hand, salvation is to gain what one does not already have, or be extricated from a situation into a wholly new one. This is more suggestive of a spiritual transformation in which an individual is changed utterly, transformed in its spiritual being and transposed to a heavenly world. Considering this difference, the transformation indicated in the thinking of Heidegger is of an inner character though not spiritual, what he advocates is a return to an originary and primordial way of thinking Being. As such there is a redemption of the concept from neglect and through proper engagement with the thinking of Being, a redemption of an individual to an originary way of experiencing Being itself.

### **The Eschatological Moment.**

In Christianity the eschatological moment as the event of 'Last things' offers transcendence, it heralds the day of judgement following which the spiritual kingdom of God in eternity replaces the earthly one of man in time. This kingdom takes its place before us in the future, the phrase 'the future life' can be taken to refer to the eternal life after death. Heidegger comes to speak of the eternal in relation to the *Augenblick*, not as a realm separate

from this world, but relating to the way in which *Dasein* can bridge the 'cleavage' between temporality as ordinary everyday being 'in time' and the transcendent '*Temporality of Being*'<sup>614</sup>. For Heidegger, the concept of the *Augenblick*, is central to his ontology, in such a moment human being can transcend its ordinary, everyday temporal situation. Such a transcendence for Heidegger is not to another spiritual realm but to an experience of Being itself as a 'pre-ontological' state of *Dasein*'s constitution.

While eschatology in a religious sense usually refers to 'end' as the ultimate termination of the world and the end of history, the word 'end' as 'teleology' refers to a 'goal' or purpose. Heidegger's *Augenblick* is not an eschatological end of the world, nor is it concerned with the teleology of history. It is about human, historical being acting to take their part in the events of history and seizing a decisive moment. Such a moment marks an 'end of time' in Heidegger, in the sense of the experience of a passing away of ordinary everyday temporality which, he says, is 'the meaning of Being of that entity which we call *Dasein*'<sup>615</sup>. The temporal world as continuity is taken over by a unity, time as we know it passes away. Although we might think of the end of a human being in death as a *terminus*, we can interpret an 'end of time' as referring to their end in finite time, allowing for an eternal element of

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<sup>614</sup> Ibid, p. 39

<sup>615</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 38

*Dasein*. The concept of apocalypse carries a sense of urgency, the critical present holds an anxious anticipation of change, an expectation of transcendence of the time or epoch, when one situation gives way to another, entirely new one. The counter to this anxiety is the hope that the event of the change's coming to pass will afford a redemption through whatever the change reveals. It is the very situation of impending destruction which itself gives rise to the possibility of its transcendence.

### **The Authentic Present.**

For Heidegger, the present can assume a special character which not every present moment has, that of being 'authentic'. An authentic 'Present' cannot be derived from a ordinarily present 'now' of time, he tells us, without the unity of its corresponding 'ecstases' of future and 'having-been'. Of these three 'temporal ecstases', Heidegger asserts, the future has priority for *Dasein* whose 'facticity'<sup>616</sup> includes its existence as 'projection'. This means that *Dasein* has the possibility of 'projecting' its own future possibilities. It is this 'futural'<sup>617</sup> being of *Dasein* which compels us through life and onto ever new projects and gives us an expectation of change and a propensity for hope. In expressing this special sense of the present, Heidegger exploits the

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<sup>616</sup> 'Facticity' does not refer to the brute facts of existence, but a characteristic of *Dasein*'s Being, the 'that-it-is'. See *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 174

<sup>617</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 437

German for present (*gegenwart*) which, by hyphenating 'gegen' and 'wart' becomes 'waiting-towards'. The 'now' of everyday temporality takes on a transcendent quality as a unity of past, present and future which stand out in anticipation. From here, Heidegger elevates his concept of the Moment or *Augenblick*, 'understood, in the active sense as an ecstasis'<sup>618</sup> and from which can come an experience of a 'more primordial temporality'<sup>619</sup>, that which is fundamental to *Dasein*.

As we have said, the figurative expression 'in the blink or twinkling of an eye' points to its harbouring meaning in excess of a mere moment in time, rather it describes a sudden and swift 'happening' which brings about momentous and decisive change. The moment comes, according to the St. Paul's *First Letter to the Thessalonians*, 'like a thief in the night', it cannot be brought about by human actions but only by the direct intervention of God. Pöggeler, in *Destruction and Moment* tells us that Heidegger's concern is with 'the philosophical indication that life-experience in general is factual, historical, and thereby oriented to the unavailable moment beyond our control.'<sup>620</sup> Heidegger asserts that in the 'moment of vision' 'nothing can occur', it is rather the site of 'an authentic Present or waiting-towards'<sup>621</sup>. As

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<sup>618</sup> Ibid, p. 387

<sup>619</sup> Ibid, p. 497, note iii

<sup>620</sup> Pöggeler, *Destruction and Moment*, op cit, p. 140

<sup>621</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 388

Kierkegaard points out, there is no discernible moment of change we can identify as being when one state of being becomes another, or when something comes into or goes out of existence.

In the event of a personal moment of revelation, the reason is confounded by the paradox of the infinite meeting the finite. This is the state of perplexity which Kierkegaard asserts is the proper point of departure for philosophising, it is 'with explaining the wonderful'<sup>622</sup> he tells us, that philosophy began. Heidegger echoes this in his insistence that a questioning stance is required for thinking, and for the direct 'pre-theoretical' disclosure in which *Dasein* catches 'sight' of its 'there'. The translators of *Being and Time* render the word *Augenblick* as 'moment of vision' and as such the term is necessarily related to 'sight' or 'insight' (*Einblick*). For Heidegger, what is attained in the *Augenblick* is the 'vision' into Being which reveals *Dasein* in its ownmost possibilities of Being, and through which *Dasein* can experience an extraordinary and 'totalizing' sense of Being. Yet some kind of action on the part of a particular individual is necessary to this moment.

### **The Man who asks the Question.**

What is needed is a person fitted to the task, who can risk meeting its challenge and seize its possibilities. Rowland informs us that apocalypse 'seeks to offer an understanding which bypasses human reason by being

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<sup>622</sup> Ibid, p. 240

grounded in the direct disclosure through vision or audition'<sup>623</sup> . Particular individuals have visions which open 'ultimate possibilities', they are given insight hidden to others and thereby have a privileged role to play in history. Schweitzer sees Jesus, as 'a man of his time' who shares the beliefs of other Jews living in the constant expectation that the world is about to be remade, and who has the 'vision' to realise that 'now' is the time. For Heidegger, in relation to the *Augenblick*, there must be a person who is of a sufficiently courageous disposition to take up the possibilities which the *Augenblick* presents. Such a one must be receptive to the possibilities and in a state of readiness, which he describes in his concepts of 'attunement' (*Gestimmtheit*) and 'resoluteness' (*Entschlossenheit*). Jesus, Schweitzer says, understood *himself* to be the Messiah<sup>624</sup>, and there is a sense in which Heidegger sees himself as one who can redeem the present disastrous situation in philosophy and thinking, which he asserts, underlies the political and social impasse of his contemporary world.

In terms of Heidegger's own actual historical situation, a decisive moment with the person proper to it appears for him in 1933 when he sees Hitler as the august man of the moment. In his rectoral address at the university of Freiburg, he speaks of the 'greatness and glory of this dawn,' of

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<sup>623</sup> Rowland, op cit, p.43

<sup>624</sup> Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, The MacMillan Company, USA, 1999, p. 123

the *Reich* (kingdom) and states that: 'The *Führer* himself and he alone *is* the present and future of German reality and its rule'<sup>625</sup>. Hitler is one of whom Heidegger asserts are only a few 'authentic and superior' men who have 'an insight into the caesura, the moment of destiny' and 'the will and power to carry it through'<sup>626</sup>, those who can meet this opportunity in its fullness of possibilities and make the 'radical decisions' required. Fascism appeals to Heidegger's notion of heritage and tradition but also demands a look away from an idyllic past and toward the future with a new energy and will.

At the same time as Heidegger sees Hitler as the Messianic figure for Germany he sees himself as the one who can rescue the university and return philosophy to the kind of questioning thinking in which, he says, there can be a 'privileged, unique relation' between the question and the questioner who is, he says, thereby opened up 'as a whole'<sup>627</sup>. One can catch a view of oneself as this questioning being in the very act of questioning and can 'unlock' what forgetfulness of Being has hidden. Thus, Heidegger asserts, 'one kind of essent persists in coming to the fore, namely

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<sup>625</sup> *ONLY A GOD CAN SAVE US: Der Spiegel's Interview With Martin Heidegger*, op cit, p. 271

<sup>626</sup> Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, op cit, p. 26

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4



the men who ask the question<sup>628</sup>, those who have a certain intelligence required to point their efforts toward the 'psycho-spiritual process'<sup>629</sup> of fundamental inquiry.

For Heidegger, the metaphysical question of why there are beings at all, is hand in hand with the question of 'how' human beings *are* in the world, 'how things stand'<sup>630</sup> with them in their situation. Being 'inauthentically' engrossed in or 'lost' in the world is the usual, unquestioning mode of *Dasein's* existence, part of its 'facticity'. Heidegger uses the term 'irresoluteness' to describe 'the way things are in the 'they''<sup>631</sup>. An aspect of this 'facticity', then, is that human being exists as 'thrownness' (*Geworfenheit*), it is 'thrown' Heidegger says, into the everyday world and also from the past toward the future. Heidegger describes this 'thrownness' as being in a condition of 'falling'<sup>632</sup> into the everyday ways of 'idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity'<sup>633</sup>, it can be understood to mean a 'falling away' in which *Dasein*

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>629</sup> Ibid, p. 29

<sup>630</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, op cit, p. 135

<sup>631</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 331

<sup>632</sup> Despite this word resonating with the Christian sense of a 'fall' into the sin, this is not the sense in which Heidegger intends it.

<sup>633</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 219

avoids its authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*). Lost in its everyday concerns, in an inauthentic present, Heidegger refers to this as 'falling' that is, the way in which *Dasein* usually is in the everyday world into which it is 'thrown'. Being gets 'taken along', yet 'never arrives at any other ecstatical horizon of its own accord, unless it gets brought back from its lostness by a resolution'. The everyday mode of the present is 'the counter-phenomenon at the opposite extreme from the *moment of vision*'.<sup>634</sup> As Heidegger says, '*Dasein* can undergo a dull suffering' and seek to lose itself further. But, 'In the moment of vision and often just 'for that moment', existence can even gain the mastery over the 'everyday' though it 'can never extinguish it'<sup>635</sup>. This may in a sense point to a redemption of *Dasein* from the superficial world of everyday concern and indicate a momentary experience of the overcoming of its temporality.

### **Attunement (*Gestimmtheit*).**

The resonances of a moment which Heidegger experienced, foreshadowed by grace, in turn give onto his concept of 'attunements' or a profound 'mood' (*Stimmung*), which can allow the sudden and unexpected intense moments of experience to yield an insight. Heidegger's concept of 'attunement' is a heightened 'waiting towards' the moment, the event that

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<sup>634</sup> Ibid, pp. 397-8

<sup>635</sup> Ibid, p. 422

might occur, suddenly and decisively in the blink of an eye. In a continuation of the understanding of the authentic Present as 'waiting-towards', there are underlying 'moods' of *Dasein* which Heidegger describes as a 'heightened waiting-towards'. These existential moods Heidegger calls 'attunements' and they can afford the possibility of a transcendence of the temporal domain. *Dasein's* being 'attuned' is necessary to the experiencing of the *Augenblick*; when one is properly 'attuned' a moment can be anticipated. The main attunements are Anxiety (*Angst*<sup>636</sup>), derived from Kierkegaard's 'dread', which occurs when *Dasein* confronts its own finitude, and Profound Boredom (*Langeweile*). As established by Kierkegaard, anxiety, unlike fear, has no object, it is an existential mode. *Dasein* 'flees' Heidegger says in the face of that threat which is grounded in anxiety, into an absorption in the everyday world of its concern, a 'dark' state of being which disallows insight or an attunement to the 'moment of vision'.

*Langeweile*, along with a sensation which might be described as the drawing away of, or loss of meaning of the world, also carries the connotation of an altered temporal experience of the present, a 'lengthening of the while'<sup>637</sup>. It can take hold of us, Heidegger says, 'in an instant like flash of lightning'. In this instant the whole expanse of the entire time of *Dasein* is united there, not divided into past and future. 'Neither merely the present nor

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<sup>636</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, note iv, p. 492, Heidegger again credits Kierkegaard, this time as 'The man who has gone farther in analysing the phenomenon of anxiety ...'

merely the past nor merely the future, nor indeed all these reckoned together but rather their *unarticulated unity* in the simplicity of the unity of their horizon all at once.<sup>638</sup> The temporal experience in boredom is of a lengthening of the while, a 'stretched 'now'. When *Langeweile* is awakened the while is long and it must be kept long in order to attune *Dasein*, not allowed to sink back into being that 'sleeping giant' at *Dasein*'s core. We must 'let it become awake', in order to 'give it space and freedom'<sup>639</sup>, it attunes us if we do not try to mitigate it but allow it come upon us. The word 'ennui' indicates the weary dispiritedness and loss of world intimated in this concept.

Heidegger stresses over and over how the attunements belong to a deep existential level of one's Being, they refer to the state one is in, or 'How things stand with us', what 'takes hold of us'<sup>640</sup> :

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<sup>637</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, op cit, p. 152

<sup>638</sup> Ibid, p.148

<sup>639</sup> Ibid, p. 132

<sup>640</sup> Ibid, p.77

'Boredom is the entrancement of the temporal horizon, an entrancement which lets the moment of vision belonging to temporality vanish. In thus letting it vanish, boredom impels entranced Dasein into the moment of vision as the properly authentic possibility of its existence, an existence only possible in the midst of beings as a whole, and within the horizon of entrancement, their telling refusal of themselves as a whole.'<sup>641</sup>

We might think of this 'entrancement' as a being overwhelmed or put out of action, in a sense *Dasein* is 'fascinated'. There is an etymological link in the German between this being fascinated and 'taken back', perhaps we can say 'one is taken aback'. One is taken back from, and taken aback by the worldly possibilities found in that rigid past, present and future. This entrancement 'lets the moment of vision belonging to temporality vanish'. This vanishing is the disappearance in such a moment, of *Dasein's* awareness of the seeming shortness of its existence within ordinary temporality. It is not the instantaneous sense of 'in a flash' of vision. *Dasein* in this state of entrancement is thrust into the moment of vision, it cannot be otherwise, because it is the state of authenticity in which *Dasein* can glance at and grasp its ownmost possibilities in its essential Being. It arises from *Dasein's* Being-in-the-world which includes other beings, yet it elevates itself from temporal strictures and worldly concerns. The refusal or 'turning away from' is 'telling' or revealing of *Dasein's* self as an authentic 'one' amongst the

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<sup>641</sup> Ibid, p.153

'they', now properly 'placed' regarding its ownmost possibilities. *Dasein* balks in the face of being swallowed back into in the 'they', and the everyday world.

In letting ourselves become attuned to these resonances, Heidegger maintains, a spark of illumination might leap across the gap in our Being. When this boredom comes it is not related to any particular situation or occasion it can erupt 'out of the blue'<sup>642</sup>. It 'transposes us into a realm of power' over which we have no power<sup>643</sup>. It is of an 'overpowering nature', so that it would be impossible to struggle against it, he says, or to try to pass the time because 'it has already *transformed Dasein*'<sup>644</sup>.

These 'attunements'<sup>645</sup> allow the sudden and unexpected moments of experience to yield an insight, to 'sound' in one's Being, then 'all at once' one might see the world as one has never *seen* it before. An attunement can be of an 'overpowering nature' so that it would be impossible to struggle against it, because 'it has already *transformed Dasein*.'<sup>646</sup> '*Dasein* is 'entranced' by the long while, there is an apocalyptic sense of this word, that of 'being

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<sup>642</sup> Ibid, p. 134

<sup>643</sup> Ibid, p. 135

<sup>644</sup> Ibid, p. 136

<sup>645</sup> Further 'attunements', including that of 'joy' appear in Heidegger's later work.

<sup>646</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, op cit, p. 136

snatched out of the world that is about to pass away'<sup>647</sup>. In a translator's note in *Being and Time*, it is pointed out that this powerlessness (*Ohnmacht*), can also suggest a visionary's 'mystical trance'<sup>648</sup>. Heidegger describes this further as a state of 'resolute rapture' in which *Dasein* regards its ownmost possibilities revealed in a 'Situation', and holds onto them in anticipation of what they may disclose. Heidegger's use of the word 'rapture' (*Entrückung*<sup>649</sup>) strongly suggests a state of being carried out of oneself, but again it is important to understand that Heidegger is not referring to being transported to a heavenly realm. What is disclosed to *Dasein* most forcibly in terms of its future potentialities of Being, is its 'ownmost' possibility of death. *Dasein* is carried away toward its possibilities.

As Being-toward-death *Dasein* carries, in Anxiety, an underlying anticipation of this most certain of events. In the face of the threat of loss of being the meaning and significance of the world and the situation which surrounds being as a whole drains away. In authentic attunement, it is as if one is released, or freed to gaze at death and comprehend it as the ultimate possibility for one's being. *Dasein*'s own death hovers in its horizon, as a 'possibility that it has inherited'. In grasping and 'accommodating' the finitude

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<sup>647</sup> Pöggeler, *Destruction and Moment*, op cit, p. 154

<sup>648</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 436

<sup>649</sup> A note in *Being and Time* says that *Entrückung* and *Ekstase* can be synonymous but *Entrückung* is more general.

of existence, Heidegger says, *Dasein* is rescued from the possibilities that are closest, the inauthentic 'comfortableness, shirking, and taking things lightly'<sup>650</sup>. *Dasein's* 'facticity' or knowing of itself as a self, concerned with its own Being as 'being-there' allows it to catch sight of the moment of its own death. We become astonishingly aware that this certain event *is* for us.

In making itself 'free' for, or 'accommodating' death *Dasein* both inherits and chooses this possibility. In a sense *Dasein* 'hands down to itself' this possibility as 'heritage'. *Dasein* cannot usually know, however, when to expect this moment; and neither can it, when the moment does come actually experience its own 'demise' (*das Ableben*). *Dasein* can never 'have' this moment, it is 'unavailable'. In using the word 'demise' rather than 'end' Heidegger keeps the concept of death from being a final closing down of *Dasein*, it must, Heidegger asserts, be recognised as a state of *Being*<sup>651</sup>. He differentiates between the term demise as the 'living out' of human being and 'dying' (*das Sterben*). *Dasein's* 'being-towards-death, includes more than being-mortal; it is an aspect of disclosedness which discloses to *dasein* that it is a *mortal* disclosedness, that it carries its end within it. *Dasein*, then, is not a mortality which happens to be self-conscious but in virtue of its very being it

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<sup>650</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 435

<sup>651</sup> We might extend this notion of *Dasein's* Angst regarding its own demise, perhaps the deepest Angst is in relation to the possibility of the end of 'world' and Being itself in some cataclysmic event.



is a mortal self-disclosedness<sup>652</sup>. Human being stands between its origin and its demise at any given moment but cannot access the experience of its actual beginning or end, such moments are unavailable.

In terms of Being, *Dasein* as being-toward-death has its existence in the certainty of an inevitable event beyond its control, by its demise it may not have fulfilled its goal, the moment might come suddenly and rob it of the chance to take up further possibilities. *Dasein* has its Being-in-the World, Heidegger says, both for the 'fortunate' circumstances which 'come its way' and for the 'cruelty of accidents'<sup>653</sup>. *Dasein* is situated in-between and including the two limit situations of birth and death. It cannot experience these absolutes as events and neither can it experience the *Augenblick* itself as fully present moment. *Dasein* is oriented in a certain way toward its Being by carrying the certainty of its own death with it.

### **Resoluteness (*Entschlossenheit*).**

'The term irresoluteness expresses the way things are in the 'they''<sup>654</sup> Heidegger tells us. It remains dependent on the 'they' and the world, and is dominant in the same relation as authentic to inauthentic. 'The understanding

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<sup>652</sup> Magurshak, Dan, *Heidegger and Edwards on Sein-Zum-Tode, The Monist*, JA 79; 62: p. 112

<sup>653</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 436

<sup>654</sup> Ibid, p. 331

of this is one of the things that a resolution discloses<sup>655</sup>. The counter to inauthentic irresoluteness is 'resoluteness', not as practical 'behaviour' but a decisive mode of being-there, in which one lets oneself be summoned out of the lostness in the 'they', into a kind of existing which, Heidegger says, is 'primordial and authentic'. It is only through resoluteness that the attunements of which we have spoken can, as Heidegger puts it, 'mount authentically' in *Dasein*: the anxiety in the face of finitude and the 'rapture' born out *Langeweile*. In resoluteness *Dasein*'s current factual Situation is disclosed to it, it is brought into and gives itself to the situation in a 'free resolving', that is, it holds itself open for current factual possibilities. It is a decisive mode of being-there, one lets oneself be summoned out of the lostness in the 'they', into 'a kind of existing which is primordial and authentic'.

In being resolute, *Dasein* can retrieve itself from being engrossed in the everyday and hold a moment in authentic presence as the *Augenblick*. In this state of 'resolute rapture' *Dasein* regards its ownmost possibilities revealed in a 'Situation', and holds onto them in anticipation of what they may disclose. Resoluteness refers to the loyalty one has to one's decision to grasp and make one's own those possibilities. So intimate is this relation that

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<sup>655</sup> Ibid, p. 331

'Dasein itself *is* this revealing and Being-revealed.'<sup>656</sup> 'Resoluteness constitutes the *loyalty* of existence to its own Self' and this loyalty, Heidegger says, is revering the repeatable possibilities of existence.'<sup>657</sup> For Heidegger, authentic historicity 'understands history as the 'recurrence' of the possible', a possibility will recur only if existence is open for it, as 'resolute repetition'. At the site of the moment does recurrence save *Dasein* from the limit situation of its own death, its momentary fleeting existence owned in broader perspective as a culmination of past and future, death and birth?

Heidegger's extension of this concept as 'anticipatory resoluteness' describes the 'futural' impetus of *Dasein*. But it also refers to *Dasein's* way of existing authentically in understanding itself concerning its 'potentiality-for-Being'- that it can take over of its factual 'there' and the 'individualization'<sup>658</sup> into which it has been 'thrown'. But this anticipatory, futural impetus of *Dasein* is only possible in a being within a present which has as part of that being accepted a past, or 'has been'. Such a present held in authentic temporality, Heidegger says, is the 'moment of vision'. 'It is in the counteraction to fleeing, when *Dasein* turns away from the everyday in attunement, which can allow a moment of vision' which brings *Dasein* back

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<sup>656</sup> *Existentialism, Basic Writings*, Editors: Charles Gignon and Derk Pereboom, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., Indianapolis, Cambridge, 1995, p. 246

<sup>657</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 443

from thrownness.

'Anticipatory resoluteness is at the same time a coming-back to one's ownmost Self.'<sup>659</sup> By being properly attuned and resolute, Heidegger tells us, there is a possibility, that *Dasein* can be *augenblicklich*. As an adjective in German, this word describes a state of Being of *Dasein*, it is translated in *Being and Time* as being 'in the Moment'. Heidegger says that *Dasein* can be 'in the moment of vision for 'its time''<sup>660</sup>, this refers to *Dasein*'s 'being-historical' which comprises both the ownmost and intrinsic temporal existence within which one might experience a personal and decisive Moment, and also one's actual time in history, or one's epoch.

### **The Saving Power.**

In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, based on his lecture courses of 1935, Heidegger comes to see the inquiry into Being as concerning not only *Dasein* and the actual events of historical existence but the very 'spiritual destiny of the Western world'.<sup>661</sup> Man's forgetfulness of Being is due to something inherent in Western metaphysics from the beginning. Now is the

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<sup>658</sup> Ibid, p. 338

<sup>659</sup> Ibid, p. 338

<sup>660</sup> Ibid, p. 437

<sup>661</sup> Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, op cit, p.37

time Heidegger asserts, that it is precisely 'today'<sup>662</sup> that the situation has arisen or come to a culmination point, that we have both 'fallen away from' the meaning of Being and that it is necessary to find 'our way back' to it in order to grasp and understand the truth regarding the historical being of Germany. Heidegger sees Europe at this time as a nation, 'in a great pincers' between Russia and America which he considers to be metaphysically the same 'in regard to their world character and their relation to the spirit'. They display 'the same dreary technological frenzy, the same unrestricted organisation of the average man'<sup>663</sup>. Europe however, although a danger to itself because it is without 'vision' is, Heidegger asserts, metaphysically superior and has therefore an 'historical mission'<sup>664</sup> to grasp the opportunity for change.

