The limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk:  
A conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida

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door

Johann Albrecht Meylahn

geboren te Barkly West, Zuid-Afrika
promotor: prof.dr. W.L. van der Merwe

copromotor: dr. A. van der Braak
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Summary of study: The limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk. A conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been characterised by a return of religion in various forms such as rising fundamentalism and the role religion is playing in the politics of certain secular Western democracies, but also the return of religion to the philosophical debate and the rise in prominence of the science-religion debate. The study will specifically focus on the limits and possibilities of such a return by focussing on God-talk from a philosophical perspective taking the developments in recent philosophy into consideration.

The journey of Western philosophy towards what has been described as postmodernity has been characterised by numerous turns that changed the way the world and humans are interpreted and thus also the role and understanding of God within the world. The first major turn that had an effect on God-talk was the metaphysical turn toward the end or closure of metaphysics. This turn fatally wounded traditional metaphysical God-talk and for many this turn was the end of God-talk. The second turn was the linguistic turn and the realisation of the importance of language in the construction of realities. This second turn reopened the possibility for God-talk, but God-talk as part of the social construction of realities, thus God-talk as the religious ideals of particular communities. Such a return of God-talk leaves God-talk relative to its context of construction, which reopens the door for religious conflict between differing contexts of God-talk where the various particular religious ideals compete for supremacy in the Global Village. The study seeks an alternative to such God-talk by exploring the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk in the site of the closure of metaphysics and the linguistic turn by bringing three philosophers, Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida into conversation with each other.

Postmetaphysics in this study is interpreted as thinking through metaphysics at the closure of metaphysics by thinking the impossible possibility of metaphysics. In this site of the closure of metaphysics and the turn to language, the grammar of faith is discovered as the grammar of language or writing (grammatology). The logic or grammatology of writing and thus of reality (context) is revealed, not contra to philosophy or metaphysics, but when thinking through metaphysics to its end (Heidegger) or closure (Derrida), and there in that site the grammar of faith is revealed as the grammar of texts and contexts and in such a site “God” is a good name to save and hence the possibility of postmetaphysical God-talk.
The study concludes with three oblique offerings with regard to such postmetaphysical God-talk, namely a construction of an image, theopoetics and finally holy folly in response to the limitations and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk in the light of the conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida.
Overzicht over de studie: De beperkingen en mogelijkheden van postmetafysisch spreken over God. Een gesprek tussen Heidegger, Levinas en Derrida

Het begin van de eenentwintigste eeuw wordt gekarakteriseerd door de herverschijning van religie in verschillende vormen, zoals toenemend fundamentalisme en de rol die religie speelt in de politiek van sommige seculaire Westerse democratieën, maar ook de herverschijning van religie in het filosofische debat, in het bijzonder het wetenschap-religie debat. De studie onderzoekt de beperkingen en mogelijkheden van deze herverschijning. De focus valt op het spreken over God gezien vanuit een filosofisch perspectief met inachtneming van de recente ontwikkelingen in de filosofie.

De reis van de westerse filosofie naar wat als ‘postmoderniteit’ beschreven wordt, werd gekarakteriseerd door een aantal wendingen in de interpretatie van de wereld en mensen, en dus ook van de rol en het verstaan van God in de wereld. De eerste grote wending die een effect heeft gehad op het spreken over God was de metafysische wending tegen het einde of de afsluiting van de metafysica. Deze wending heeft het traditionele metafysische spreken over God een fatale wond toegediend. Voor velen was dit het einde van het spreken over God. De tweede was de linguïstische wending: het besef van het belang van taal in de constructie van werkelijkheden. Deze wending heropende de mogelijkheid tot spreken over God, maar dan als deel van de sociale constructie van werkelijkheden, met andere woorden ‘God-talk’ als de religieuze idealen van particuliere gemeenschappen. Dit soort terugkeer naar ‘God-talk’ relatieve het spreken over God tot de context waarbinnen het geconstrueerd wordt. Dit opent de mogelijkheid tot religieus conflict tussen verschillende contexten van ‘God-talk’ waar de onderscheiden particuliere religieuze idealen wedijveren naar oppermacht in het mondiaal dorp. Deze studie tracht een alternatief tot dit soort spreken over God te vinden door de beperkingen van en mogelijkheden to postmetafysisch spreken over God te onderzoeken binnen de lokaliteit van de afsluiting van de metafysica en de linguïstische wending door drie filosofen, Heidegger, Levinas en Derrida, in gesprek te brengen.

Postmetafysica wordt in deze studie verstaan als het doordenken van de metafysica bij de afsluiting van de metafysica door het bedenken van de onmogelijke mogelijkheid van de metafysica. In deze lokaliteit van de afsluiting van de metafysica en de wending naar taal wordt de grammatica van het geloof ontdekt als de grammatica van taal of schrift (grammatologie). De logica of grammaticko van schrift en dus van de werkelijkheid
context) wordt blootgelegd, niet contra filosofie of metafysica, maar door middel van het doordenken van de metafysica tot haar einde (Heidegger) of afsluiting (Derrida). In die lokaliteit wordt de grammatica van het geloof blootgelegd als de grammatica van teksten en contexten. In dit soort lokaliteit is de naam ‘God’ de moeite waard om te redden en zo onstaat de mogelijkheid tot postmetafysisch spreken over God.

De studie concludeert met drie ondoorzichtige mogelijkheden tot postmetafysisch ‘God-talk’: de constructie van een beeld, theopoëtiek, en heilige dwaasheid, in respons tot de beperkingen van en mogelijkheden tot postmetafysisch spreken over God in het licht van het gesprek tussen Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida.
Chapter One  The limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk. A conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida: An Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION, RATIONALE AND DELIMITATION OF STUDY

Postmetaphysical God-talk seems to be a contradiction in terms. How can one talk of God postmetaphysically; that is how can one talk of God without or beyond the categories of God being a being? Does not thinking or speaking (theo-logos) or talking of God presuppose a reality, an existing being, or maybe even God as Being? The title already introduces a limitation as the God-talk that is referred to in the title does not involve theories, proof or evidence of the existence of metaphysical being as it refers to postmetaphysical God-talk. Postmetaphysical God-talk in this study does not refer to an ens realismus or the prime mover or a or even the transcendental signifier. The limitation is clear, but what possibilities are there for postmetaphysical God-talk? What possibilities are there to talk of God without this talk necessarily referring to a transcendental signified?

There is a long tradition of seeking to speak of God (God-talk) outside or beyond the categories of metaphysics (non-metaphysical God-talk). The earliest Christian God-talk that seeks to move outside the categories of philosophy is found in the writings of Saint Paul when he speaks of the cross that makes foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 1: 18). In other words Saint Paul’s God-talk does not fit the categories of wisdom (philosophy) of the Greeks. From this early beginning in the writings of Saint Paul a whole tradition of Christian God-talk developed that was other than the God-talk of philosophy. Yet it was other because there has always been talk of the existence and being of God in philosophy, as Schrag (2002:5) argues, from the time of Aristotle’s definition of God as the “unmoved mover” in his book lambda of Metaphysics right until Nietzsche declared God dead. This God of philosophy (metaphysics) is different to Saint Paul’s God-talk or the God-talk of faith.

Luther, following the tradition of Saint Paul in his 1518 Heidelberg Disputation (thesis 18-25), argues that God-talk is only possible if it is in reference to the foolishness of the
cross, and thus it is a *Theologia Crucis* (God-talk of the cross) which is other than the God-talk found in the wisdom of the world (theories of the existence or being of God in metaphysics) or *Theologia Gloriae*.

Kant argued in his 1787 preface to the second edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, “I must, therefore, abolish knowledge, to make room for belief” (Kant 2003:78). Kant sought a God-talk that was reasonable, but beyond the categories of metaphysics as he argued against both the possibility of God-talk within metaphysics and more specifically against the necessity of God-talk within the categories of metaphysics and thereby challenged both the possibility and the necessity of metaphysics (Westphal 2007:254-255). Westphal (2007) continues in this tradition developing it from Kant via Heidegger to Marion, arguing that Heidegger, although making room for faith, is still too philosophical or maybe too Heideggerian (Westphal 2007:261). Thus there are at least two possibilities of God-talk within the long tradition of God-talk: either God-talk within metaphysical categories (metaphysical God-talk) or God-talk beyond or otherwise than these categories (non-metaphysical God-talk).

Kant argued for the necessity of faith and thus God-talk not on metaphysical or philosophical grounds, but on practical grounds. There are certain similarities between this kind of (non)metaphysical God-talk and the religious turn in sociology. The fathers of sociology first argued for the disappearance of God-talk within the secular realm, but there has been a turn to religion and a return of religion also in sociology as they now realise that there will always be a sacred story or a story of ultimate reference that binds (*religare*) individuals into a whole or that binds the community into a whole with shared values, norms and laws which are legitimised by an ultimate story of meaning or an ultimate founding myth. This kind of God-talk can lead to all sorts of dangers, as each community has its own sacred story and therefore there is the problem of relativism, yet these stories

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20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.
21. A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.
22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened.
23. The »law brings the wrath« of God (Rom 4:15), kills, reviles, accuses, judges, and condemns everything that is not in Christ.
24. Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.
25. He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ (Luther n.d.).
2 I refer to the religious turn in sociology as the first generation sociologists or the fathers of sociology, Marx, Webber and Durkheim all argued that religion would eventually disappear, but as religion is making a come-back the next generation of sociologists like Peter Berger (1990) and Geertz (1993) are arguing for the sociological necessity for religion for the construction of meaning beyond metaphysical proofs and theories. Neuhaus (1984:250-251) argues that religion (*regiare*) is the complex network of meaning, values and norms that binds a community into a unity and binds individuals into the whole.
are not believed to be relative, but ultimate, and thus the tremendous potential for violence and religious conflict.

The study will not follow this path of the impossibility of metaphysics yet practical necessity of God, but rather a postmetaphysics that thinks through metaphysics at the closure of metaphysics and discovers the grammar of faith not in practical reason, but the grammar of faith in the grammar of language (grammatology) and thus faith as the possibility and limitation of reason itself.

