

## **The Beginning of the End. Heidegger and Hegel from Metaphysics to the Event**

**El principio del fin.  
Heidegger y Hegel de la metafísica al evento**

*NICOLA RAMAZZOTTO*  
*(Università di Pisa)*

**Abstract:** In this paper I address the relationship between Hegel and Heidegger from the perspective of the dialectic between end and beginning. After the introduction, in the second part of the paper I analyze Hegel's position in the history of being as the beginning of the end of metaphysics. Afterwards I address Heidegger's interpretation of the beginning of Hegel's *Logic*, showing how the essential beginning is the end of the completed system. In the fourth part of the text, I discuss how Heidegger wants to position himself in relation to Hegel, mainly examining their different interpretation of negativity and initiality. I will argue that the key word for understanding their different positions is "event". Whereas Hegel's system leaves no room for any beginning as event, but every beginning is reabsorbed by the finished and concluded system, for Heidegger thought must time and time again make itself initial and eventual. **Key-words:** Hegel, beginning, fulfillment, event, negativity

**Resumen:** En este artículo afronto la relación entre Hegel y Heidegger desde la perspectiva de la dialéctica entre fin y principio. Tras la introducción, en la segunda parte del ensayo analizo la posición de Hegel en la historia del ser como principio del fin de la metafísica. Después abordo la interpretación de Heidegger del principio de la *Lógica* de Hegel, mostrando cómo el principio esencial es el fin del sistema completado. En la cuarta parte del texto, discuto cómo Heidegger quiere posicionarse en relación con Hegel, examinando principalmente su diferente interpretación de la negatividad y la inicialidad. Argumentaré que la palabra clave para entender sus diferentes posiciones es "acontecimiento". Mientras que el sistema de Hegel no deja lugar a ningún comienzo como acontecimiento, sino que cada comienzo es reabsorbido por el sistema acabado y concluido, para Heidegger el pensamiento debe una y otra vez hacerse inicial y eventual. **Palabras clave:** Hegel, comienzo, cumplimiento, evento, negatividad

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Heidegger's relationship with German Idealism, and in particular with Hegel's philosophy, is notoriously multifaceted and complex<sup>2</sup>. It is well known how, even as he came near the end of his own philosophical journey, Heidegger himself still struggled to define his own position to Hegel's thought. In a letter to Gadamer dated December 2, 1971, Heidegger writes:

I myself do not know clearly enough how my 'position' vis-à-vis Hegel is to be determined— it would not be enough to put it down as a 'counterposition'; the determination of 'position' is connected with the question concerning the mystery of the 'beginning'; it is far more difficult because it is simpler than the explanation Hegel gives for it before the start of the 'movement' in his *Logik*<sup>3</sup>

Heidegger's admission is significant, especially considering the many texts, seminars, courses and essays he has devoted to Hegel. This very proclivity towards Hegel can perhaps in turn be interpreted as the recognition of a dissatisfaction, as an ever-renewed attempt by Heidegger to approach Hegel's thought and thus determine his own position with respect to it. Building on this complexity, the goal of this contribution cannot be to completely unravel this entanglement and thus succeed in what Heidegger himself failed to do. The scope of this work is more limited. Indeed, the purpose of these paper is to deepen this complexity and try to explore it. To do so, an attempt will be made to deepen this passage by Heidegger by identifying three main points in it. The first relates to the question of «position»: in the first part of this paper, I will then identify what Heidegger considers to be Hegel's peculiar position within the history of being and how Heidegger wants to define himself with respect to it. The second step concerns the theme of the «beginning»: in the second part of this work, I will then show how Heidegger interprets Hegel's problem of the foundation and beginning of the system. Finally, in the third part, I will try to show what Heidegger means by the «secret of the beginning» and in what sense it is easier and simpler than how Hegel understands it. In doing so, I will argue that the key words for understanding the different positions of Hegel and Heidegger are “negativity” and “event”.

## 2. Erörterung

The question of determining the “position”, which Heidegger discusses in his letter to Gadamer, is closely related to the question of “place”. Only by determining the place that a certain philosophy occupies is it possible to decide and specify how to stand with respect to it. The key word for indicating this is for Heidegger «*Erörterung*»<sup>4</sup>. The word has a twofold meaning in German. In its most common sense, it simply means a discussion, debate. Heidegger, however, recalls the connection of the word with “*Ort*”,

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers, whose suggestions helped to vastly improve the first draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The secondary literature on the subject is obviously vast. Here I simply list a few texts that were particularly helpful in the writing of this paper or that are in consonance with the thesis I will support. See (Lindberg, 2010); (Mejía, 2004); (Benjamin, 1993); (Kolb, 1986); (Gillespie, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in (Gadamer, 2007, p. 455-456).

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the various meanings of “*Ort*”, “*Erörterung*”, “*Ortschaft*,” etc., see (Malpas, 2021), who also offers additional literature.

i.e., with place and locality (GA 12, p. 33). Ultimately, then, *Erörterung* is the discussion that must determine the place held by a thought. Place, in turn, does not indicate anything trivially spatial, in the sense of a flat, homogeneous space – we might say, the space of the Cartesian plane. On the contrary, the space of thought indicates its own locality, the place to which it belongs.

This problem of the place and position of thought cannot be underestimated not least because it is directly mentioned in Heidegger's letter that we want to study – and is thus important for the problem of his relation to Hegel. It is in fact Heidegger himself who, in the Le Thor seminar, states that after “meaning” and “truth”, “place” is the key word of the third phase of his philosophical journey (GA 15, p. 344). To summarize, we can say that philosophy, for the late Heidegger, i.e., for the Heidegger who writes the aforementioned letter to Gadamer, is first and foremost a determination of the place of thought.

If this is the case, then Heidegger's annotation whereby he is unable to determine his own position with respect to Hegel becomes more significant. If philosophy is the determination of the place of thought, then the difficulty in finding one's position with respect to the place held by Hegel's philosophy becomes something more complex than a simple opinion about a past philosophy and something broader than a simple historiographical discourse. This ambiguity results from an oscillation and hesitation that veins Heidegger's thought deeply. The thesis that I want to argue for is that this difficulty lies precisely in the attempt at which Heidegger's entire path of thought is aimed: the effort to overcome metaphysics and to free a new thought of being. In order to argue this thesis, it is first necessary to understand where Hegel's thought actually belongs and what is its place. Once this is understood, only once this *Erörterung* is done, is it possible to grasp why Heidegger finds it so difficult to understand his own position with regard to Hegel. The determination of the place of thought occurs within what the late Heidegger calls the «topology of being»<sup>5</sup>. The truth of being has historically happened as a destiny and has mostly occurred as metaphysics. Within metaphysics, being, forgone, is conceived as being of beings each time according to different principles: God, the *ego cogito*, substance, the monad the transcendental subject, spirit, and so on. The first step in understanding the place of a thought is then to situate it in this history of being. That is, it is necessary to understand how the truth of being is at play, how it happens and how it occurs in that given historical philosophy. The essence of thought, that which makes it belong to a certain place in the topology of being, lies precisely in the specific way in which it conceives the being of beings – and, therefore, in the different way in which it also obscures and hints at being. Each philosophy, then, is part of the mountain range of being<sup>6</sup>, it is linked to what precedes and follows it, and thereby obtains its own place and locality.