Could it be, Heidegger asks, that oblivion regarding Being 'was the most powerful and most central cause'<sup>665</sup> of the decline of these nations. They have fallen prey to the 'sway' of technology and its reduction of 'the human spirit on earth'<sup>666</sup>. Heidegger's later questioning in *The Question Concerning Technology*, regarding the essence of modern technology aims

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<sup>662</sup> Ibid, p. 40

<sup>663</sup> Ibid, pp. 37-8

<sup>664</sup> Ibid, p. 29

<sup>665</sup> Ibid, p. 36-37

<sup>666</sup> Ibid, p. 42

at opening 'our human existence'<sup>667</sup> to this essence<sup>668</sup>, out of which comes the type of revealing which Heidegger calls 'Enframing' (*Ge-stellt*). The 'monstrousness that reigns'<sup>669</sup> as a result of 'Enframing', he tells us, represents the most extreme danger: 'the danger as such'. Due to the insidious nature of this essence of technology, human being itself is 'endangered' and comes to a 'fall' where he must take himself as merely another resource, or 'standing-reserve' (*Bestand*). Arendt tells us 'technology's very nature is the will to will, namely, to subject the whole world to its domination and rulership, whose natural end can only be total destruction'<sup>670</sup>. The counter to this danger, Heidegger tells us, comes ambiguously from out of this very 'Enframing'. Due to 'the mystery of all revealing'<sup>671</sup>, the essence of technology contains also a 'saving power' and the closer human being is to the danger, Heidegger asserts, the 'more brightly ... the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more

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<sup>667</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, translator's footnote, op cit, p. 3

<sup>668</sup> Here 'essence' refers not to what technology consists of in the way of its objects and their purpose but what it means, how it 'comes to presence' as itself.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid, p. 16

<sup>670</sup> Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1978, p. 178

<sup>671</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, op cit, p. 33

questioning we become'<sup>672</sup>. The danger is not counterable by human activity, the action which Heidegger refers to here is that of thinking. Arendt explains, that Heidegger's concept of will comes to refer to 'thinking that obeys the call of Being' and to think in this way is to 'say the unspoken word of Being' and it is this which constitutes authentic 'doing', a doing which transcends 'all human acts'<sup>673</sup>.

Heidegger, it transpires, is mistaken in the redemption he expects of National Socialism, which harbours the very opposite of a saving power. There is, however, a redemption to be found within Heidegger's ontology both in the sense of his hopes for a return to a proper engagement with the concept and in the allowing of a redemptive experience of Being itself for human being. From out of the 'danger as such' comes the 'saving power', and from out of oblivion, Being itself calls as if it had always already been there.

### **Recurrence and the Event (*Ereignis*) of Being itself.**

In his later work on Nietzsche, Heidegger utilises the concept of Eternal Return or Recurrence of the Same. This thought he says, as strange and 'burdensome' as it is, must be preserved, because it 'pertains to the truth concerning beings as a whole' and 'as such has the fundamental character of

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<sup>672</sup> Ibid, p. 35

<sup>673</sup> Arendt, op cit, p. 175

the will to power' and 'can as a whole only be eternal return of the same or vice versa'<sup>674</sup>. He understands it as the 'metaphysical expression for' 'the way in which the whole of beings comes to presence', its essential occurrence. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as we have seen, Zarathustra, from a position of being in the gateway can see the two eternal roads instead of a single road one way into the future. Being *augenblicklich* or 'in the Moment' is to be resolute in that moment of meeting. Heidegger says that this 'is the authentic content of the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence', 'eternity is in the Moment, that the moment is not the fleeting "now", not an instant of time whizzing by a spectator, but the collision of future and past. Here the Moment comes to itself. It determines how everything recurs.'<sup>675</sup> As Nietzsche establishes, the revelatory experience of the gateway moment itself also recurs<sup>676</sup>. In the gateway past and future clash but only for the one Heidegger says, who himself is the now, the one who is pressed by the urgency of decision, who stands in the moment and takes their part in its event. It is only by entering

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<sup>674</sup> Ibid, p. 210

<sup>675</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volumes 1 and 2*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1991, p. 57.

<sup>676</sup> Perhaps by extension the very *concept* of the *Augenblick* might do likewise. Ruin calls the *Augenblick* a 'philosopheme', suggesting that it has an existence as an idea reviewed and revised by subsequent thinkers which becomes an inherited conceptual tool of metaphysical thought through which we might consider various elements within historical or contemporary situations.



the gateway that the dialectic of Recurrence is available.

In partaking of the insight of Eternal Return and overcoming death by affirming life, one is taking part in 'the beingness of beings as a whole', Heidegger says, and this is to will. 'Beings as a whole', knows no ends to which it moves because it has no ends outside itself and is 'continually underway toward its essence', it is 'end-less'. Yet it is finite and it has limits because it cannot be, as Heidegger puts it, 'infinitely expanding', 'it cannot be new unto infinity'. We cannot find any purpose or ultimate value of 'beings as a whole' because it is 'value-less', in the same sense in which we say something is priceless. When we determine a total value we give it conditions which it must adhere to, but this is to destroy the notion of its being absolute, and so questioning towards values must always remain questioning. It is Heidegger says 'beyond human capacities'<sup>677</sup> to discover absolute values. That there are 'eternal truths', Heidegger asserts, 'will not be adequately proved until someone has succeeded in demonstrating that Dasein has been and will be for all eternity'<sup>678</sup>.

Heidegger asserts that *Dasein* by being resolute takes over 'that entity which it already is, and that 'In anticipating, Dasein *brings* itself *again forth* into its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. If *Being-as-having-been* is authentic,

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<sup>677</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume 3 and 4*, , Harper Collins, San Francisco, 1991, p. 209

<sup>678</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, pp. 269-270

we call it 'repetition' (*Wiederholung*). 'The resoluteness which comes back to itself and hands itself down, then becomes the repetition of a possibility of existence that has come down to us. Repeating is handing down explicitly - that is to say, going back into the possibilities of the Dasein that has-been-there.'<sup>679</sup> Heidegger thinks of 'Return' as a retrieving of former *possibilities*, which are 'handed down' or 'transmitted' and are in a sense constantly there. Heidegger refers in a note to 'the traditional conception of 'eternity' as signifying the 'standing 'now'' (*nunc stans*), as "constant' presence-at-hand'<sup>680</sup>. He says, 'If God's eternity can be 'construed' philosophically, it may be understood only as a more primordial temporality which is 'infinite''<sup>681</sup>. Further to our earlier discussion of the 'now' as starting point for the *Augenblick*, we can take into account Heidegger's comment that 'even Plato, who directed his glance in this manner at time as a sequence of 'nows' arising and passing away, had to call time 'the image of eternity'. 'The 'nows' pass away ... The 'nows' come along ...'<sup>682</sup> yet in their changing they are also 'self- same', and therefore, 'as *this* thing which changes', Heidegger says, 'it

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<sup>679</sup> Ibid, p. 437

<sup>680</sup> Ibid, p.499, note xiii

<sup>681</sup> Ibid, p.499, note xiii

<sup>682</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, H423, p.

simultaneously shows its own constant presence'<sup>683</sup>. In the *Augenblick* comes the revelation of human being as an entity which understands itself as coming into and passing out of existence, partaking for 'a time' in the 'transcendens'<sup>684</sup> that is Being.

This revelation, paradoxically, 'comes out of Being itself'<sup>685</sup> and by 1936-8, in *Contributions to Philosophy (On Enowning)*, the *Augenblick* has come to be seen as historically determined in a further way, 'not by the historicity of *Dasein* as in *Being and Time* but by historicity understood as the happening of being itself, to which human actions are responsive'<sup>686</sup>. Rather than the 'resolute openness' of the *Augenblick* belonging to *Dasein*, it is *Dasein* which 'always already and in advance' belongs to the *Augenblick* as the originary site of the disclosure of a world and of the historical destiny of the event of being'<sup>687</sup>. In *Being and Time* Heidegger tells us that in disclosure *Dasein* 'appropriates' or makes its own what it gains sight of through circumspection. This appropriation now emerges as the 'event'

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<sup>683</sup> Ibid, p. 475

<sup>684</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 63

<sup>685</sup> In German the 'there is' in the phrase 'there is Being' is 'es gibt', literally 'it gives' enabling Heidegger to indicate that Being gives itself.

<sup>686</sup> McNeill, *The Time of Contributions to Philosophy*, in *Companion to Heidegger's Contributions*, Editor: Charles E. Scott, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2001, p. 137

(*ereignis*) itself, the very occurrence of things coming to presence, 'the event of presencing itself'<sup>688</sup>. The word *Ereignis* is rendered as 'enowning' by the translators of *Contributions* and as such carries a sense of 'an un-possessive owning'<sup>689</sup>, perhaps a belonging *with* rather than *to*. What 'eventuates' in *ereignis* is the enactment of decision, though not in reference to individual actions. What resolute action brings to 'Presence' is a disclosure of 'Being in its finitude and singularity' and as such cannot itself become something present but remains inaccessible to theoretical apprehension. 'Enowning' also conveys a sense of being brought into a certain 'condition', of taking responsibility for and carry out one's obligations to one's self. *Dasein*, in achieving authenticity might be said to 'come into its own'. The terms 'authenticity' and 'inauthenticity,' Heidegger tells us refer to 'an 'ecstatic' relation of the essence of man to the truth of Being'<sup>690</sup>.

As Heidegger says, nothing can happen in the *Augenblick* but an authentic 'waiting towards', resolute rapture and being entranced allow a

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<sup>687</sup> Ibid, p. 137

<sup>688</sup> William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye*, op cit, p. 116

<sup>689</sup> Translators Forward, Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, op cit, pp. xix – xxii

<sup>690</sup> Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, in *The Existentialist Reader: An Anthology of Key Texts*, editor: Paul S. MacDonald, Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 249

sight of eternity not as the linear Christian future but, as Pöggeler says, 'in terms of eternity as the passing which again and again has its hour but is never at our beck and call'. In this way human being becomes a 'momentary one'<sup>691</sup>. In the *Augenblick* there is no actual content we should be seeking until the possibilities it holds come to presence for us. Empty of content but full of possibilities it is everything and nothing as Kierkegaard has established. 'Eternity' represents the potential possibilities which might arise in any moment. The *Augenblick* is nowhere for it is locatable neither in a now of time nor a here or there within the horizon of our temporal being; yet it is everywhere in the horizon of *Dasein* as there-Being. In the *Augenblick*, *Dasein* can become *augenblicklich*, but in *Contributions* Heidegger now speaks of the essence of *Dasein's* being itself as *augenblicklichkeit*, which has been translated by George J. Seidel in *Musing with Kierkegaard* as 'momentous momentariness'<sup>692</sup>.

### **A New Epoch.**

An event is that which happens or eventuates and significant events can gather their time around them to define an 'epoch' of history:

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<sup>691</sup> Pöggeler, *Destruction and Moment*, op cit, p.154

<sup>692</sup> George J. Seidel, *Musing with Kierkegaard: Heidegger's Besinnung*, Continental Philosophy Review 34, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Netherlands, 2001, p. 405

'All essential philosophical questioning is necessarily untimely. This is so because philosophy is always projected far in advance of its time, or because it connects the present with its antecedent, with what *initially* was. Philosophy always remains a knowledge which not only cannot be adjusted to a given epoch but on the contrary imposes its measure upon its epoch'<sup>693</sup>.

Heidegger says that Kierkegaard's initial comprehending of *Augenblick* 'gives onto the possibility of new epoch of philosophy'. In the realm of thinking, if we can catch sight of ourselves as *augenblicklichkeit*, we can be brought into a condition which transcends temporality as everydayness and as the linear future temporal notion of eternity. In *Contributions* Heidegger speaks of the 'restoration of beings'; Being is elevated, not to some quasi-divinity, it is not Heidegger's intention to posit divinity within human being, nor to suggest that Being is a god, the gods or God, for all this is nothing in light of the astonishing experience of the fact of Being itself.

Early on Heidegger speaks of the need to find 'transcendent values of life' underpinned by tradition and heritage. The 'false gods of the modern world' must be 'shattered', but what must replace them? An experience of the site of the *Augenblick*, Heidegger asserts, can transform human beings into 'the coming future ones' (*zu-künftigen*). We might hear in this an echo of

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<sup>693</sup> Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, op cit, p. 8

Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. The traditional values which Heidegger considers to have fallen away in the modern world will appear anew for them. These coming future ones, he says will 'receive the hints of the last god', and be prepared for 'the passing of the last god' (*Götterung*)<sup>694</sup>. There is a prophetic quality to these ideas, those who hint of gods are prophets. And the last gods who pass, what do they give way to? If apocalypse refers to the decisive moment of a change of epoch, perhaps Heidegger is heralding a new world where human being no longer seeks otherworldly or spiritual transformation, or looks to a god as absolute value.

In his developing analytic of Being, Heidegger also indicates a future move from the 'Being of time' to 'the time of Being'. The *Augenblick*, as the crux of temporal existence must lie at the heart of this move. It is in the closing pages of *Contributions* that Heidegger extends his thinking in regard to Gods: '[Gods] not from within 'religion'; not as something extant, nor as an expedient of man; rather [they come] from our of be-ing ...'<sup>695</sup> The 'necessity of being ' is the highest question relating to the 'freedom of man', man 'thrusts' what is essential and own-most to him into 'ab-groundness', because its home is in the most intimate and closest aspect of him. The question now becomes 'impossible', 'then en-owning is, for a moment,

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<sup>694</sup> Pöggeler, *Destruction and Moment*, op cit, p. 154

<sup>695</sup> Heidegger, *Contributions*, op cit, p. 357

enowning. This moment is *the time of being*.<sup>696</sup> What is nearest, 'the simplest intimacy of its en-ownment', is the furthest from theoretical understanding. The *Augenblick* as an immediate and intimate experience is the experience of this central paradox, that the moment is time in its closest relation to us, our Being. A realisation of this in one's depths can only be a fleeting glimpse, not staying to be analysed. When 'en-owning is, for a moment' fully 'enowned', we exist intensely.

In conclusion, Albert Schweitzer considered the claims of eschatology to be: 'appropriate ... to any world, for in every world they raise the man who dares to meet their challenge', this man can rise 'above his world and his time, making him inwardly free, so that he is fitted to be, in his own world and in his own time, a simple channel of the power of Jesus'<sup>697</sup>. This resonates with Heidegger's ideas that the person present must be in a state of readiness, in the correct condition of attunement to and resolution in the *Augenblick*. That *Dasein*, as a futural entity and at the same time 'having been' can be 'in' the moment for its time, and transcend the ordinary temporal domain. I interpret *Dasein*'s 'being-in-the-world' as first encompassed by each individual *Dasein*'s span of life but also the recurrence of 'things' in its world that already have been. In having-been *Dasein* inherits

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<sup>696</sup> Ibid, pp. 357-8

<sup>697</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1931, quoted in Rowland, Christopher, *Apocalypse Theory*, op cit, p. 52



its past, in its authentic presence it makes the past its own and in its futural impetus it runs before itself as being-toward its own certain death. In being 'free for death' *Dasein* accommodates its ownmost state of being finite or momentary and is 'transposed into a realm of power', not that of Jesus or a godly power, but of will as the truth of Being.

Recurrence might orient *Dasein* to its finitude, or 'do down' death, but perhaps the deepest *Angst* is due to the underlying possibility of the finitude of 'world' and of Being itself. This expectation of disaster is an aspect of the very mood of the time of Heidegger's work and Jaspers expresses eloquently it when he says in *Philosophy III*, 'all the experience of human history suggests that some day, somewhere, somebody will do the worst that can be done.'<sup>698</sup> *Dasein* is being-toward its own certain death, but also, I would like to posit, toward the possibility of the death of all Being, of heritage and of 'world'. Eschatology refers to this moment of complete change, when the old world will pass away in favour of the new. But in terms of an individual human life span, for one who comprehends the event of Being itself in its significant momentariness, that is when *Dasein* experiences its Being (as) Momentary, if I may be allowed to combine momentary and momentous to coin that word, then *Dasein* embraces its essence as Momentariness (*augenblicklichkeit*).

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<sup>698</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy Vol III*, op cit, p. 193

**Chapter 5.**  
**Henri Cartier-Bresson's *Images à la Sauvette* (Images on the Run), and  
the Image as Still.**

Having traced the development of the concept of the Moment from Kierkegaard's theology to Heidegger's existentialism, I now change my approach by using the Moment as a conceptual tool. This is enabled in part by following Jaspers' explication of the cipher and finding that the *Augenblick* itself is one such cipher. By looking through the *Augenblick*, we can come to certain understandings of events both historical and personal. We can also analyse the products of certain individuals, in this case the photographs of Henri Cartier-Bresson.

Aspects of the Moment which we have noted previously come to the fore in this chapter, beginning with Heidegger's descriptions of the correct attitude in which one might seize a Moment. The character of the 'learner' is revealed as a *flâneur* and a spy. The concept of *kairos* reveals further nuances pertinent to the unfolding and seizing of a Moment, and we meet again the *nunc stans* in the form of a photographically 'captured now'. The notion of there being movement or a process, out of which arises a moment which holds itself open, a hiatus corresponding to Kierkegaard's pause of wonder, filled with possibilities. The idea that what is seized is a 'now' replete with meaning occurs again. Heidegger asserted that one could be 'in a 'moment of vision' for one's time' in two senses. Correspondingly, in this

chapter Henri Cartier-Bresson is attributed the ability to seize an image which not only sums up the prevailing *zeitgeist*, but also describes something that has already been there in terms of the human condition.

I was initially drawn to Cartier-Bresson's book *The Decisive Moment* (1952) by the title, though I did not expect to find in it quite the moment I was investigating. Still I was curious as to what this phrase 'meant' to the photographer. In relation to photography it may seem to have no more to do with a decisive moment than the clicking of the shutter at an opportune moment in time and capturing one fleeting moment of life. It may therefore seem erroneous to link it to the complex and rich 'moment of vision' of Heidegger. However, while reading Cartier-Bresson's book and other commentaries on his work, 'street photography' or 'photojournalism' in general, connections of interest have emerged which I wish to explore; not least because it is contemporaneous with Heidegger's initial explications of the 'moment of vision'. Furthermore, the title *The Decisive Moment*, which can refer both to the content of the photographic image as well as to the moment of its capture, turns out to be an American translation of Cartier-Bresson's original French title, *Image à la Suavette* meaning literally, 'images on the run'. The term 'decisive moment' has all the elements of *kairos* in its non-biblical use, whose basic sense is of the 'decisive or critical place or point', 'whether spacially, materially or temporally.'<sup>699</sup> We will come to see that

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<sup>699</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume III*, Editor: Gerhard Kittel, Wm. B.

Cartier-Bresson's moment incorporates all of these; the event in the three dimensional spacial world he grasps, the two-dimensional material images which result, and the temporality both of Cartier-Bresson and of the action. Jean Clair of the Musée Picasso in Paris maintains that the notion of *kairos* is implicit in the seemingly 'trivial and apparently mechanical act', that it actually 'presupposes a whole philosophy, ethical framework and body of knowledge that are those of the ancient world'<sup>700</sup>.

Peter Galassi in the catalogue to an exhibition of Cartier-Bresson's early works of 1932-34 held in New York in 1987, refers to the title *The Decisive Moment* as 'an over-simplification' and tells us that 'Cartier-Bresson's photography is celebrated as the expression of an intuitive talent beyond the reach of historical analysis' and 'is classified as an exemplar of an anonymous formal principle: the capacity of the small, hand-held camera to seize a telling picture from the flux of life.'<sup>701</sup> We will come, in the course of this chapter to see Cartier-Bresson's 'intuition' as more than a mysterious and inexplicable ability, to appreciate the importance of this revolutionary

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Eerdman's Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, p. 455

<sup>700</sup> Clair, Jean, *Kairos: The Idea of the Decisive Moment in the Work of Cartier-Bresson*, in *Henri Cartier-Bresson, Man, Image, World, A Retrospective*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003, pp. 49-50

<sup>701</sup> Galassi, Peter, *Henri Cartier-Bresson, The Early Work*, The Museum of Modern Art/Thames and Hudson, New York, p.9

little camera, and to understand the moment as more than the grasping of a fleeting image. Colin Westerbeck and Joel Meyerowitz's explication of the title *Image à la Suavette* in their book *Bystander, A History of Street Photography*<sup>702</sup> also reveals further nuances of the title which, instead of breaking the tentative link to *Augenblick* as a 'moment of vision', reinforces and deepens the significance of the idea of the photographer's recognising and seizing of a 'decisive moment'.

The period in European history leading up to the 1920s and into the 1930s which Heidegger and Cartier-Bresson share, appears to have been itself decisive in its very fullness of decisive moments as is discussed in the final chapter which follows. It was an era of rupture and upheaval and the 'mood of the time' was impulsive and destructive giving rise to movements such as Dada and Surrealism. It is possible to draw parallels between certain concepts of Heidegger and the work of Cartier-Bresson at this time; their descriptions of the circumstances surrounding a 'moment' and its seizing are strikingly similar. These concentrate on the *Augenblick* as an 'authentic' encounter with an 'event' of 'moment' which comes to presence, and the 'stance' of an artist who is out to get an impression of the world, as one who sets out to see, encounter, grasp and express something. This is

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<sup>702</sup> Colin Westerbeck and Joel Meyerowitz, in *Bystander, A History of Street Photography*, Thames and Hudson, UK, 1994.

exemplified by the new 'art' work of street photography which emerges in the 1930s and the practise of which involves the total circumstance of the photographer himself out in the world. As a 'photojournalist', Cartier-Bresson recognises that his talent is 'rooted in direct observation of ordinary life'<sup>703</sup>. We might think of a photojournalist today as going out specifically to collect an image of a newsworthy event, but as Galassi informs us, Cartier-Bresson only rarely does this. He seeks rather to describe 'a place, its people and culture', what he calls the 'texture of its everyday life.'<sup>704</sup> We will hear Cartier-Bresson himself referring to the 'picture-story'.

It may be taking a liberty to describe the attitude of the photographer as akin to Heidegger's fundamental attunement of *Angst*, but this does seem to be an underlying mood of the period. It also provides the photographer's impetus toward seizing a moment before it vanishes, a pictorial image through the contemplation of which one might gain some insight not only into oneself but the wider human condition. This is something which, in fact, Walter Kaufmann in his book of photographs of Indian cities and people: *Life at the Limits*<sup>705</sup>, asserts the Existential philosophers, especially the German

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<sup>703</sup> Galassi, op cit, p.24

<sup>704</sup> Ibid, p.9.

<sup>705</sup> Kaufmann, Walter, *Life at the Limits, Photographs and Text*, Readers Digest Press, New York, 1978, p. 65

ones have neglected. However, the images taken by Cartier-Bresson, although the product of an individual's stance toward the world, have been noted as representing 'the plight' which 'has always already been 'there''<sup>706</sup>. This discussion of Cartier-Bresson's particular work leads to a consideration of the nature of a still photograph in more general terms which, taken out of the continuum, (the sequence of an unfolding event), can sum up that event and hold it in presence, so to speak, as representative of a decisive moment of an epoch. Even in the age of the moving image, still images and the 'decisive moment' retain their significance as I shall discuss in the final section of the chapter with reference to the 'cut' in film editing.

I shall be using the term 'photographer' to encompass the various senses of 'street-photographer', 'photojournalist' and 'artist', as Cartier-Bresson is all these things. Although perhaps 'artist' is a term we apply in retrospect and not one Cartier-Bresson would have given himself. Cartier-Bresson began his career as a painter dedicated to 'Art with a capital 'A''<sup>707</sup>. He aligned himself with the Surrealists, becoming a photographer when, as he said, his adventurous spirit 'felt obliged to testify with a quicker instrument

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<sup>706</sup> Westerbeck and Meyerowitzop cit, 1994, p. 163

<sup>707</sup> Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, Simon and Schuster and Éditions Verve, 1952, Paris/New York, [ii]

than a brush to the scars of the world'<sup>708</sup>, work that can only be done 'with the speed of a reflex, so that it prevents us from trying to make Art'<sup>709</sup> .

Galassi describes an abstract character he calls 'the Surrealist' and his particular attitude to the world and we can confer this label on Cartier-Bresson to indicate how much it now seems his attitude and work owe to Surrealism. His colleague Robert Capa's advice to Cartier-Bresson was to call himself a 'photojournalist' rather than a 'Surrealist' if he wants to work in America. The question as to whether the images of photojournalism are 'art' in a deeper sense, in that they require a technical 'art' will not be gone into, but perhaps their status has changed with the world they represent and the audience they serve. It may be that when the time of the event pictured is long enough passed for the picture to be viewed on its compositional merits within the environment of a gallery exhibition, then the individual images become 'art'. As works which we might say reveal something of the world rather than simply represent it, they adhere to Ernst Bloch's contention that art 'is fundamentally concerned not with the imitation but with the revelation of the world'<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>708</sup> Galassi, op cit, p.16

<sup>709</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 52

<sup>710</sup> Bloch, Ernst, *The Principle of Hope, Volume I*, Translators: Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995, p.xxxii.