Thus the study “refers” to the term “God” within talk, within language and what that name signifies within the grammar of language. This name “God” is not seen as being contra reason although it is beyond reason’s capability to grasp it. The logic or grammatology of writing and thus of reality (context) is revealed not contra to philosophy or metaphysics, but when thinking through metaphysics to its end (Heidegger) or closure (Derrida), and there in that site the grammar of faith is revealed as the grammar of texts and contexts and in such a site “God” is a good name to save and hence the possibility of postmetaphysical God-talk.

To arrive at this possibility of God-talk that is postmetaphysical, the study presupposes a tradition of fore-knowledge as it is postmetaphysical, and thus it presupposes a metaphysical tradition, particularly from the Western perspective, that formed and shaped God-talk (theology) for centuries. This study “begins3 at the end of that very tradition or at the closure of this metaphysical theological (God-talk) tradition, but without resorting to a non-metaphysical God-talk. Thus it begins where the limitations of this tradition are revealed and therefore the impossibility of God-talk (metaphysics), but the end or closure is simultaneously the possibility, but wounded possibility, of metaphysics and thus of postmetaphysical God-talk or wounded-(limited) metaphysical God-talk within the language (grammatology) of faith.

The scope of this study will be to investigate the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk at the closure of the metaphysical tradition, in conversation with Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida. Certain shifts have taken place in the development towards the closure of metaphysics. The first shift was away from ancient and medieval metaphysics towards rational grounds for knowledge (epistemology), secondly the epistemological turn and lastly the linguistic turn towards a poetics.

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3 Beings is written in inverted commas as it will become apparent on the chapter on Derrida that there is no beginning, as one is already always within the text.
The first challenge the study will focus on is what has been characterised in continental philosophy since Heidegger as the “overcoming of metaphysics”\(^4\), in other words going beyond being, and then going beyond what was defined by Enlightenment reason as “grounds for knowledge”.

The investigation into the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk will need to take these developments seriously, although the study will focus on the two turns, namely the metaphysical turn and the linguistic turn within the thinking of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida.

The first turn, the metaphysical turn, began with Nietzsche, or with Kierkegaard as Caputo argues, but for the purpose of this study Heidegger’s metaphysical turn will be the focus. The choice of Heidegger, rather than Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, is because both Levinas and Derrida are in conversation with Heidegger’s metaphysical turn\(^5\) and thus they are in conversation with Heidegger’s überwindung of metaphysics and therefore he is an ideal starting place for the conversation on the limits and possibilities of God-talk at the closure of metaphysics. So although Nietzsche boldly declared God dead the focus will be on Heidegger who moved beyond metaphysics and onto-theology towards postmetaphysical understanding and interpretations and later turned towards poetic (linguistic) interpretations. This postmetaphysical development made traditional God-talk based on metaphysics impossible and thus an absolute limitation.

The second turn, the linguistic, questioned the Enlightenment foundations\(^6\) by making them relative to the context or paradigm of construction. Within the linguistic turn the secular deconstructionists thought that “the free play of signifiers” was the last moment of

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\(^4\) Caputo would argue that this “overcoming of metaphysics already began with Kierkegaard” (Caputo 1987), but the study will limit itself and begin with Heidegger’s überwindung of metaphysics.

\(^5\) Levinas and Derrida are also in conversation with Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, either directly or indirectly, but to a lesser extent than they are in conversation with Heidegger, and therefore Heidegger will be the third conversational partner in this study.

\(^6\) Enlightenment reason was characterised by Kant as the emancipation from self-incurred Unmündigkeit (immaturity). This is a movement that sought its own emancipated foundations, which were liberated from the Vormündigkeit of tradition and religious authorities (Mautner 2000:168). These new foundations were reason, science and rationality. It was the search for the first principle or the ‘conditions of possibility’. This movement had an influence on Christian philosophy and theology, as knowledge and truth were liberated from tradition and ecclesiological authority. New foundations were developed, based not on tradition or ecclesiological authority, but on reason and science. Theology had to base its knowledge and understanding of God and faith on these ‘liberated’ foundations of reason and science and thus join the Enlightenment search for the basic principle (the absolute foundation of all knowledge and truth). This was the time of foundationalism, the search for the founding principle of all truth and knowledge. God was then equated with this founding principle, but this interpretation of God, as Carlson says, is a limited and present “God” (Marion 2001:xviii). Post-Enlightenment or postmodernity questioned the possibility of such a basic principle on which all truth and knowledge is founded, as knowledge and truth are seen to be socially constructed rather than objectively discovered. Thus postmodernity questioned these Enlightenment foundations by making them relative to the context or paradigm of construction.
liberation from the transcendental signified (Caputo & Scanlon 1999:5). This challenge leads this study to investigate the possibility of religion without a transcendental signified. One such a possibility is what Don Cupitt describes as a non-metaphysical interpretation of god/God, a non-realist interpretation of God as my god. “As I see this, metaphysics dies and I am left knowing only my god, my guiding religious ideal and that is the non-realist philosophy of religion in a nut-shell” (Cupitt 2002:xiv). However, such an interpretation of a non-realist god, like already mentioned above regarding the gods of the sociologists and Kant’s practical necessity for a god, can be shown to be too relativistic and too subjective (local). It could also be that such a guiding religious ideal is none other than a disguised form of Nietzsche’s: “will to power” (Nietzsche 1956).

On the Continent (specifically France) the linguistic turn took the form of a “turn to semiotics, more specifically structuralist linguistics” (Schrag 2002:22). In Great Britain, through the work of the later Wittgenstein, “the linguistic turn came to be characterized as a turn to ordinary language” (Schrag 2002:23). Within the linguistic turn the secular deconstructionists thought that “the free play of signifiers” was the last moment of liberation from the transcendental signified (Caputo & Scanlon 1999:5). Derrida’s famous statement, “there is nothing outside the text” (Derrida 1997a:158), could be interpreted as the pinnacle of Kant’s “conditions of possibility”, in other words what falls beyond the text is what also falls beyond the conditions of possibility and thus the impossibility of God-talk that refers to the transcendental signified. This would have been the end of God as the final nail in the coffin of God. Yet it was not as there was a return of religion in a time-space that had declared God dead (see De Vries 1999; Janicaud 2000).

What is the possibility of this return of religion? What possibilities does it offer to theology for God-talk? The study will focus on the possibilities of God-talk within the limitations of the closure of metaphysics and thus not focus on the social-political phenomenon of the rise in religious fundamentalism, which certainly is a very concrete and dangerous possibility of the contemporary socio-political time-space, but it is not a God-talk that thinks through the closure of metaphysics, but rather ignores the limitations revealed by the three thinkers that will be brought into conversation in this study7, and therefore the study will not investigate various forms of fundamentalism as possibilities as they are not postmetaphysical possibilities. The study will focus on God-talk that is possible within the context of the wounding or closure of metaphysics and therefore the focus will not be the

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7 The study will not focus on the rise in fundamentalism and thus the above statement is not a qualified statement as it does not intend to give any kind of analysis or interpretation of the rise of fundamentalism. It purely seeks to demarcate the study.
return of religion in the social-political sphere, but the return of religion within philosophy, specifically the possibilities of such a return within the thinking of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida. “There is nothing outside the text” certainly seems to be the “final word” on God. However, Derrida does not make any final claims, but rather acknowledges the inner textual undecidability which will be explored in the chapter on Derrida, and Levinas argues for God coming to mind in the infinite responsibility towards the Other, which will be explored in the chapter on Levinas. Thus new possibilities for God-talk emerge in this site of the closure of metaphysics and the name “God” returns to the philosophical debate, but postmetaphysically: God as a name for an event in language as either the desertification of language (Derrida 1995b:56) or as the incoming of the impossible: l’invention de l’autre. The linguistic turn brought back the possibility of God-talk, but in new forms, for example God as an event within language, or openness within language by and for the other.

The return of the possibility of God-talk at the closure of metaphysics (postmetaphysical God-talk) seems to find itself between two temptations or dangers.

1. The first temptation, as already discussed above, is the temptation of non-metaphysical God-talk which embraces the positivist approach and can be described as humanistic or anthropological or demythologized God-talk, and although these three cannot be equated with one another they are characteristic of this trend. This God-talk is bound to the local subjective context in which the God-talk is constructed as a practical necessity or as a sociological necessity. It is a non-realistic interpretation of God, who is nothing more than my individual personal subjective religious ideal or a community’s religious ideal, which is projected onto God. Don Cupitt writes: “As I see this, metaphysics dies and I am left knowing only my god, my guiding religious ideal and that is the non-realistic philosophy of religion in a nut-shell” (Cupitt 2002:xiv). Kuitert describes this kind of God-talk as follows: “Algemener gesteld kan men van het problem van de religieuze projectie spreken; in dat geval hebben we met een anthropologische toespitsing te maaking” (Kuitert 1967:7) The study identifies a limitation here as God-talk would be bound to a specific context, and thus inter-religious dialogue would be very difficult as all God-talk would be particular to the context of construction. Non-metaphysical God-talk in this temptation is bound to its texts and therefore bound to the context of construction. God-talk will always be to a certain extent bound to the texts and

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8 “Seems to be” the final word, as in the chapter on Derrida it will become clear that there are no final words and thus one cannot conclusively state either that God is dead or that God is alive.

9 Derrida refers to the two temptations of deconstruction (Derrida 2002:271) and these temptations apply equally to God-talk interpreted as an event within language.
contexts of religious communities. If nothing is beyond the text then these texts are only relevant for their specific community and thus God-talk will be trapped in particularity.