What then is the place of Hegel's system? How does the truth of being happen in his thought? Heidegger asks this question perhaps most explicitly in the Le Thor seminar (GA 15, p. 347). Here Heidegger considers that the key to understanding Hegel's ontology – and thus the place of Hegel's thought – lies in the famous sentence with which the *Science of Logic* begins:

<sup>5</sup> Heidegger's first mention of a topology of being is found in GA 13, p. 84. Here, as part of a poem, Heidegger writes: «Das denkende Dichten ist in der Wahrheit / die Topologie des Seyns. / Sie sagt diesem die Ortschaft seines Wesens». A more extensive formulation is found instead in GA 15, p. 335, where it is related to the event of the truth of being. In the course of the exposition, I will refer to this last formulation.

<sup>6</sup> «Gebirge des Seyns», see: GA 96, p. 144-145.

«*Being, pure being* – without further determinations. In its indeterminate immediacy it is equal only to itself and also not unequal with respect to another; it has no difference within it, nor any outwardly. [...] It is pure indeterminateness and emptiness. – There is *nothing* to be intuited in it [...]. Being, the indeterminate immediate is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than nothing» (Hegel, 2010, p. 149)

These are, as is well known, the first lines of Hegel's *Logic*, where "being" and "nothing" are regarded as immediate, indeterminate, and all in all empty and overlapping. They are mere abstractions that do not yet belong to the speculative movement that characterizes thought – a movement whose first example lies precisely in the category of "becoming", which is the result and truth of being and nothingness.

Let us return to Heidegger's letter from which we had started. There, Heidegger states that the key to understanding his own position with respect to Hegel lies in «the mystery of the 'beginning'» and that this beginning lies in a relation at once simpler and more complex with the question of the beginning as Hegel presents it in his *Logic*. The path we have taken, our *Erörterung*, has confirmed and clarified precisely this passage. In order to determine his own position with respect to Hegel, it is first of all necessary for Heidegger to engage with these pages of Hegel's *Logic*, because there is the *Ort* of the Hegelian system – there is where the truth of being happens in Hegel's philosophy<sup>7</sup>.

How, however, to determine this place? How to map it and how to understand both its specificity and its continuity with what precedes and follows it? Heidegger explains this *Ort* thusly:

«Absolute knowledge is the place of absolute certainty, in which absolute knowledge knows itself. Only in this way can "science," or the knowledge of knowledge, be understood—which now becomes an exact synonym for "philosophy."»

The place where Hegel's proposition arises can thus be precisely determined: it is consciousness, the place of its own conscious being. The constitution of its own conscious being includes that there is only consciousness of an object insofar as consciousness, still more originally, is a being conscious of itself. More precisely, and here one recognizes the Kantian contribution to the Cartesian theme: anything certain arises from the mediation of self-certainty. Otherwise put: all knowledge of objectivity is beforehand a knowledge-about-oneself» (GA 15, p. 348)

At first glance, the link between being-nothing and absolute consciousness does not seem very perspicuous. The analysis of Hegel's position will be the focus of the next section, now it is first necessary to understand the historical nature of Hegel's position in its relation to modern metaphysics – a position that is already hinted at by Heidegger in this very passage through the references to Descartes and Kant.

If the theoretical determination of his own position with respect to Hegel remains for Heidegger a doubt that is never dissolved, on the contrary, the actual historical determination of the role of Hegel's philosophy within the history of metaphysics is for him far more perspicuous and remains virtually unchanged throughout his whole path of thought. For Heidegger, Hegel's philosophy remains true to the trajectory outlined

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger himself makes this process explicit, as he sets the goal for his seminar in Le Thor: «"Pure being and pure nothing are, therefore, the same"? The task here is, first of all, to understand the statement correctly. Even more intently then: what relation could there be between being and nothing for Hegel and this formulation, to which the extra-metaphysical grounding of the ontological difference as concealed source of metaphysics has led? In order to situate this question, the seminar now asks about the place in Hegel's thinking where the above cited statement is to be found» (GA 15, p. 347).

by modern metaphysics and is directly consequential with the metaphysical position of Descartes, Leibniz and Kant. In Heidegger's own words:

«The uniqueness of the systematic of Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling – a systematic that is inherently diverse – has still not been understood. The greatness of the systematic of these thinkers consists in the fact that it does not unfold, as with Descartes, out of the *subiectum* as ego and *substantia finita*. Rather, it unfolds either, as with Leibniz, out of the monad or, as with Kant, out of the transcendental essence of finite reason rooted in the imagination, or, as with Fichte, out of the infinite "I", or, as with Hegel, out of the spirit of absolute knowledge, or, finally, as with Schelling, from out of freedom as the necessity of every particular being which, as such a being, remains determined through the distinction between ground and existence» (GA 5, p. 101)

Heidegger sees a common thread along the course of modern philosophy and sees a continuity unraveling from the foundation of modern thought, with Descartes, all the way to Hegel. Hegel, in fact, is for Heidegger the end of this progression. In other words, Hegel is not only the end (*Ende*), but also the fulfillment (*Vollendung*) of modern metaphysical thought. For Heidegger. This is the place taken by Hegel's system: that of the end and fulfillment of the systematic attempt of modern philosophy - an attempt that, beginning with Descartes' *cogito me cogitare*, leads up to the absolute self-consciousness of Hegel's system<sup>8</sup>. This is the place from which the truth of being happens in Hegel's philosophy, and it is with respect to this place that Heidegger must determine his own position.

Building on this, we can already begin to see some of the difficulties Heidegger faces in figuring out his own position with respect to Hegel's thought – difficulties that descend directly from Hegel's position as the fulfillment of metaphysics. The notion of fulfillment, as we shall see, proves in fact to be deeply ambiguous. While there is no doubt for Heidegger that Hegel is a culmination point within the procession of modern metaphysics, it is equally true that Heidegger also reserves this, simultaneously, also to the philosophy of Schelling and the thought of Nietzsche<sup>9</sup>. When he wants to be more precise, Heidegger states more clearly that Hegel «begins» the fulfillment of metaphysics (GA 2, p. 74), or that he «prepares» it (GA 69, p. 35). In other words, Hegel is the beginning of an end (*Ende*) in that he begins the fulfillment (*Vollendung*). What distinguishes Hegel as the initiator of the fulfillment of metaphysics? Heidegger does not offer explicit answers to this question, and the overview does not get any clearer<sup>10</sup>. The place of the Hegelian system, while distinctly determined, is in fact for Heidegger not easy to map. Once again, the problem is the one Heidegger mentioned in his letter to Gadamer: the question of the beginning. More precisely, we can now understand that the problem lies in the «secret» that binds the end as fulfillment, the beginning of this end in Hegel's system, and the new beginning of thought Heidegger wants to stand for.