## **Circumstance.**

Before considering the nuances of the moment as 'images on the run', it is important to speak of the circumstances or 'environment', i.e., that which surrounds the appearance of such a moment. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger speaks of how 'one comports oneself (*verhalten*) towards entities, even toward oneself' in cognizing or making assertions about things or in relating oneself to other things, (or even, as the translators of *Being and Time*, Macquarrie and Robinson, emphasise in a footnote, in holding back from relating to things). In so doing one assumes 'Being' in an 'average' kind of understanding behind which lies 'a priori an enigma'<sup>711</sup>. This average understanding of Being means that its true meaning 'is still veiled in darkness' and for Heidegger this is actually the reason that the question concerning Being must be raised again. The comportment of the photographer includes his stance (*haltung*) or state-of-mind (*Befindlichkeit*), which Heidegger expounds in relation to *Dasein* as an entity for which its own Being is its questioning concern.

*Befindlichkeit* is translated by William McNeill as 'disposition' which is an alternative also offered by Joan Stambaugh in the preface to her translation of *Being and Time*, in order, she says, to avoid the too psychological connotation of 'state-of-mind'. She chooses, however, to use

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<sup>711</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 23

the word 'attunement' for *Befindlichkeit*, though the choice of 'attunement' is confusing because as we have seen, it is a concept with its own sphere of meaning in Heidegger's work. (Macquarrie and Robinson have 'attunement' as the English translation of *Gestimmtheit*.) For Heidegger, 'state-of-mind' is 'how things stand with us'; how one is positioned toward the 'world' in an existential sense is integral to our 'seeing', as both taking notice and understanding. The photographer, understanding himself in this way, is to understand himself *in* his possibilities of Being and *in terms* of them - he must hold himself in question. This very kind of inquiry might be said to be the subject of the photographer's work. Cartier-Bresson maintains a questioning attitude toward the world and himself, which is representative of the authentic attitude identified in the previous chapter. As Peter Galassi writes in his catalogue essay for an exhibition of Cartier-Bresson's early work at *The Museum of Modern Art* in New York, 'throughout his life' Cartier-Bresson 'has tried always to put himself in question'<sup>712</sup> .

One looks around in the world with 'circumspection' (*Umsicht*). This is one of a group of words with the prefix *-um*, which Macquarrie and Robinson inform us can not only mean 'around' or 'about', but 'can also be used in an expression such as ... 'in order to''<sup>713</sup> . This gives us the added intimation of

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<sup>712</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, p.

<sup>713</sup> Ibid, p. 93

intention in this looking about. The word *Umsicht*, however, might better be translated as 'circumvision', in order to distinguish it from *specto*, spectator<sup>714</sup>. This serves to enhance our discussion concerning how a 'moment of vision' can arise from the comportment and circumspection of the photographer who, it could be claimed, can look or see into the moment. Clair asserts that Cartier-Bresson weighs up and judges the world but is also 'a seer'<sup>715</sup>, making predictions regarding what is about to happen. For Heidegger, there is an ordinary kind of 'sight' by which we make our way around in the world, it is grounded primarily in understanding. The circumspection of concern is understanding as *common sense* [*Verständigkeit*] he tells us, of which 'Intuition' and 'thinking' are both derivative.

Human being as a nexus of 'lived experience' is a notion basic to Heidegger's analysis of human being as 'being-in-the-world'. As temporal beings we draw on our past and project ahead of ourselves into the future in order to enable our present, that which intimately concerns us and is, as Heidegger says, the very meaning of 'the Being of that entity which we call Dasein'<sup>716</sup>. Descriptions of and by the photographer Cartier-Bresson and his

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<sup>714</sup> As Dr. Paul MacDonald points out,

<sup>715</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 53

<sup>716</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p.38

'lived experience' or immediate encounter with 'world', parallel the explications of Heidegger regarding one's authentic stance toward the 'moment of vision'.

The total circumstance of the photographer out and about in the world includes his movement within it, his attitude to it and to his own work. In Cartier-Bresson's own words this is 'the joint operation of the brain, the eye and the heart'<sup>717</sup>, which includes what one might take as his technical know-how, the learned craft and also what Cartier-Bresson himself calls 'intuition'. These are the aspects of being which he relies on in action, to discover the fitting moment *of* action or *kairos*. They are elements which are part of the aesthetic experience of the artist at work and the aesthetic expression he wishes to convey. One must also include the temporal aspects of this 'lived experience', Cartier-Bresson's 'ownmost' time of Being, in the sense of how the moment unfolds for him and *the* time, the era itself which his images reveal.

In an everyday mode human beings go along negotiating the world around them almost automatically. Occasionally things might come to us unbidden, but mostly 'just lived' moments, as both Heidegger and Ernst Bloch refer to them, pass 'darkly' and are not lit up with significance nor are they available for seizing. While one lives, a moment is just another instant in

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<sup>717</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [iii]

the flow of time. It is necessary to feel arrested in the moment, to be able to be astonished by the very fact of something's existence. It enables a moment to stand out in intensity rather than darkly passing, as it does when one is 'too close' to one's life. Yet in the correct 'attitude', that of maintaining an attunement, Heidegger asserts, a moment can be accessible. Then 'all at once' it is as if the atmosphere around things has changed and one can see the world as one has never *seen* it before. He says that the term *Augenblick*, 'must be understood in the active sense as an *ecstasis*'<sup>718</sup>. The everyday mode of Being of a photojournalist, is one of being out and about alone, alert and 'attuned'.

For Heidegger then, 'comportment' or the way in which one moves around and navigates things in the world is brought to a heightened pitch or state of awareness when one is properly attuned. The photographer also, when properly attuned, is absorbed in his task. Heidegger sees absorption in various ways; one way is an inauthentic being subsumed by, engrossed in the everyday, never raising one's head above the flow, going along with the crowd, looking around. He calls this kind of superficial looking, 'curiosity'. There is a sense also in which one might 'lose oneself' in an activity in such a way that one might lose sight of oneself and 'flee' into the everyday. Yet the everyday world and how one manages in it is fundamental to Heidegger's

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<sup>718</sup> Heidegger, op cit, p.387

understanding of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-world and it is also fundamental to the work ethos of Cartier-Bresson. We remember from the last chapter that in the *Augenblick* one could even 'gain mastery over the everyday'<sup>719</sup>

### **Stance.**

The absorption of the photographer is more like a 'self-effacing concentration', as the critic Arthur Goldsmith describes Cartier-Bresson in his work. It is a kind of 'self-abandonment', in order 'to make the sort of street photographs Cartier-Bresson does', he says 'one's presence must be turned into an absence in this way.'<sup>720</sup> As though time is forgotten, as if time itself stops. On the street the photographer cultivates an anonymity, an eclipse of ego in order to concentrate on the subject. Tuning in to these inner oscillations one may discover something on the side of the way, flickering at the edge of vision. When once 'lifting the gaze', so to speak, and turning one's attention, or one's glance to the subject, one has assumed an attitude of authentic looking, and listening, sounding out the world and one's self 'in' it. In this the *act* of turning and looking is crucial to the object or situation to which it is directed.

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<sup>719</sup> Ibid, p. 422

<sup>720</sup> Goldsmith quoted in Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, op cit, p.167

One of Heidegger's types of 'attunement' is 'anxiety' (*Angst*); unlike fear, anxiety has no object, it is an existential mode. Heidegger says *Dasein* 'flees' in the face of that threat which is grounded in anxiety, into an absorption in the everyday world of its concern, a 'dark' state of being which disallows insight or an attunement to the 'moment of vision'. In order to allow a 'moment of vision', anxiety must be kept awake in some way. In parallel to this 'anxiety' we can think of the photographer as being 'geared up', that is, through his essential mode of maintaining intensity in his working frame of mind. Delightful descriptions of Cartier-Bresson at work in this way are plentiful and clearly illustrate this kind of comportment. 'I walked the whole day on tenterhooks, searching the streets in order to snatch photos, as it were, *in flagrante delicto*'<sup>721</sup>, caught in the act.

Clair likens Cartier-Bresson to *Kairos* the god himself... 'Anyone who has ever seen him walking, light, airy, on the tips of his toes, anyone who has seen him taking photos, ... will not be too surprised to discover in him a resemblance to the famous statue of *Kairos* by *Lysippus*:

'You, who are you?  
I am Kairos, the master of the World!  
Why do you run on tiptoe?  
I am always moving on.  
Why do have winged feet?

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<sup>721</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 53

Because I fly like the wind.  
Why do you hold a blade in your right hand?  
To remind men, that I, Kairos, am sharper and swifter than anything'<sup>722</sup>.

Truman Capote describes seeing Cartier-Bresson 'dancing along the pavement like an agitated dragon-fly, three Leicas swinging from straps around his neck, a fourth hugged to his eye, click-click-click (the camera seems to be part of his own body), clicking away with a joyous intensity, a religious absorption'. However, Westerbeck and Meyerowitz tell us that Cartier-Bresson himself claims never to have carried more than two cameras and 'The animation with which this photographer impresses witnesses is the sort that only characters in cartoons are capable of'<sup>723</sup>. Clair, on the other hand gives a corresponding picture of Cartier-Bresson, observing him with his camera 'concealed in his palm, silent, invisible'<sup>724</sup>. (*A la sauvette* can also carry a connotation of being unauthorized, something done 'on the sly' or 'with stealth'<sup>725</sup>. This adds an element of espionage to our image of the photographer which is not out of place). One of Cartier-Bresson's colleagues

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<sup>722</sup> As described in an epigram by *Posidippus* in the third century BC in which the following dialogue takes place between *Kairos* and a passer-by, Clair, op cit, p. 54

<sup>723</sup> Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, op cit, pp. 156-7

<sup>724</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 54

<sup>725</sup> My thanks to Dr. Paul MacDonald for this further elucidation of the term.



Malcolm Brinnin, experienced the photographer's immersion in his work when they collaborated on a project (never completed), to capture America in pictures. Brinnin suffered such rough and rude treatment from Cartier-Bresson as he chased a scene, that, he reports, he had wanted to push him under a fire engine: 'Focussing on one thing, he quivers in the imminence of ten others.... When there is nothing in view, he's mute, unapproachable, humming-bird tense'. There is, he says, something out of control about him. The act of photographing is a compulsive, involuntary one...<sup>726</sup> . Westerbeck and Meyerowitz say: 'Cartier-Bresson has freely admitted on numerous occasions that he is bundle of nerves. But, he explains, 'one must seize the moment before it passes, the fleeting gesture, the evanescent smile ... That's why I'm so nervous - it's horrible for my friends - but it's only by maintaining a permanent tension that I can stick to reality'.

'This permanent tension is what makes him equal to all the unresolved ambiguities of which reality, truly seen, consists.'<sup>727</sup> A completely dedicated professional then, when out working he was known to physically elbow people, even colleagues, out of his way if they stood between him and the picture he was on to. However, Cartier-Bresson himself has spoken of photographers as 'intruders' who 'must approach on tiptoe, ... Its no good

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<sup>726</sup> Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, op cit, p.157

<sup>727</sup> Ibid, p.157

jostling or elbowing ... Unless a photographer observes such conditions as these, he may become an intolerably aggressive character!<sup>728</sup> Cartier-Bresson denies he was anxious, but we confine our use of this term to refer to the underlying 'mood' which constitutes an aspect of 'how' the photographer is in the world. We might also think of it as a necessary counter-part to the underlying 'yearning' of which we have spoken, the craning toward some thing, we know not what.

Heidegger asserts there is a special character of the 'Present' which enables the moment of vision, which not every ordinarily present moment has.<sup>729</sup> It is not a moment which marks a present 'Now' of 'within-time-ness' but is something to discover and to gain. When the authentic 'Present' is disclosed 'the future and the having-been are united'<sup>730</sup> and *Dasein* is thereby brought into the 'moment of vision'. The 'having been' contains 'recollection', perhaps in the case of the photographer, the recollection of a familiar mood connected to being in a certain work situation. The background mood that one assumes may be recognised though the actual events may be new. One might stretch the being of 'attunement' here to include remembering as something 'ringing a bell' for us or 'sounding' in our Being. By the repetition of

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<sup>728</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [iv]

<sup>729</sup> Heidegger, op cit, pp. 387-388

<sup>730</sup> Ibid, p.449

an attitude, the photographer assumes the right frame of mind, with the necessary orientation to a 'moment of vision' and its contingent 'stance'. By this repetition or recollection the photographer is able to recognise (to 'see' or to 'know') a decisive moment. The past, or 'having been' thus enables the present and the future.

The artist cultivates this mood or attunement of being aware in order to invite to 'presence' or to the authentic 'Present' that which he pursues, that which will disclose itself in a decisive 'moment of vision'. This attunement comprises the temporality of the photographer as *Dasein*, that is, in his ownmost time of duration which belongs to his essence and in the ownmost time of the moment, the duration which belongs to *its* essence. In two meanings of the phrase Cartier-Bresson 'took his time': he took his own inner time in finding and taking the picture and his pictures captured the 'outer' time, his epoch. In the words of Jean-Noël Jeanneney in his essay *Seeing Is Everything*, it is as if he is 'blessed with luck'<sup>731</sup> in his uncanny ability to grasp images which show 'the very moment when history hung in the balance'. Photography, or the images it produces, would seem to mediate between the inner reality of the photographer, and the outer realities of the world.

### **The Surrealist.**

Peter Galassi tells us that 'photography appealed to the modernist eye

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.. because it lay outside the conventional boundaries of art' . Provocative and inventive it owes 'an enormous debt to modern painting' in its 'formal innovations ... and its devotion to innovation as an end in itself'<sup>732</sup> . The surrealists loved the idea of photography because it is purely mechanical and automatic; it seemed to offer a direct conduit between the psyche and reality, free from the habits of consciousness and from the hated conventions of aesthetics. Such immediate creation throws up the surprising juxtapositions of which surrealism is so fond.

Galassi describes how '... the Surrealist wanders the street without destination but with a premeditated alertness for the unexpected detail that will release a marvellous and compelling reality just beneath the banal surface of ordinary experience. His every act is calculated to disrupt the conventional patterns of life, to invite irrational obsession...'<sup>733</sup> . It requires practise to lose one's way in a city, one must be as if one had relinquished control of navigation or directedness yet be in a state of intensity, open to possibilities. It is in itself an experimental process. This is a practised and controlled meandering, a familiar method. The early 19th century figure of the *flaneur* is one who wanders aimlessly, an observer taking in impressions but

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<sup>731</sup> Jeanneney, Jean-Noël, *Seeing Is Everything in Man, Image, World*, op cit, p.

<sup>732</sup> Galassi, op cit, p. 32

<sup>733</sup> Galassi, op cit, p.15

essentially doing nothing, never intervening. The photographer however, though also wandering, acts as observer and witness; he is out in pursuit of something essential, as Cartier-Bresson says '... of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes'<sup>734</sup> . However, he still cannot intervene in events, as Susan Sontag in *On Photography*, asserts, "the person who intervenes cannot record; the person who is recording cannot intervene"<sup>735</sup>.

The word *flanerie* is translated variously as improvisation and also idling. One who idles goes along in a low gear but nevertheless is geared to expect something, the photographer maintains readiness to improvise action when the time comes, perhaps even to notice, on the spur of the moment that an unfolding scene might yield a worthwhile image. Maintaining this desirous expectation is a kind of hope, a craning toward a future event. Cartier-Bresson describes how he 'craved to seize the whole essence' of a situation; to 'crave' is to hold a strong desire, an intense longing for a thing. It might be described as being like a yearning which relies on the absence of that which is yearned for, where 'yearning' is lost in being satisfied by the arrival of what is desired. With the yearning satisfied, the moment is fulfilled. The photographer is physically self-restrained yet straining toward a goal, he

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<sup>734</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [ii]

<sup>735</sup> Sontag, Susan, *On Photography*, Penguin Books, England, 1980, p.12

maintains a level of engagement, expecting with 'bated breath' and a sharpness of attention, an 'attunement'.

Such is the state-of-mind of the photographer. This mode of meandering wonder can be also likened to Heidegger's method of thinking as described by Charles E. Scott in the *Companion to the Contributions*, - that is, as a 'progress' or journey in search not of his own private feelings but of something which 'has no clear way leading to it'. It is an exploration which he says is 'less a position than it is a manner of disciplined alertness with the occurrence of being'. That which is sought: 'appears as beings come to pass, and Heidegger wishes to think alertly in the eventuation of this happening.'<sup>736</sup> For Heidegger, real historical life is the foundation of his philosophy, life itself must reveal itself and for this, he asserts, an un-theoretical attitude is necessary. Cartier-Bresson also stresses the importance of setting out with no fixed plan and seeking the 'texture of the everyday' which might be transformed in this seizing, into a revelation of something underlying the ordinary surface of the everyday.

Cartier-Bresson's description of his work as 'a joint operation of the brain, the eye and the heart'<sup>737</sup> can be taken to refer to his early training, his

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<sup>736</sup> Charles E. Scott et al, (ed) *Companion to the Contributions*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2001, p.2

<sup>737</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [ii]

technical skill and deftness with equipment, those learned things which might be said to have become 'second nature' to him. In 1927 Cartier-Bresson entered the painting studio of André Lhote who had worked out his own mathematical system for determining the perspectival composition of a picture by geometric principles derived from the analytical method of Cézanne and the Cubists. Cartier-Bresson's work has been described as having a 'geometric clarity' and a 'principle of discipline, not as the rote application of formal rules but as the definition of a set of precise conditions that clarify an artistic problem and thus release the imagination to work on it.'<sup>738</sup> . He bore in mind such conventions if only to flout them, though his skill still underlies his spontaneity. 'I left [Lhote's] studio', he says 'because I did not want to enter into that systematic spirit. I wanted to be myself ... I took off on adventure... I made a clean break ... To paint and to change the world counted for more than everything in my life.'<sup>739</sup> At this time Cartier-Bresson's work has taken him out of the studio and into the street, from formality to spontaneity. His concerns are with events in the world and the place of human beings within the world, the photographer amongst them.

Surrealism provides a foil for this exactitude, not only in the aesthetic composition of Cartier-Bresson's work but in the aspects of social and

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<sup>738</sup> Galassi, op cit, p.12

<sup>739</sup> Ibid, p.15

political life; his encounter with Surrealism precipitates a rebellion against convention. Surrealism, as André Breton put it, was not just an artistic movement but a 'moral and spiritual crusade' which drew art 'into political debate [and] aimed at provoking a crisis of conscience.'<sup>740</sup> The '...growing concern' was with 'content, with human beings, with social and political implications.'<sup>741</sup> . Breton speaking on art in the 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism* advocates working in the form of '... a monologue spoken as rapidly as possible without any intervention on the part of the critical faculties, a monologue consequently unencumbered by the slightest inhibition and which was, as closely as possible, akin to spoken thought'<sup>742</sup>. Cartier-Bresson is influenced more by the ideas of Breton than Surrealist painting: 'the role of spontaneous expression [*jailissement*] and of intuition and, above all, the attitude of revolt.' It is he added, a revolt 'in art but also in life.'<sup>743</sup>

Cartier-Bresson's Surrealist freedom however, is informed by a technical 'know how' with equipment and his training in composition. The organisation and form of the picture comes from his craft of vision involving

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<sup>740</sup> Ibid, p.12

<sup>741</sup> Ibid, p.10

<sup>742</sup> Westerbeck, and Meyerowitz, op cit, p.156

<sup>743</sup> Galassi, op cit, p.12



what he calls 'a developed instinct'<sup>744</sup> . At the moment of taking the picture 'the decision is made by the eye' and things come together. 'Composition' he says 'can stem only from our intuition, for we are out to capture the fugitive moment, and all the interrelationships involved are on the move'<sup>745</sup> . As Clair says, the moment in which the world 'reveals itself, before the waters roll back and chaos returns, when light and shade are perfectly in balance ... in which form emerges from amid a confusion of forms'<sup>746</sup>.

The photographer also moves within the movement of the world, with, as Cartier-Bresson says 'a suppleness of body', modifying perspectives; 'with a gentle flexing of the knees, we make lines meet simply by moving the head a fraction of a millimetre'<sup>747</sup>. The photographer is also composed, he is himself 'together' and there is a ceremoniousness in the stance he takes born of practice and experience. In 1932, having discovered the Leica, Cartier-Bresson abandoned studio Surrealism and, like Breton and Aragon, 'gave himself up to the surprises of the street'. Galassi tells us that 'two previously separate elements of the Surrealist aesthetic' are brought together

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<sup>744</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit [xiv]

<sup>745</sup> Ibid, [viii]

<sup>746</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 52

<sup>747</sup> Ibid, p. 52

in this stepping out: the 'sensitivity to the unpredictable psychic force of the straight photography' and the 'vision of the street as an arena of adventure and fantasy only thinly disguised by the veneer of daily routine'<sup>748</sup> . But it is the new small camera, the Leica, which Galassi credits with enabling the results.

### **Gear (Zeug), the Camera.**

Cartier-Bresson's training and experience inform and enable his action, but together with the art of doing come the 'doings' of art, what Heidegger calls 'gear' or equipment (*zeug*). For Heidegger, *Dasein's* environment includes the things one uses and handles, things 'to hand' (*zuhanden*) and things one 'procures'<sup>749</sup> . The 'moment of vision' brings these things to attention [to presence] and 'permits us to encounter for the first time what can be 'in a time' as ready-to-hand or present-at-hand'<sup>750</sup> . Most crucial at this time is Cartier-Bresson's discovery of the new hand-held *Leica* camera, itself a revolution in photography. Mistrusted initially on account of its small size, its lightness and ease of use, Cartier-Bresson says of the Leica: 'It became the extension of my eye, and I have never been separated

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<sup>748</sup> Galassi, op c it, p. 32

<sup>749</sup> Heidegger, op cit, footnote p.83

<sup>750</sup> Ibid, p.388

from it since I found it.<sup>751</sup> It becomes his chosen instrument of work, it gives him freedom of movement, as Clair describes it, the camera is 'his balance', it is 'a judge' with which 'he weighs up the world'<sup>752</sup>. Cartier-Bresson speaks of weighing the perspective and bringing objects into alignment through the viewfinder, yet even with all this going on, it is still an immediate reflex action<sup>753</sup>.

As Galassi explains, 'the photographer could now pursue the action as it unfolded, as one potential subject transformed itself by almost imperceptible stages into another'<sup>754</sup>. Galassi reports the photographers using this small camera being filled with 'delight in the new freedom' it gives them. It 'spawned a whole class of pictures that celebrated instantaneity for its own sake', Galassi says, although this notion of instantaneity, if too much is made of it, can impoverish Cartier-Bresson's notion of the 'decisive moment'. On this subject of 'gear' or the 'tools' of the photographers' trade, we might also mention that in Westerbeck and Meyerwitz's book *Bystander*, they suggest that the photo agency *Magnum* also constituted a tool in that it

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<sup>751</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [ii]

<sup>752</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 3

<sup>753</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 52

<sup>754</sup> Ibid, p. 29

relieved Cartier-Bresson of the necessity to sell or distribute his images himself.

### **À la Sauvette.**

Let us turn now to the aspects of 'moment' which, as mentioned earlier, are given expression in the French title of Cartier-Bresson's book, *Images à la Sauvette*. Nuances of this phrase have already shown something of themselves in our explications of the photographer's stance. The photographer moves in pursuit of the action as it unfolds and is in this sense himself 'on the run'. In the midst of the movement of the world events occur, moments appear and as the picture moves into balance hopefully something is grasped. This grasping does indeed take place immediately, without delay so as not to be missed. Cartier-Bresson maintains that the immediacy of action of taking a picture 'on the run', the framing in the viewfinder at the moment of 'seeing', is crucial to grasping the scene. He does not believe in cropping or otherwise altering the picture in the darkroom, the picture 'framed' by the eye at the time which does not compromise the subject can be the only true testament. Yet this 'immediately' carries not only a sense of time and of place but more a sense of close relation between the subject which has 'come to presence' and the photographer, who is ready for it.

Westerbeck and Meyerowitz say of the moment: 'The instant being described is the one when you are just about to take off, the point at which

the shortstop is ready to dash in any direction as he watches the batter step into the ball...<sup>755</sup> This element of the moment is a hiatus and not one of conclusion but of anticipation, that which is just *before* a decision is made. Clair, as we have said, describes an aspect of the photographer's skill as being able to make predictions 'in a millisecond what is about to happen next'<sup>756</sup>. He can do this 'because he remembers that he can predict'<sup>757</sup>. There is an element here, of the time being opportune yet pending, held in readiness, and thus the photographer who is all action is also is poised before action. Cartier-Bresson in *The Decisive Moment* says: 'We work in unison with movement as though it were a presentiment of the way in which life itself unfolds. But inside movement there is one moment at which the elements in motion are in balance. Photography must seize upon this moment and hold immobile the equilibrium of it.'<sup>758</sup> Strikingly, we remember that the concept of the pause in Kierkegaard's moment has an aspect which Kierkegaard describes thus: '... in every such moment there is in each instant a pause, where wonder stands in *pausa* and waits for the coming into

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<sup>755</sup> Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, op cit, p.156

<sup>756</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 53

<sup>757</sup> Ibid, p. 54

<sup>758</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [viii]

existence'<sup>759</sup> . The state of wonder or astonishment (*thaumazein*) we have spoken of as being a starting point for philosophy.