2. The second temptation is found in the development towards a new phenomenology of transcendence. The transcendent, that which is beyond the text, is not a being, yet it is impossible to deny the “reality” of transcendence. There is something beyond the text, for example the transcendence of the gift in the work of Derrida (Derrida 1992), but we have no access to that something. The new phenomenologies of transcendence have been further developed for postmetaphysical God-talk, for example in thinking the event of the impossible (Caputo 2006), God as otherwise than Being (Schrag 2002) or God as what may Be (Kearney 2001). These different approaches to God-talk have moved beyond the language of existence and essence towards gift, possibility and the impossible yet eschatologically hoped for. Schrag finds a new God-talk in the semantics of the gift, Kearney discovers God as possibility, which is opened up by the gift, and Caputo reflects on the impossibility of the gift yet the eschatologically hoped for. These various thinkers (Schrag, Kearney, Caputo) explore the possibilities and limits with regard to God-talk within postmodernity. These new possibilities which are postmetaphysical, but more than metaphorical and anthropological projections or constructions, can be fleshed out by bringing Heidegger’s, Levinas’ and Derrida’s phenomenologies of transcendence into dialogue. The danger in this return to a transcendence is that, abstracted from the texts of tradition, it can easily develop into a new form of universalism.

The study’s scope is to investigate the possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk in the thinking of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida as an alternative to the relativism of non-metaphysical God-talk and yet conscious of the temptation of universalism. Derrida, in his article *Force of Law* on the violence inherent in law, warns against the two temptations of deconstruction (Derrida 2002:271), namely universalism and particularism. This is also the danger of God-talk – it either strives towards a new universalism or it is so local and particular that it is relative to all other local and particular contexts.
2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND FOCUS

This study will investigate the possibilities and limitations of postmetaphysical God-talk in conversation with Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida. The study will limit itself to the limited possibilities of God-talk in the thinking of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida, with the question: What possibilities do these three philosophers’ thoughts offer to postmetaphysical God-talk, whilst also limiting this God-talk, by keeping in mind the two challenges (limits), namely a new universalism and the relativism of particularism?

The research question: What are the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk in the thinking of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida?

3. GUIDING QUESTIONS

The journey of this study will be guided by the following two questions.

i. The development of postmetaphysical possibilities of talking of God in the philosophy of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida, which challenges traditional realist (metaphysical) interpretations of God. What are the limits and the possibilities of such postmetaphysical interpretations of God in the work of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida?

ii. Postmetaphysical God-talk can either end up as non-metaphysical God-talk that is linked to the particularity of the local context, or in a new form of universalism (a new transcendental signified). Are there creative ways to bring these two together so that it is meaningful for the local particular religious community yet can function as a basis for inter-religious dialogue?

4. METHOD

The research is philosophical. It will be a critical reading of the main works of the three philosophers concerning their metaphysical and linguistic turns and will then turn to the possibilities that they perceive for God-talk within the limits of their metaphysical and linguistic turns, bringing their thoughts into conversation with each other. The research will be qualitative and will not seek to be conclusive, but understands itself to be part of the ongoing dialogue and journey within the field of religious philosophy.
5. CHAPTER LAYOUT

- **Chapter one: Introduction**

This chapter will introduce the study and the delimitation of the study.

- **Chapter two:** The limits and possibilities of Heidegger’s wounded metaphysics and the limits and possibilities it offers to postmetaphysical God-talk

Heidegger spoke of the Verwindung of metaphysics and the journey towards this Verwindung of metaphysics follows three interrelated thought paths that are related to the different stages in Heidegger’s thinking.

The first thought path was the meaning of Being, the second the truth of Being and the last was the event of Being. It was also in this last stage that the turn to language as the house of Being was developed and it is here in the event (Ereignis) that possibilities and limitations of postmetaphysical God-talk are discovered.

In this chapter these three stages of his thought path will be described in relation to the limitations and possibilities they offer to postmetaphysical God-talk.

- **Chapter three:** The limits and possibilities of Levinas’ ‘other otherwise’ and the limits and possibilities it offers to postmetaphysical God-talk

Levinas turned towards the concrete Other person arguing that Heidegger’s Gelassenheit towards the epochal sendings of Being does not leave much room for ethical responsibility towards the suffering Other. Levinas thus developed an ethical metaphysics or ethics as first philosophy. This ethical metaphysical turn was criticised by Derrida who argued that Levinas had fallen into the very trap that Heidegger had revealed, namely the trap of forgetting of Being. In Levinas’ second great work, Otherwise than Being or beyond essence (1981), he indirectly responds to Derrida’s criticism and turns towards language: the language of alterity, transcendence and infinity. It is in the infinite otherness of the Other that God comes to mind. God that comes to mind in the infinite otherness of the Other does not leave much room for traditional (metaphysical) God-talk and yet it creates room for prophetic (biblical) God-talk, but always in relation to the Other and specifically in relation to the widow, orphan and refugee.

- **Chapter four:** The limits and possibilities of Derrida’s différence for postmetaphysical God-talk.
Derrida, like Heidegger and Levinas, turns to language and the possibilities and limits of language and specifically the limitation of language that there is no outside the text (Derrida 1997a:158) and therefore one is always within text (language). This seems to be the end of transcendence and metaphysics. Yet, Derrida does not see it as the end, but rather the closure of metaphysics, as it encloses metaphysics by revealing both the possibility thereof and the limitation. It is in this site of the closure of metaphysics that God-talk comes to mind and Derrida fleshes out these possibilities and limitations in relation to negative theology.

- **Chapter Five**: The impossible possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk. A conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida: Theopoetics and Holy Folly

The final chapter will seek to bring the thoughts of the three thinkers once more into conversation with each other and offer three oblique offerings with regard to postmetaphysical God-talk, namely a construction of an image, theopoetics and finally holy folly in response to the limitation and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk, but taking the two temptations of relativism and universalism seriously.
Chapter Two  The limits and possibilities of Heidegger’s wounded metaphysics and the limits and possibilities it offers to postmetaphysical God-talk

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why Heidegger?

Why begin with Heidegger? As already mentioned in the introductory chapter both Levinas and Derrida are in conversation with Heidegger and respond to his *Destruktion* of the metaphysical and onto-theological tradition, and therefore it is an important place to start with regards to a conversation between the three on the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk.

Yet, besides Heidegger’s thought being in close relationship with the thinking of Derrida and to which Levinas critically responded, Heidegger’s critique of metaphysics is fundamental as it reveals the structural possibility of metaphysical thinking and thereby limits metaphysical thought to those structural possibilities. This fundamental critique of metaphysics needs to be taken into account in any attempt at postmetaphysical God-talk. It is for this reason that Heidegger’s *Überwindung* of metaphysics was chosen as the starting point of this journey into the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk. Heidegger’s *Gedankenwege* (thought-paths) lead the way towards the *Ortschaft* (site) where metaphysics is destructed via a *destruierender Rückgang* to its fundamental possibilities and is therefore fatally wounded, but within this site Heidegger expresses hope for new possibilities of an other beginning, perhaps for postmetaphysical God-talk. Heidegger never ventured down the paths of possible postmetaphysical God-talk or the paths of new beginnings as he understood his task to be to reveal the paths that lead into that *Ortschaft*. The study is about this *Ortschaft* and the conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida in this *Ortschaft, and about the limits and possibilities this Ortschaft offers to God-talk. Heidegger is thus the one who leads into the site of this study, the *Ortschaft* of fatally wounded\(^\text{10}\) metaphysics and thus postmetaphysics. However, before one can boldly follow Heidegger down his thought-paths into the *Ortschaft* of wounded

\(^{10}\) I will explain my use of the term *wounded* metaphysics in the next section of this chapter.
metaphysics (postmetaphysics) one cannot ignore the controversy that shrouds his thoughts.

1.2 The limitations of his thought

When reading Heidegger one cannot ignore the controversy surrounding him as a person and his involvement in the Nazi party, but Heidegger’s personal choice of political association, although disconcerting, will not be of concern here. What will be of concern are the latent political consequences that are present in his thought11. In the introductory chapter, two temptations were discussed: the first, the temptation of non-metaphysical thought that leads to relativism and yet heightens the potential of religious or political violent conflict as each of these particular divine (ideological) narratives do not see themselves as relative to other particular narratives, but as ultimate, and the second temptation was a new kind of universalism. Heidegger’s thought-paths, and specifically the political potential in his thought-paths, tend towards these two temptations.

Therefore the most limiting aspect of Heidegger’s thought for the purpose of this study, are the possible fateful and fatal political consequences of his texts. Yet, if one reads Heidegger against Heidegger, as Caputo has done in numerous works (Caputo 1982, 1986, 1993a, 1993b, 2000), one discovers in Heidegger’s texts possibilities which were taken up by Levinas and Derrida – possibilities for thought once the Greek-German metanarrative12 of the origin of Being has been deconstructed and brought into dialogue with multiple sources (not origins13) and a plurality of Seinsgeschicke. In this chapter Caputo’s directive will be followed as he suggests a way to read Heidegger’s texts via the idea of other, and in that sense Levinas’ and Derrida’s voices are already brought indirectly into conversation in this second chapter. A clôtural14 reading of Heidegger will be offered where the other voice is heard. This other voice (other Heidegger) deconstructs the dominant reading and opens new possibilities.

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11 These latent political consequences in his thought probably explain his personal choice to join the Nazi party, but the focus will be on the latent political consequences of his texts rather than focussing on his political biography.
12 Later in the chapter the role of the Greek-German metanarrative in Heidegger’s thought will be discussed.
13 The reason for not speaking of origins will become clear in the chapter on Derrida.
14 Simon Critchley (1999:88ff), in his book The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas, argues for a clôtural reading by bringing Levinas and Derrida into conversation with each other. “This clôtural structure is provoked by an act of reading whereby two irreconcilable lines of thought open up within a text” (1999:88). One reads these two lines of thought together as the one deconstructs the other and thus opens new possibilities.
Such a reading, where the other voice is heard, would be a more just \([\text{dike}]\) reading of Heidegger as an unjust \([\text{adikia}]\) reading would be to allow the metanarrative, which excludes the other, a stiff-necked persistence and domination of presence\(^\text{15}\). This is what is meant by reading Heidegger against Heidegger, namely to use his own terms and thoughts (the unthought which are the possibilities in his texts) to deconstruct the limitations of his texts and thereby set the texts free to offer new possibilities and limitations for wounded metaphysical God-talk.