Heidegger himself does not dissolve this secret. We, however, can venture a few steps by staying true to the fundamental words Heidegger chose as coordinates to determine his own confrontation with Hegel: beginning, event, negativity. The thesis I want to argue, in fact, does not involve resolving the ambiguity, but wants to deepen

<sup>8</sup> On these themes, see also GA 65, p. 238, where Heidegger states that in the period that goes from Descartes to Hegel there is «a renewed transformation, but no essential change» (GA 65, p. 232).

<sup>9</sup> On these issues I follow Schwab, who points out precisely this «triple ending» of metaphysics (Schwab, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> The best attempt to explain this strange place occupied by Hegel's philosophy is, as far as I know, (Trawny, 1999).

it by showing how precisely in the “beginning-of-the-end” feature that is proper to the Hegelian system lies the determination of its most precise place in the history of Being. The idea is that in Hegel we witness simultaneously the most absolute radicalization of the instances of modern metaphysics, and at the same time a first seed for a new beginning of thought. This initially-conclusive trait typical of Hegel is what determines his position as the beginning of the fulfillment of modern metaphysics, and the recognition of this peculiar trait is the ultimate task for an *Erörterung* of the Hegelian system. Only by delving into this twofoldness and only by going deep into this secret of the beginning is it possible to understand Heidegger’s difficulties in finding his own position with respect to Hegel’s philosophy.

### 3. Beginning(s)

Heidegger himself, in the aforementioned letter to Gadamer, names the problem of the beginning as the crux for understanding his relationship with Hegel. Such a precise determination does not take away from the ambiguous and problematic nature of the matter. The very concept of beginning, in fact, is said in many ways, and each of its meanings contributes to the complexity and variety of the issue of the «secret of the beginning». The simultaneously initial and final character that we have seen shapes Hegel’s place within the history of metaphysics must be understood in its unfolding in the different senses of beginning, starting with that which Heidegger himself names: the beginning «before the start of the ‘movement’» of the *Science of Logic*.

Before Hegel begins to survey the various categories, moments and movements of thought, the *Science of Logic* opens with an interlocutory chapter entitled «With what must the beginning of science be made?» (Hegel, 2010, p. 134). Here Hegel addresses the problem of the beginning that is before the beginning of the logical movement: Hegel determines this problem as the problem of the foundation of science. Denying both that the beginning of science can be something objective (water, one, *nous*, idea, substance, monad) and something subjective (thinking, intuiting, feeling, I, subjectivity), Hegel states that:

«Being is what makes the beginning here; it is presented as originating through mediation, but a mediation which at the same time sublates itself, and the presupposition is of a pure knowledge which is the result of finite knowledge. But if no presupposition is to be made, if the beginning is itself to be taken immediately, then the only determination of this beginning is that it is to be the beginning of logic, of thought as such. [...] The beginning must then be absolute or, what means the same here, must be an abstract beginning; and so there is nothing that it may presuppose, must not be mediated by anything or have a ground, ought to be rather itself the ground of the entire science. [...] Just as it cannot have any determination with respect to an other, so too it cannot have any within; it cannot have any content, for any content would entail distinction and the reference of distinct moments to each other, and hence a mediation. The beginning is therefore pure being» (Hegel, 2010, p. 136)

Since Heidegger locates his problem with Hegel in the question of the beginning of the Logic, his interpretation also begins right here, where Hegel himself discusses the problem of the beginning.<sup>11</sup> It is clear from Hegel’s words that the foundation of

<sup>11</sup> It goes without saying that the aim of this paper is not to provide a correct and orthodox interpretation

the system has a seemingly contradictory character: it must be both immediate and the result of dialectical mediation, it cannot presuppose anything and at the same time presupposes absolute thought, it cannot be a ground and yet it must ground the system, it has no content but from it descends the concreteness of the entire system of the *Logic*<sup>12</sup>. Heidegger dissolves this contradiction in an original way, proposing a backward reading of the system by interpreting Hegel's quote literally: «The beginning is the result». For Heidegger, this means that the beginning is *resultare*, i.e., taking a leap back to the *true* beginning (GA, 86:848). This true beginning is nothing but the already unfolded system, the absolute idea, the result of the absolute mediation and self-reflection of thought. In other words, for Heidegger the beginning of the *Logic* is only the beginning of its own appearing to itself, of its own becoming self-conscious, which in turn is only possible if thought has *already* developed to its own absoluteness. Indeed, only when it is absolute can thought reflect and mirror itself, recognizing its own beginning as an empty and immediate beginning: only then does it in fact possess the strength and concreteness to know its own history, which is precisely what happens in the *Phenomenology*, in which the spirit can recognize its own path because it has reached its end. In Hegel's system, the beginning presupposes the end, and the end is found in the beginning:

The beginning is the end! and the end – the beginning! I.e., the beginning – is immanent [...] The beginning – determines itself from an already finished whole, which shall bring itself into motion as itself. The pure thinking – as self-establishing thought of the thinking of the thought [*Gedachtheit des Denkens des Gedachten*] – the pure determining being? (GA 86, p. 40)

Once again, we find, in Hegel, a peculiar entanglement between end and beginning. In his system, in fact, the beginning as pure being is not actually the *primum* but is the first result of the speculative movement by which thought comes to itself. This is why Heidegger, in the aforementioned letter to Gadamer, will say that the problem lies *before* the beginning of the movement of the *Logic*. Once the logical engine of the Hegelian system is set in motion, nothing prevents it from arriving at the completion of the system in the absolute idea. If, on the other hand, Heidegger needs to find *his own* position with respect to Hegel, he will have to intervene before this movement takes place.

Naturally, one may ask what is wrong with Hegel's position, or why it is necessary to intervene. Certainly, the Hegelian system represents a special case within the history of metaphysics, a case that seems almost to elude from that onto-theo-logical structure that for Heidegger characterizes all Western thought and underlies modern technological thinking. Indeed, Hegel denies that there can be any determinate *Grund*, denies that any given principle can by itself take the highest ontological degree of being of beings, and denies the instrumentality of all logic. This, however, from Heidegger's perspective, is far from excluding Hegel from the domain of the metaphysical tradition, of which indeed, we have seen, he represents the culmination. Indeed, Heidegger goes

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of the problem of beginning/foundation in Hegel, but to discuss Heidegger's interpretation of it. For an introduction to these issues in Hegel, see (Hyppolite, 1952), (Rockmore, 1989), and (Maker, 1994). For an interpretation that systematically tries to point some supposed problems in Heidegger's interpretation, see (Sell, 1998).