The Greek word, *aporia* or 'being at a loss' refers to places where impasses of thinking or meaning occur. It is not a state in which one can remain, hovering before a resolution, but rather precipitates fulfilment. It is the point from where one sets out to encounter and grasp an 'idea' in a certain mood or attunement which Heidegger tells us is necessary to embarking on philosophical thinking. This may be what Heidegger has in mind when he describes *Dasein*, enraptured before its ownmost possibilities of Being as '...held in resoluteness.'<sup>760</sup> In this state, *Dasein* is authentically 'there', resolute before the 'moment of vision' in a Present which is held on to, but in which he says 'nothing can occur; but as an authentic Present or 'waiting toward'<sup>761</sup> .

At this point of perplexity, *Dasein* turns to consideration of itself in 'comprehended time', or inner time, in its own-most temporality which, crucially, is oriented toward its future. Risen from its immersion in the ordinary and everyday *Dasein* can be 'in the moment of vision for 'its

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<sup>759</sup> Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments* , op cit, Hong, p. 80

<sup>760</sup> Heidegger, op cit, p. 387

<sup>761</sup> Ibid, p. 33

time' ...<sup>762</sup> . The photographer works 'in his own time', the altered sense of duration belongs to him alone as 'authentic temporality'. Authentic temporality, as we have established in chapter 4, is fundamentally 'futural', and these concepts run on into a futural notion of the decisive moment in its rendition as 'images on the run'. Westerbeck and Meyerowitz tell us that the phrase '*à la sauvette*' contains an 'untranslatable future element'<sup>763</sup> . The Latin word *momentum* signifies more than just the temporal instant, for it gives the moment its movement, and within this movement outstanding possibilities as futural elements hover. The futural impetus of the photographer, his movement within the movement of the world, can be thought as being open to possibilities always unfolding in the environment, and not just to the 'now' instant.

Here, being authentically 'futural' and being held in the hiatus before the moment, give on to the *Augenblick* in its possible translation as 'glance of the eye'. The glance of perception given to an object, an opportunity or a possibility, gives a clue. It reveals an aspect of the world and one can fill in the rest from one's own knowledge and expectations. Cartier-Bresson's practised 'eye' creates something of a 'presentiment', a foreshadowing in the atmospheric 'feel' of the scene. If, in the darkroom, when it seems that a shot

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<sup>762</sup> Ibid, p. 437

<sup>763</sup> Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, op cit, p. 156

has 'failed' due to hesitation or uncertainty, Cartier-Bresson says it is usually 'because your glance became vague, your eye wandered off'<sup>764</sup>. One might say he missed his aim. Jean Clair in his essay *Kairos: The Idea of the Decisive Moment in the Work of Cartier-Bresson*, explains that one sense of *Kairos* is 'power of discrimination... for the hunter this skill lies in shooting an arrow accurately'<sup>765</sup>. The skill of the archer is almost 'mercurial' or 'hermetic'<sup>766</sup>, he adds.

The word 'glance' seems to reinforce the sense of a momentary action, linked as it often is with the word 'fleeting'. But this glance of perception, the moment in which one looks or turns toward something, is integral to the actual point of *grasping* the object, the moment of illumination is a moment of connection. The glance toward the scene and the 'seeing' of the picture which the artist must grasp comprise the attitude of authentic 'looking', sounding out the world and one's self 'in' it, as we have said. The *act* of turning and looking is crucial to the situation towards which it is directed, and we find this idea in Westerbeck and Meyerwitz who assert that the title, *Images à la Sauvette*, 'characterizes the photographer's actions as

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<sup>764</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [iv]

<sup>765</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 48

<sup>766</sup> Ibid, p. 52



well as his subjects - it looks to both out and in.<sup>767</sup> We might also think of an 'image on the run' as the one which escapes capture. Having been captured, this 'privileged moment turned into a slim object'<sup>768</sup> can still out run any fixed meaning we try to apply.

Similarly, Cartier-Bresson describes looking through the lens, with one eye outward on the scene and one inward to himself. He sees himself seeing, Cartier-Bresson says, '... the discovery of oneself is made concurrently with the discovery of the world around us which can mould us, but which can also be affected by us. A balance must be established between these two worlds - the one inside us and the one outside us. As a result of a constant reciprocal process, both these worlds come to form a single one. And it is this world that we must communicate.'<sup>769</sup> Clair tells us that in this statement Cartier-Bresson is 'spelling out a rule of etiquette'. In relation to *kairos*, 'To discover the 'decisive moment' is effectively the same thing as to arrive 'at precisely the correct time', neither too early nor too late; in other words, it is a rule of ethical and social behaviour on which an exact consensus can be reached with contemporaries. It is a question of being in tune with the times ... it is also a rule of aesthetics, incorporating concepts of

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<sup>767</sup> Westerbeck, and Meyerowitz, op cit, p. 156

<sup>768</sup> Sontag, op cit, p.18

<sup>769</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [xiv]

beauty, the measure or equilibrium of things and the *kairos* capable of apprehending them in an instant.<sup>770</sup> Cartier-Bresson directs his regard to the perceiving act, he watches himself watching out for the prominent aspect of a moment or event as it comes into balance. He recognises the moment by which he can, as he says, communicate some kind of 'truth' or 'reality' which he has seen in the subject.

### **Seizing.**

This 'reciprocal' constitution of the *Augenblick*, emerges as that which one might, following Heidegger, call 'event' (*ereignis*). One can think of 'moment' as that which is 'of moment' or significance, and as that which arrives and happens (the French *arriver*, to happen), and is decisive for one's project of Being. It is not the moment in its type or level of intensity which is of primary importance but one's own-most experiencing of it. *Ereignis* is, for Heidegger, 'the event of presencing itself'<sup>771</sup>; it refers to events which unfolds in their ownmost temporality, that which is intrinsic to them. This includes our own encounter with 'event', in *our* ownmost or 'authentic' temporality. As we have said, *ereignis* can be thought of as *enowning* in the sense of 'an un-

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<sup>770</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 50

<sup>771</sup> McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye*, op cit, p.116

possessive owning'<sup>772</sup> .

What 'eventuates' in *ereignis* is the enactment of decision, the 'decisive' moment is one in which something is decided. Such a moment 'makes a difference', something is changed radically in a determined resolution, it is brought to fullness in a satisfactory conclusion. This is the meaning of *kairos*, the appropriate moment for action duly considered and using the knowledge of one's experience and technical expertise, the moment of decision. Resolute action brings to Presence or discloses what this moment holds. In Cartier-Bresson's case, something hidden is revealed.

In a brute sense events occur, but Heidegger asserts they must not be noted as simply occurring but seized and made to mean for Being. *Dasein* must be seized '*in its essence*'<sup>773</sup> by its questioning . A 'moment' becomes 'of vision' when insight or 'understanding' comes to one through it and is used to gain a knowledge of oneself in the world. Cartier-Bresson, by his resolute holding of himself in question, is in a position to access a decisive moment. The photographer seems to live the metaphor of wandering and seeking something he will not know until he sees it. Full of anticipation at this time he is authentically 'futural', open to what might happen. Here there is an expectation and a waiting to be gripped by something when it appears on the

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<sup>772</sup> Heidegger, op cit, pp. xix - xxii.

<sup>773</sup> Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, op cit, p.132

'horizon'. Exercising the 'craft' of thinking towards the 'world', of straying in one's thoughts as one does in the street, allowing the 'eye' to roam, gains a kind of access which enables the immediate seizing of which we have spoken.

What is seized by Cartier-Bresson in this 'event of presencing' is an image or 'idea'. He has said that he was driven by the pursuit of a gripping representation as an 'idea' rather than simply a beautiful visual image. Cartier Bresson's photograph entitled *Behind the Gare St. Lazare*, (Paris, 1932), is perhaps the most frequently discussed of his images. In the foreground a man leaps from a piece of ladder floating in some water, he is pictured mid-leap. His reflection is clear. His leap is echoed by a poster of a dancer on the wall behind (which itself repeats in a portion of a second identical poster next to it). Pieces of curved metal lie in the water and echo the ripples made by the man's taking off on his leap. In contrast, another man behind the railings is standing idly. The railings between the leaping man are echoed by some scaffolding on the station rooftop. Another poster reads: '*Railowski*'.

One could go on finding elements and visual echoes which make this picture so unique. Is it possible that Cartier-Bresson saw all these elements in the view finder at the instant the man leapt? In fact he claims to have put the camera up to a hole in a fence and not even looked at the image as he shot it. Perhaps he sees a man running and seizes his chance; however it may be the reward is great. Clair, however, asserts that Cartier-Bresson 'never left things to chance. As an artist, he is in control of phenomena - in

control of events, to the extent at least that he is able to predict them. *Kairos* is that control'<sup>774</sup>

We can make assumptions as to what this well-composed figure of the leaping man may have meant for Cartier-Bresson. But this image, out in the public domain is available to meanings we impose upon it. It might stand as representative of Cartier-Bresson himself leaping through the air like a dancer and never being seen to land with a splash in dirty water. This image might stand for the leap of hopeful human striving in doubtful and unpromising times. This is an image that has been preserved because as an object it fulfils the required value expectations that we have of the photograph as art.

### **Still Now?**

Estelle Jussim in *The Eternal Moment, Essays on the Photographic Image*, reports William James calling the now '*the thickened present*' which, as with so many ways of speaking of time, is a spatial analogy. It lets us imagine a moment which coalesces and adheres itself to reality, becomes quickened as well as thickened, it comes to life. However, attempts to identify the duration of 'now' by amounts of time result in some arbitrary and meaningless computations, William James suggests that 'now' lasts three

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<sup>774</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 51

seconds. 'A student of his claimed it lasted for twelve seconds.'<sup>775</sup> However, as Kierkegaard says, 'it need not be long, for it is a leap'<sup>776</sup> .

The paradoxical question of whether we can hold the 'now' still in an image is the paradox of the *Augenblick* itself. There is nothing in the *Augenblick*, it is 'empty', 'dark', 'unmediated' as both Heidegger and Ernst Bloch describe, it is 'lived (*gelebt*) but not experienced (*erlebt*)'<sup>777</sup> . It would seem, therefore, that the moment can only be experienced before or after it has passed. Wayne Hudson, describes a moment in the work of Ernst Bloch, as 'rare, short-lived experiences of an anticipatory 'still', in which a vertical lightning effect falls on the unmediated content of the moment, and makes it seem 'almost mediated'<sup>778</sup> . Bloch, according to Hudson, holds that the moment is 'the blind spot of our vision: the region of existence which is too near for the perspective necessary for something to be seen . We do not see the moment in which we live: there is an invisibility at the heart of our

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<sup>775</sup> Jussim, Estelle, *The Eternal Moment, Essays on the Photographic Image*, Writers and Artists on Photography Series, Aperture, 1989, p. 50

<sup>776</sup> Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, Hong, op cit, p. 43

<sup>777</sup> Hudson, Wayne, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*, The MacMillan Press Ltd., London, 1982, p. 97

<sup>778</sup> Ibid, p. 97

existence'<sup>779</sup> .

Hans Georg Gadamer in his essay *The Continuity of History and The Existential Moment* (*Die Kontinuität der Geschichte und der Augenblick der Existenz*), asks of time 'what is this which in truth can never at any moment be identified with itself as that which is present [da]?'<sup>780</sup> The problem of the idea of a continuity of history, Gadamer tells us is contained in this question - how can a continuity of events which we call 'history' emerge from time in its continuous flow when the 'now' as a moment of time cannot be held onto or identified. The answer to this question of history, and for that matter the question of the 'now' itself, is that what matters is not a 'now' as time. It is not directly from 'the continuous experiencing of unrolling nows' that the 'continuity of history receives its problematic'<sup>781</sup>. But 'It may well be that the experience of continuity is grounded in ... a continuity of historical relationships built out of the endless flow of changes.'<sup>782</sup> So that when we speak of the 'now', we are not speaking of a moment of time but an event of moment which occurs. It is events themselves that are the subject of images

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<sup>779</sup> Ibid, p. 96

<sup>780</sup> Gadamer, Hans George, *The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment*, in *Philosophy Today*, Fall, 1972,; 16, p. 232

<sup>781</sup> Ibid, p. 233

<sup>782</sup> Ibid, p. 233

caught on the run. Viewed always in the present, an image represents a moment caught on the spot. Jussim asks whether a photograph stops time<sup>783</sup> of course it can't but it can isolate events in time. Changing events are the content of time, what we see now is always changing, change is the nature of discontinuity or vice versa. The image, as Sontag says is 'a pseudo-presence and a token of absence'<sup>784</sup> and actually refers to 'what lies beyond' the image.

For Ernst Bloch, the *nunc stans* is the 'stationary moment, the captured now'<sup>785</sup>, and the now moment as a *nunc stans* is, Hudson says 'a foretaste of eternity'<sup>786</sup>. We must take care when we call the captured image a *nunc stans*. Boethius describes it in *The Consolation of Philosophy*, as 'that abiding present' of eternity, in which the whole 'fullness of everlasting life, which lacks nothing of the future and has lost nothing of the past' is simultaneously held. This world of ours cannot do this, but, he says, the fact of its infinity makes it able,

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<sup>783</sup> Jussim, p. 50

<sup>784</sup> Sontag, op cit, p. 18

<sup>785</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope, Volume III*, op cit, p. 1383

<sup>786</sup> Hudson, p. 96



‘in some measure to emulate that which it cannot fulfil or express. It does this by attaching itself to some sort of presence in this small and fleeting moment, and since this presence bears a certain resemblance to that abiding presence, it confers on whatever possess it the appearance of being that which it imitates’<sup>787</sup>.

We cannot properly say then, that this or that moment is a *nunc stans*, what we mean is that it emulates the ‘abiding present’ of eternity to which we have no real access. Something enduring and, in that sense ‘eternal’ and transcendent may seem to be captured in an image. Jussim asks, in relation to the leaping man: ‘has Cartier-Bresson in his ‘decisive moment’ somehow abstracted this fellow from all time? Since in the photograph, he can never move forward, is he not in the now at all, but rather in what we call *eternity*?’<sup>788</sup> Cartier-Bresson's pictures have been said to 'describe not so much the plight of the early thirties as the one that has always existed, has always already been 'there'.<sup>789</sup> Not the particular contemporary political situation but a general ‘human condition’, that which Kaufmann declares ‘almost all philosophers have ignored. Existentialism poses as the one great exception and bases its claim for wide attention on its exploration of extreme

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<sup>787</sup> Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book V. p. 164

<sup>788</sup> Jussim, p. 52

<sup>789</sup> Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, op cit, p.163

situations'. It is art, he asserts that can give us 'insight into the human condition'<sup>790</sup>.

We might say there are eternal facts in events that have certainly happened and cannot be reversed. A still image of a particular event which becomes well-known can come to represent a time, and we have said that Cartier-Bresson takes his own inner time. Jeanneney considers that Cartier-Bresson 'made a record of *his* twentieth century', and 'through his eyes'. But 'it becomes ours as well'<sup>791</sup>, as Cartier-Bresson captures the 'outer' time, the epoch. Jeanneney says that his images are often ones of a scene rescued 'in the nick of time ... before a whole world vanishes' and might bear the titles: 'The last moments of China before Mao, the last moments of English India and also the last moments of great political and literary figures, such as the final image of Gandhi, assassinated barely an hour after the sitting'<sup>792</sup>. What comes to presence is brought to the fore, something 'stands before us', though not present in time. An event stilled and held constant in the 'now' shows us what was 'then', but this 'then' is always tempered by the present and personal perspective. Neither does this 'then' remain identical to its own

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<sup>790</sup> Kaufmann, Walter, *Life at the Limits, Photographs and Text*, Readers Digest Press, New York, 1978, p. 65

<sup>791</sup> Ibid, p. 10

<sup>792</sup> Jeanneney, op cit, p. 11

moment in the 'now', it gains significance and meaning as we carry it with us into the future.

In this age so full of moving visual images, the still image retains its power. The *Magnum* photography agency mentioned earlier as a 'tool' of the photographer's trade, and which Henri Cartier-Bresson and his colleagues, Robert Capa and 'Chim' were instrumental in establishing, is still in business today. Though based in New York City their photojournalists are usually not in that city but out and about where major events are unfolding. However, on September 10th 2001, there happened to be a board meeting at *Magnum* which brought some of their top photojournalists to New York, many of them photographing the events next day. The millions of images taken of the 11th, whether by these professional photographers or by amateurs, whether of the events themselves or of missing loved ones pasted on walls, has brought out the power of the one still image to sum up a situation or event, and also the nature of being impelled to photograph at all. A 'still' is still, it stands still and still remains as a moment which represents far more than itself, having the power to encapsulate a whole event in one 'decisive moment'.

Such a moment of course is the province of the news media; they are the means by which visual images of momentous events reach the public. The 'news' is closest to the 'now' ('That's the news to now' the anchor person says). Television and video capture whole sequences of action but print media carries the still pictures. The Weekend Australian's Inquirer section, on September 15th-16th 2001 ran a full page picture of the moment when the

second plane hit the World Trade Centre, the headline in large capitals: 'The Day The World Changed'. It is surely not often that such a statement is true. Inside, small boxes carry condensed reports of eyewitnesses, stories of the experiences of individuals at the very moment of the event. Each carries the title 'The Moment', these glimpses might also be called 'images', the word need not only refer to the visual. Like these stories, the still photographs are 'now moments' plucked from the continuum of time. What use is it then to debate how many seconds the now lasts?

Gadamer, writing in 1972, says that today people speak of 'living in the epoch of atomic energy', what we ourselves hear is that we are living in the epoch of terrorism. The specifics of the threat to the continuity of the human race changes but the threat remains. Images of nuclear bomb mushroom clouds are old. 'Something 'new' has happened such that it will not soon be cancelled out by some other 'new' and conversely, that in the light of this 'new' we must denominate the 'old' as old in a qualitatively distinct and unambiguous sense. Thus 'war' meant something qualitatively and fundamentally different before the epoch-making event of the discovery of atomic power'<sup>793</sup>. Conflict means something different for us since 'The Day the World Changed'. 'When this sort of thing happens, it is as though time itself has grown old ... in the sense that its own future stands under the

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<sup>793</sup> Gadamer, p. 234

epoch-making event<sup>794</sup>.

In still images of past events we see time grow old and our perceptions of the future itself changed. Gadamer quotes Kant on the event of the French Revolution, that 'such an event does not let itself be forgotten'. This phrase, language treats 'as an acting being'; language, he says, 'is pointing at something... which is contained and retained in man's consciousness'<sup>795</sup>. We might substitute the language of images here for verbal language. In contemplating the fact of these historical events together with our individual experiencing of them is to understand what Gadamer calls 'The Existential Moment'.

The notion of instantaneity in photography is embodied in the camera 'flash', the holiday 'snap', and is perpetuated in advertising which promises us access to 'Kodak moments'; this idea is captured in the very naming of a camera - an *Instamatic*. Such expressions reinforce a superficial notion of picture-making, that which Cartier-Bresson's title is reduced to in its translation as *The Decisive Moment*, pithy though the phrase is. Cartier-Bresson says, 'Of all the means of expression, photography is the only one that fixes forever the precise and transitory instant. We photographers deal in

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<sup>794</sup> Ibid, p. 234

<sup>795</sup> Ibid, p. 234

things which are continually vanishing.<sup>796</sup> Sartre says, *'It is important to grasp the present in the form of an instant, for the instant would be the moment when the present is.* But the present is not; it makes itself present in the form of flight.<sup>797</sup> The one 'vanishing' momentary image seen in the flow of images on a contact sheet can sum up a whole narrative scene. Cartier-Bresson as photojournalist is well aware of this, as he says in his book, '... the decisive moment is not only a pictorial climax that yields a satisfactory photograph but also a narrative climax that reveals a truth about the subject.'<sup>798</sup>

### **Still in Sequence.**

'Cartier-Bresson has said that the photographer himself is revealed more clearly by his contact sheets than by prints... you can see the sequence of shots building toward the best picture ... 'I prefer to look at contact sheets,' he told *Le Monde*, '[because] there one see the individual'<sup>799</sup> . The sequence reveals the individual photographer, but this does not extend to moving images, Cartier-Bresson asserts that he dislikes the collaborative aspects of

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<sup>796</sup> Cartier-Bresson, op cit, [v]

<sup>797</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Being and Nothingness*, Routledge, London, 2001, p.179

<sup>798</sup> Galassi, op cit, p.9

<sup>799</sup> Westerbeck and Meyerowitz, op cit, p.155

film making'. But the notions of an individual 'vision', of a search for balance and harmony and the methods of achieving it are all relevant to a discussion of the 'decisive moment' in relation to film editing. We might point at many moments which are decisive to the history of film, and to moments of decision represented in film, but if we stay with the part of our theme in this chapter which discusses the moment in relation to the work of the 'artist' as practitioner we can find some interesting observations in a book by Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye, A Perspective on Film*. Murch gives us insights gleaned from his years of practise in the field of film editor, working on such films as *Apocalypse Now* (for which he won Academy Awards) and the film of Kundera's novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. To work in this genre, he says, you need 'to have a sense of who you are dealing with', one needs to get one's ideas or 'vision' across to a director or producer 'in the right context. And that has to do with your whole working history'<sup>800</sup>.

Perhaps in common with Cartier-Bresson's process of shooting a sequence of pictures to create a 'picture story', Murch describes the process of editing as 'not so much a *putting together* as it is a *discovery of a path*'<sup>801</sup>. Forming a story involves recognising the relationships between images or

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<sup>800</sup> Murch, Walter, *In the Blink of an Eye. A Perspective on Film Editing*, Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Sydney, 1992, p. 29

<sup>801</sup> Ibid, p. 34

sequences and choosing between them to create the movement of the action, in doing this the editor is choosing between infinite possibilities (of images). The film editor builds the total piece of work from its tiny fragments of detail. Cartier-Bresson would never crop an image or change it in the darkroom because he believed this destroyed the integrity of the work. Murch tells us that 'in the States film is 'cut', which puts the emphasis on *separation*. In Australia and in Great Britain film is 'joined', with the emphasis on *bringing together*'<sup>802</sup> and it is the bringing together of ideas to form a story which constitutes the 'path' which editing discovers and which we might think of as 'musing' or a path of thinking. These two terms of separation and bringing together, reflect the concepts of destruction and construction, antinomies of the moment from which can spring a new possibility even an actuality.

*Lysippus'* statue of *Kairos* holds a blade in his right hand, as a reminder that 'I, *Kairos*, am shaper and swifter than anything.'<sup>803</sup> He cuts time precisely 'now', and he can also cut time into pieces, isolate moments from an unfolding life sequence (world process) into still images. In Murch's terms there is a 'total and instantaneous displacement', 'of one field of vision with another'; one sense of *kairos* is that it 'marks a break in continuity and logical

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<sup>802</sup> Ibid, p. 12

<sup>803</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 54



progression of things'. 'Editing' Murch says 'is a kind of surgery'<sup>804</sup>, presumably one which requires another aspect of *kairos*, that which pertains to the doctor's knowing when and where to intervene in the patient, if necessary to cut into the body. 'Choosing an appropriate location in space, or a decisive spot on the body' is the doctor's 'power of discrimination', similarly for the hunter this skill lies in shooting an arrow accurately<sup>805</sup> .

Such a displacement, happening 'in just a few milliseconds', he tells us 'sometimes also entails a jump forward in time as well as space', at the moment of the 'cut' or 'join', 'when the visual displacement is great enough ... we are forced to re-evaluate the new image as a different context'<sup>806</sup>. The moment marks where one idea is brought to an end and something else begins. It is important to emphasise that the cut by itself does not create the 'blink moment', he says, adding 'the tail does not wag the dog'<sup>807</sup> In everyday life, Murch says, we experience 'a continuous stream of linked images' and would therefore seem likely to reject such displacement when seeing it in film. However, we can assimilate this new 'reality', perhaps because by now

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<sup>804</sup> Ibid, p.44

<sup>805</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 48

<sup>806</sup> Murch, op cit, p. 13

<sup>807</sup> Ibid, p. 61

we have become accustomed to seeing it and how it plays with locations in time and space in ever more distorted ways. Yet, it may be that we do not find displacement unusual because our incoming flow of images is constantly interrupted quite naturally by our train of thought. Our 'inner dialogue' has things to interject about the flow of sensations, observations, memories and phantasies which it throws up against them as they pass. We do interrupt the continuity of thought when we imagine or remember things, unconscious images constantly surface to break the continuity, '*kairos* breaks through the prevailing *logos*'<sup>808</sup>.