### 1.3 The possibilities of his thought

The possibilities of Heidegger’s thought are discovered when reading Heidegger against Heidegger or Heidegger without the Greek-German metanarrative and in dialogue with the other (the other that the Greek-German metanarrative excludes) as mentioned above. Such a demythologized Heidegger is another Heidegger: namely a Heidegger who thinks against Heidegger (Caputo 1993a:6).

This kind of reading of philosophical texts is not something foreign to Heidegger’s texts, as he suggested that this is the way in which to read the works of others, specifically philosophers. Heidegger understood the task of philosophy to be transformative reading, which becomes clear in the way in which Heidegger reads the texts of Kant, specifically in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*\(^\text{16}\).

In reading Heidegger’s texts on Kant, the task of philosophical reading and interpretation is illustrated, and thus in a sense this is what Heidegger’s texts call for, namely a transformative reading of his texts as well. In the same book Heidegger continues and argues that every interpretation necessarily resorts to a form of violence in order to wrest from the actual words that which these words ‘intend to say’. He warns that this violence, which is necessary, should not be arbitrary. Heidegger’s intention was not that anything goes so that one is free to interpret into texts whatever one likes, but that the violence of interpretation needs to come not from arbitrary whims, but from the power of an illuminative idea (Heidegger 1962b:207). He further argues that it is only through the power of the illuminative idea that interpretation can risk that which is always audacious,

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\(^{15}\) *A-dikia* is the refusal to make space for an-other and that is when an authority of an epoch asserts itself (Heidegger 1975:45-46, 54).

\(^{16}\) “[A]n interpretation limited to a recapitulation of what Kant explicitly said can never be a real explication, if the business of the latter is to bring to light what Kant, over and above his express formulation, uncovered in the course of his laying of the foundation. To be sure, Kant himself is no longer able to say anything concerning this, but what is essential to all philosophical discourse is not found in the specific propositions of which it is composed but in that which, although unstated as such, is made evident through these propositions” (Heidegger 1962b:206).
namely to entrust oneself to the secret élan of a work and only then, via this élan, to get through to the unsaid of the text and find an expression for it. This audacious reading is confirmed by its own power of illumination (Heidegger 1962b:207). Illumination is when a text begins to make sense and transforms the way one understands, as new insights are gained on a specific subject matter.

Therefore Heidegger encourages philosophical reading to be audacious and to take the risk of reading texts against themselves, thereby not following arbitrary whims, but following an illuminative idea by entrusting oneself to the secret élan of the work. The reading of Heidegger offered in this study hopes to take up this challenge to be audacious and to take the risk of reading Heidegger and not just repeating him.

Heidegger suggested such a reading of Kant and yet in Kant one also finds the suggestion of a double reading17.

One cannot completely equate the two suggestions on how to read, as Kant’s thoughts are more in line with Plato’s idea and the two “methods” of reading pull in two different directions, namely:

i. The Kantian recognition that philosophers are typically on to something whose precise shape they may not fully grasp

ii. The Heideggerian recognition that ‘real explication’ is required to try to get at something of the order of what a philosopher is on to (Wood 2002:27).

The way to read Heidegger truly suggests coming to a text with the illuminative power of a directive idea. He argues that without a certain level of re-animation of the text one does not have thinking, but a dangerous and widespread impostor, sometimes called philosophy. This is of course risky, as he says at the very end of Being and Time:

“We must look for a way to illuminate the fundamental ontological question, and follow it. Whether that way is at all the only one or even the right one can be decided only after we have followed it. The strife in relation to the question of being cannot be settled because it has not even been started” (Heidegger 1996:437).

To read Heidegger is an audacious risk, just as it is a risk to read Levinas and Derrida, as one does not know if one has read correctly18. Yet one has to start with an idea (postmetaphysical God-talk) and follow the secret élan of the texts that grips one so as to discover the unthought that illumines the idea (postmetaphysical God-talk) and offers

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17 “I need only remark that it is by no means unusual, upon comparing the thoughts which an author has expressed in regard to his subject… to find that we understand him better than he understands himself. As he has not sufficiently determined his concept, he has sometimes spoken, or even thought, in opposition to his own intention” (Kant 1964:B371-372).

18 There is no correct reading as texts remain open to interpretation, within the limits of the root metaphors of the texts themselves.
insights for further exploration of this idea beyond repeating what the specific author has said.

In *What is Called Thinking?* (1968), Heidegger reflects on how one encounters the work of other philosophers. He says that such an encounter with philosophers requires a certain acknowledgment and respect (*Anerkennung*) which consists in letting every thinker’s thought come to us as something in each case unique, never to be repeated, inexhaustible, and shaken to the depths (deconstructed) by what is unthought in their thought\(^\text{19}\). This unthought (other) of the thought is not a lack, but the ‘greatest gift that thinking can bestow’. It is with this gift in mind of the unthought other in Heidegger’s thought that the study turns to the works of Heidegger in this chapter. Simply to go counter to the thinking of Heidegger (*dagegen angehen*), and there are many who believe that there are enough reasons to go counter to Heidegger, would not give us what is unthought in his works, but to encounter (*Entgegen gehen*) will allow one to enter what is unthought and receive the gift of his thought – the unthought.

### 1.4 Three interrelated thought-paths (*Gedankenwege*) towards the wounding of metaphysics

This study will seek to encounter (*Entgegen gehen*) Heidegger’s thought on overcoming of metaphysics by following his three interrelated thought-paths (*Gedankenwege*), which he describes in *Vier Seminare* (Heidegger 1977:73, 82-87). By encountering these *Gedankenwege* one can enter the unthought and thus receive the gift of his thought for this study, namely the limits and the possibilities his thought offers to postmetaphysical (wounded metaphysical) God-talk.

These three *Gedankenwege* that will be followed in this chapter are from different periods of Heidegger’s thought, although the intention is not to reduce his thought to historic periods but rather to read these thoughts in dialogue with each other. The three *Gedankenwege* are:

1. The meaning of Being
2. *Aletheia* or *a-letheia* (the truth of Being)
3. *Ereignis* (the event of Being)

\(^{19}\) This seems to echo Critchley’s (1999:88) idea of clôtureal reading with the two lines of thought in a text (the thought and the un-thought), where the unthought deconstructs (shakes to the depths) the thought.
The third thought-path will culminate in a reflection on Heidegger’s understanding of language as the *house of Being* and finally the chapter will be concluded with a reflection on the fateful and fatal possibilities of his thought which are the limitations, but also the possibilities of his thought for postmetaphysical God-talk.

### 2. *VERWUNDUNG DER METAPHYSIK*: THE WOUNDING OF METAPHYSICS

Why speak of the wounding of metaphysics? In one of Heidegger’s articles, “Überwindung der Metaphysik”, translated as *Overcoming Metaphysics* by Joan Stambaugh, Heidegger uses the familiar word *Überwindung*, but he uses it in the sense of a less familiar word *Verwundung* (Heidegger 2003:84). When he uses *überwunden* (which means to defeat something and then to leave it behind) in the sense of *verwunden* (which can be translated as wounding or *to wound*), he clearly uses it with another intent— not to defeat and leave behind, but rather to overcome in the sense of incorporation, just as chronic pain or a chronic illness or to be chronically wounded (*Verwundung*) is not overcome, but one learns to live with it. The idea of the fatal or chronic wound that one learns to live with is appropriate for understanding Heidegger’s *Überwindung der Metaphysik*. The wound is fatal or chronic in that it is not just a problem that will be solved (cured) in the near future as it is a fatal or chronic wound that is here to stay, but one can learn to live with chronic wounds. For Heidegger to overcome metaphysics means to think through metaphysics to its structural possibility, but to do that would be to fatally question metaphysics, as one questions its very possibility. Yet how does one think metaphysics to its structural possibility? One can only do that by thinking the structural possibility of metaphysics metaphysically. To think metaphysics to its limits (structural possibility) means to incorporate metaphysics into one’s thinking, but in the hope, which is not a certainty, that metaphysics can be elevated to a new reality with new possibilities (Heidegger 2003:84). This hope inspired Heidegger’s *Verwundung* of metaphysics so that it might open to new possibilities at the end (limitation) of metaphysics.

The reason that *Verwunden* was chosen is not so much because of Heidegger’s own choice of words, but rather what the word conveys. It conveys something more than overcoming and moving on past (post)metaphysics, as one does not move beyond metaphysics, but metaphysics finds itself in the pain of the rift (wound) of the ontological

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20 Joan Stambaugh mentions this in a footnote in her translation of *Überwindung der Metaphysik*.

21 Heidegger in *On Time and Being* says that our task is to ‘cease all overcoming’ (Heidegger 1972:24).
difference opened by dif-ference. Thus metaphysics is wounded, vulnerable and no longer an absolute. Metaphysics cannot be left behind and be forgotten as it cannot be removed from thought, but it is thought differently, it is thought through and thereby opened (wounded). As Heidegger argues, at first the overcoming of metaphysics can only be represented in terms of metaphysics itself (Heidegger 2003:93). Thus metaphysics is overcome and yet it is overcome by using metaphysical terms or metaphysical language, and so it is overcome within metaphysics and in that sense it is a “manner of a heightening of itself through itself” (Heidegger 2003:93).

Therefore, the task is not to overcome metaphysics, but to think it through and to receive the unthought of metaphysics as a gift for thinking the limits and possibilities of wounded-metaphysical thought. John Sallis interprets Heidegger’s understanding of the end of metaphysics as the gathering of metaphysics to the extreme limits of possibility, a closure of the future as all the possibilities have been exhausted, but this closure should not be interpreted as temporal, but rather as a structural delimitation (Sallis 1995:18-23).

