

HBrueggemann

Manuscript: Can we start again

24.June.2026: 27.June.2026 15:37 am

Phreak Magazine: Can we start again?

Wondering if ‘can we start again’ is not an innocent endeavour? On one hand, it brings into question our absolute capacity to give ‘all this’ another shot (and hopefully do it *better* this time, whatever we conceive this ‘better’ to be).

As someone with a disposition towards optimistic insurgency, I find myself tempted by the allure of these possibilities. After Hermann Hesse:

*‘A magic that dwells in each beginning,  
telling us how to live.’<sup>1</sup>*

For Hesse it seems that newness entails the potential of getting ‘it’ right this time, with the wisdom of hindsight and the foresight of experience. A beautiful thought, full of vigour and incipient outlook – a spirit I share. It is after all actions, not ideas, that enact change to the state of all that necessitates mending. In this sense, ‘can we start again’, is a motion full of optimism and potential, but there is a certain concerning burden tagging along that question too.

On the other hand then, asking *if* we ‘can we start again?’ implies that we are currently not in a moment of beginning, or of ‘sovereignly becoming’. Taking the question ‘Can we start

---

<sup>1</sup> Hesse, H. (1941) Stufen. In: Neue Gedichte. Berlin: Suhrkamp. Translated by Anon.(2024) Poem: "Stufen" by Hermann Hesse (English: Steps) – My favorite. Available at: WorldSupporter <https://www.worldsupporter.org/en/blog/poem-stufen-herman-hesse-english-steps-my-favorite-64445> (Accessed: 24 June 2026).

again?’ at face value **firstly** means that there could be chance that starting-over is beyond our horizon of abilities, and **secondly** (and perhaps of greater concern) it codifies that we are currently not in any fashion ‘beginning anew at all’. That is the locus I want to interrogate: can we, the Living, ever not be in a state of new-beginning? Hannah Arendt speaks calls this ‘natality’.<sup>2</sup> A term that describes the intrinsic affordance of any living thing to be endowed with the capacity to ignite newness and spark beginnings. Being alive, and the capacity to spark new beginning, are synonymous. To live means to begin. Only the Dead have license to fall into eternal abeyance, to cease acting, striving, or carrying responsibility. Unlike them, we the Living, irrespective of our desires, hold ‘natality’ and thereby embody a capacity for change. Alas, possessing potential does not equate enactment. Natality is a propensity that carries power, but the decision to act accordingly is each and everyone’s own judgement to make.

To hold a nostalgia for the instantiation of modern technology is to underappreciate the power that rests within us this very moment and in the present. To lament our inability to change the course of the events that have led to the present day is to underappreciate the inexorable power that intrinsically resides within us. There *truly is a magic that dwells in each beginning*, but for as long as we live, beginning never ends.

‘Can we start again?’ There can only be one answer to this.

We do not merely *may*, nor do we simply *must*; we already *do*. Every moment, every decision, and every deed carries the capacity to make the world anew, and the arts are integral to this continual creation of alternate futures. This process begins with the courage to imagine, to think rigorously, and to make diligently. Rigorous artistic practices are nothing short of externalisations of lived philosophies,

---

<sup>2</sup> Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [1]

activated political ideologies, and grounded courageous new beginnings that fabulate whole new stories about how we might live. So, one last time: *Can we start again?*

We have never stopped beginning in the first place.

MJHB