Murch believes that these "filmic' juxtapositions' take place when we dream as well as when we are awake. He goes further, asserting that they are 'not accidental mental artefacts but part of the method we use to make sense of the world: we *must* render visual reality discontinuous, otherwise perceived reality would resemble an almost incomprehensible string of letters without word separation or punctuation'<sup>809</sup>. It is because of this, he says, that 'we find edited film a (surprisingly) familiar experience. 'More like thought than anything else', in Huston's words'<sup>810</sup>. We have spoken of the juxtapositions in Cartier-Bresson's images which provide an impetus to

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<sup>808</sup> Clair, op cit, p. 52

<sup>809</sup> Murch, op cit, p. 61

<sup>810</sup> Ibid, p. 61

assembling meaning from the image. Although film is made up of 'many different pieces of film joined together', Murch tells us, there are examples of films which use one unbroken shot, Hitchcock's *Rope* is the example he gives, but more recently we might think of *Russian Arc*. In one whole movement, a figure wanders through the history of a museum, in a present moment suspended in and over time during which selected aspects of the past are observed.

Murch has his own six criteria for what makes a good cut<sup>811</sup>, the most important for him is whether the cut remains 'true to the emotion of the moment. The cut must also 'advance the story' and happen at a 'moment that is rhythmically interesting and 'right''. In relation to this, John Huston tells of directing Gene Hackman in *The Conversation*, and realising that the actor 'would blink very close to the point I had decided to cut'. Huston uses this device to identify where separations will work convincingly. This leads us to Murch's next criteria that the cut must concern itself with the location and movement of the audience's focus of interest at any one moment, Murch refers to this as 'eye-trace'. A cut must respect the 'planarity' or the two-dimensional plane of screen by attending to 'the grammar of three dimensions transposed by photography to two' and correspondingly, it must 'respect' the continuity of the actual three-dimensional space in which people

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<sup>811</sup> Ibid, p.22-3

appear in relation to one another, or the action.

Although to 'cut' film is a sharp action and suggests a sharp contrast between images, not all 'transitions' between images are arresting, Murch speaks of 'cross-fades' as 'a long moment'<sup>812</sup> and says 'transitions reveal the soul of a film'. The arrangement of images can quicken our heart rate, one can follow the action wide-eyed and astonished, mouth agape with wonder or aghast in terror, breath held as events unfold either swiftly or in slow motion. In an extended impression, one might clamp a hand over the mouth<sup>813</sup> for an unblinking moment, and one does not blink until the moment is over. John Huston's assertion that 'film is like thought', and his observations regarding the blink deserve some comment here. When one looks across a room at an object and then back again, he tells us, 'You *blinked*'. These, he says, 'are *cuts*'<sup>814</sup>, they are punctuation. Moving the eye across the room, (unless the eye is unfocussed), is not a smooth action, the eye attaches to objects as it goes. The physiological mechanism of the blink, Huston asserts, 'interrupts the apparent visual continuity of our perceptions: my head may move

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<sup>812</sup> Ibid, p.86

<sup>813</sup> The Northern English term 'gob-smacked' refers to being so surprised as to clamp a hand over one's mouth.

<sup>814</sup> John Huston in an interview the Christian Science Monitor, August 11th, 1973 by Louise Sweeney, pp. 57-8

smoothly from one side of the room to the other, but in fact I am cutting the flow of visual images into significant bits, the better to juxtapose and compare those bits'. This discussion relies on the work of John Stern<sup>815</sup>, on the psychophysiology of eye movements in the blink. His observations tell us that sometimes someone angry or concentrating will not blink, they might stare at you to make a point, or they blink rapidly in anger. A person may blink when they have understood or assimilated what you have said to them so far, or when 'being assailed simultaneously by many conflicting emotions and thoughts, and is trying desperately (but unconsciously) using those blinks to try to separate these thoughts and to sort things out'<sup>816</sup>. In this way the blink can be an indication of an emotional state as well as registering the occurrence of differing thoughts.

In terms of the 'stance' of the photographer or film editor, Murch, like Cartier-Bresson advocates physicality as an important part of the work. In his discussion of new electronic systems of editing he tells us that most editors are not and should not be comfortable with an increased use of the computer keyboard. He says, 'there needs to be an easy and immediate kinetic feedback between the material and the eye-hand co-ordination of the

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<sup>815</sup> John Stern, Washington University, St Louis, work in the psych-physiology of the blink , 1987, cited in Murch, p.59

<sup>816</sup> Murch, op cit, p.59

editor, both in terms of selecting the desired frame and making the splice itself'<sup>817</sup> . He goes on to say in a distinct echo of Cartier-Bresson, 'Editing is a kind of dance and this depends on engaging as much of the editor's body as possible.'<sup>818</sup>

*The Blink of an Eye* of Murch's title is not a flippant use of our 'beautiful expression', his discussion refers to the 'decisive moment' of Cartier-Bresson while he looks into the importance of the single image-frame within a sequence. While editing the film *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, he tells us, he would choose 'at least one representative frame from every set-up and take a still photograph of it off the workprint.'" One frame to represent a whole sequence, would be printed as a still and pinned up on a board. The images he selects in this way could be 'read' from left to right or *vice versa*, up and down or *vice versa*, and this method would sometimes produce 'sparks', 'it would cause you to think about things, editorial leaps, that otherwise you might never have thought of...'<sup>819</sup> 'In choosing a representative frame' he says, 'what you're looking for is an image that distills the essence of the thousands of frames that make up the shot in question,

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<sup>817</sup> Ibid, p. 81

<sup>818</sup> Ibid, p. 81

<sup>819</sup> *ibid*, pp. 33-34

what Cartier-Bresson - referring to still photography- called the 'decisive moment'.<sup>820</sup> Each of these single frames of film in containing an essential kernel of the whole sequence of action can serve as what we can call an *Ansatzpunkt* - a devise of literary criticism found in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*. *Ansatzpunkt* can refer to an original starting point or idea from which is developed an extended body of ideas. In *Mimesis* Auerbach uses a brief text taken from a whole work in which, he asserts, the work's main theme is manifest. He describes his 'procedure' as 'citing for every epoch a number of texts and using these as test cases for my ideas'. This he tells us, 'takes the reader directly into the subject and makes him sense what is at issue long before he is expected to cope with anything theoretical.'<sup>821</sup> As a hermeneutical device for interpreting texts it reduces a text to its smallest components and through this 'promises the discovery of a key to the larger whole'. *Ansatz* as a 'base' or 'root' suggests something which as well as a starting point to progress outwards from, might also be a point which gathers meaning to it.

As we have said, maintaining the emotional continuity is an important aspect of film editing for Murch; how one wants the audience to feel is an

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<sup>820</sup> Ibid, pp. 42

<sup>821</sup> Auerbach, Erich, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Translator: Willard R. Trask, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1974, in the Epilogue, p. 556

important consideration. It is desirable that they share the emotion and the idea the film want to put across because, he asserts, that 'how they felt', is what they remember afterwards. He describes the isolated stills or 'photo moments' as 'hieroglyphs for a language of emotions'<sup>822</sup>, complex and nameless emotions such as, in his example, 'anger tinged with melancholy' require careful use of visual language, emotions for which there are no words but can be seen in the isolated images. 'I want it to embody that nameless but familiar emotion I see in that photograph.'<sup>823</sup>

Existentialism deals with the underlying, fundamental 'moods', but as Kaufmann<sup>824</sup> points out, they neglect the nature of emotions as complex. Perhaps the paucity of words for varieties of emotion, especially in the English language is to blame, or perhaps it is that another language can speak of them and make them observable in a more fitting way, perhaps in the language of the visual image, or of music. In music it is as with our own thoughts, Murch tells us, 'the way one realisation will suddenly overwhelm everything else, to be in turn replaced by yet another'. Returning briefly to the notion of suspension in the blink, Murch tells the story of 'a famous live recording of the pianist Sviatoslav Richter playing Mussorgsky's *Pictures at*

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<sup>822</sup> Murch, op cit, p. 34

<sup>823</sup> Ibid, p. 35

<sup>824</sup> Kaufmann, op cit, p. 90



*an Exhibition* during a 'flu epidemic in Bulgaria many years ago ... while he was playing certain passages there were no coughs. At those moments he was able to suppress, by his artistry, the coughing impulse of 1500 sick people'<sup>825</sup>. The musical image holds one in its gaze. The expression and representation of these complex, simultaneously experienced emotions in visual and musical 'imagery', is one of the focal points of our next chapter.

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<sup>825</sup> Murch, op cit, p.69

**Chapter 6.**  
**A Decisive Epoch and the 'Existential Moment' (*der Augenblick der Existenz*) in Art.**

In the previous chapter we looked at the 'decisive moment' of Cartier-Bresson in a period of turmoil which he shares with Heidegger. We noted that this period or epoch itself appears to have been decisive in its very fullness of decisive moments, and this is the focus of the present chapter. While the previous chapter considered the Moment in relation to the visual, specifically photographic image, it is now extended to consider the visual image of art and musical 'imagery'. We will meet various aspects of the *Augenblick* again, both the Greek concepts of *kairos* and the *nunc stans*. The idea of the moment as encompassing an historical event and an individual experience which describes a certain *zeitgeist* occurs, and this *zeitgeist* described in relation to Heidegger's *Augenblick* as 'apocalyptic' is now described as 'dissonant'.

That this epoch can be accurately described as 'dissonant' reflects that aspect of the Moment which is seen as being held open with all its possibilities, as it were, 'up in the air'. Arnold Schoenberg's exhortation to 'emancipate the dissonance' can be read as a call to be fully engaged with the situation, to be authentically 'in the Moment'. What comes out of the dissonance, for instance certain artistic movements, might arrive as a seeming revolution but proves to be part of an evolutionary process. Even a moment of artistic 'inspiration' is, as Adorno explains, inseparable from the

process of creation of the object which follows.

The figure of the 'learner' from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and the individual involved in a process of decision in Jaspers are connected to the idea that the individual must be in a proper 'attitude' of striving. This individual who's striving takes them to a limit becomes an exaggerated character, one who in venturing to go beyond that limit falls. This fall, as we have seen is necessary, but in this case appears to lead to irrevocable damage to the individual in their existential self and to their intentions (the producing of something 'new' as a work of art).

My investigations have concentrated on nineteenth and twentieth century conceptions of the 'moment'. This period also loosely encompasses that of Modernism, even though it is disputed when the beginning and end of that period actually is, if indeed there has been an end to modernism. We have seen that the development of the idea of moment as an existential concept has followed the path of the development of modernism itself. The fact that a period should bear the name of 'modern' points to the fact that it is concerned with the contemporary, with the present time and with things 'new' within it. To be 'modern' is to exist 'now', in this sense we carry the modern along with us, it will always be 'now' with us. Like the moment itself, the period called 'modernism' spans an indefinite time, its exact duration and ends are uncertain. It appears that within this period that portion spanning the two world wars in Europe defined as 'high' or 'late' modernism represents a most poignant and fertile time for consideration of the 'moment'. It is a

period of great social and political upheaval, impinging on artistic and philosophical aspects of European life. In the title of this final chapter I identify this particular epoch as standing out from others as 'decisive'.

Gadamer posits that an epoch shows up as different from other epochs through a discontinuity of events, yet what we call 'history' is the series of events through which can perceive a continuity. The idea of continuity relies, however, on the notion of the flow of time; but rather than history being the flow of time, Gadamer tells us, it is made up of the flow of changes. It would seem that it is the position from which these changes are seen or experienced, relative to the notion of the flow of perishing and becoming which determines the significance we assign them. The notion of perishing and becoming seems, as Gadamer says, to be where the 'truth of historical consciousness' reaches 'its fulfilment', this endless coming and going of change builds 'a continuity of historical relationships'<sup>826</sup>. We are able to come to the point of celebrating the momentariness of our existence (*augenblicklichkeit*), because we understand it relative to the notion that 'there is no perishing without a simultaneous becoming'<sup>827</sup>. Ernst Bloch, as Wayne Hudson informs us, interprets the process of the 'now' as a section which reveals the structure and content of the world process. Bloch

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<sup>826</sup> Gadamer, *The Continuity of History and the Existential Moment*, op cit, p. 233

<sup>827</sup> Ibid, p. 232

understands this process as 'heliotropic', this word indicates that he considers it to be a continually growing process moving in a particular direction toward the light of an 'end'. 'This process', Hudson explains, 'begins again in each moment: as a process to solve the question of its origin; and every moment contains both the *datum* of world completion and the *data* of its content.'<sup>828</sup> The process is ongoing it seems, 'an unsolved world process in which the intensive That drives toward its missing What or essence, and the structure of the moment reflects the structure of the process.'<sup>829</sup>

Gadamer says that we can 'never know with certainty whether or not it is correct to attribute epoch-making significance to an event'<sup>830</sup>, as we did in the previous chapter. The future effect of any event is uncertain but 'it is enough', he says that we might have the impression, 'an enduring conviction' that an event 'was epoch-making', that we ourselves instil an event with such meaning. Such events signify 'an epochal time span'; 'Everything is dated from such an event'<sup>831</sup> because something of such great importance to our

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<sup>828</sup> Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*, The MacMillan Press Ltd., London and Basingstoke, 1982, p. 97

<sup>829</sup> Ibid, pp. 97-8

<sup>830</sup> Gadamer, op cit p. 234

<sup>831</sup> Ibid, p234 -5

lives has occurred 'that from then on everything is different'<sup>832</sup>. For Kierkegaard, Christ's coming is an historical fact, with the advent of the eternal we have the initial 'moment' upon which all other moments depend. The *Augenblick* is established as pivotal for the consideration of the eternal or transcendent aspect of human being. With it comes a capacity for faith, for absolute hope beyond the experiences and aspirations of the everyday. Even in situations such as those presented by the turmoil of this epoch, human being is consigned to 'hope'. Hope is relentlessly there in the face of seemingly unavoidable and complete destruction. Walter Benjamin understood very well that 'it is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us'<sup>833</sup>. Gadamer recognises 'the birth of Christ' as 'an absolute epoch-experience', not only as he says, 'on religious grounds', but also as the basis of 'the history of ideas'. The Christian message of salvation establishes 'history in a new sense', Gadamer asserts. The order of 'providence' is introduced into the disorder of destiny as the 'waxing and waning of happiness and unhappiness, as the opening and closing of the conditions for a happy and wholesome outcome or for a painful disaster'<sup>834</sup>.

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<sup>832</sup> Ibid, pp. 234-5

<sup>833</sup> Benjamin, quoted in Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Abacus, London, 1974, p.200

<sup>834</sup> Gadamer, op cit, p. 235

Heidegger considers that Kierkegaard's comprehending of *Augenblick* is an event which 'gives onto the possibility of new epoch of philosophy'<sup>835</sup>. Philosophy itself is a kind of knowledge which 'imposes its measure upon its epoch'<sup>836</sup>. It is the existential understanding of ourselves in the world which emerges as the defining philosophical knowledge of this 'epoch of the *Augenblick*', if we can now call it that. Shortly after Kierkegaard posits the 'new age' of Christianity and salvation, Nietzsche raises the notion that God is dead. Both of these seemingly antithetical positions are concerned with a deep individual response to, and a taking of responsibility for one's existence. God's death might be seen as a gradual demise which has a culmination point in the early part of the twentieth century, when it comes to attention as significant to the particular time. People, desperate for redemption, when order is again overwhelmed by disorder, might easily doubt that there is 'order' in God's providence.

It is possible to say that the *Augenblick* constitutes the very 'historicity' of this particular time. This term 'historicity' (*Geschichtlichkeit*) for Gadamer<sup>837</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit,

<sup>836</sup> Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, op cit, p. 8

<sup>837</sup> 'Historicity', Gadamer explains, was 'given its special meaning by Graf Yorke von Wartenburg, ... take up by Dilthey (and) used with special precision by Heidegger and Jaspers.'

as for Heidegger and Jaspers denotes factual events which occur, which can be identified as connected, along with the experiencing of them. The concept of historicity 'has come to hold an 'ontological claim'. For Jaspers, as Alan M. Olson explains, 'the legacy of modernity is the legacy of thoroughgoing historicism, to wit, that there is the 'life' of an 'external historical reality' which can be explained by its own conditions, and there is my 'life' - the two being divided. The outstanding problem is that of uniting the human individual and their history. Man is 'an exile from the secure providence of metaphysics - standing at the meridian of consciousness and history'<sup>838</sup> . From here, Olson says, 'Jaspers attempts to see beyond the 'secularized residue' of the past, the 'failed supernaturalism' of the 'eschatological consciousness' of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. He does this through the notion of 'epochal consciousness'<sup>839</sup> in which there can be 'unanticipated shifts'<sup>840</sup>.

### **The Existential Moment in Art.**

Through events coming to attention, a continuity is perceived; through

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<sup>838</sup> Olson, Alan, M., *Jaspers' Critique of Modernity, A Postmodern Reflection*, in *Karl Jaspers Today*, Editor: Leonard H. Erlich and Richard Wisser, Centre for Advanced research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, Washington, D.C., 1988, p. 368

<sup>839</sup> Ibid, p. 368

<sup>840</sup> Ibid, p. 364



the individual experiencing of the event (*ereignis*) we perceive our Being in time. These two aspects combined are what Gadamer denotes 'the existential moment'. Art deals with an inner subjective experience and an outer, objective (re)presentation. As such, art provides examples of the 'existential moment' grounded in, perhaps unique to, the particular time and place that produce them. Art provides a repository of the inner 'feelings' of the individuals involved which reflect the outer mood of the time itself. Through art works we can bring an extraordinary period to the fore, not as dry dates and factual events but as living testimony to the experiences of those involved, and with the power of a renewed emotional affect in the present. Peter Selz tells us 'the artists pointed at the symptoms, as artists often do. The civilization to which they belonged was not to last'<sup>841</sup>. The artists' discriminating glance recognises the *kairos*, the decisive point for intervention.

In this chapter then, we consider the existential moment, its relation to art, and the documents including works of art which describe the prevailing *zeitgeist*. We look at the decisiveness of such an epoch with its seemingly revolutionary upsurge in artistic movements and ideas. We note how the 'will to form' expresses the protagonist's relation to the world. We notice certain parallels in the development of abstract art in painting and expressionism in

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<sup>841</sup> Selz, Peter, *Beyond the Mainstream, Essays on Modern and Contemporary Art*, Cambridge University Press, Berkeley, 1997, p. 31

music, represented respectively by Wassily Kandinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. We elucidate the 'moment of inspiration' as found in Adorno's concept of *Einfall*. We revisit the idea of the authentic individual, now in the form of those who 'venture beyond' and ask what it is they venture beyond. We look at some attempts to represent the *Augenblick* in art works themselves and find out what it is about this venture that constitutes what Ernst Bloch refers to as 'the Faustian Moment of fulfilment'. Finally we will arrive at a 'resolution'.

Only in a discontinuous model of time as change can identifiable 'now' moments be endowed with any special meaning. If the *Augenblick* is empty as a portion of time; as the concept of a significant event, it is full. There is in fact a danger of giving the *Augenblick* too much fullness, of finding the *Augenblick* everywhere, and in everything '*augenblicklichkeit*'. However, we have pointed to certain of its elements: the part the resolute individual plays, the anticipation or apprehension of change, being prepared and yet unable to fully access the actual moment. The sense of urgency of the time and the primacy of the present are features of this particular period, when people are preoccupied with their own present moment. We have considered the *Augenblick* as a figurative expression: 'the blink of an eye', an image which represents an idea about how human being experiences its existence in the temporal world. The subjective individual experiences which result in the

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contemplation of this idea have also been given attention. The word *Augenblick* as a metaphor, a sign in a language, is a literary image, but we have extended it for consideration in relation to a visual image, that of the photograph. We now extend 'image' to include the visual image in art and in music and the subjective experiences which artists attempt to elucidate through their various media.

### **Documents of a *Zeitgeist*.**

What gets remembered and makes 'history', depends on what gets chosen and saved as documentary evidence<sup>842</sup>. The art of a period is document and evidence of the 'ambience of the period', the '*zeitgeist*'<sup>843</sup>, and 'a *zeitgeist* it seems, caused the most radical innovations in music and art just prior to World War I.'<sup>844</sup> The possible *loss* of documentary evidence of our existence concerns Jaspers, for whom the destruction of such evidence represents a loss of 'human continuity' which we wish to preserve with a 'passionate will'. The desire to 'save the phenomenality of being proper,

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<sup>842</sup> Things get left out which tell another story, such fragments come to occupy the attention of Benjamin as the 'dialectical image' and are found in his monumental *Arcades Project*.

<sup>843</sup> Selz, op cit, p. 4

<sup>844</sup> Ibid, p. 4

drives us to rescue its documents'<sup>845</sup>, he tells us. That is, the evidence of being, the 'that we are', so to speak. The assurance that we are, depends on the assurance of the 'that we were', the saving of evidence is also crucial to assure us as to the future, that we shall continue. Details of the past are often only partially or erroneously remembered. On the one hand, this distorts the 'story' of history while, on the other hand, it allows for reinterpretations and the emergence of new ideas. Jaspers' statement that 'some day, somewhere, somebody will do the worst that can be done'<sup>846</sup> suggests that the worst thing would be the total loss of existence and further of any evidence that we ever existed. 'There is no interpreting the ruin of oblivion', although Jaspers means this in relation to forgetting or losing the memories contained in 'documents', the mood of the time in which he spoke is one full of the possibility of impending total destruction. It is not only the loss of evidence of our factual existence which impels us to save its documents, but to preserve the evidence of our existential being. That we are and that we have been aware of and concerned with our very existence; that we strove to articulate a meaningful inner life. Loss of the works of art which evidence this striving are particularly poignant.

Along with loss there is the possibility of discrepancies in documentary

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<sup>845</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy III*, p. 204

<sup>846</sup> *Ibid*, p. 193

evidence, and although we rely on the documents of art to illustrate this epoch, we recognise as Herbert Read does, that 'It is a curious but well-known fact that contemporary records are often inconsistent, and even the artists sometimes contradict themselves in their recorded statements'<sup>847</sup>. However, in parallel with the statements of artists, we have their works and it is possible to imagine that in these resides the expression of existentiality in a form which we can 'read' or 'hear'. We can never fully access the immediate experience of the artist but only its echo, as individual subjective beings we interpret it according to our own inner experience.

The documents we retrieve in order to glimpse the events of the time are those that have been preserved according to a certain system of values as Gadamer maintains. In this chapter we rely on documents of the time preserved through such a system, choosing from amongst them to articulate our 'idea'. The factual evidence is necessary to determine the context which defines the prevailing historical situation, as Jaspers tells us. That this particular epoch comes to our attention as being so significant and memorable indicates that there is something in it of a 'boundary situation'. The boundary is, as Jaspers states, the very situation 'that we are in situations' and that we are 'historically defined' by context; the context of which we speak is the particular existential 'situation' of modernity. Jaspers'

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<sup>847</sup> Read, Herbert, *A Concise History of Modern Painting*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1965, Preface, p. 8

concern is with the spiritual nature of modernity. The English translation of his book: *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* (1931) which appeared in the same period as his *Philosophie, as 'Man in the Modern Age'* indicates Olson claims, an aversion to the idea of the spiritual in an age when its meaning is reduced to indicating something spectral. Jaspers' use of '*geist*' must be understood in light of its 'essential metaphysical nuances'<sup>848</sup>. The ambiguity of the meaning of this word *geist* is 'retained in Jaspers' 'modification of 'situation' by 'spiritual' in the title of this book'<sup>849</sup>, because it is essential to Jaspers' intention. As well as referring to 'factors having a bearing on the well-being of humanity', it also 'refers to the 'nameless unconditioned' which is the source and goal of transcendence and value, as experienced in a particular existential 'situation''<sup>850</sup>. The severing of the notion of 'value' from the transcendent and its confining to 'a utilitarian immanentism', Jaspers suggests, 'is the sure and certain recipe for disaster'<sup>851</sup>. So when we speak of *zeitgeist* it must involve the intellectual attitude and the metaphysical frame in which the epoch unfolds. In choosing the representative artists and

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<sup>848</sup> Olson, Alan, M., *Jaspers' Critique of Modernity*, op cit, p. 363

<sup>849</sup> Ibid, p. 364

<sup>850</sup> Ibid, p. 364

<sup>851</sup> Ibid, p. 364

documents from this period, we find attempts to bring the 'spiritual' to presence to be of primary concern. Artists attempt to reach the inner subjective experience of something 'eternal' or 'transcendent' in human being, to bring it to presence in an objective work in order to express and convey it to others.