As mentioned in the introduction this wounding of metaphysics occurs in and through three Gedankenwege. The Verwundung of metaphysics will be traced along these three thought-paths to discover how the Verwundung of metaphysics limits God-talk and yet new possibilities are opened for postmetaphysical or wounded-metaphysical thought and God-talk.

2.1 The meaning of Being

The first thought-path is from pre 1930’s when Heidegger’s thoughts were not yet under the spell of the myth of a singular origin of Being in pre-Socratic Greek thought which would later play an important part in his philosophical thinking (Caputo1993a:3-5). This early period can be seen as the period of the first Freiburg lectures (1919-1923) and characteristic of this period is his first great work, Being and Time (1996). This period was not so much about the myth of Being, but about demythologizing the myths in an attempt to retrieve the facticity of everyday life and experience. The first Freiburg project, entitled hermeneutics of facticity, was exactly such a retrieval (Caputo 1993a:4). It was a two-pronged retrieval as on the one hand it sought to retrieve that factual lifeworld of the New Testament communities which were buried under layers of dogmatic ontotheology of tradition, and on the other hand a retrieval of the lifeworld of Aristotelean ethics which lay
buried under layers of the metaphysics of *ousia* (Caputo 1993a:4). This passion for the retrieval of the facticity of life and experience culminated in the great work, *Being and Time*, where Heidegger sought to think the *meaning of Being* via a path of *destruktion* of the sedimented layers of ontotheology and metaphysics that prevent one from truly discovering the meaning of Being of *Dasein*.

The journey towards the *Verwundung* of metaphysics begins here in the early period reflecting on the meaning of Being in *Being and Time*. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger, in his search for the facticity of experience, the interpretation of *Da-sein*, offers to thought the transcendental conditions of the possibility of the meaning of Being, in other words a transcendental account of how one meaning of Being after another meaning of Being comes about in the history of Western thought. The question that interested Heidegger was, why is it that in every epoch there are different interpretations of the meaning of Being. He did not seek to offer an account of the best or the last “meaning of Being”, but he sought to discover why the meaning of Being changes over time? In other words, he sought to understand the transcendental conditions of the various meanings of Being within the different historical epochs.

Heidegger, in his search for the facticity of experience and specifically the everydayness of *Dasein*, seeks the transcendental conditions of understanding and interpreting the meaning of *Dasein*’s Being\(^{22}\) (Heidegger 1996). He argues that *Dasein*’s Being can be interpreted as care (*Sorge*) (Heidegger 1996:297-299), but how can one come to such an interpretation? How does one come to such a meaning of Being of *Dasein*? In his attempt to understand this he turns to the signification of *meaning* and he investigates what meaning signifies in the context of the meaning of the *Being* of *Dasein*. He begins this section by arguing that meaning is that “in which the intelligibility of something keeps itself, without coming into view explicitly and thematically” (Heidegger 1996:298). The meaning of something is the intelligibility of something over time (that keeps itself), yet it does not come to view, for example the meaning of *Dasein*’s Being as care. Care does not come to view as care, either explicitly or thematically, yet to understand the meaning of the *Being* of *Dasein*, care is the “upon which”(*Woraufhin*) that the meaning of *Dasein*’s *Being* becomes intelligible. The *Being* of *Dasein* becomes intelligible (makes sense), meaningful, once one thinks of *Dasein* as care. *Dasein*’s Being is different from the *Being* of other

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\(^{22}\) Joan Stambaugh in her 1996 translation of *Being and Time* does not capitalise *Being*. In the study the older tradition of the translation of *Being and Time* (1962) will be followed, continuing to capitalise *Being*, as it makes it easier to differentiate. Although agreeing with Stambaugh’s (1996:xiv) reasons not to capitalise *Being*, as by capitalising it conveys the message that it is something unique and even transcendental, which was never the intention of Heidegger, it causes too much confusion to write of the being of being, and therefore the choice to rather capitalise.
beings, for example the Being of a stone or a tree, as Dasein is concerned (has Sorge) about its own Being. Dasein reflects, wonders and thus cares about its own Da-Sein (about its being-there). Dasein’s being-there (Da-sein) is of concern to it and therefore Dasein becomes intelligible as Sorge für Da-sein. Care (Sorge) is the “upon which” the Being of Dasein becomes intelligible. Thus meaning signifies that “upon which the primary project is projected, that in terms of which something can be conceived in its possibility as what it is” (Heidegger 1996:298). He continues and argues that “projection discloses possibilities”, which means that it reveals what makes something possible. Heidegger argues that these projections upon which something becomes intelligible are more or less transparent, in other words they are not thought (Heidegger 1996:298). If one thus says that beings have meaning, this signifies that they have become accessible in their being. Yet, what is not thought is that this being is projected upon a “upon which” and this “upon which” is what really has meaning first of all (Heidegger 1996:298). That means that beings only become intelligible in the “project of that being” and that is in terms of the “upon which” of that project.

The “upon which” is linked to a specific historical time. Things (beings) have meaning according to an “upon which”, upon which they are interpreted. For example, things (beings) have a certain meaning in pre-industrial times because the various entities are interpreted “upon which” of their possibilities and potential in that specific epoch (that specific epoch of being-there). In pre-industrial times the possibilities of certain things (beings) are interpreted differently than in industrial times as their potential and possibilities changes. The Being of Dasein will be different in a pre-industrial world to Dasein in an industrial world.

If one takes a river as an example, in pre-industrial times the project is determined by mythological narratives about the river god and the fruitfulness of the gifts of water and fish, and thus the river is interpreted in the light (“upon which”) of its potential (possibility) as a giver of life. In industrial times the river is interpreted in the light (“upon which”) of its potential (possibility) of being a way to remove waste products, namely to pump chemical waste into the river and therefore a possible site for the building of a chemical factory. What is the meaning of the Being of the river? Is it mythological, filled with the presence of a deity, or is it a waste-removal system? This was not Heidegger’s motive to try and determine the final or last or best interpretation of the meaning of the Being of a river, but to reveal that the meaning of the Being of the river is dependent on the “upon which”, upon which its potential and possibilities are interpreted, and according to these possibilities it has meaning for that specific epoch. The river is there and the there
determines the meaning (possibilities and potentialities) of the river, but what Heidegger realised was that to-be-there is not something timeless or universal, but it is dependent on the specific time (epoch). Thus to-be-there (Da-sein) is dependent on the Da, and the Da of Da-sein in turn is dependent on time. The meaning of Being is dependent on the “upon which” it is thought, namely the Da (there) of Da-sein (being-there) and the there is dependent on the historical epoch. Yet this “upon which” is not thought, because every epoch takes the “upon which” for granted (as being obvious) – that this is the way the river and its potential (possibilities) is to be interpreted.

Heidegger’s understanding (theory) of the meaning of Being does not have an historical instantiation, as it is not a particular interpretation of what Being is, but it is a universal and transcendental understanding of the “upon which” the various particular understandings of Being are made possible, and in that sense it is a theory of the meaning of Being. Heidegger did not seek a new foundation upon which to think Being, but he sought the transcendental foundation (fundamental ontological foundation) upon which the meaning of Being can be thought. As was mentioned above, it is very difficult to seek the transcendental foundation of metaphysics, because the language (words like foundation) are metaphysical words and thus the limits of metaphysics are discovered and conveyed in the language of metaphysics.

Heidegger sought the transcendental conditions (foundation) upon which metaphysical theories can be thought. In every historical period of Da-sein this “true meaning of Being” (the “upon which”) is forgotten, or is in oblivion (Seinsvergessenheit), and the focus in every period of metaphysical history is on the particular metaphysics and ontology of that particular time in history. Every period in the metaphysical history has its own interpretation of the ontological difference between Being and beings and beings are interpreted “upon which” of Being. What is not thought in these interpretations of beings on the foundation of Being (upon which) is exactly the role of the “upon which”. The “upon which” is taken for granted and therefore not thought and Heidegger revealed this transcendental structure that underlies all metaphysical theories.

In these various competing metaphysical theories the focus is either on the metaphysics of the river god and the blessing of the gifts of water or on the Zweckmäßigkeit of the river as an ideal waste disposal, but what is not thought is that each of these interpretations is dependent on the ontological difference of that particular period. The difference between

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23 Heidegger’s analysis on the meaning of Being is “a transcendental theory about the history of metaphysics, not a theory which assumes a place within that history” (Caputo 1993a:10).
these two interpretations of the river is only because of the “upon which” the meaning of the Being of the river is interpreted, which determines the river’s possibilities. Heidegger sought to understand this transcendental structure that gives rise to the ontological difference that is at the basis of all metaphysical theories. Yet what is not thought is the ontological difference and the role the ontological difference plays in metaphysics. By arguing that the ontological difference between Being and beings was not thought, one is not arguing that the different metaphysical theories did not think that there was a difference between Being and beings. On the contrary, they were very aware that there is a difference and that was exactly what they thought. Every metaphysical theory was about proving how beings are related to Being. What they did not think and which was forgotten was that this ontological difference is the structural possibility of their metaphysical theory and this structural possibility was not thought, but taken for granted. The question that was never asked, was: what makes this structural possibility possible? This will be further discussed in the last thought-path and Heidegger’s distinction between difference and difference.

The “upon which” is dependent on the particular historical epoch’s metaphysics and ontology (ontological difference). Thus, in the history of the West the focus was in every historical epoch on the particular projection (sending) of Being (Seinsgeschick) rather than on the meaning of Being. The focus has been on the particular historical metaphysics and ontology rather than on the meaning of Being, which is forgotten or not thought, as one is so involved in the particular metaphysical structure and ontological order of the various beings within that structure or order that one cannot see beyond it and presumes that this particular structure is the way the world is. The particular “upon which” is taken for granted and not thought through.

