

New Beginnings

From the Ending of Worlds to the Vision of Futures



In times of uncertainty and instability we turn towards new beginnings. Which poses the question: Is it possible to start anew, to leave the past and status quo behind and create something entirely new? In philosophy, the hallmark of freedom is the ability to begin something new (within the self and the world at large).

The Bible prophesizes *“Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”* (Isaiah 43:18-19) and thus calls upon a God of new beginnings and the power of religious imagination. But it also calls forth the possibility of social and political renewal.

LIMINA 9:2 (autumn 2026) explores the topic of “New Beginnings. From the ending of worlds to the vision of futures” and seeks out philosophical, theological and cultural science potentials and possibilities for new beginnings.

From a philosophical perspective, the question of new beginnings is fundamental to the question of freedom. Contained within that perspective are a plethora of theories and possibilities. While some schools of thought follow a determinist view, others see the ability to create something new without a concrete causality as a defining characteristic of humanity.

The former denies free will, whereas the latter requires free will. The assumption that all actions are solely determined by the brain without any intervention from the subject themselves, leading them into a future without agency, leans into a fatalist existence. In order to meaningfully discuss intentional and directable new beginnings, we need to presup-

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pose that people possess a certain scope for free decision-making despite the limitations and conditions of human behaviour.

The transhumanist conviction that technology will surpass humanity in its capability rests on the belief in a future where the world will be more liveable and people embody a higher morality – before they are replaced by machines. Even ecological concerns about the environmental future facing existing threats and expected challenges are promised to be solved by technological and digital developments. In transhumanism, we can overcome all current crises through technology.

Walter Benjamin proposes that there is a tipping point at which exceptional instances can no longer be deemed exceptions and instead need to be recognised as the new normal. Following this line of thinking, a new generation of critical theorists interprets the omnipresence of on-going crises as an indicator that modernist world views have outlived their reality. Thus, the idea of a rationally explainable, controllable and configurable world is revealed to be an illusion. The human-effected Anthropocene and its physical consequences on the planet demonstrate the fundamental fallacy of a nature/culture dichotomy and render human (omni-)potency impotent. Apocalyptic predications based on this critique herald the end of Modernism and the emergence of a new era – an era of realisation that humans are ontologically embedded in a planetary ecosystem alongside a diversity of human and beyond-human beings; an era in which humans expand their awareness and knowledge horizon and open up new possibilities for creation.

Theological perspectives on “new beginnings” can be gleaned from the Bible’s prophecies that answer the question of reversal and renewal with both threats of punishing evil and promises of a better future through salvation. Their interpretations point towards ethical and social issues and deciding considerations pertaining to the right moment (*kairós*), historical dynamics and eschatology. Ultimately, all human efforts to end injustice, violence and destruction reveal God himself to be the creator of new life and possibilities. But the Bible also presents counterpoints to this prophecy: *“What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, ‘See, this is new’? It has been already in the ages before us.”* (Ecclesiastes 1:9–10)

The New Testament further references aspects of new beginnings in apocalyptic concepts, eschatological visions, the proclamation of the kingdom of God (as heterotopia) or the theme of birth.

These scriptural tensions and contradictions offer interdisciplinary connection points for current philosophical discourses on freedom and time as well as scientific cultural and political analyses. From a cultural science perspective, “new beginnings” hold important roles and functions in epochal ruptures, transitional periods and utopias both within individual lives and collective dynamics. Political and social concepts of new beginnings encompass strategies for conflict resolution, initiatives of direct democracy, attempts at revolution and beyond. In the face of global crises, we face questions as to the disruption and dismantling of traditional ways of doing, trading and producing, and the development and implementation of new forms of economy, community and resourcing.

Current and ongoing wars in Europe, the Middle East and Africa raise the question whether there will ever be a possibility of new beginnings for peace and reconciliation. The idea of a permanent peace seems to have moved out of reach, or might prove to be an unrealistic utopia. In light of this, concepts that counter dystopian futures are ever more pressing and vital.

This call for papers addresses a broad thematic spectrum but aims to shine a light on the following questions in particular, and welcomes inter- and transdisciplinary approaches:

- What characterises new beginnings and what are currently dominant philosophical and anthropological approaches in this respect?
- What are possible explanations or interpretations for growing dystopian and utopian visions of the future?
- Does the rapid acceleration of machine-human interaction offer new scopes for creation and renewal for the individual as well as the collective, and what are these possibilities?
- What are philosophical and anthropological perspectives on transhumanist futures?
- What may we learn from different prophecies, eschatologies and apocalyptic elements in the Bible for our present context?
- Which Biblical predictions for the future (turning points, end of time, radical recreation) may be relevant for current crises?
- Which new approaches in theological eschatology reflect current insecurities?
- Which profane eschatologies are prevalent today?

- How do anxieties about and hopes for a different future manifest themselves in therapeutic settings today?
- How do vision of futures, utopias and eschatological ideas of time contribute to current debates on sustainable conditions for life?
- Which philosophical and theological concepts on reversal and renewal may be fruitful for current political processes of transformation and strategies for conflict resolution?
- Which political views imply optimistic or (in turn) pessimistic utopias?
- Which current approaches in peace studies are particularly promising?
- How does contemporary art reflect the current tension between resignation and new beginnings?

If you are interested in contributing to this discussion on “New beginnings. From the ending of worlds to the vision of futures” in [LIMINA](#) with an unpublished, current and innovative scientific paper, please submit your outline (max. 4,000 characters) to:

[limina\(at\)uni-graz.at](mailto:limina(at)uni-graz.at)

The final article (in English or German) should not exceed 40,000 characters. For more information about the journal, the peer review process and publication guidelines please visit: <http://unipub.uni-graz.at/limina>

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