<sup>12</sup> It should be remembered that the *Logic* begins precisely where *Phenomenology* ends and it presupposes it: thought, having come to recognize itself in *Phenomenology* as absolute spirit, now goes in search of its own pure categories.

so far as to say that precisely Hegel's *Logic* is «the clearest and greatest example of this unity of tradition» (GA 65, p. 76). We now need to understand why this is the case and we must investigate once again the meaning of the peculiar place occupied by Hegel's system in the history of metaphysics. This time, we will focus more specifically on the question of the foundation of knowledge and its connection to the problem of the beginning.

From Heidegger's point of view, even with regard to the question of the foundation, Hegel is the fulfillment of modern philosophy - a position which, we have seen, presupposes both continuity and discontinuity. As is well known, for Heidegger, the problem of the foundation is the central thread of all modern philosophy. Beginning with Descartes, in fact, knowledge can no longer arise immediately, but needs a justification and a foundation. The being of beings is understood as objectivity of the object, as that which stands against the thinking subject, which alone guarantees its existence and epistemic and moral validity. The subject, in turn, since it cannot find any external given ground, thus grounds itself by an act of reflection: the *cogito me cogitare*. The subjectivity of the subject, its reflexivity, becomes in the modern post-Cartesian world the guarantee of the objectivity of the object, it becomes that which offers being to beings, which exists, is valid and works only in reference to the subject<sup>13</sup>.

In the course of modern philosophical thought, the second decisive step taken by the principle of ground/foundation is Kant and his concept of the transcendental. Heidegger interprets the Kantian transcendental as the dimension of the objectivity of the object. In fact, in order to have an object, that is, something that stands in stable and certain opposition to the subject, it is first necessary to investigate the conditions of possibility of the object as such. These conditions of possibility reside, for Heidegger, in the transcendental apperception of the subject, which in its synthetic unity becomes the site of the guarantee of the possibility of the objectivity of the object. The objectivity of the object stands above and before the object itself; it is transcendental and thus referred to the transcendental and reflexive subjectivity of the *Ich denke*. Transcendental subjectivity, as the set of these conditions of possibility, is thus also the set of rules for a given phenomenon to be constituted as an object, that is, as something grounded and certain for judgment<sup>14</sup>.

Consistent with his ambiguous position of fulfillment, Hegel stands as much in continuity as in discontinuity with the Kantian transcendental. Indeed, on the one hand, Heidegger speaks explicitly of the «transcendental-monadological essence of absolute metaphysics» (GA 86, p. 267). On the other hand, Heidegger explains the difference between the two as follows:

«There is a difference between the objectivity of the object in Kant and the appearance of the appearing in Hegel. In Kant, the objectivity of the object is appearance for the subjectivity, in Hegel, the appearance of the appearing happens in the essence, this precisely is the subjectivity» (GA 86, p. 758)

Here lies the difference. In Kant, the certainty of knowledge lies in the fact that the object appears to a subject, whose transcendental forms constitute objectivity and

<sup>13</sup> See first and foremost GA 5, p. 108-111. Also interesting is Heidegger's interpretation of Descartes' *Regulae* in GA 76, p. 191-208.

<sup>14</sup> Here I refer mostly to the reading Heidegger carries on in GA 41. On the relationship between Heidegger and Kant, see as introductions (Schalow, 2013) (Blattner, 2006). For a somewhat different reading of the question of the transcendental in Heidegger, see the analytical interpretations contained in (Crowell & Jeff, 2007).

found synthetic and grounded knowledge. In Hegel, the assurance of knowledge is not the subjectivity of a transcendental subject with its *a priori* forms. It is appearance itself that appears to itself, that reflects itself not in other, but within itself, *thus* becoming other. The essence of which Heidegger speaks is the process of negativity that causes all positivity to have to come out of itself, appear to itself, and then return to itself. We are here facing a new iteration of what we saw when we looked at the problem of the beginning of the movement in the *Logic*. Both here and then, in the beginning knowledge has already arrived at the end, that is, at the absolute. Only for this reason it can and must now go outside itself, must appear to itself, in order to *know* itself as absolute in-and-for-itself. The appearance of absolute knowledge is interpreted by Heidegger as that process by which spirit, in itself already absolute, reflects in itself and learns to know itself in its own absoluteness. In Heidegger's eyes, this is what Hegel means when he states that «everything hangs on grasping and expressing the true not just as substance but just as much as subject» (Hegel, 2018, p. 12). Subject and subjectivity, here, do not mean something like individuality or personality. Their meaning must be understood in an exquisitely ontological sense. Subjective literally means “*sub-jectum*”, i.e., “that-which-lies-beneath”. The subject is what lies beneath and pivots the movement of reflection. In other words, subjectivity, reflexivity and negativity (understood as the motor of reflection), are in Hegel inextricably intertwined<sup>15</sup>.

From what we have said, we now return to the main issue, that of the link between beginning and foundation and that of Hegel's position as the fulfillment of metaphysics. There is no doubt that Hegel represents a new and original step within metaphysics, but this does not mean that he jumps out of this tradition. For if, compared to Descartes and Kant, Hegel denies the possibility of a single foundation that underlies the entire system, his proclaimed *Voraussetzungslosigkeit*<sup>16</sup> does not mean that he actually eschews the *Satz vom Grund*. Likewise, the fact that, unlike Kant and Descartes, the object is not guaranteed by a single individual subjectivity certainly does not mean that Hegel more generally renounces the possibility of a new kind of subjectivity and a new conception of reflexivity. Subjectivity, as the structure of reflexivity, does not disappear in Hegel, nor does its guarantee of foundationality<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, Hegel represents in this sense the absolutization, i.e., the liberation and extremization of the principle of foundation. This means that in his system subjectivity, representation, reflexivity and foundationality become absolute, that is, *ab-solutus*, free and untied from any connection to something else. Foundation is founded by itself, just as appearance appears to itself. No single foundation is given but each moment, each point on the circumference is as much the end as the beginning of the circle of knowledge<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> It should appear clear how Heidegger is moving here in a dimension that is antecedent to the distinction between subjectivity and intersubjectivity, between the self and the other: at stake here is the reflexivity that constitutes any form of subjectivity – whether singular, plural, contrastive, in struggle or in harmony with others. This is why I cannot agree with Sinnerbrink's criticism of Heidegger, for example, for which Heidegger fails to understand these more contemporary aspects of Hegel's thought (Sinnerbrink, 2007). The problem is more radical and more original, and is part of Heidegger's attempt to rethink the human being no longer as subject among subjects but as *Dasein*.

<sup>16</sup> On this concept in Hegel, see (Houlgate, 2006). For a different, anti-foundationalist reading of Hegel, see once again (Maker, 1994). The intention here is not to enter into this internal debate within Hegel's scholarship, but to exhibit the position of Heidegger, for whom Hegel, though in a peculiar position, is not outside the perimeter of metaphysics and its quest for a foundation.