For the purposes of this chapter then, we have chosen to concentrate on a 'select few' representatives who share a concern with elucidating a 'spiritual' aspect of human being through the medium of art. Indeed in some cases art itself is thought to embody the 'spiritual'. In such an epoch, permeated with possible 'sightings' of the *Augenblick*, we must choose which examples to use for our present purpose and which to hold in reserve. We must choose individual practitioners from a complex web of connections and changing 'constellations'. Various 'movements' flourish and fade with increasing rapidity. The individuals of the epoch we have singled out are closely interrelated, the parallels of developments in thinking and in art are striking. We will focus on the music of Arnold Schoenberg, the painting of Wassily Kandinsky; and the theories of Theodor Adorno in relation to the atonal technique of Schoenberg. We will explore Bloch's expressionistic elaborations on the moment of fulfilment with its overtones of a Faustian pact; and consider the antics of Dada. Their works are not distanced regards, but a heartfelt attempt at an engagement with an inner experience which

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seeks its correlation in an objective work. Even Adorno writing on the phenomenon of Schoenberg's music, does so in reaction to his actual experience of the music. This is also the case with Kandinsky, who sees his own feelings and objectives echoed in the sounds of Schoenberg's music.

### **A Decisive Epoch.**

Discontinuity and radical change rather than continuity and flow define this particular period between the wars. Rüdiger Safranski quotes the view of Oswald Spengler in *Man and Technics*: 'world history proceeds from catastrophe to catastrophe ... as abruptly as a flash of lightning or an earthquake'. We must, Spengler says, 'emancipate ourselves from the nineteenth century idea .. of an *evolutionary* process'<sup>852</sup>. 'History is a volcanic crater: it does not occur, it erupts. That is why one has to be swiftly and meaningfully present before one is buried'. Safranski suggests, one must be prepared for the eruption in which 'the decisive'<sup>853</sup> takes place. A person loving the moment must not be too worried about his safety. Dangerous moments call for adventurous hearts'<sup>854</sup>. Life at this time is staid and

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<sup>852</sup> Safranski, *Between Good and Evil*, op cit, p. 174

<sup>853</sup> Ibid, p. 174

<sup>854</sup> Ibid, p. 174



mechanised, one of 'utility', full of trained minds but empty hearts. Max Weber speaks against the 'steel capsule of modern 'rationalized' civilization'<sup>855</sup>, which rob human being of the ability to make its own value judgments and decisions and leaves no answer to the meaning of one's life.

Safranski refers to the sudden discontinuity caused by radical change, as an 'epochal caesura'<sup>856</sup>. With 'the collapse of yesterday's world in a world war,' the ground was shaking and a new beginning had to be made. A new beginning comes at the height of, or the culmination point of modernism. This 'realises itself', Marshall Berman tells us, in 'cubist painting, collage and montage, the cinema, the stream of consciousness in the novel, the free verse of Eliot and Pound and Apollinaire, futurism, vorticism, constructivism'. We might add to these 'isms': Purism, Orphism, Suprematism, Expressionism, the earlier Fauvism and the later Minimalism. Berman continues: 'dada, poems that accelerate like cars, paintings that explode like bombs'<sup>857</sup>. At this time a rich overlap in and cross-fertilisation of ideas can be identified. Many artists are working in more than one discipline with the same aims and coming to the same conclusions. Modernism comes to fullness in a

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<sup>855</sup> Weber in Safranski, p. 89

<sup>856</sup> Ibid, p. 149

<sup>857</sup> Berman, Marshall, *All That is Solid Melts into Air, The Experience of Modernity*, Verso, London, New York, 1982/3, p. 145

conjunction of events and those who experience and seek to elucidate both the events and themselves within them. Berman manages to give the impression of this conjunction as a centrifuge, drawing the past into its centre and spinning out again toward the future.

Thomas Harrison recognises the year of 1910 as pivotal to this period. Taking Arnold Schoenberg's famous phrase as his title he points to dissonance as the central motif and mood of this disturbed time. In extending the use of Schoenberg's exhortation in this way, as an analogy for the time we can understand dissonance as the alienation of the individual from the world which has become increasingly harder to understand, less close and more uncanny. People are also physically/geographically displaced and exiled. Distance and unresolvedness are apt motifs for this period, keeping things in the air, maintaining tension while so much changes. 'Halley's comet shatters the peace of Europe's skies. As tends to happen at such moments of cosmic disturbance, the event evokes deep-seated anxieties, articulated in newspaper editorials on doom and degeneration. For each collective concern there are thousands of personal ones'<sup>858</sup>; cases of loss of 'some life-sustaining faith' leading to desperate acts. Suicide is so rife that Harrison

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<sup>858</sup> Harrison, Thomas, *1910: The Emancipation of the Dissonance*, University of California Press, 1996, p. 2

asks whether there is an ‘idea’ at work in these deaths?’<sup>859</sup> .

Researchers at the time come to the conclusion that ‘personal behaviour is always a function of larger, communal patterns’<sup>860</sup>. This mood, ‘this knowledge or perception’, Harrison tells us is called ‘nihilism in philosophy and expressionism in the arts. It comprises a vision of history as nightmare, an obsession with mortality and decay, a sense of human marginalisation from the autonomous developments of culture, and the responses they spur’<sup>861</sup>. Peter Selz, recognises that certain Expressionist works reflect a firm belief in the ‘final release and absolution of all things, whether they please or torment’ like the novels by his contemporary Thomas Mann. Mann’s work, Selz tells us, is proof that ‘a work of art, even if it is one of despair, can ultimately only be interpreted as a belief in life’<sup>862</sup>. Despite this view, many of the protagonists, Harrison tells us, died young sometimes by suicide and ‘had as precarious a grasp on their intentions as the age on its course.’ Whether they realise their intentions in works of art, literature or music, whether those intentions are in fact realisable, in a sense, Harrison

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<sup>859</sup> Ibid, p. 2

<sup>860</sup> Ibid, p. 2

<sup>861</sup> Ibid, p. 3

<sup>862</sup> Thomas Mann in K. Kerényi, *Gespräche in Briefen*. Letter of 1 January 1947 (Zurich: Rhein Verlag, 1960), p. 146 in Selz, op cit, p.4

says, 'the real act of completion lies in the suicide itself'. Harrison quotes Gottfried Benn: '1910, that is indeed the year when all the scaffolds began to crack'<sup>863</sup>.

Some of the plethora of movements which come and go produce journals, certain of which survive to give us the documents from which we can, to some extent, interpret the period. Founded in 1910, the weekly periodical *Der Sturm*, 'became the catalyst of the modern movement and the focal point of Expressionism'. This itself is a term *Der Sturm's* founder Herwarth Walden made popular 'as the appellation of the new art which it was to champion', in response Selz tells us 'to the pulsations of a remarkable age'<sup>864</sup>. In 1911 *Der Sturm* published the art historian Wilhelm Worringer's seminal essay *Abstraction and Empathy* in which Worringer maintained that 'Expressionism was an historical necessity of the time, one by which the artist, rejecting merely rational forms, seeks a return to the irrational abstraction of primitive and elemental forms'. In a later work, Worringer tells us that the 'metaphysical anxiety'<sup>865</sup> 'of the Gothic soul finds its outlet in art. Herbert Read tells us that in Worringer, 'for the first time a will to abstraction

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<sup>863</sup> Gottfried Benn in Harrison, op cit, p.1

<sup>864</sup> Ibid, pp. 43-4

<sup>865</sup> Worringer, *Formprobleme der Gothik*, 1912, quoted in Read, op cit, pp. 218-9

in art was postulated as a recurrent historical phenomenon.

'Worringer's argument, ... would serve as a description not only of the artistic movements that were to develop in Munich from 1912 onwards, but generally of the development of Expressionism throughout Europe and America in our century. It would not be difficult to find the parallels in literature (in the prose style of Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*; in Bert Brecht's plays and in the verse forms of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Boris Pasternak); and even contemporary architecture (in Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and Luigi Nervi) exhibits the same restless linear activity and refined construction'<sup>866</sup>.

Bertolt Brecht's practise of an 'alienation technique' is seen by Safranski as analogous to the terminology of Heidegger, 'because what is being examined here is 'not a strange and unfamiliar matter, but on the contrary the nearest, which is perhaps precisely why it leads us astray into mistakes'<sup>867</sup>.

The year 1910 also marks the inception of the *Blaue Reiter* almanac produced by Kandinsky and Franz Marc. Kandinsky showed Schoenberg's self-portraits in the first *Blaue Reiter* exhibition in that year. In 1912, Walden exhibited Kandinsky's work of 1901 to 1912 and thus 'showed the origins of non-objective painting' stimulating Guillaume Apollinaire to begin his own experiments with 'the elimination of subject-matter.'<sup>868</sup> Schoenberg's *Theory*

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<sup>866</sup> Read, p. 220

<sup>867</sup> Safranski, *Between Good and Evil*, op cit, p. 155

<sup>868</sup> *Ibid*, p.47

of *Harmony* and Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art* appear shortly after one another in 1911; both are 'completed before the exchange of ideas between the authors began'<sup>869</sup>. Simultaneous with Kandinsky's discoveries regarding non-objective painting Schoenberg, from within the intellectual and artistic life of conservative Vienna is exploring atonal music.

The *Blaue Reiter* was represented at the first German Autumn Salon of 1913, the 'climax of Waldren's activities'<sup>870</sup>. Marc's 'guiding idea for the selection and hanging of the pictures was at all times to show the extraordinary spiritual engagement and energy' of the work, an impression which he is sure, 'is designated for the soul'. It is Marc's belief 'that a person who loves his time and is in search for its spiritual meaning, will go through the exhibition with a pounding heart and find it filled with good surprises'<sup>871</sup>.

In Zurich, in neutral Switzerland, an 'exceptional conjunction of

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<sup>869</sup> Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky, *Letters, Pictures and Documents*, Editor: Jelena Hahl-Koch, Translator: John C. Crawford, Faber and Faber, London, 1984 p. 144

<sup>870</sup> Which also include his becoming a 'clamorous spokesman' for Futurism. In 1912 *Der Sturm* carries Marinetti's Futurist manifesto, 'which frantically denounced tradition and extolled the virtues of racing cars, militarism, war, and a violent - if nebulous - future.'

<sup>871</sup> Franz Marc, *Letter to Kandinsky*, September 30, 1913, quoted in Selz, op cit, p.48. In this exhibition Marc himself shows his now lost masterpiece, *Tower of the Blue Horses*, 'and his stunning premonitions of the approaching war in which he himself was to die: *The Fate of the Animals and Tirol*.'

circumstances' and 'an international constellation of artists'<sup>872</sup> occurred. The city was a centre for expatriates, refugees from Central and Eastern Europe, of 'many different persuasions'<sup>873</sup>. Here were Russian Socialists and revolutionaries, (including Lenin), pacifist German expressionists, Hungarians, Roumanians notably Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janko. There was the Alsatian visual artist Hans Arp from Strasbourg who was also connected with Kandinsky and the *Blaue Reiter*. Hugo Ball whose interests were mostly literature and theatre, arrived from Germany, and later Richard Huelsenbeck, also a poet. Membership of these groups of artists and intellectuals was to an extent interchangeable. The dadaists were a more or less 'coherent' group although Ball, in his *Dada Diary, Flight out of Time (Flucht aus der Zeit)*, says they were never 'in complete or simultaneous agreement, ... The constellations change'<sup>874</sup>, and they were not isolated from interactions between others groups with whom they shared an attitude of anti-tradition.

In 1912 the philosopher Ernst Bloch met 'the anarchist' Ball finding

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<sup>872</sup> Dachy, Marc, *The DADA Movement*, Skira, Geneva, 1996, p. 7

<sup>873</sup> John Elderfield, Preface to Hugo Ball's *Flight out of Time (Flucht aus der Zeit)*, , University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1974/96. See also Gascoyne in *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, , Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., London, 1970, p. 25

<sup>874</sup> Ball, pp. xxii

him 'both enthusiastic and anxious'<sup>875</sup>. Bloch himself, Vincent Geoghegan tells us, made his 'discovery' in 1907, at the age of 22, of the category 'Not-Yet' (*Noch-Nich*), which forms the foundation of his work. Bloch referred to it as 'the origin' of his philosophy.<sup>876</sup> Bloch's 'phenomenology of the darkness of the lived moment was a major theme of his early utopian philosophy' and reappeared in his later work 'as support for Bloch's claim that the world as 'process' contains 'concrete utopia'<sup>877</sup>. Bloch, Geoghegan explains, 'develops a whole armoury of concepts to encompass the utopian moment of fulfilment - *Ultimum, Totum, the Upright gait*'<sup>878</sup>. Interestingly, in regard to the web of relationships with which we are concerned, Bloch later meets Theodor Adorno who speaks of 'the great Blochean music'. Later still, somewhat incongruously, as refugees from Hitler's Germany, Adorno, Schoenberg and Thomas Mann 'lived within a few miles of each other just outside Hollywood'<sup>879</sup>. From there the three explored in their various works, 'the

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<sup>875</sup> Vincent Geoghegan; *Ernst Bloch*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996, p.14

<sup>876</sup> *Ibid*, p.15

<sup>877</sup> *Ibid*, p. 96

<sup>878</sup> *Ibid*, p.4

<sup>879</sup> James Schmidt, in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, editor: Tom Huhn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 148



intertwining of enlightenment and myth, reason and barbarism, civilization and cruelty' in response to 'the diabolical force that had driven their creators into exile'. Our protagonists are timely, they recognise the moment, and in Benjamin's words 'the Now of recognizability is the moment of awakening'<sup>880</sup>

### **An 'Epochal Consciousness' and the 'Will to Form'.**

Jaspers refers to the 'few who knew themselves to be the true representatives of their age'<sup>881</sup> as an 'epochal consciousness'. He points out, Olson tells us, that within an 'epochal consciousness' 'there is always the tendency to view one's own epoch as 'final' even though 'we know there are new epochs to unfold'. 'Thus the natural psychological predilection of 'modern man'' is 'to a 'realized eschatology or immanentalism'. We assume that in future the patterns recognised in the present will come to 'completion'<sup>882</sup>. This in itself then is an inherited pattern of thinking. Ernst Bloch urged that we should make such a pattern 'think against itself' at a time

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<sup>880</sup> Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, Translators: Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, The Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 2004, p. 486

<sup>881</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Man in the Modern Age*, Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1957, p. 6

<sup>882</sup> Olson, op cit, p. 365

when we perceive in it 'a limitation' and when 'no alternative is available'<sup>883</sup>. In this way the historical consciousness comes to be expressed in new works. According to Kandinsky, 'each period of culture produces an art of its own which can never be repeated'<sup>884</sup>. It must 'spring from contemporary feeling' and not only be the 'echo and mirror of it, but also has a deep and powerful prophetic strength'<sup>885</sup>. We break the patterns of the past with new ideas, and consequently change the view toward the future.

Those of an 'epochal consciousness' are driven to articulate this decisive epoch, which constitutes their general historical 'boundary situation' as well as the individual specific situations which they suffer (the 'wall upon which they founder'). Amongst them are philosophers and artists who each find their own method of expression of the situation, their 'praxis', the necessary action over contemplation. We might extend Jaspers' reference to philosophy as 'a practice' which only becomes real 'in the living appropriation' of the contents of philosophical texts, never in an indifferent 'theoretical contemplation', to the practice of art. Only in this way can their contents have a 'resurrection', and be appropriated in a variation fitted to its time and

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<sup>883</sup> Hudson, op cit, p. 68

<sup>884</sup> Kandinsky, Wassily, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1977, p.1

<sup>885</sup> Ibid, p. 4

to the individual practitioner. Art can be seen as a repository of a *zeitgeist* which can be vicariously experienced by us in our present time. Adorno tells us that the 'anxiety of the lonely person' in their alienation from society is a gesture which can be quoted: 'the Expressionist reveals loneliness as universal'<sup>886</sup>. In Expressionism, 'anxiety has emancipated itself from the bourgeois taboos on expression'<sup>887</sup>. The content of Expressionism however, is not only the 'absolute subject' but society itself is also reflected in the isolation of the Expressionist movement'. We have mentioned the work of Thomas Mann, and in Mann's novel *Magic Mountain*, we find the character of Hans Castorp in the rarified atmosphere of a mountain sanatorium. He sits apart from the war raging in the world down below; perhaps reflecting a more general wish to be 'out of it', Mann himself describes *Magic Mountain* as a '*nunc stans*'<sup>888</sup>.

The marked mood of 'anxiety' or 'dissonance' of the time, is reflected in the personal conflicts of individuals; the existential moods reflected in the very mood of the time. In *Dada Diary*, Ball speaks of his tendency 'to

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<sup>886</sup> Adorno, Theodor, W., *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Translated by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Bloomster, Sheed and Ward, 1973, p.47

<sup>887</sup> Ibid, p. 48

<sup>888</sup> Mann, Thomas, *The Magic Mountain*, Translator: H. T. Lowe-Porter, Nationwide Book Service, England, 1979, from the postscript by the author on The Making of the Novel, p. 725

compare my own private experiences with the nation's'. He sees it, he says, 'almost as a matter of conscience to perceive a certain parallel there', Ball asserts that he 'could not live without the conviction that my own personal fate is an abbreviated version of the fate of the whole nation'<sup>889</sup>. Robert Hullot-Kentor describes Schoenberg's break from tonality in music as achieving 'a depositional expression, a docket of the historical unconscious that registered impulses of isolation, shock, and collapse'<sup>890</sup>. It is in this way that Jaspers 'speaks as one situated *zwischen den Zeiten*'<sup>891</sup>, that is, situated *in amongst* the times; 'remembering the classical European civilization that was no more ... scrutinizing the various utopian dogmatisms identified with modernity', and 'pondering the new world of apparatus and technology coming into being but the meaning of which was still unclear.'<sup>892</sup> Upheaval so severe produces changes too great to assimilate without struggle.

Adorno considered that 'art becomes the unconscious writing of history'<sup>893</sup> and uses changes in music as an analogy for the economic and

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<sup>889</sup> Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, op cit, p. 30

<sup>890</sup> Hullot-Kentor, Robert, *The Philosophy of Dissonance: Adorno and Schoenberg*, editor: Tom Huhn, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 317

<sup>891</sup> Olson, op cit, p. 368

<sup>892</sup> Ibid, p. 368

<sup>893</sup> Hullot-Kentor, op cit, p. 313

cultural crisis in society at the time. To Adorno, Schoenberg especially articulates modernity in crisis<sup>894</sup>. The 'chaotic fermentation in music', he says, 'the resolution of which is nevertheless expected to 'restore order to disorder' in some 'future renewal' is a denial of 'events of the past and elements that can be suppressed, but not eradicated'<sup>895</sup>. The 'objective consequences' of music, Adorno asserts, have made the idea of a polished work of art invalid and 'disrupted the collective continuity of the effect' of art. Musical material is permeated by 'traces' of the social process and there is an altercation between the composer and the material which is the same as that between the composer and society. It finds its expression in his work, not least in the disturbances it causes to the fabric of a work. For music to be 'timely' it must fulfil its function<sup>896</sup>. Accordingly Schoenberg's music is 'timely', it mirrors the conditions of the times which produce it through Schoenberg.

The uncertainties of the era lead to an anguish which is 'released through and reflected in the art'<sup>897</sup>, Charles Rosen tells us. Given that, it is

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<sup>894</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, Editor: Tom Huhn, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004

<sup>895</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music* cit, p. 29

<sup>896</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34

<sup>897</sup> Rosen, Charles, *Schoenberg*, Fontana/Collins, Glasgow, 1976, p. 22

fitting that Schoenberg should be working on a style of music that maintains the dissonant tension of this time. In 1936 Schoenberg made this retrospective comment which recognises that the times themselves were partly responsible for the way his music developed: 'Supposing times were normal - normal as they were before 1914 - then the music of our times would be in a different situation'<sup>898</sup>. Not identifiable until they are passed, possibilities exist which are unimaginable. Here again we find the idea that the moment is only recognisable when it has already passed. As Kierkegaard says in the *Journals*, 'Life can be interpreted only after it has been experienced'<sup>899</sup>. Perceived as a sudden and unexpected rupture in the continuity of musical progression, Schoenberg's form can still be seen as naturally following on from the works which preceded it. Rosen says: 'To a certain extent the stylistic revolutions of those years were merely the exploitation of already existent possibilities within the artistic languages, the drawing of unavoidable conclusions'<sup>900</sup>.

### **Revolution or Evolution.**

The emergence of 'new' art forms or works is perhaps an evolution

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<sup>898</sup> Rosen, op cit, p. 10

<sup>899</sup> Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*, op cit, p. 449

<sup>900</sup> Rosen, op cit, p.16

rather than a revolution. What appears as a revolution from a distant perspective might indeed be an evolution whose connections are more distant. Schoenberg himself tells us in relation to dissonant or 'atonal' music that 'a new approach to expression of moods and characters was discovered' which 'many people, instead of realising its evolutionary element, called (it) a revolution'<sup>901</sup>. We might think of the coming into being of a work as an 'emergence' which suggests something which grows organically in a natural process. Our protagonists stress this natural and organic vector of their art even as it appears in some cases most unnatural and 'constructed'. We might say that an art movement 'erupts' into being, it comes unexpectedly and suddenly yet from out of where it has been in immanence, biding its time.

In the case of Kandinsky and Schoenberg, their work up to a certain point constitutes an 'artistic revolution'; but it is also important to realise that they both retain traditional forms as their departure points. The new emerges from the dissolution of the old, the old and the new confront one another yet work together; traditional methods and forms are retained - although Schoenberg rejects the harmonic tradition, he is conservative in this regard. While working with atonality and dissonance, he composes in the traditional styles of chamber music, opera and oratorio. Kandinsky, while developing

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<sup>901</sup> Schoenberg, *Style and Idea, Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, Editor: Leonard Stein, Faber and Faber, London, 1975, p. 50

abstraction, still makes pictures in oil or water-colour and produces drawings and woodcuts. The Dadaists, who left few art works compared to the level of their notoriety, might stand as a different example, most of what they did happened there and then in the momentary performances at the *Cabaret Voltaire*. Dada 'erupts' into being there in Zurich, in 1916, founded by Hugo Ball in the middle of the First World War. Serge Lemoine asserts it is 'born out of the war itself' as a 'direct consequence'<sup>902</sup>. After the war there are also Dada occurrences in other cities in Germany: Berlin, Hanover and Cologne, followed by those in Paris and in New York, but the *event* of Dada is dated from this public manifestation at the *Cabaret Voltaire*. These events bring together a like-minded group of people to express their revulsion against the war by means of 'anti-artistic events'<sup>903</sup>.

The desire for destruction which gives birth to the new 'precipitated Ball into the Dada cultural frenzy'<sup>904</sup>. He declares, 'The central clock of an abstract epoch has exploded'<sup>905</sup>, and that 'Dadaism is the only training ground

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<sup>902</sup> *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, New York, 1966, 1978, in Lemoine, Serge, *DADA*, Translator: Charles Lynn Clark, Hazan, Paris, 1987, p. 5

<sup>903</sup> Lemoine, op cit, p. 11

<sup>904</sup> Safranski, *Beyond Good and Evil*, op cit p. 173

<sup>905</sup> Ball in Safranski, *Ibid*, p. 173



for the great moment that would make everything new'<sup>906</sup>. Dada succeeds in being sacrilegious, subversive and outrageous. 'And then came the dadaists, endowed with the acuteness of sleep-walking alcoholics, to attack the arts, that last refuge of idealism. ...' "the most sacred possessions', of which the Kaiser had spoken ... were being desecrated, drugged and poisoned. The ideal of beauty was brought up against life, ugly life, earth, being, even not-being'<sup>907</sup>.

Artists and philosophers question the world, the most obvious appearances will never satisfy. Dada seems to originate in chance, accident and arbitrariness. The Dadaist Hans Arp comments on the intense moment of Zurich Dada and is the first of the Dadaists to proclaim *das Gesetz des Zufalls*, the laws of accident as a new basis for artistic creation. He describes his work as 'ordered according to the law of the accident, the accident which, ... is but an element of the inexplicable reason, the incomprehensible order by which nature herself is governed'<sup>908</sup>. The very establishing of the name 'Dada' happens by a famous

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<sup>906</sup> Ball, op cit, p.108

<sup>907</sup> Richard Huelsenbeck: *DADA and Existentialism*, in *DADA, Monograph of a Movement*, editor: Willy Verkauf, (co-editors; Marcel Janco, Hans Bollinger), Academy Editions, St. Martin's Press, New York, London, 1975, p. 34

<sup>908</sup> Arp, Hans, *Our Daily Dream, Journal 1914-54*, in *Three Painter Poets, Arp/Schwitters/Klee*,

though contended method of arbitrarily choosing a word at random from a dictionary. Tristan Tzara asserts the spirit of Dada, however, is undermined by the retrospective arguments as to dates and details, 'What interests us is the dada spirit, and we were all dada before Dada began ...'<sup>909</sup> Dada turns out to have even longer roots. A group of painters, illustrators, writers and musicians called the *Incohérents*, in Paris in 1882 aim to 'ridicule all forms of artistic expression as well as the institutions of their day'<sup>910</sup> . They are known to the Zurich Dadaists, as evidenced by a poster in the Cabaret Voltaire.