How does one rediscover that which is forgotten? How does one retrieve (wiederfinden/wiederholen) the lost “meaning of Being”? How does one look behind the particular sending or projection of Being to understand the upon which, that makes such a sending possible so as to come to the “meaning of Being” beyond the various “upon which” structures of the historical metaphysical epochs? In Being and Time such a wiederfinden of the lost “meaning of Being” is made possible by a destruction of the tradition, that is a destruction of the various projections of Being so as to reach that “primordial source”, that which tradition has made invisible or blocked off or forgotten. Heidegger thus argues that what needs to happen is that one needs to have a destruierenden Rückgang of the history of ontology (Heidegger 1996:20). The long tradition of ontology must be unpacked

24 “The destructuring of the history of ontology essentially belongs to the formulation of the question of being and is possible solely within such a formulation” (Heidegger 1996:20).
(destroyed) down to its original experiences. This is what Heidegger does in *Being and Time*. The destruction is carried out backward beginning with Kant and then returning to the Greeks.

At this early stage in Heidegger’s thought, modernity was still interpreted in a positive light, which would change in the later Heidegger which will be referred to in the next section. In *Being and Time* Kant’s thought was understood as a major breakthrough because it is only in these modern (Kantian) times that the clue to the “meaning” of Being gets truly ferreted out and one comes very close to the true meaning of Being. What made Kant’s thought so unique in Heidegger’s opinion was that Kant’s existential analytic shows that the meaning of Being can only be determined in terms of time (Caputo 1993a:11). Kant’s existential analytic helps in discovering that the temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) of *Dasein* provides the necessary clues to the temporality (*Temporalität*) of Being (Caputo 1993a:11). The problem with Kant’s interpretation was that these ideas of temporality were still intertwined in the trappings of tradition and therefore these trappings of tradition needed to be destroyed (as part of the **destruierende Rückgang**). Kant came close because he realised that *Dasein* can only be interpreted within the context of time, but when it came to interpreting time he interpreted it within the tradition, that is, he interpreted it within the metaphysical ontological projection of his time. This projection of his time needed to be destroyed to reveal the meaning of time beyond the metaphysical trappings of that particular historical metaphysical epoch.25

Kant holds a very special place in Heidegger’s thought in *Being and Time*, but he made the ‘mistake’ of not thinking through time (Wood 2002:28). To liberate Kant’s understanding of time, one needs to trace the conceptualisation of time through Western tradition and retrace the steps of this conceptualisation in that tradition.

Heidegger retraces the steps of this tradition from Kant to Descartes to show how the cogito is conceived in the most traditional manner, namely within the medieval terms of *substantia* and *ens creatum* or *ens finitum*. These prejudices held the thinking of later generations (*die Folgezeit*) captive and this needs to be deconstructed. It is only once the tradition is traced all the way back to the Greeks that one can get to the bottom of these traditional prejudices. The process is a matter of retracing the tradition of *Seinsvergessenheit*, of why every period of metaphysical history thinks only according to

25 “And because Kant, at the time of his presentation of the transcendental schemata, had not worked out an interpretation of the primordial essence of time, his elucidation of the pure schemata as transcendental determinations of time is both fragmentary and obscure, for time taken as the pure now-sequence offers no possible means of access to the “temporal” interpretation of the notions” (Heidegger 1962b:206).
the “upon which” of that particular period and via this retreat, exposing these traditions (destruierender Rückgang), and this eventually leads to the Greeks (the birth-place of Western metaphysics). For Heidegger it is here, in the thought of the Greeks, that the trouble starts because here for the first time Being is interpreted in terms of world-time, that means both world and time (Caputo 1993a:12). The Greek’s choice to interpret Being in terms of the world (cosmology) and time as presence is a double prejudice. It is a prejudice which the Western tradition struggles to escape and which still holds much of Western thinking captive today.

This prejudice has held Western tradition captive till the transcendental turn, by:

i. Privileging world over Dasein and thus being blind to the disclosive work of Dasein,

ii. Privileging the time of things, that is the presence of what is present, the presence of the present-at-hand, ousia (Caputo 1993a:12).

This twofold privileging blocks our access to time altogether for two reasons:

i. genuine time is primordially a phenomenon of Dasein as things (beings) are in time because they are temporalized by Dasein, that is, given temporal determination by Dasein’s own temporalizing understanding (Caputo 1993a:12)

ii. Insofar as things are seen to be “present” one loses sight of their temporal qualities altogether and interprets them as stable, motionless and timeless.

In the thinking of these early Greeks a fateful decision was made which still affects our thinking today and therefore a destroying regress is needed.

It is only by going back to these early beginnings that the thoughts of the Spätlinge can be freed up, who have been blind to the genuine understanding of the relationship between time and Dasein. Thus a Wiederholung is necessary to give us access to those “original wellsprings” out of which the traditional categories and concepts were in part genuinely

26 World is given privilege in the sense that it is taken for granted. In other words, the world (the Da of Da-sein) is interpreted as a given and therefore to understand and interpret being in the world (Dasein) one must begin with the world and once one understands the world all the beings in the world will have a clear place in the metaphysical ontological structure of that particular interpretation of the world.

27 Time is interpreted as the present and in terms of what is present in the present (Gegenwart), and it is not seen as the transcendental condition “upon which” of Da-sein.

28 To be-there (Da-sein) is dependent on the Da (there), yet the there is not universal and timeless, but in turn is dependent on the time (historical epoch) of there and in this historical epoch the possibilities and potential of being-there (Dasein) is determined as discussed above concerning the river.

29 “The work of this destroying regress is carried out only when going back to the Greeks, it puts its finger on this decisive move and catches the Greeks at that very point where they made this fateful slip. In uncovering the prejudice at work in Greek philosophy, we can free up the work of those who come lately, wir Spätlinge, who up to now had been working in the blind about time and the subject” (Caputo 1993a:12).
drawn, because what was handed down by this Greek tradition was handed down to obviousness and therefore never questioned (Heidegger 1996:19).

For Heidegger the clue is to be found in the word ousia. Ousia means the stable presence of things that are truly and enduringly present and not merely passing away (Caputo 1993a:12).

If one wants to understand the Greeks, particularly Aristotle’s Metaphysics, and truly wants to encounter their thinking, one has to understand their interpretation of ousia. The central question of Aristotle’s Metaphysics is: What is Being?, and for Aristotle this question is the same as the question: what is ousia? Ousia has traditionally been translated as substance in English, because of the Latin translation of ousia in the Metaphysics as substantia. To really get behind the word ousia one needs to return to Plato’s use of the word. For Plato ousia meant permanent property, non-transferable goods (Sachs 2006). In Aristotle the word ousia seems to fill the gap in the language of being, because in Greek there is no word for thing. The closest one gets to thing is with two other concepts, namely to on and to chrema. To on simply means whatever is and to chrema is a thing used, used up, spent or consumed. To chrema is anything that is not ousia. Ousia on the other hand holds together, remains, and makes its possessor emphatically something (Sachs 2006).

According to Heidegger, as alluded to in the introduction, one has to think what is unthought if one truly encounters the thinking of philosophers. What is unthought in Aristotle’s understanding of ousia, which is based on Plato’s understanding of ousia? What is unthought in ousia, understood as a stable permanent presence, is time. Thus ousia, as stable permanent presence, functions by means of a concealed time-clue, namely the present. This idea of presence is handed down, as Heidegger says, to obviousness (Heidegger 1996:19) and therefore never questioned or challenged. This obviousness needs to be unpacked and interpreted. In German there are two different words for presence, Anwesenheit and Gegenwart, but Anwesenheit is a function of Gegenwart. Something is present (anwesend) because it is present (gegenwärtig). This presence of something (being) is interpreted as stable presence (ousia) in that it is present over time, and remains stable as it remains gegenwärtig, and it remains gegenwärtig because it is stable, and thus it is anwesend (present to hand). This seems obvious – a pen is a pen (it is gegenwärtig – within this time) because it remains anwesend (to hand as a tool for writing). It stays a pen today and tomorrow and thus that is what makes it a pen. What is not thought in this obviousness is to whom the pen is
present as pen? To somebody from another time and place (in another Gegenwart) it will not be so obvious that what is before one is a pen, as for it to be a pen, it needs to be thought in the light of (upon which) a particular time-place.

Thus ousia, interpreted as stable presence or the substantiality of things (beings), is a function of the present (the presential now) and therefore belongs to Dasein’s temporalizing (Caputo 1993a:12) as for another Dasein in a different time and place it might mean something different. This temporality of Dasein is what is forgotten or not explicit in the ancient ontology. Therefore the return to the Greek beginnings has a double status as it is the beginning of the problem, but in it also lies the clue to the solution. It is the root of the problem of Western tradition, but by truly encountering this early philosophy, namely by thinking the unthought, the unthought becomes the site of the gift of new possibilities.

The Greeks viewed Being as a timeless presence30 as they did not think through the “upon which” (Woraufhin) this stable presence is thought, namely time. The early Greeks thematized Being, but they did not thematize the temporal clues in terms of which they could thematize Being. The Greeks got to Being (ontology and Metaphysics), but they never got to the meaning of Being, in other words that upon which Being is given to thought, yet in their understanding of Being the clues lie hidden (concealed/unthought). The Greeks got to think the ontological difference as the difference between Being and beings, but they never got to think the meaning of this difference or the fundamental transcendental structure of this difference which makes all metaphysics possible.