<sup>17</sup> See for example GA 5, p. 161.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, this does not answer the legitimate question as to why *Logic* then begins precisely with being. I follow here the interpretation of Houlgate, for whom. «the decision made by the thinker to

We are confronted, yet again, with a strange combination of beginning and end in Hegel's system, this time observed from the more specific point of view of the problem of the system's foundation – a problem we have interpreted, in the wake of Heidegger's own words to Gadamer, as that which is before the movement of the *Logic*. If all this is true, then it is here that the possibility for Heidegger to determine his own position with respect to Hegel is at stake. In other words, it is from this specific point of view of the beginning as foundation that we must be able to determine what characterizes Hegel's peculiar place as the beginning of the fulfillment of metaphysics and thus also the position Heidegger must take with respect to it. Since the *Erörterung*, we have seen, is for Heidegger the determination of the peculiar position of a philosopher in the unfolding of the truth of being, then we must be able to deduce, from what we have said about the end, the beginning, and the foundation, what Hegel's peculiar position is regarding being, beings, and the being of beings. Heidegger describes this position of Hegel most clearly in a page of the *Beiträge zur Philosophie*, which is worth quoting in its entirety and then commenting on:

«Absolute idealism seems to overcome the priority of beings, for the exclusive determination of the object on the basis of objectivity [...] signifies nothing other than the establishment of the priority of beingness over beings. Therefore, it is indeed impossible, for instance, to follow Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* precisely in its beginning ("sense certainty") unless the incorporation of the sensible object into the actuality of absolute spirit is already thought in advance and absolutely. [...] This interpretation would nevertheless amount to a downright misunderstanding of idealism, for even idealism adheres to the priority of beings over beingness and merely covers over this relation while seeming to reverse it. Every objectivity, on every one of its levels, is indeed determined on the basis of the absolute. Yet objectivity as such is already, according to its essence [...], not only related to the object but also determined from the object as from a determinate interpretation of beings on the basis of a starting point within beings themselves. Through sublation into absolute knowledge, objectivity seems to disappear, but it is merely extended into the objectivity of self-consciousness and of reason. Precisely this, that beingness is grounded in absolute subjectivity, shows very well that this being, the *subjectum*, as relational center of all representing to oneself, decides over beingness [...] Therefore absolute idealism, though it seems to dissolve everything into being, actually carries out the complete disempowerment of being in favor of an undisputed and limitless empowerment of beings» (GA 65, p. 426-427)<sup>19</sup>

The first fact to be extracted from this lengthy quotation is once again the inherent ambiguity of Hegel's position. The novelty that separates Hegel from the rest of metaphysics and makes him its fulfillment is that the objectivity of the object, that is, the

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focus on pure being does not constitute a founding presupposition of the *Logic*: one that determines in advance the path that the *Logic* will take», but rather «the decision to think pure being at the start of the *Logic* initiates a study of the basic categories of thought rather than action in the world. Nevertheless, as a decision or act of will, it is the same as the act described in the *Philosophy of Right*: an act of abstraction by thought». As an act of abstraction, it only makes sense to begin precisely with the most abstract of categories. i.e., with being. Recently, this argument was convincingly brought forward by Dunphy, who demonstrated the impossibility of other beginnings of *Logic* (Dunphy, 2021).

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger is, of course, referring here to the *Phenomenology*, but as shown earlier there is a similar structure linking the two works: in both cases, in fact, there is a beginning of the exposition that does not correspond to the true speculative-systematic beginning, which is instead the end, in absolute thought. This structural and systematic analogy makes it possible to move from one to the other, not least because Heidegger's argument remains almost identical for the two scenarios.

being of beings, in Hegel no longer needs a single entity to act as the foundation for everything but is absolute and thus free to appear and think of itself only from itself. The autonomy of the being of beings from any given entity, however, does not yet mean the liberation of the question of being, for being, in the Hegelian system, even when it becomes *Wirklichkeit*, still remains the being of beings. The foundational model of a single entity serving as the being of beings is not overcome but brought to completion insofar as it is made absolute. It is true that it is no longer a matter of a single entity serving as a foundation, but now the entire domain of what can be, i.e., reality understood in its broadest and highest sense as *Wirklichkeit*, is thought of on the model of beings as subject and object. Reality, the being of beings, is *subject* insofar as it becomes the pivotal point for the reflection through which reality appears to itself and can thus know itself and become self-conscious. Since on the other hand this process of reflection is immanent, so that *Wirklichkeit* thinks and knows *itself*, the being of beings becomes the *object* of its own reflection, it comes out of itself so that it can then return to itself enriched with the awareness of its own in-and-for itself.

This is the ontological position that determines for Heidegger the uniqueness of Hegel's thought within the history of being: having freed the being of beings from all particular entities and having brought to fruition «the complete disempowerment of being in favor of an undisputed and limitless empowerment of beings». On this basis, Heidegger certainly does not fail to repeatedly and insistently remark how Hegel still belongs to metaphysics and how he is nothing more than a variation on the theme of the oblivion of being. Yet, the problem remains. If Hegel were merely a metaphysician among others, if his fulfillment was nothing more than a reiteration of old ontological categories, it is not clear why it should be so complicated for Heidegger to determine his own position with respect to him. The fact that, in his letter to Gadamer, Heidegger states that a simple contra-position is not satisfactory suggests that something happens in this fulfillment that complicates the matter. The ontological novelty of the Hegelian system requires special attention. We learn from the letter to Gadamer that, for Heidegger in Hegel – i.e., in the end of metaphysics – lies the question of «the mystery of the “beginning” ». It is now necessary to see how Heidegger establishes this dialogue between end and beginning.

#### 4. From the End to the Event

In determining his own comparison with Hegel, Heidegger preventively states that it requires taking into account «the uniqueness of the standpoint of his philosophy» (GA 68, p. 4). Since Hegel in fact represents the culmination of metaphysical philosophy, a confrontation with him cannot be an attempt to graft oneself above him, nor, by virtue of the intrinsic systematicity of Hegel's system, can one introduce an external principle to unhinge it. All such attempts fail because they do not grasp that unique and ambiguous position of Hegel within the history of being, as we have displayed in the conclusion of the previous section. What then is the point of view from which to approach a dialogue with Hegel? Heidegger provides the answer: «This starting point of the confrontation must indeed lie in Hegel's philosophy, but hidden as the ground that is essentially inaccessible and indifferent to it» (GA 68, p. 4). We return once again to the problem of the foundation, of the *Grund*, and thus of the beginning. Heidegger now states that the key word to find this hidden ground within Hegel's system is negativity<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> On the problem of negativity in Hegel and Heidegger, as well as for an introduction to these pages,

«What is that fundamental determination of Hegel's philosophy whose thinking through leads back to a more original point of view, because it can only be truly seen as such first from this point of view? And what is this basic determination, that it at the same time remains fair to the worked through of the Hegelian system? We claim: this basic determination is "negativity"» (GA 68, p. 6)

We have already seen the importance of the negative in the Hegelian system: it is in fact «the tremendous power of the negative; it is the energy of thinking» (Hegel, 2018, p. 20) that sets the *Logic* in motion. Likewise, that movement by which the spirit is moved to its own reflection is nothing other than «the labor of the negative» (Hegel, 2018, p. 13), which pushes the spirit out of itself and causes it to place itself as an object to itself, so that it can then return to itself. If this is true, then Heidegger's two indications for which one must grasp the secret Grund of the Hegelian system and, as the letter to Gadamer put it, for which one must grasp the secret of the beginning before the beginning of the logical movement, now appear to be the same thing. The issue at stake is to rethink negativity in an alternative way to the Hegelian view that considers it the logical-dialectical engine of the system. This is for Heidegger the only way to confront Hegel's system from its own peculiar place and attack it at its secret foundation, before it can unfold into the absolute system.