In a sense it is 'the fate of modern art' to be the place or time when art is transformed. There is a sense of necessity and inevitability of the change and of those who bring it about - indeed Schoenberg almost proclaims himself to be necessary: 'In the army, a superior officer once said to me: 'So you are this notorious Schoenberg, then.' 'Beg to report, sir, yes, ' I replied. 'Nobody wanted to be, someone had to be, so I let it be me.'<sup>911</sup> Adorno, however, compares him to the elect who refuse their mission.

'Throughout these decades, art moved fundamentally against fiction,

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*Selected Poems*, op cit, pp. 11-12

<sup>909</sup> Hans Arp quoted in Gascoyne, David, *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., London, 1970, p. 23

<sup>910</sup> Lemoine, op cit, 1987, p. 98

<sup>911</sup> Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, op cit, p. 104

against portraying or representing the world, and toward essence.<sup>912</sup> In search of an 'elemental origin'<sup>913</sup> of art. Kandinsky's theory of non-objective art seeks the moment of dissolution of the objective/subjective dichotomy and constitutes 'a revolution that is still felt today'<sup>914</sup>. 'Does not the dissolution of the portrayed object correspond to the dissolution of traditional tonality in music?' asks Jelena Hahl-Koch, 'does not the emancipation of colors and forms ... correspond to the emancipation of dissonance? And do not both correspond to the dissolution of grammar and syntax which began about the same time, as for example with the German Expressionists, with the ... Russian Futurists, on up to dadaism and concrete poetry?'<sup>915</sup>. Adorno shows that Schoenberg does this in the medium of music, with the dissolution of the 'grammar' of music in dissonance. The impetus for the work of art is the desire for the dialectic of the antithetical elements of inner content and outer form, or the spiritual and material to reach a synthesis.

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<sup>912</sup> Hullot-Kentor, op cit, p. 317

<sup>913</sup> Jelena Hahl-Koch, op cit, p. 142

<sup>914</sup> Stratton in preface to Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, , Dover Books, Inc., New York, 1977, p. viii

<sup>915</sup> Jelena Hahl-Koch, op cit, p. 142

## **Adorno's *Einfall*.**

In artistic creation the initial words, images or notes come to mind and are transferred to paper. This first act of creation is often seemingly simultaneous with the idea or the initiating notion, its 'inspiration'. Theodor Adorno has a term for this: *Einfall*. This refers not only to the subjective moment of inspiration but contains also the objectivising moment. The word can also mean 'invasion', which gives a graphic description of the experience of having an idea suddenly occur as if from nowhere, and be so impelling that it is impossible to ignore. The verb, *einfallen* carries the meaning 'to collapse', and here we might recall Kierkegaard's sensation of being confronted by notions which he trembles before, that seem alien and in which 'he could not recognise himself'. But when the understanding surrenders and gives itself to the idea, one reaches 'that happy passion' which is faith. The invasion of thought is not always welcome, but it is still impelling: it is 'a sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy'<sup>916</sup>. This double action is not mediated but immediate, it is 'the wonder', a revelation. Schoenberg's stages by which he creates a musical composition<sup>917</sup> and Kandinsky's

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<sup>916</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p. 42

<sup>917</sup> Outlined in Schoenberg, *Self-Analysis, an answer to a questionnaire by Julius Bahle*, op cit, p.

sources of a 'symphonic composition'<sup>918</sup>, share a first 'moment' of direct 'impression' or 'inspiration' which comes from an 'inner compulsion'. This is followed by the composition or construction as a matter of the artist's skills, gaining a more substantial existence as a concrete entity, but which yet remains faithful to the initial urge.

Our theme of the impossibility of language to express inner thoughts and feelings, the *aporias* inherent in translation must be brought to attention again when we consider the moment of inspiration for a work of art.

Adorno's concept of *Einfall*, is found in a footnote within his chapter *Schoenberg and Progress in Philosophy of Modern Music* (1948). It is, the translators tell us, 'impossible to translate', but 'it involves the idea of a decisive inspirational occurrence bordering upon revelation which becomes the basis for a work of art.'<sup>919</sup> But there are two inseparable aspects of the *Einfall* involving both the subjective inspirational moment and the resulting objective elements which make up a work of art.

The concept of *Einfall*, Adorno tells us 'was defined in order to distinguish the theme as a matter of organic essence from its creative transformation in the work as a matter of abstract, hypothetical ordering. '*Einfall*' is not just a psychological category, a matter of 'inspiration', but a

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<sup>918</sup> Outlined in Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, op cit, p. 57

<sup>919</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, Translators' note, pp. 73-4

moment in the dialectical process manifest in musical form.<sup>920</sup> This 'moment in the dialectical process' refers to that stage in the process of development of the piece of music which follows from the initial 'inner' impetus. The next stage is a translation of this impulse into music in a natural and not too 'conscious' way to begin with; this becomes more a 'conscious' effort to render into form the idea as the process goes on.

Schoenberg professed to be against form, even though his atonal scheme is itself a form to which he must keep, like the logical development of an argument. The 'idea' he says is preeminent over style. In *Prisms*, Adorno explains: 'Both practically and theoretically he steadfastly rejected the notion of 'style', in the sense of a category existing prior to the subject-matter and oriented on external consensus; instead he spoke of the 'idea', meaning the pure elaboration of musical thoughts.'<sup>921</sup> Leonard Stein, the translator of Schoenberg's *Style and Idea*, outlines in his preface the difficulties inherent in translating these terms 'style' and 'idea'. 'Perhaps the central among all his ideas', Stein tells us 'is that of *Darstellung der Gedanken*'. '*Gedanken*', he says 'is easy enough' to translate as 'ideas', but '*Darstellung*' depends on what an 'idea' is. According to the context, it can refer either to 'something one puts forward, expounds, 'presents' (*darstellt*), like a plan or a

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<sup>920</sup> Ibid, p. 74

<sup>921</sup> Adorno, *Prisms*, Neville Spearman, London, 1967, p. 153

proposition', or 'something like a stage character whom (in sound) one acts, depicts, 'represents' (*darstellt*). The idea is arrived at by *Erkenntnis* - another crucial and problematic concept' for Schoenberg it 'represents something akin to intuition or insight ... or 'realisation'<sup>922</sup>.

Although this subjective moment works 'as a driving force'<sup>923</sup>, the 'working out' represents 'the process of objectivity and the process of becoming'. This adherence to the 'idea', however, can leave irrevocable 'scars' or 'blotches' on the work, Adorno asserts. Here, we will remember the adverse effect on the polished work which Adorno attributes to the anguish of the times. Adorno tells us that Schoenberg's problem 'is that of mastering the contradiction between essence and appearance'<sup>924</sup> .

'Richness and plenitude are to be made the essence, not mere ornament; the essence, in turn, will appear no longer as the rigid framework on which the music is draped but rather as concrete and evident in its most subtle traits. What he designates as the 'subcutaneous' - the fabric of individual musical events, grasped as the ineluctable moments of an internally coherent totality - breaks through the surface, becomes visible and manifests itself independently of all stereotyped forms'<sup>925</sup>.

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<sup>922</sup> Leonard Stein, Translators' Introduction, Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, op cit, p. 18

<sup>923</sup> Adorno, *Prisms*, op cit, p. 153

<sup>924</sup> Ibid, p. 153

<sup>925</sup> Ibid, p. 153

And thus the inward dimension moves outward. 'Ordering categories, which reduce the difficulties of active listening at the cost of the pure elaboration of the work, are eliminated. The absence of all mediations introduced into the work from outside makes the musical progression seem fragmented and abrupt ... with the impression increasing in direct proportion to the actual degree of inner organization.'<sup>926</sup>

Schoenberg's innovations in form, Adorno tells us, 'serve the breakthrough of the reality of this content'<sup>927</sup>. This breakthrough does not happen, however, without leaving 'scars' and 'blotches' on the work, Adorno asserts, whether in Schoenberg's painting or music. Irremovable, these blotches 'destroy the surface', but the 'authentic suffering' indicates that the 'autonomy of the work is no longer recognised by this suffering'<sup>928</sup>. The work loses its autonomy as a work of art because it has become, as it were, a vehicle of the suffering. Schoenberg's pieces as 'case studies and construction in one' have no conventional structure from within which 'a freedom of play' is allowed. Schoenberg rejects play as he rejects illusion,

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<sup>926</sup> Ibid, p. 153

<sup>927</sup> Adorno refers to Schoenberg's compositions in a Freudian psychoanalytic term: 'case studies', presumably implying that they can be deciphered to reveal the originating feeling as psychoanalysis analyses 'dream case studies'.

<sup>928</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, op cit, p. 39



decoration and everything superfluous.

Adorno compares Schoenberg's technique to an attempt in writing which might try to use a different grammar and vocabulary for each individual piece. Schoenberg attempts to express inner meaning through the very fabric of the music. The phenomenon of the 'shrinking and expansion in time'<sup>929</sup> in music is symptomatic of the difficulties of these technical restrictions, Adorno asserts, and are 'evident not only in reflection' on a work 'but in the dark interior of the work itself'. Schoenberg's works exhibit 'concentration and consistency of formal structure', the brevity of his (and his pupil Webern's) 'shortest movements' is a 'direct result of the demand for the greatest consistency'. It 'precludes the superfluous', the ornamental and 'opposes expansion in time' which has been the 'basis for conceptual work since the 18th century'.<sup>930</sup> 'Music, compressed into a moment, is valid as an eruptive revelation of negative experience. It is closely related to actual suffering'<sup>931</sup>. The moment in terms of condensed time is found represented in 'The monodrama *Erwartung*', Adorno notes, 'which develops the eternity of the second in four hundred bars', and the notion of a moment too swift to register in time is found in 'the rapidly revolving pictures of *Die glückliche Hand*,

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<sup>929</sup> Ibid, p. 37

<sup>930</sup> Ibid, p. 37

<sup>931</sup> Ibid, p. 37

which takes back a life unto itself before it has a chance to find its place in time.’<sup>932</sup>

As Nietzsche pointed out, Adorno tells us, ‘the essence of the great work of art lies in the fact that it might be totally different in any of its given moments.’<sup>933</sup> Within the play of forms lies the possibility of change in every moment. There is the possibility of new ideas emerging in every moment, but also, if a work of art is to endure it must be able to communicate something relevant in each new and changing situation. ‘The definition of a work of art in terms of its own freedom assures that conventions are binding’. Nietzsche takes a positive position toward aesthetic conventions, but, Adorno tells us this ‘is consistent with this possibility of constant change and his highest wisdom is the ironic play with forms whose substantiality has diminished’<sup>934</sup>. The denial of possible change inherent in Schoenberg’s work restricts its meaning to the standing moment and robs it of the powerful and enduring aspect of art - that it can change its meaning or rather it can reveal the world anew. That the interpretation of a work of art can always vary is what makes it enduring.

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<sup>932</sup> Ibid, p. 30

<sup>933</sup> Ibid, p. 40

<sup>934</sup> Ibid, p. 40

By this reasoning, it is a form of 'barbarism' to flout convention, there is even something, Adorno asserts which is 'childish' about it, we might even say retrogressive: 'Progress itself in its passionate protest against conventions has something of the child - a retrogressive tendency'<sup>935</sup>. It is the barbaric nature or 'primitivism' of Schoenberg's early atonal compositions rather than 'their complexity', Adorno says, especially the *Piano Pieces* (which so appealed to Kandinsky) which shocked the audience. Schoenberg breaks the 'taboos of form'<sup>936</sup>, to present the passions, not in a stylised form or 'image' of them but more immediately without disguise through the medium of music'. His desire is to bridge the [impossible] gap between the subjective experience and its objective expression. These aims bring about a 'moment' when there is a 'breakthrough' of a new style of art and hence underline again this 'time' as the decisive moment's moment.

### **Figures of Venturing Beyond.**

We might consider that what Schoenberg has done in his work is to venture beyond certain limits. Ernst Bloch in the *Principle of Hope III* describes those who venture 'beyond the limits'<sup>937</sup>. His main examples are

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<sup>935</sup> Ibid, footnote pp. 40-1

<sup>936</sup> Ibid, pp. 38-9

<sup>937</sup> Bloch, *The Principle of Hope Vol III*, op cit, p. 1000

Don Giovanni and Faust whose predecessors include Shakespeare and Goethe. In their 'performances', he tells us, they 'gazed at life colossally in the poetic magnifying mirror', all 'the sleeping giants' of their inner life 'rose up', in a procession of 'heroes'<sup>938</sup>. These 'heroes', 'poor devils and great men amongst them', Bloch goes on, all act as if they were 'the tinderbox of the Hans Christian Anderson story' which held the means to fulfil their 'every wish'<sup>939</sup>. They 'all venture beyond what is apportioned to them, flare up like fire'<sup>940</sup>. The desire to be different can only be maintained throughout life by those sufficiently 'insatiable' and restless. But because this very thing they seek 'is not there, such unrestrained characters do not turn back'<sup>941</sup>. The dandy and the *flâneur*, Bloch asserts originate in 'the barbaric elegance of the fin de siècle'<sup>942</sup>; they are characters seeking only worldly pleasure, making gestures 'of living life to the full at any cost, as if it could be bought like this'<sup>943</sup>.

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<sup>938</sup> Quote from Jean Paul, Titan, 54th Cycle in Bloch, op cit, p. 1000

<sup>939</sup> Ibid, p. 1001

<sup>940</sup> Ibid, p. 1001

<sup>941</sup> Ibid, p. 1001

<sup>942</sup> Ibid, p. 1004

<sup>943</sup> Ibid, p. 1002

However, Ball makes a distinction between an adventurer and a dandy which gives us a different interpretation. The adventurer is, he says, led by 'mood', he trusts in chance and his experiences are 'gratuitous' and his 'own affair'. 'He seeks not insights, but confirmation of his superiority. If it is necessary, he risks his life, but he hopes to get away with it'. Following this analysis, we might say that the adventurer lives 'in the moment' for his own finite ends. On the other hand, according to Ball, the dandy is an 'inquisitive man', who 'is led from one experience to the another not by his mood, but by the consistency of ideas and the logic of intellectual facts. The adventures of the dandy are at the expense of the age he lives in ... One could also say: the adventurer relies on an ideology of chance, the dandy on one of fate'<sup>944</sup>. The dandy experiences the moment as meaningful to the fate of human being and to the epoch which he observes.

Ball likens himself to the biblical Daniel; Switzerland, he says 'is a birdcage, surrounded by roaring lions'<sup>945</sup>. 'It is a delusion of grandeur' he admits 'but sometimes I take the whole story as if it had been arranged for me'<sup>946</sup>. Ball sees himself as providential, like Daniel an 'interpreter of dreams who is thrown with his friends into fire and to the lions ... but ... 'the fire had

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<sup>944</sup> Ball, op cit, p. 30

<sup>945</sup> Ibid, p. 34

<sup>946</sup> Ibid, p. 34

no power upon their bodies'. 'And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.'

There is a danger of hubris in these venturing characters. Venturing beyond, Bloch warns, as an individualistic trait 'could become simply anti-social'<sup>947</sup>. As Huelsenbeck confirms, with this individual audacious striving forward the dadaist 'programme' involves 'the adoration of brute force from Rimbaud to Mickey Spillane, ... Hitchcock - all that, horrible dictu.'<sup>948</sup> The striving individual might become something of a bully and a dictator, enamoured of his own messianic mission; how one attains one's objective might be at odds with the outcome. In the case of the artist they appear intolerably egotistical. Ball writes in *Dada Diary*: 'notice that I am falling into slight madness that comes from my boundless desire to be different'<sup>949</sup>.

This epoch is a moment for fantasies of the omnipotence of art and artists. Ball sees it as necessary that he should 'drop all respect for tradition, opinion, and judgment. It is necessary for me to erase the rambling text that

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<sup>947</sup> Bloch, op cit, p. 1004

<sup>948</sup> Huelsenbeck, *DADA Monograph of a Movement*, op cit, p. 35

<sup>949</sup> Ball, op cit, p. 35

others have written.<sup>950</sup> 'Kandinsky also advanced a messianic claim *for art*<sup>951</sup>, and posited a spiritual élite 'whose summit is an artist-prophet'. This 'corresponds to the belief expressed by Schoenberg in the *Theory of Harmony*, that the laws of the man of genius are the laws of the humanity of the future', elsewhere asserting: 'art is born of 'I must', not of 'I can'<sup>952</sup>. In echoes of Kierkegaard, Schoenberg states that he rates 'the struggle for truth higher than the truth itself'<sup>953</sup>. In 1909, he says that what he visualises he has not yet attained, 'Perhaps this is not yet graspable. It will perhaps take a long time before I can write the music I feel urged to, of which I have had an inkling for several years, but which, for the time being, I cannot express'<sup>954</sup>.

We remember our discussion regarding the difference between those who are obviously submerged in the world of everyday concern, who live life only 'for the moment', and those authentically absorbed. To live 'in the

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<sup>950</sup> Ibid, p. 35

<sup>951</sup> Hahl-Koch, op cit, p. 146

<sup>952</sup> Schoenberg essay 'Problems in Teaching Art' (1911), quoted in Hahl-Koch p. 146

<sup>953</sup> Schoenberg, *Three Letters to Ferruccio Busconi about the Piano Pieces, Opus II.*, 1909, in *Arnold Schoenberg Self-Portrait, A Collection of Articles, Program Notes, and Letters by the Composer About his own Work*, Editor: Nuria Schoenberg Nono, Belmont Music Publishers, Pacific Palisades, 1988, p. 8

<sup>954</sup> Ibid, pp. 9-10

moment' for Kierkegaard is to live exclusively in some partial phase of a whole. 'To live anarchically' according to an 'imperfect sensuality' or engrossed in concern for the future are both ways of missing the significance of the 'moment'. Kierkegaard's figure of the 'seducer' in *Either/Or*, is a representative of the person who lives 'in the moment' in such a way. Kierkegaard and Bloch both use the figure of Don Juan to describe this character. Goethe's Faust is a man venturing beyond the limit in his quest to 'access spiritual forces'<sup>955</sup>, as Bloch says, this is 'a search for the complete fulfilment of what appears in the moment'<sup>956</sup>. In *Don Giovanni* or *Don Juan*, Bloch tells us, we find examples of the 'radical love-drive', in Faust 'the radical drive for knowledge and experience'<sup>957</sup>.

In Thomas Mann's novel *Doctor Faustus*, the character of Faust is represented in the figure of a composer, Adrian Leverkühn. Mann's character is a composite of Schoenberg and Nietzsche. Leverkühn meets his Mephistopheles first in the shape of a pimp who leads him to a prostitute. From her 'he contracted the syphilis that will eventually render him insane'<sup>958</sup>.

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<sup>955</sup> Hahl-Koch, op cit, p. 143

<sup>956</sup> Hudson, op cit, p. 96

<sup>957</sup> Bloch, op cit, p. 1010

<sup>958</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, op cit, p. 151



Hence, Bloch tells us, 'the demonic pact has already been inscribed in his own blood, granting him, in the years before his collapse into madness, 'great time, mad time, the most devilish time, in which to soar higher and higher still'<sup>959</sup>. Mann alarmed Schoenberg with his seemingly mysterious ability to discern his objectives and put into literary language a clear description of his ideas. In fact Mann lifted sections of Adorno's unpublished manuscript of *Philosophy of Modern Music*, whole into his fiction. The figure of Mephistopheles appears again in this work of Mann's as 'an intellectualist, who writes of art, of music, for vulgar newspapers, a theorist and critic, who is himself a composer'<sup>960</sup>. He is described in terms which unmistakably capture Adorno, and it seems, Adorno did not object.

The extraordinary knowledge and experience this Faustian Leverkühn seeks is given with two hands: carnal knowledge and the experience of the 'under-side' of life on one and the knowledge he develops of a new music with the name it gains him amongst the 'great' creative artists on the other. Through one he contracts syphilis which leads to his death and through the other he composes radical new music which, in a sense, makes him 'immortal'. Adorno declares that 'All those outside the sphere of management'

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<sup>959</sup> Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, Translator: John E. Woods, Knopf, New York, 1997, p. 246, in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, p. 151

<sup>960</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 165-6

in music 'are path-finders, trail-blazers, and - above all - tragic figures'<sup>961</sup>, and Harrison confirms this, asserting that there is a 'tragic experience of heroic suffering' at root of dissonance in musical composition. This is what Bloch refers to as the Faustian 'drive for fulfilment'.

### **Beyond What and How.**

What are the limits which our 'heroes' seek to venture beyond? In general terms the artist strives toward expression of some 'inner' feeling in an outward, objective representation. Kandinsky's central concept is that of 'inner necessity' (*innerer Klang*), the expression of the 'soul of nature and humanity'<sup>962</sup>. The question is that of form and content, of how an objective form can convey truthfully or accurately the moment of a subjective experience. 'What Kandinsky sought to investigate here was nothing less than the common denominator of all the arts, their correlations and ... their 'translatability' of one kind of art into another'. He believed in an 'overreaching law of all the arts, he pursued it all his life, and always hoped for the scientific evidence that would definitely confirm his surmises'<sup>963</sup>.

Schoenberg considers there is something in the underlying laws of

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<sup>961</sup> Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, op cit, p. 50

<sup>962</sup> Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, op cit, p. xiv

<sup>963</sup> Hahl-Koch, op cit, p. 150

musical composition, though not the laws themselves, which appears to be 'eternal or at least of such long duration that we may just as well say eternal'. It is perhaps, he ventures, 'the circumstance that the work of art will always mirror our modes of thought, our perceptual and conceptual powers, and our feelings'<sup>964</sup>. Schoenberg says, 'At times, when working on something extraordinarily difficult, I had a sense of merely transcribing what already existed.'<sup>965</sup> The 'eternal' is that which is abiding and enduring and appears to show itself as present in certain moments which come to our attention. We have spoken of the *Augenblick* as that inaccessible entity which has no actual content; Heidegger says 'Nothing can happen in the moment of vision'. Boethius describes the *nunc stans* as a moment which 'emulates the eternal present of eternity', the *nunc stans* is not a possible condition of the world, only an appearance which attaches itself to the present. Gadamer asks of time 'what is this which ... can never at any moment be identical with itself as that which is present (*da*)?'<sup>966</sup>. The cipher-image *Augenblick* refers to its own emptiness. Jaspers' concept of cipher as we have seen is of that

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<sup>964</sup> Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, op cit, p. 164

<sup>965</sup> Self-Portrait, answers to Bahl questionnaire, p. 56

<sup>966</sup> Jacques Derrida asks a similar question in relation to the self identity of a sign in '*Signs and the Blink of an Eye*, in *Speech and Phenomena And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, Editors: David B. Allison and Newton Garver, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1973.

which is the language of transcendence but not transcendence itself. For Jaspers one of the boundary situations occurs in the antinomical structure of man and especially where it concerns the 'subject/object dichotomy'. Regarding the photograph, we have had Sontag's description of it as a 'pseudo presence' which is a 'token of absence', and Sartre speaking of the 'present in the form of flight'. Following these examples, the indication is that the objective work cannot be identical with the subjective experience it expresses.

Art attempts to bring to our attention something eternal and transcendent, something of the 'spirit' in its many available renderings allowed by the German *Geist*. For Kandinsky 'spirit' refers to a part of finite being as it seems to do for Jaspers. The 'nameless unconditioned' which Jaspers posits as both source and goal of transcendence and value, is that which is experienced in a particular existential 'situation'. We might also consider Gadamer's 'existential moment' here, as events of 'history' and their individual experiencing - the *zeitgeist*, brought to expression. We are also reminded of Heidegger's event as *ereignis*, with its quality of 'en-owning', events are taken to heart as belonging with their experiencing. In some cases art desires to bring an experience to such close attention as to emulate the original moment of experience; but the problem is of being too close to the moment to 'see' it. Yet, expressionism is an attempt to do just

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this, it is in fact the central concern of Schoenberg.

Schoenberg's technique of dissonance relates to the mood of society at the time and points to the fact that all things are as it were 'up in the air', we might call the very *zeitgeist* 'dissonant'. The conditions of life are not ones we know and recognise, they are unidentifiable, not understandable, and beyond the power of the individual human being to resolve. Yet there is an as-yet unseen resolution; Schoenberg asserts that the expressions 'consonance' and 'dissonance' are false when used to signify an antithesis. 'It all simply depends on the growing ability of the analysing ear to familiarize itself with the remote overtones', he tells us. 'What today is remote can tomorrow be close at hand; it is all a matter of whether one can get closer.'<sup>967</sup> Schoenberg defines consonances as being closer to and in 'simpler relations to the fundamental tone', while so-called dissonances are more 'remote, more complicated'<sup>968</sup> .