The latecomers have a privileged position to be able to read backward the tradition and discover these clues and thus see what went wrong in the tradition. The Greeks are thus important because they are the source of the tradition and in being the source of the Western metaphysical tradition they are the source of the trouble and thus the troubleshooting needs to start with a retrieval (Wiederholung) of this tradition, not just in its fateful mistakes, but also, and more importantly, by thinking the unthought, the clues that they left. In Heidegger’s early work the unthought (the concealed upon which we think) does not belong to any specific time in history, but it is that which reveals the true

30 “However, this Greek interpretation of being comes about without any explicit knowledge of the guideline functioning in it, without taking cognizance of or understanding the fundamental ontological function of time, without insight into the ground of the possibility of this function. On the contrary, time itself is taken to be one being among others. The attempt is made to grasp time itself in the structure of its being on the horizon of an understanding of being which is oriented toward time in an inexplicit and naive way” (Heidegger 1996:23).
meaning of Being in that it offers a structure in which to think the various and multiple meanings of the Being of beings.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, does not believe that there is a period in the history of ontology or Metaphysics where the meaning of Being was thought. The meaning of Being must be understood in a functional sense, not an historical sense. Heidegger does not believe that the Greeks had it right and ever since then the history of ontology has been in decline. His aim was to reveal what is at work in any given theory of Being at any point in the history of ontology. Heidegger wants to show how in the tradition ideas of Being are constructed and then he isolates and exposes the structural makeup of these ideas, not with the intention of coming up with a better idea of Being, but to deconstruct those ideas that conceal their temporal clues (Caputo 1993a:14). Theories of Being present themselves as timeless and universal as if they were discovered and therefore they are unquestionable and obvious. Heidegger reveals that they are not discoveries, but rather constructions, and are constructed by not thinking (unconsciously not thinking) that the Vorhandensein (beings given to thought in science) and Zuhandensein (beings given to thought in everydayness) are given to thought from a hidden transcendental function (upon which) they are thought. Thus beings are understood “upon which” of the particular historical periods’ understanding of Being, but what is not thought is that this particular Being upon which beings are thought in its turn needs to be thought “upon which” of time. In other words, the Being upon which beings are thought and interpreted is dependent upon that particular historical time.

So the task is to deconstruct the historically accumulated notions of Being and understand how these notions were made possible and this Heidegger locates in time functions. This notion of meaning of Being is transcendental and not something constituted and historically actual. Therefore there will never be a time in the history of metaphysics where this meaning of Being will become the meaning of the Being of beings, as it is rather the transcendental condition for there to be meanings for the Being of beings in every period of metaphysical history.

What is given to thought are the various projections of Being – the entities projected here (Vorhandensein) are given to thought in science and there in everydayness (Zuhandensein), but all this is made possible from a hidden transcendental function (unthought) that is continuously at work sustaining and nourishing these projections. This hidden transcendental function is the Woraufhin (upon which), “the implicit
(transcendental) clue which explicit accounts of Being are always following without paying it any heed" (Caputo 1993a:15).

Heidegger’s transcendental understanding of the meaning of Being, functions on a fundamental-ontological level and thus cannot and must not be confused with some form of transcendent understanding or interpretation of Being. In other words, Heidegger reveals the logic, or rather the fundamental onto-logic, that makes ontology and/or metaphysics possible, but this fundamental ontology cannot function as the new foundation (transcendental foundation) of Being. Heidegger reveals the transcendent function and not the transcendent being upon which Being is thought, therefore this function cannot be interpreted as the new transcendent. In the history of metaphysics, Being is always understood in terms of some or other transcendent. The temptation in God-talk is to transform Heidegger’s fundamental ontological meaning of Being into an onto-theo-logical theory. Heidegger’s meaning of Being is more fundamental than any onto-theo-logy, as any onto-theo-logical interpretation of Being would be one possible projection (interpretation, understanding) of Being which is still projected upon the Worauthin (upon which). This Worauthin remains more fundamental than any transcendental theory of Being.

However, the temptation remains to inscribe into the fundamental ontological or transcendental structure of Being a transcendental understanding of Being, such as God. This study needs to be very aware of this temptation as it seeks the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk. Heidegger’s whole point is that any transcendental interpretation of Being is only possible because of a more fundamental transcendental (concealed/unthought) structure of the meaning of Being.

Heidegger’s meaning of Being has wounded metaphysics or opened metaphysics up to the plurality of the sendings of Being, where no epochal sending can be privileged above the other, although later, in the next stage, this is exactly what Heidegger did, namely privileging early pre-Socratic Greek thought to a certain extent and privileging modernity as the site for a new beginning. Yet, before one moves to this next stage of his thought-paths it is important to hold onto his understanding of the meaning of Being which delimits any metaphysical thinking, making it relative to the time of its construction. It is for this reason that his thought has often been described as the end of metaphysics or the end of philosophy even. This end of metaphysics or the end of philosophy is thought in “the spirit of Kantian krinein” (Caputo 1993a:16). This critique does not destroy, but rather points out the limits of metaphysical thinking, as metaphysics cannot be destroyed (one cannot do
without) – thinking is always metaphysical, but metaphysics needs to be delimited as it is revealed that all metaphysical thought is relative to the time-place of its construction.

Heidegger’s meaning of Being delimits and wounds any possible God-talk, even if this God-talk takes place within the grammar of wounded-metaphysics (postmetaphysics). By thinking the Woraufthin (upon which), the meaning of Being emphasises the historicity of any metaphysical grammar and thus limits that grammar to the particular historical context, but this limitation also opens new possibilities. In the next section Heidegger’s hope regarding these possibilities will be discussed although the study will later, when discussing Derrida, develop a different kind of hope with regards to the possibilities in this Ortschaft of the delimitation of metaphysics.

2.2 Aletheia or A-letheia (the truth of Being)

2.2.1 Introduction

Heidegger’s thinking of aletheia as the truth of Being begins in the years after Being and Time. Two major works are characteristic of this period of his thought, namely Grundfrage der Philosophie (1984) and Beiträge zur Philosophie (1999). In this period Heidegger’s thoughts took a turn (Kehre), in the sense that he turned on some of his earlier views, and this turn can be characterised as a move away from the transcendental function of time developed in Being and Time towards an interpretation of time within a historical narrative that began in the Greek metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle and developed through various stages [Fügung] (Heidegger 1999) to its culmination in modernity as the eschaton of this grand historic narrative. The time before the beginning (pre-Socratic Greek thought) and the end time are both privileged with regards to thinking the truth of Being and this is a new development that is contrary to his thinking of the earlier period, where no particular time was privileged. Rather the transcendental function of time for meaning of Being was revealed. In this period the truth of Being is sought and two specific periods within the ontological history are more privileged with regard to the truth than others. In this section this move in Heidegger’s thought will be unpacked.

2.2.2 A turn (Kehre) on his earlier thinking and the development of the Seinsgeschichte

By the time Heidegger gave his 1937-1938 lecture course, Grundfrage der Philosophie, the myth of Being was already firmly in place. In the previous period, modernity and specifically Kant were interpreted as the breakthrough, but now modernity was seen as
the eschaton, the end into which the West had run (Caputo 1993a:17). This end for Heidegger was also the site for a new beginning and therefore there was hope – hope in a new beginning, and it was the fate of the Germans to take up this hope and develop the possibilities of this new beginning in Andenken of the early Greek beginning, and thus the Greek-German myth was created that had fateful and fatal political consequences.

In Beiträge zur Philosophie, translated as Contributions to Philosophy (Heidegger 1999) written between 1936 and 1938, Heidegger begins his critique of the modern world that would later intensify. It intensified in the beginning of the 1940s where he identifies the character of the modern time as being determined by technological ways of thinking and behaving which he termed Machenschaft, which is translated as machination (Heidegger 1999), where everything is enframed within the Gestell. Thus modernity is no longer the site of the Kantian breakthrough with his existential analytic, but it is the end, as culmination of a long history of Seinsvergessenheit. Modernity was thus the end time (Heidegger 1975:17). This end time was the direct result of the Seinsvergessenheit that began with the Greeks, specifically Plato and Aristotle. Thus he changed his views on modernity: in the first period it was the time of the breakthrough, now it had become the end time. He also changed his view (turned on his previous view) on the role of Greek thought. In this second thought-path, the Greek thinking still played a central role, but the role was completely different to the role it played in the first thought-path of his thinking. In the previous thought-path, as discussed above, the Greek thinking was the site of the problem, but (and importantly so) also the site for possible redemption and one was challenged to think the unthought of that period. Now the Greeks with and after Plato and Aristotle are only the site of the problem as the history that ends in the Gestell of modernity began with Plato and Aristotle. This end in the Gestell is interpreted negatively in this phase of Heidegger’s thought and yet it is also the site of the Ereignis of an ‘other beginning’.

In the Beiträge, Heidegger articulates the preparation for the Ereignis through six interlinked sections or ‘joinings’ [Fügung]. This preparation for the Ereignis is necessary, Heidegger argues, for a ‘crossing’ toward ‘another beginning’ [anderen Anfang] of history (Heidegger 1999:§1). The history of the West is interpreted as if everything was meant to be and thus it becomes this grand-narrative of Being. In this period of Heidegger’s thought it would make sense to capitalise Being, which Stambaugh (1996:xiv) argued against in translating Sein in Being and Time, because history in this period is interpreted as various stages [Fügung], as if divinely ordained. These stages are interpreted as if Being ordains and determines the various Seinsgeschicke and connects them into a Seinsgeschichte as
the transcendental power behind history and thus one can speak of the Myth or Grand-narrative of Being (Grand-Seinsgeschichte).

Heidegger, already here in this period, uses the term Ereignis, yet the full implication of this term and its meaning belongs to the third stage of his thought which will be reflected on in the next section. What is important at this stage of his thought is that this narrative that began with the Greeks comes to its eschaton in the modern Gestell and this Gestell is the site for the Ereignis of a new beginning. The new beginning is only possible if it is thought together with the primordial beginning which is located in pre-Socratic Greek thought. The new beginning is possible only if thought together with that, which came before the “fall of thinking”, inaugurated by Plato.

The idea of this grand narrative (Seinsgeschichte der Seinsvergessenheit) that began in Greek metaphysics and culminates in the Gestell of modernity is a clear move away from the transcendental function of time in Being and Time, where time was the “upon which” the meaning of Being needed to be thought. In this phase time is still thought, but it is thought “upon which” of the Seinsgeschichte. The ontological difference is conditioned by time (Being and Time) but this time is in turn conditioned by or included in the story of various Seinsgeschicke that together form a Seinsgeschichte. This Grand-narrative (Seinsgeschichte der Seinsvergessenheit) is placed between a myth of two beginnings.