That same ambiguity that characterizes the Hegelian system in general as the fulfillment of metaphysics also applies to its key concept, negativity. Indeed, Heidegger says that: «Negativity both is unquestioned in the system of the completion of the occidental metaphysics, and in general within the history of metaphysics» (GA 68, p. 39). Paradox would have it that precisely in the Hegelian system, where the negative is all-pervasive as the motor that moves every dialectical moment, and thus represents the fulfillment of the metaphysical conception of negativity, it is precisely here that the true concept of the negative is most absent. In a similar way to what we have seen happen with the being of beings, a double movement takes place here with regard to negativity. On the one hand, the metaphysical conception of negativity arrives at its fulfillment insofar as each individual moment of the system incorporates its own negative: this is necessary insofar as no single moment can claim the right to be the absolute or the foundation, but each must come out of itself, deny itself as an absolute and then return to itself as only a moment within the system. On the other hand, this negativity is never simple negativity, but is determined negativity. In Hegel's own words:

On the other hand, as was formerly pointed out, in comprehensive thinking, the negative belongs to the content itself and is the positive, both as its immanent movement and determination and as the totality of these. Taken as a result, it is the determinate negative which emerges out of this movement and is likewise thereby a positive content (Hegel, 2018, p. 37)

The negative appears as a moment of the positive, it is never maintained in its negativity, but is always resolved into a determinate and positive content. This is why

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see (Pöggeler, 1995), (de Boer K. , 2010), (de Boer K. , 2000) and Dahlstrom, who rightly points out how «Heidegger's criticism of Hegel's conception of negativity may be said to operate on three levels. [...] He charges (a) that Hegel fails to offer an explanation of the senses of negativity that he presupposes; (b) that he uncritically assumes senses of negativity inherent in a modern conception of thinking as representing, and as a result overlooks the ontological difference – or, better, the senses of the ontological difference, given Hegel's narrow and broad senses of 'being' – to which those senses of negativity correspond; and (c) that there is another way of thinking of nothing (i.e., a primordial nothing coincident with primordial being) that underlies the senses of negativity» (Dahlstrom, 2011, p. 531).

Heidegger can state that: «Hegel's negativity is not one, because it is never serious about the not and the negation at all, – it has already cancelled the not into the “yes”» (GA 68, p. 47). The conclusion Heidegger draws from this is stark:

In Hegel's metaphysics a transformation of thinking finds as little room as in any other metaphysics. What looks like transformation there - according to the dialectical overcomings [*Aufhebungen*] - is only the change of the stages of reflection and their reflection. It is not by chance that the absolute consciousness as the first stage of which Hegel understands “Reason” has the form of negativity in the sense of negation of negation. The path of dialectics never leads to a transformation of thinking. (GA 76, p. 274-275)

From Heidegger's point of view, since in Hegel's system the true beginning is the absolute system that must appear to itself, within the history of the experience of consciousness there is no room for new events or unexpected turns: the path of the spirit is the triumphant march by which the spirit in itself absolute returns to itself to know itself absolutely. The ending, so to speak, is already written in advance. For this reason, within the system there is no room for any metamorphosis, and any attempt to use the Hegelian system to propose a revolution outside of metaphysics is doomed to failure. On closer reading, however, this does not mean that Hegel's thought does not play an important role in Heidegger's attempt at a new thought. For if there is no space *within* Hegel's system, the recognition of what lies secretly at the *base* (*Grund*) of his system, and which therefore can only come to light through a confrontation with it, can certainly play a role. In other words, through a confrontation with Hegel, negativity can be highlighted as an indispensable moment for the thought of being. Indeed, Heidegger states:

«With the beginning of the completion of metaphysics, the preparation begins, unrecognized and essentially inaccessible to metaphysics, for a first appearance of the twofoldness of Being and beings. In this appearance the first resonance of the truth of Being still conceals itself, taking back into itself the precedence of Being with regard to its dominance» (GA 7, p. 76)

With the beginning of the fulfillment of metaphysics, which we have identified with the Hegelian system, the possibility of bringing the negative into focus as an irreducible difference between being and beings comes to light for the first time. This provided that we do not remain within the Hegelian system, in which the negative is not yet unleashed in all its nullifying force, but only if we are able to grasp negativity for the first time in Hegel as the secret ground of his system. From that ground, says Heidegger, it is possible to determine the task of thought as that of properly thinking the negative as irreducibly negative, and to transform that secret ground (*Grund*) into an abyss (*Abgrund*)<sup>21</sup>. In this way, Heidegger says, thanks to Hegel and against Hegel, «in the thinking of the history of being the essential power of negation [*Nicht-haften*] and reversal comes into the open for the first time» (GA 65, p. 84). With the last considerations, we can go back to where we started and re-interpret Heidegger's letter to Gadamer. It should now be clear why Heidegger's position with respect to

<sup>21</sup> It may be useful to resume the already quoted GA 68, p. 47 and continue the previous quotation: «Hegel's negativity is not one, because it is never serious about the not and the negation at all, – it has already cancelled the not into the “yes” The objective-present [*Gegenständliche-Zuständliche*] in the beingness of the unconditional thinking. The nothingness: the “ground”, the abyss [*Ab-Grund*]. The being “is” the “nothing”, – not because they are equally indeterminate and unmediated, but “fundamentally” different are the one! That, which first opens “decision” [*Ent-scheidung*]».

Hegel must be more articulate than a mere contraposition: a mere opposition would in fact be unable to grasp the peculiarity of the Hegelian system, its role as much final as initial, and its paradoxical contribution to the thought of the history of being. The secret of the beginning that Heidegger mentioned in his letter is in fact nothing more than the problem of the foundation of the Hegelian system, namely negativity. The mystery of the beginning, in this sense, must be thought of before the beginning of the logical movement since negativity must be redeemed from its role as a dialectical engine in the Hegelian system. The question remains, then, in what sense the beginning, as Heidegger understands it, is «far more difficult because it is simpler» than how Hegel thinks of it. The key word for understanding this aspect of Heidegger's thought is «*Ereignis*».

Naturally, since “*Ereignis*” is the key word of the entire path of thought of the later Heidegger, it is not possible here to offer an exhaustive account. It will suffice, however, to point out those features of the event that are most decisive for the comparison with Hegel. For this, we can focus on one aspect, that, we shall see, plays an important role: the significance of the event for the problem of history<sup>22</sup>.