In our 'decisive epoch' both the world and the artists within it are in a process of continual striving; what is sought is the achieving of an impossible end or the end itself in a final resolution. Bloch, Hudson tells us, followed Plato in treating time as a discontinuous continuum of discrete 'nows' each of which constitutes itself anew in each moment and always takes the same

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<sup>967</sup> Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, p. 21

<sup>968</sup> Ibid, p. 21

form: the form of a sudden pulse, which drives forward to the next and then sinks.<sup>969</sup> Bloch interprets this process of the now as a section which reveals the structure and content of the world process. It begins again in each moment: 'as a process to solve the question of its origin; and every moment contains both the *datum* of world completion and the *data* of its content'<sup>970</sup>. The world process, Bloch asserts, is 'unsolved', in it 'the intensive That drives toward its missing What or essence, and the structure of the moment reflects the structure of the process'<sup>971</sup>.

### **Momentary Appearance.**

The moment itself is represented in some of the works of art of this period in an attempt to access and represent the moment of the immediate, inner experience. The problems involved with this reveal the impossibility of seeing what one is fundamentally 'in'. Schoenberg's paintings are attempts in self-portraiture to 'see oneself', their titles pointing to the nature of his endeavours: 'Green Self-portrait' (1910); 'Vision' (1910); 'Self-Portrait' (1911); and perhaps the most famous and certainly the most angst-ridden 'Red Gaze' (1910). Schoenberg, in a note from 1934 says Kandinsky called

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<sup>969</sup> Hudson, op cit, p. 97

<sup>970</sup> Ibid, p. 97

<sup>971</sup> Ibid, pp. 97-8

his paintings 'Visions', 'while I named them 'Gazes' (*Blicke*)<sup>972</sup>. We might consider that a 'vision' is what one 'sees' or experiences, while a 'gaze' is a concentrated act of looking, of trying to 'see'. In Schoenberg's musical compositions we find this attempt to access the immediate experience in *A Survivor from Warsaw*.

Robert Hullot-Kentor describes a scene in *A Survivor from Warsaw* in which German soldiers raiding the hiding place of some Jews find them asleep, and oust them from their hiding place. The narrator provides a subjective report of the event, as one of the Jews, the subjective position prevents certain objective aspects being represented. The confusion of 'even the first moments - the orders shouted, the searchlights - are hard to follow and describe', Hullot-Kentor explains, because the narrator 'does not know what is or is not dream'. As the crowd 'is driven out of hiding and provoked into a stumbling fast march in the street', the sergeant 'orders their heads smashed' and the narrator 'is clubbed down'. 'The chaos and shattering of his perceptions deprive the listener of objective recourse'. 'In the concussive instant that the rifle butt strikes the narrator's head, however, we do not, and could not possibly, hear a scream. The subjective form of the report prohibits the event being registered externally. Instead, the sound that must have occurred is documented only by a muffled, suddenly slack and hollow

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<sup>972</sup> *Arnold Schoenberg and Wassily Kandinsky, Letters, Pictures and Documents*, Editor: Jelena Hahl-Koch, Translator: John C. Crawford, Faber and Faber, London, 1984, p. 166

peacefulness that suspends the recurrent heart-spasming alarm motif that knits the work together'. There is perhaps Hullot-Kentor posits, 'no other artwork, in which fright and hope become comparably identical in the moment that they vanish. The power of the composition depends on this moment. The panicky inconsolableness of history ignites in this stifled, imploded instant, whereas any scream would have provided the rationalization that it might have been heard'<sup>973</sup> .

Adorno finds 'scars and blotches', faults in the fabric of Schoenberg's compositions which result from these attempts at immediate expression. Yet, Hullot-Kentor asserts that in this piece as 'an eye-witness report rendered into fiction' what Schoenberg attempts is achieved, 'the barrier between real and fictional is breached'<sup>974</sup> . The reviewer, Hans Keller reports on the 'shattering' effect of the composition: 'What higher praise can the *Survivor* receive than a musician-survivor's confession that never since his escape from the Nazi's did he feel, at the same time, so terrifyingly near and so redeemingly far from the memory of his experiences?'<sup>975</sup> Schoenberg, like

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<sup>973</sup> Hullot-Kentor, Robert, *The Philosophy of Dissonance: Adorno and Schoenberg*, editor: Tom Huhn, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 311

<sup>974</sup> Ibid, p. 311

<sup>975</sup> Hans Keller, 'A survivor from warsaw', music survey 3, no. 4, 1951, p. 279, in *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*, p. 162



Kierkegaard never intended to make things easy for the reader, the audience. Dissonance caused a 'scandal' for Schoenberg, which Rosen tells us 'never finished'. Perceived as ugly and an unpleasant aesthetic experience, yet for Kandinsky filled him with excitement at the obvious empathy between their respective artistic intentions.

This moment of negotiation between producing a work of art which expresses *Geist* in both its content and its form is identified by Bloch as 'the deep content of the Faust wager'. Thomas Mann's *Dr. Faustus*, presents an image of the composer as one whose artistic gifts are rather an affliction than a gift from God, and who is led into a daemonic relation where he must sacrifice what is seen as perhaps the usual reason for art - to *reflect* the world in a pleasing fashion, for the ability of *reveal* the world at the expense of pleasing. In this way the Faustian figure becomes tragic in their suffering (in the sense of a passion or progress). Nietzsche considers why '... the enigma by which 'that which is ugly and disharmonic' is represented so often in music, 'Surely, a higher pleasure must be perceived in all this.' The enigma can be explained by the tragic experience of heroic suffering, which makes us see 'that even the ugly and disharmonic are part of an artistic game that the will in the eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself ... The joy aroused by the tragic myth has the same origin as the joyous

sensation of dissonance in music<sup>976</sup> .

## **Resolution.**

We see in Schoenberg's work an attempt to hold on to the moment, to refuse it resolution, to say with Faust 'Stay Awhile you are so fair' which, Bloch tells us, '*spoken to the moment, describes the utopia of being -There par excellence.*'<sup>977</sup> Dissonance refuses its 'terminus'<sup>978</sup>. Wanting to hold on to the moment rather than letting it go to become one of Nietzsche's 'dear dead glances', immediate experience allowed to wain, can remain with one less intensely and perhaps more 'thoughtfully' in reflection. Art might help us to accept loss as necessary. Kierkegaard says, 'An expression of emotion has the 'power to relieve the soul of a burdensome weight, precisely because the burden, when merely expressed, already begins to become something of the

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<sup>976</sup> Harrison, Thomas, 1910: *The Emancipation of the Dissonance*, University of California Press, 1996, p. 48

<sup>977</sup> Bloch, op cit, p. 1015

<sup>978</sup> As does Dada - *Dada Lives!* Is the title of an essay by Richard Huelsenbeck written after the Zurich years. 'I am treating dadaism as a living idea, as if it still existed' , he says. Failure to define Dada is Dada's success; Huelsenbeck tells us that Sartre in one of his essays, proclaimed: 'I am the new dada', and 'people pricked up their ears'. Dada is on the run from definition in company with the *Augenblick* which is itself a living idea.

past<sup>979</sup>. To express the joy of such a 'letting-go', I turn again to Thomas Mann. Mann's novel *Buddenbrooks* is the story of the decline of a bourgeois family attempting to maintain its status during a period of great social change. In *Buddenbrooks*, we find a discussion of the resistance to 'new musical harmonies'<sup>980</sup> and this dissonant episode in a harmonious evening at the Buddenbrooks' in the year 1868. Young Hanno Buddenbrooks gives a recital of his own composition to whose ending he has given a strange turn. Hanno, faithful to Schoenberg's stance against pathos, manages to make his piece 'emotional rather than merely sentimental', Hanno's 'beloved finale' comes:

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<sup>979</sup> Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, op cit, p.87

<sup>980</sup> Mann, Thomas, *Buddenbrooks*, Penguin Modern Classics, England, 1985, p.383 - 386

'... It swelled, it broadened, it slowly, slowly rose: suddenly, in the *forte*, he introduced the discord C sharp, which led back to the original key ... He dwelt on the dissonance until it became *fortissimo*. But he denied himself and his audience the resolution; he kept it back. What would it be, this resolution, this enchanting, satisfying absorption into the B major chord? A joy beyond compare, a gratification of overpowering sweetness! Peace! Bliss! The kingdom of Heaven: only not yet - not yet! A moment more of striving, hesitation, suspense, that must become well-nigh intolerable in order to heighten the ultimate moment of joy. - Once more - a last, a final tasting of this striving and yearning, this craving of the entire being, this last forcing of the will to deny oneself the fulfilment and the conclusion, in the knowledge that joy, when it comes, lasts only for the moment. ... At last, at last, joy would no longer be denied. It came, it poured over him; he resisted no more. His muscles relaxed, his head sank weakly on his shoulder, his eyes closed, and a pathetic, almost an anguished smile of speechless rapture hovered about his mouth; while his *tremolo*, ... swelled up suddenly into *forte*, and after one brief, resounding burst, broke off<sup>981</sup>.

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<sup>981</sup> Ibid, p. 392

## Conclusion.

The figurative expression 'in the blink of an eye' or 'Moment' (*Augenblick*) has its root in the instant of time. The concept can never escape this basic point, human being as it is inexorably within the temporal world. In its most basic interpretation *Augenblick* describes an experience of a fleeting but momentous event. Such an occurrence can be accompanied by an altered perception of time. Events can seem to happen in a condensed 'moment' or 'instant' of intensity which passes swiftly. At its extreme, we might experience something like an arresting of time itself. Correspondingly, time can drag due to boredom or inactivity; traumatic events might be accompanied by the sensation that they unfold in slow motion. In this way an experience can seem to stand out from time, though in actuality time moves on taking these moments with it. This itself is necessary to the moment: that it must pass.

The moment brings the experience of temporality to our attention. We find that objective, 'outer' time as a linear progression does not conform to our subjective, 'inner' experience of it. Circularity in time is discernible in the seasonal natural world, however, this investigation into the concept of a 'decisive moment' reveals that our temporal experience is neither simply linear nor circular. Much of the significance of the concept lies in its promise of an experience which can elevate us from ordinary everyday temporality. Certain moments in our temporal experience stand out in significance; they

are occasional and disconnected. In reflection one can point to significant and decisive moments or events as marking out the span of one's life or attribute to them epoch-making significance.

As a metaphor, the *Augenblick* describes the temporal experience and also gives us a neatly representative visual image, the swift opening and closing of the 'blink'; and the 'eye' which allows an implication of 'seeing' in the sense of knowing or understanding. Highlighting the literal German meaning of *Augenblick* as 'glance of the eye' gives us Heidegger's 'moment of vision', a term related to sight or insight (*Einblick*) and the more mysterious connotation of 'vision'. *Augenblick* is sometimes rendered as the 'twinkling of an eye' which, along with the connotation of a swift coming and going is also suggestive of brightness and light. Nietzsche plays on the word *Augenblick* and its related words: 'glance' (*Blick*), 'wink' (*Augenblinzeln*) - as a cheeky mode of communication, and 'the lightning flash (*Blitzen*) of insight'. In its more rare rendition as 'gaze of the eye' the phrase has the connotation of a prolonged contemplation, perhaps even a dreamy unfocussed look. Jaspers refers to the 'absolute solitude' of contemplation as 'the eye of an existence', 'the first leap'<sup>982</sup> toward existence transcending itself.

I have considered the *Augenblick* as a cipher, a tool for communicating certain intense experiences which cannot be grasped or

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<sup>982</sup> Jaspers, *Philosophy II*, op cit, p. 180

demonstrated. Certain artists and works of art and photography have been examined from the point of view of various aspects of the *Augenblick*. Having passed through various philosophers and their redeployments and expansions of the complex and interrelated aspects of the concept, it has come to be thought of as a 'philosopheme'. As an inherited conceptual tool of metaphysical thought we can use it to consider various elements within historical or contemporary situations. It has also become clear that the *Augenblick* consists of variations which share what Wittgenstein terms 'family resemblances'<sup>983</sup>. I reiterate these resemblances here together with examples of their manifestations in some of the works of art which have been discussed.

The 'now' is a discrete moment in a continuum or process yet it contains something of the past and of the future. Attempts to locate the 'now' of the present cannot find it in the continuum of time. Heidegger describes the 'nows' coming along and passing away, yet in their changing being also 'self - same'. Though they pass, they retain a 'constant presence'. They can be arrested for contemplation as the 'standing now' or *nunc stans*. Heidegger has asserted that in the 'moment of vision' 'nothing can occur', it is rather the site of 'an authentic Present or waiting-towards'<sup>984</sup>. The temporal moment reveals a connection to something eternal or transcendent. As an example of this the images of Henri Cartier-Bresson seem to isolate a moment of

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<sup>983</sup> My thanks to David Cooper, as a thesis examiner for this observation.

<sup>984</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op cit, p. 388

individual or historical significance and hold it in a 'still' photograph. His work has been described as representing nothing less than the human condition. Certain of Schoenberg's works are pieces of condensed time, as is evident in *Erwartung*. One second of action is drawn out to the eternity of four hundred bars. In *Die glückliche Hand*, the rapidly revolving images are moments too swiftly passing to access. They become restricted to the 'standing moment'. Cartier-Bresson's images have been described as 'captured now' moments. Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* as he himself tells us is a *nunc stans*, indeed both of these examples are this *nunc stans* in form as well as content. It would seem that we carry the 'now' along with us in some sense, and therefore, as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche made clear, every moment holds the possibility of an *augenblicklich* experience. In the process of perishing and becoming, Nietzsche's 'life force', the Moment returns or recurs. The possibility of accessing it exists in 'every moment'. In the case of Jaspers, the potential leap to an awareness of Existenz exists as possibility in every moment, awaiting fulfilment. This realisation lies at the heart of the doctrine of Eternal Return. Bloch asserts that the structure of the 'world process' is reflected in that of the Moment as 'heliotropic', beginning anew 'in every moment' and progressing toward the light of an 'end'. This is another way in which the moment in everyday temporal existence connects itself to the 'eternal'. Heidegger and Nietzsche, through the concept of Eternal Return speak of an eternal quality of transcendent Being, out of which human beings come forth into presence in a momentary yet momentous way. Heidegger



describes *Dasein's* being as *augenblicklichkeit*. We are able to come to the point of celebrating the momentariness of our existence (*augenblicklichkeit*), because we understand it relative to the notion that 'there is no perishing without a simultaneous becoming' .

Gadamer has said of the notion of perishing and becoming that it is where the 'truth of historical consciousness' reaches 'its fulfilment'. It is the endless coming and going of change which builds a continuity of history, rather than the flow of time. It comes to our attention as moments of disruption. (Even the subjective moment of 'inspiration' which occurs as if suddenly and from 'out of the blue' and initiates the artistic attempts to express the inexpressible, is revealed as a moment in a dialectical progression. It is Adorno asserts, inseparable from its objective rendering in form.) Discontinuities and radical changes experienced relative to perishing and becoming for Gadamer constitute 'historical consciousness'. For Kierkegaard, Christ's Incarnation is such an event. It happens 'once and for all', it changes everything. As such we might consider it as 'epoch making'; we have seen that Gadamer recognises it as 'an absolute epoch-experience', as significant to religious thinking as it is to the history of ideas.

Events which precipitate great change are boundary situations, an example in the contemporary world I point to is September 11<sup>th</sup> as being a moment when the world as we know it changed. An historical event and its actual experiencing together form Gadamer's 'existential moment'. I have identified an epoch as decisive, that which centres on the year 1910.

Discontinuities keep everything up in the air so to speak. Adorno asserts that

Schoenberg's dissonant music with its dissolution of traditional tonality articulates the contemporary crisis, mirrors the condition of dissonant tension of the *zeitgeist* (intellectual and metaphysical). New art movements erupt into being from the destruction of old traditions, yet still occur within an on-going process. The Dada movement is born out of this *zeitgeist*, it aims to make the world anew by revolt. Destruction is necessary to creation, it is the result of accident, the unexpected thrown up by chance. Nietzsche followed by Jaspers and Heidegger has told us how to live and not be a prey to chance but to overcome it by willing. We find also at this time the dissolution of the representation of the object in art in favour of abstraction. There is a striving for a means of expression which goes beyond limits of form.

Christ's Incarnation as a 'once and for all' event provides a 'prototype' or initialising Moment which enables all experiences of subjective 'truth' that follow. It allows a thinking of the collapsing or condensing of time between an initial event which maintains its presence as it recurs. It is not a question of distance in time rather, a connection of understanding. We established in the case of Cartier-Bresson that one image can distil the essence of a whole sequence of action and serve as an *Ansatzpunkt* or point of departure for further thinking. A discussion regarding the ability of an image to express and represent complex, simultaneously experienced emotions led us to extend this question to incorporate 'images' of art and music, in our final chapter. In terms of art, I have already mentioned Schoenberg's *Erwartung* condensed to its limit by being devoid of anything superfluously ornamental.

The Moment of subjective experience, insight or 'vision' involves the communication of the type of 'truth' or knowledge unavailable to scientific thinking, that which requires 'faith' whether religious or philosophical. However, the connection to the eternal made in subjective moments must be constantly maintained, as Kierkegaard said, empirically existing beings are in existence as 'inwardness' 'only momentarily'<sup>985</sup>. The inherent paradox of the *Augenblick* is that it is at the same time both fulfilled 'because in it lies eternity' and empty because the temporal moment vanishes and the actual experience of the *Augenblick* cannot be grasped. The knowledge involved in a 'vision', Kierkegaard has shown us, is not that which can be conveyed socratically. Jaspers also has indicated that this is a knowledge which belongs to eternity, 'athwart of time'. Jaspers' 'epochal consciousness' attempts to see beyond the legacies of the past. Artists, as 'epochal consciousness', recognise and strive to express the *zeitgeist*. To make flesh something eternal or transcendent.

We have seen throughout this thesis the necessity of the presence of the right 'man' of the moment. Those who are unafraid to risk themselves, to raise the question of their relation to the idea as Kierkegaard says. Kierkegaard and Heidegger assert that this only happens among the very few and it is only then that the 'decisive moment' has the power to compel

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<sup>985</sup> Kierkegaard, *CUP*, op cit, p. 191

(genius), or it paralyses the individual with anxiety (irony)<sup>986</sup>. Some perhaps over-wrought attempts at a breakthrough can result in a composition being flawed according to Adorno. However, for such individuals, the *Augenblick* can allow a direct experience a connection to something eternal.

We have noted Jaspers' appropriation of Kierkegaard's concept of 'the leap', developing it from one of faith in relation to religious belief, to one of faith in philosophical thinking and decision within a finite temporal life. We have seen how Jaspers describes a penetrating glimpse of a vital, though incommunicable experience in 'fleeting moments' as 'a pure eye'. If one does not retreat from this experience transcendence can 'shine through'<sup>987</sup>. Perhaps the actions of our artists might constitute such a leap of faith.

The Moment of chance has been considered especially in Nietzsche and Jaspers together with the role of fate and accident and its acceptance as *amor fati*. What is thrown up in the flux of life can be seized and used. Our artists seize the moment of change and respond to it in their works. We have seen the moment defined as a crisis point of judgement and decision, of an act of will carried out in existential freedom. How an individual acts in a moment of decision, can reveal their attitude to life itself. Jaspers, following Kierkegaard, has identified two modes of living 'in the moment'. In one the

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<sup>986</sup> Ibid, *The Journals*, p. 12

<sup>987</sup> Thyssen, op cit, p. 306

present is given no significance in itself, life is lived for the sake of future goals; in the contrasting view the present is all - one lives only 'for the moment'. Both concern finite temporal existence and miss the connection to the eternal, Jaspers has asserted. But one who is 'like the *Augenblick*', or 'in the *Augenblick*' (*augenblicklich*) as a state of being, yearns toward a fulfilled existence. Nietzsche, with his symbol of the gateway named *Augenblick*, has presented us with the notion of the necessity of being 'in the gateway' to fully realise the nature of the eternal. He has revealed this as a site of moral decision, and told us that one must summon the courage to confront accepted values and realise that moral responsibility resides only within oneself.

Artists expose the symptoms of the problematic of the times. In artworks they attempt to express existentiality – that we are, were, and hope to be, they provide document and evidence of a *zeitgeist*. Being fully 'in' the existential moment they strive toward its expression. Kandinsky and Schoenberg both realise the limits of the possibilities of doing this in traditional forms. Adventurers both, they attempt new forms, Kandinsky moves toward abstraction as Schoenberg does toward dissonance. Having reached the limits of art the artists venture beyond them, but at great risk.

Bloch refers to those who heroically venture beyond. He uses the figure of Kierkegaard's Don Juan as one who lives 'for the moment' in what Heidegger would call an 'inauthentic' attitude. Heroic yet hubristic, suffering delusions of grandeur which can turn to madness (Hugo Ball felt his need to

be different verged on madness). This is how Schoenberg is portrayed by Mann, as a Faust figure. The risk he takes is a wager and a demonic pact. The knowledge such figures seek can only lead to their downfall. Works of art, as we have heard Adorno assert, can be scarred and lose their autonomy as a work of art. Schoenberg's *Survivor from Warsaw* can be seen as a representation of the impossibility of accessing the fleeting momentary experience, (especially that of death, which is, as we have heard Heidegger say 'unavailable'). In this work fear and hope appear momentarily together, but the clash of the paradox, though necessary, cannot be maintained and the moment vanishes.

*The moment* in its most 'replete sense', Kierkegaard calls the 'fulness of the time'. A conjunction of an historical and initial moment when something 'new' appears and the subjective experience of it, it resembles Gadamer's definition of the 'existential moment'. It describes the notion of 'historicity' used by both Gadamer and Heidegger. We have encountered this idea in Heidegger's 'apocalyptic' moment of vision', as related to *kairos* the right time for action. Aspects of *kairos* have been found throughout the investigation into Cartier-Bresson's 'decisive moment'. Finally it describes that period I have defined as the 'decisive epoch' with its dissonant *zeitgeist*. In the fullness of time, when the time is right and the person necessary is present, change occurs. Conventional perceptions of art and music are challenged and they change. The 'boundary situation' that this epoch represents brings with it the opportunity of 'venturing beyond' its limits.

Our investigations have concentrated on nineteenth and twentieth century conceptions of the 'moment'. It culminates in a period poignant and fertile for considerations of the 'moment'. We have described how human being is alienated from the world at large and from itself; and we have utilised Schoenberg's 'dissonance' as an analogy for the state of unresolvedness of the world and of the individuals within it. We have posited that art provides a repository of the inner 'feelings' of individuals which reflect the outer 'mood' of the time and as such can provide us with examples of the 'existential moment'. We have looked into examples of these attempts to go beyond temporal and material constraints.

Jaspers has said that philosophising issues from an 'inner drive'<sup>988</sup> of individual human being toward the transcendent which it can accomplish in an 'exalted moment'. The final form constantly seeks its essence. Yet we have established that this immediate moment of experiencing cannot be held onto. The dissonance seeks its consonance. Human being yearns toward fulfillment, yet perversely wants no end to the yearning, for a yearning satisfied is no longer a yearning. Though we drive toward 'ends', keeping things in the air puts off the final end. In this way we seek to keep the moment with us, pending and unresolved. And yet, its resolution when it comes might be a joyous ecstatic experience. However, we soon begin

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<sup>988</sup> Jaspers, Karl, *Way to Wisdom, An Introduction to Philosophy*, Yale University press, New Haven and London, 1954, p. 24

again yearning for the day of its return. Faust bids the moment stay, but Nietzsche, as Stambaugh astutely points out, bids the moment go - but return. This is Nietzsche's way of holding on to the moment. It is not lost in this way and we can live in joyful expectation that the possibility of a decisive moment resides in 'every moment'.

The idea which began in this thesis with Kierkegaard's collapsing of time is echoed in Jaspers' notion that the moment of philosophical insight brings together the philosophers of the past and those who follow them, transcending their actual temporal existence to become 'eternal contemporaries'<sup>989</sup>. The existentialist philosophers we have considered, the 'philosophers of the moment' are such contemporaries and we could not have had a developed concept of the *Augenblick* without them. It is our task to make these philosophers 'mean' for our contemporary situation, to collapse the time between their thought and ours, to have the courage to venture. The perennial philosophical questions, Jaspers tells us, are transformed for us in our situation, each age must come to its own understanding of them and make their own response. The *Augenblick* may continue to gather added meanings to itself, relevant to the contemporary situation. As Jaspers pointed out, the more 'rational' human being seemingly becomes, the more it has need of the *Augenblick*.

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<sup>989</sup> Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers* I, viii, Wallraff, op cit, p. 18





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