Heidegger's laconic statement that «until now man has never been historical» (GA 65, p. 492) also and especially applies to the Hegelian concept of history. According to Heidegger, in fact, Hegel thinks history, understood as the history of spirit, already from the point of view of absolute spirit. We have here a further iteration of the initial-final structure that Heidegger detects in the Hegelian system. Since only absolute spirit is able to reflect on its own history, then the final moment (absolute spirit itself) is already presupposed in any consideration of its past – no matter whether it is historical or logical past. The beginning of the spirit's history will always be its end.

This consideration leads to a paradox and two consequences. The paradox is that in Hegel the possibility of a philosophy of history and the history of philosophy opens up for the first time. Only as metaphysics has reached its completion, in fact, does it open the space for it to think its own history (GA 9, p. 428). The paradox lies in the fact that this view, instead of opening the space for alternative thinking to metaphysics, ends up becoming its absolute legitimization, as is evident in the Hegelian interpretation of the Greek world<sup>23</sup>. Conversely, the two consequences are that in Hegel's view there is only one history with only one end. Since the negative is already always immanent to the intrinsic development of the spirit, in the history of this development no revolutions or interruptions, changes of course or deviations are possible, but only the full budding of the spirit to its absolute form. The history of the spirit is the history of its own organic development, and thus leaves no room for anything to divert its course from its absolute end. In Heidegger's words:

«It seems as if history is truly included in Hegel's “systematics”, so that Hegel's own position appears as a necessary stage within history. Indeed, “history” is included in the

<sup>22</sup> I claim that although they are not opposites, the problem of history as destiny is more radical and more essential to the confrontation between Heidegger and Hegel than that of time, which instead is at the core of (de Boer K., 2000). A consequence of this approach is also the choice of texts I will examine: I will not focus much on *Sein und Zeit*, but on Heidegger's writings after the turn, in which Hegel is much more present and Heidegger's interpretation becomes much more refined.

<sup>23</sup> See first of all GA 9, p. 427-444. The thesis expressed there is that Hegel regards the Greek world and its philosophy not in their possible initial value, but always already from the fulfillment of history and thought that belongs to the modern world and the system of absolute knowledge. On this theme in Hegel's system, connected, as indeed Heidegger also does, to the problem of beauty and aesthetics, see (Menke, 2009).

“systematics” – it only seems so –; but thereby it comes to light that the “systematics” (as the dialectic of the absolute representation of the absolute) needs stages of representation, which in their necessity are at the same time transferred back as figures into the past. In truth, it is not “systematics” that is historical (at most absolutely historical), but history is made systematic and thus annihilated in essence. Hegel appears only as necessary in the unity of the stages of his absolute systematics, and his thinking is therefore only “historical” on the basis of the fact that he makes history absolute, calculates history in the sense of dialectics». (GA 76, p. 102)

It is against this view of fulfillment as the perfection of philosophy that Heidegger brings into play his own concept of *Vollendung*. Indeed, the latter, far from being its legitimization, represents the possibility of gathering together the entire history of metaphysics from Hegel to the Greeks in order to see its hidden foundation, and thus prepare the way for its overthrow<sup>24</sup>. If history, in Hegel’s sense, can be defined as the unfolding of a path already taken, and thus as something that must ultimately be surpassed, Heidegger highlights precisely its event-like character<sup>25</sup>. There is no single story, with an end always already given. On the contrary, history is the story of each time initial events that determine the epochs of the history of being.

The difference between Hegel and Heidegger’s conception of history is not, as is too often said, a problem of reversal, whereby Heidegger would favor the beginning of Western philosophy, while Hegel would favor its end. Heidegger’s problem is to make history plural. It is no longer a matter of one beginning, but of several beginnings, each with its own surplus richness over the existing, each unique and non-deductible from what preceded it (GA 70, p. 64). Here also lies the Heideggerian new consideration of negativity: it is no longer a matter of thinking negativity as a determinate negation that guarantees the continuity of the unique and intrinsic development of spirit in history. The event thinks negativity as plurality without presupposing unity. Heidegger stylizes the gap between himself and Hegel with the following formula: «For Hegel, the thing [*Sache*] of thinking [*Denkens*] is thought [*Gedanke*] as the absolute concept. For us, the thing of thinking, provisionally named, is the difference as difference» (GA 11, p. 56). If each beginning determines a different age in history, there is no single “why” in the history of being, but each age has its own necessity as manifestation and destiny of being (GA 14, p. 62). This is how Heidegger explains, with a metaphor, the difference between Hegel’s thought as determined negation, as the necessary path of spirit and as a circle of circles, and his own thought of being as an event:

«The epochs can never be derived from each other and even be put on the track of a continuous process. Nevertheless, there is a tradition [*Überlieferung*] from epoch to epoch. But it does not run between the epochs like a band that connects them, but the tradition comes each time from the hiddenness of the destiny, as from a spring different rivulets spring up, which feed a stream that is everywhere and nowhere» (GA 10, p. 135)

<sup>24</sup> I owe this interpretation of the *Vollendung* to (Bernasconi, 1985).

<sup>25</sup> See these notes by Heidegger for his 1955-1956 seminar on Hegel’s *Logik des Wesens*: «Hegel – and the history of “being”. Such a destiny – that the history of thinking – as the thought in its process – is overcoming [*aufhebend*] – while Heidegger – the destiny as a whole is not overcome [*aufgehoben*], but kept in the verity of the salvage [*verwahrt in die Wahrnis der Bergung*] – event. Not only “overcome” [*aufgehoben*] – into the completeness of the absolute knowledge». (GA 86, p. 463).

## 5. Conclusion

The task we had set ourselves was to provide an interpretation of Heidegger's letter to Gadamer dated December 2, 1971. At the end of this course, we can quote it again and try to offer an explanation of it, or at least to deepen the question that was posed there:

I myself do not know clearly enough how my 'position' vis-à-vis Hegel is to be determined— it would not be enough to put it down as a 'counterposition'; the determination of 'position' is connected with the question concerning the mystery of the 'beginning' [Anfangs]; it is far more difficult because it is simpler than the explanation Hegel gives for it before the start of the 'movement' in his *Logik*

Our first goal was to undertake an *Erörterung* of Hegel's thought and thus to identify his peculiar position within the history of being. This was shown to be the beginning of the end of metaphysics. Determining the position occupied by Hegel in the history of being is a necessary step for Heidegger to orient himself and determine his own position. We have seen how Hegel's position as the beginning of the end of metaphysics is related to the problem of the beginning. First, it is connected in that Hegel is precisely the *beginning* of the end of metaphysics. Secondly, we have analyzed how at different moments and levels of the Hegelian system Heidegger is characterized by a peculiar connection precisely between beginning and end: the end always determines the beginning and the beginning is visible only from the end. This applies as much to the logical beginning as to the more properly historical beginning. The mystery of the beginning of which Heidegger speaks in his letter has subsequently been identified in negativity, understood as the foundation of the Hegelian system, of which it is the driving force and, in the form of intrinsic and determined negation, the guarantee of the certainty of absolute knowledge. When thinking about his own position with respect to Hegel, we have seen how Heidegger cannot be content with a simple contra-position that denies the peculiar ambiguity of the Hegelian system but goes in search of a more complex stance. This stance stems from rethinking negativity as it is before it initiates the logical movement, and thus before it is thought of as dialectical negation.

This new concept of negativity and the corresponding rethinking of the beginning become evident, as we have seen, in the thought of the *Ereignis*. In the *Ereignis*, in fact, the mystery of the beginning truly is thought of as «far more difficult because it is simpler» than it is in Hegel. It is more difficult because it must think negativity and the beginning beyond the metaphysical tradition. It is at the same time simpler because it thinks the negative and the beginning as they are themselves, unlike Hegelian fulfilled metaphysics, which always thinks the negative and the beginning from the absolute:

«Hegel conceives the beginning of the occidental philosophy as the first preliminary stage of his philosophy and i.e. of the philosophy of German idealism as the absolute metaphysics. With this is already said: the beginning is not conceived in itself, not in its beginningness, i.e., in the being out of its own ground and back into its own ground, but as a preliminary stage for...and thus (in the interpretation) as dependent on the completion of occidental metaphysics, which Hegel knows he himself is» (GA 76, p. 26)

In contrast to the Hegelian model, event thinking lets the destiny of being simply be itself: the every time principal and radically historical plural happening by which being destines itself. In contrast to the Hegelian infinity, being as event is shown to be

radically more initial because it is more final, that is, more finite<sup>26</sup>. Every configuration or destination, every «economy of being», as Schürmann puts it (Schürmann, 1982), is not *the* one, ultimate reality, but only *a* possibility, destined to dawn in order to let a no one rise.

How, then, to draw a final balance of Heidegger's position towards Hegel? That hesitancy which at first seemed to be a limitation and lack on Heidegger's side now appears in a different light. The ambiguity of the position is not a weakness in Heidegger's thought, but an act of consistency toward Hegel's ambiguous position as the fulfillment of metaphysics. When Heidegger stands before Hegel, before him lies the decisive question about the fate of metaphysics, and this fate, in its fulfillment, shows the ambiguity of its own vanishing. Says Heidegger: «The completion of metaphysics is its passing away. In passing it does not disappear, but it enters into the twisting [*Verwindung*] of its essence. In this it has its historical remaining» (GA 76, p. 4). Inasmuch as Hegel is precisely this fulfillment, his is the thought in which metaphysics «goes down to the ground [*zu-grunde-geht*]» (GA 71, p. 271), that is, he glimpses that secret foundation (*Grund*) that allows the leap to negativity as the abyss (*Ab-Grund*) of being<sup>27</sup>. This is why Heidegger can state that «the decisive question therefore remains whether Hegel's philosophy could be original enough in itself to conceive the beginning» (GA 76, p. 25). For only by understanding the end of metaphysics from the originality of the beginning is it possible to gain that perspective with which «to look Hegel's systematics from a dominating view and yet to think in a completely opposite way» (GA 65, p. 176)<sup>28</sup>.

The task set before thought when it confronts Hegel, while clarified in its destination, does not make it any less paradoxical. There where metaphysics has reached its completion, its highest degree and its absolute development, there also lurks a window of opportunity<sup>29</sup>. This glimmer leads not yet to the new, but to the understanding of the

<sup>26</sup> On the tensions between Hegel's infinite reason and Heidegger's essentially finite subjectivity is interesting the recent work by Pippin (Pippin, 2022). Although I agree with Pippin's interpretation of Hegel's meaning of infinity, I believe that Heidegger's criticism of Hegel remains valid if one shifts the focus from the problem of subjectivity and *Dasein* to the more radical problem of the plurality of events in the destiny of being. The problem is not so much the finitude of the individual subject, which is a trait that applies to both authors, but the broader problem that takes place in the second Heidegger and involves the very possibility of difference as difference. The problem, that is, of whether the history of being can be nothing but a continuous and *infinite Aufhebung*, or whether each configuration of the sense of being must be taken as such, as a *finite* moment, each time initial and unique, inductible and destined to perish.

<sup>27</sup> For the problem of the «going under towards the abyss», see (Ma, 2019). To Ma I also owe the methodological assumption of applying a principle of charity that allows to reconstruct a unified view of Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel among his various texts. However, I do not agree with Ma's idea of such a clear difference between these texts and the *Contributions to Philosophy* regarding the problem of nothingness. In both cases, it seems to me that the question of nothingness, the abyss, and being are present and intertwined. The problem is not central to this paper, except insofar as it has to do with Hegel, but I think it is more interesting to try to read the essentializing of being time after time as nothingness, that is, as the ground-less opening of a new destiny of being as no-thing.

<sup>28</sup> See also GA 24, p. 400: «Hegel saw everything that is possible. But the question is whether he saw it from the radical centre of philosophy, whether he exhausted all the possibilities of the beginning so as to say that he is at the end» (quoted in Bernasconi, 1985, p. 2).

<sup>29</sup> It is not difficult to hear an echo of Hölderlin's verses: «Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / das Rettende auch». For the sake of brevity, it has not been possible to also consider Hölderlin's contribution to Heidegger's understanding of the fulfillment of metaphysics, which Heidegger recalls more explicitly for the question of technology, and less so for Hölderlin's relationship to absolute idealism, from which he instead wants to distance Hölderlin as much as possible. Demonstrating that things are in fact even

end, and thus to the opening of the space for the transition to the new beginning: «From here no bridge leads into the other beginning. But we have to know just this thought of the German idealism, because it prepares the end» (GA 65, p. 203).

If all of this is true, then the ultimate test for thought in the face of Hegel's system is to defeat the temptation to overcome (*Aufheben*) the paradox itself, but to keep it alive and open:

« The overcoming of metaphysics is not negation and annulment; in it, what has been comes into essence and yet remains remembered» (GA 70, p. 193). This is why, on the same page, Heidegger can say that: «the completion of metaphysics (Hegel – Nietzsche) is the closest to the transition into overcoming» (GA 70, p. 192-193) and that «to call Hegel to one's aid in order to make the thinking of the history of the being "clear" is like to want to produce fire out of water» (GA 70, p. 193). These statements are as much contradictory as they equally belonging to the ambiguity of the fulfillment of metaphysics, with respect to which the premise Heidegger makes at the beginning of his lectures on Hegel inevitably always applies:

«However, Hegel is not regarded as an arbitrary occasion and starting point for a philosophical confrontation. His philosophy stands definitively in the history of thinking – or, we want to say: of being – as the unique and not yet comprehended demand of an confrontation with it for any thinking that comes after it or even only wants to prepare philosophy again» (GA 68, p. 3).

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here more complex than a simple contra-position, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

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