2.2.3 The Myth of the two beginnings

If modernity and Greek metaphysics are interpreted negatively the task of thinking can no longer be a destruierender Rückgang of tradition to discover the forgotten implicit unthought clues. What is suggested is a return to the primordial “Beginning” (Anfang), to a time before the great fall into Seinsvergessenheit. In this thought-path Heidegger’s thought thus begins the idea of privileging the early Greeks (pre-Socratic Greeks) and linking this early beginning to the new beginning. In the early beginning lies hidden the truth that needed to be recaptured to transform the modern age into an authentic end, namely a transition to another beginning (Heidegger 1984:134). The Grand-narrative (Seinsgeschichte der Seinsvergessenheit) which culminates in modernity could only be transformed into the truth of Being by an andenken of the time prior to the beginning of the Seinsgeschichte der Seinsvergessenheit.

31 “The ‘other beginning’ is only possible as a “fundamentally new stage of Western thinking that escapes longstanding prejudices and unquestioned foundations of the Western tradition since Plato, now hardened into the increasingly unthinking determination of thinking by technology and calculation. But the preparation for the ‘other beginning’ is itself only possible through a new understanding of the first beginning, the beginning of Western thinking in the thought of the pre-Socratics” (Livingston 2003:326).
Two important aspects of Heidegger’s thoughts from the previous period, *Being and Time*, were rejected: the privilege granted to modernity and specifically the work of Kant, and the role of Greek thought. This change in attitude towards modernity (Kant) and Greek metaphysics can be understood if one takes into consideration what was said above, that Heidegger’s understanding of the function of time had changed. The transcendental determination of time had changed and was subjected to the *Seinsgeschichte*. The role of time had to change for Heidegger to be able to think the *Seinsgeschichte* as well as the myths of the two beginnings. Modernity became the end time, the climax, of the *Seinsgeschichte der Seinsvergessenheit*, and like every story it needed a beginning and this beginning was found in the metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle. A question that is always asked once one determines a specific beginning, is: what was prior to that beginning? What was prior to the beginning of *Seinsvergessenheit*? Could it be that prior to the beginning of *Seinsvergessenheit* there was a thinking of Sein? Maybe prior to the forgetting there was a time where the truth of Being was thought? Yet besides asking what came prior to the beginning there is also the question: what happens after the end? Thus the *Seinsgeschichte der Seinsvergessenheit* is placed between a beginning and an end and if it is the story of the forgetting of Being then maybe that which came before and that which comes after might be the truth of Being.

This is what Heidegger thought: that the Grand-narrative of the forgetting of Being had a beginning and prior to that beginning was a time where people (pre-Socratic Greeks) were more aware of Being in their experience of Being and thus closer to the truth of Being. This time prior to the beginning of the forgetting of Being is thus privileged with regards to experiencing Being. They did not think the truth of Being, but they were more aware of Being in their experience of Being.

In *Being and Time*, the history of ontology had to go through a process of *destruierender Rückgang* as an exercise in troubleshooting to look for what went wrong in order to repeat and re-do (*wieder-holen*). Now, in the second thought-path, history is reconceived as a work of recollective thought (*An-denken*) (Caputo 1993a:17). Plato and Aristotle are still the source of the trouble, but not the source where the clues are hidden, but the source of a great cover-up of the primordial experience of Being prior to their metaphysics. In the previous thought-path, Plato and Aristotle were to be read backwards from modernity via Kant to seek there the clues (unthought) which will help in uncovering (revealing) the

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32 It must be mentioned that Heidegger never argued that the pre-Socratic Greeks thought the truth of Being, but this will be discussed at a later stage. Thus this privileging of this earlier Greek period should not be read as if Heidegger thought they understood the truth of Being, but that the clues for interpreting *aletheia* are to be found in this period.
meaning of Being. In this thought-path Plato and Aristotle are read forwards with each successive historical stage being interpreted as a further falling away from the early Greeks’ (pre-Socratic) experience of Being. Therefore the experience of being that came before the falling away takes on a place of historical privilege (Caputo 1993a:17). The idea of Wiederholen of the clues hidden was replaced with Andenken, memorial thinking which is thinking back to the great Anfang (Beginning) and only in and through this Andenken is a true and authentic new beginning possible.

Taking the above into consideration this period of Heidegger’s thought can be described as a myth of two beginnings. Not the two beginnings of the earlier Heidegger where Western thought was believed to have two (if not more) origins, namely Greek thought as well as Jewish (Biblical) thought, but the two beginnings which refer to the way truth is understood. It is the history, grand narrative, of truth between the primordial beginning in pre-Socratic thought and the new beginning at the eschaton of a long history of thought influenced and determined by Plato.

To understand this tale of two beginnings which characterises Heidegger’s thought of this second thought-path as thinking the truth of Being one has to turn to his understanding of truth. Within Western tradition, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, it has become self-evident and self-grounding that truth means correctness (Richtigkeit, adequatio, homoiosis).

2.2.4 Thinking back to the great Anfang and the new Beginning and the possibilities of the truth (aletheia) of Being

For Heidegger there are three things associated with this Western conception of truth (Wisnewski 2008:131).

The first is that truth is linguistic, as one makes assertions and these assertions are spoken or written and can be classified as either true or false assertions.

Second, the truth or falsity of these assertions is determined by the degree of agreement with the world (reality). An assertion is a true statement if it is in agreement with the way things are in reality or the way things happened in the real world.

Thirdly, this idea of truth began in the thinking of Aristotle.

Within the Western tradition this understanding of truth is taken for granted, it is passed on as obvious. Yet Heidegger challenges this conception of truth by revealing the unthought of these claims. Heidegger (1984:§§20-24) argues that before one can make any claims about a true or false assertion an entity must be visible for one to be able to claim that an
assertion is either true or false concerning that entity. To assert that a dog is brown and to know if that assertion is true one will have to see the dog and be able to distinguish the colour brown. This means that for truth to be possible concerning a dog the dog must be manifest (visible) as well as its colour. Thus before one can say that this or that is a truth concerning an entity the entity itself must be manifest. The Western tradition of truth presupposes this openness (visibility) of entities, but does not think this openness. This conception of truth never asks the question: how is it that entities are manifest or are open and thus visible so that one can make correct or false assertions about them? As in the previous section certain ideas, such as this conception of truth, are passed on in tradition as being obvious. This self-grounding definition of truth is only possible on the concealed ground, namely that beings (entities) need to be in the open and only then one can make true or false claims about them.

For Heidegger the problem with truth as correctness is that it is cut off from its concealed ground. The concealed ground of truth is the primordial Greek experience of Being which is interpreted as the open and manifest realm in which beings appear and are thus manifest. Heidegger thus returns to the Greek concept of truth as aletheia. Today, when one speaks of truth (aletheia) as correctness, only half the “truth” is heard. One only hears the idea of correctness, but what is not heard is the ground upon which correctness can be determined. The Greek view of truth presupposes that truth is based on homoiosis because it is first and foremost openness and in that openness, likeness or sameness can be established (Caputo 1993a:18). To be able to determine likeness between two things, or between an assertion and the subject matter of the assertion, there needs to be visibility of the things or of the subject matter so as to determine likeness.

Truth as correctness is made possible by the forgotten primary beginning, namely truth as openness. This primary beginning is also in accordance with the etymology of the word aletheia as unconcealedness. Heidegger is not saying that the early Greeks thought of truth as unconcealedness, as their focus was on the question of Being. They focussed on that which shows itself from itself (phusis) and as such arises into well-formed and enduring appearance (Heidegger 1984:§§30-33).

They were amazed with sheer wonderment (thaumazein) that being emerges into presence and perdures there (Heidegger 1984:§§36-39). All this thinking and wonderment takes place in the Umkreis, Gesichtskreis of the open space of unconcealment. The early (pre-Socratic) Greek experience of Being was the experience of sheer wonderment that beings show themselves from themselves and arise into well-formed and enduring
appearances. Thus they experienced Being as the un concealing of beings within an Umkreis, Gesichtskreis of un concealment. This was their experience of Being which focuss ed on the beings appearing as un concealed, but they never thought or made this un concealment a theme. What they experienced was that beings become visible, manifest in a process and within a Gesichtskreis of un concealment. Thus, although the Greeks focussed on being, they were aware that beings become manifest within the Gesichtskreis of un concealment. One could say, thinking back to the previous thought-path, that they were aware and amazed at the presence of being which emerged out of concealment which is the “upon which”. Their wonder and amazement focussed on the being that was manifest and not on the un concealment. Thus Being was experienced as un concealment rather than in terms of one or other metaphysical ontological category which was the fate of Being in the thinking that began with Plato.

Therefore aletheia, truth, begins with un concealment and the wonder that beings exist and that they exist within this Gesichtskreis of un concealment (aletheia). Dasein is first of all wonderment of there being something in place of nothing. Dasein is wonderment about the Da (there is). This there is there because of un concealment and therefore Dasein can only be interpreted within this realm (Gesichtskreis) of Da-sein (there is). What the early Greeks did not further pursue was to think this Gesichtskreis of un concealment (aletheia) on the transcendental function of time. They were amazed that there was there (Da) and that what there was was because of un concealment. Thus they were amazed because of aletheia, but they did not think aletheia. They did not think what this Gesichtskreis of un concealment meant; that Gesichtskreis means exactly what the word says: the circle of view or the circle within which things are interpreted, and therefore whatever is, is dependent on this circle of view, this circle of interpretation which might be a good description of hermeneutics. Whatever is is dependent on this circle of view, and depending on the view, whatever “is” will be interpreted (seen) differently. Thus the early Greeks came very close to thinking the importance of the circle of view and that this circle of view (Gesichtskreis) of un concealment is the truth of Being (aletheia).

The beginning of Greek metaphysics changed this amazement at the un concealment of what is within the Gesichtskreis, and ignored the role played by the Gesichtskreis in un concealing what is, and sought very specific ontological metaphysical determinations of what is (beings) on the basis of a specific determination of what Being is, and thus metaphysics began.
The *Gesichtskreis* of unconcealment was not thematized, but only that which happens in this *Kreis* (unconcealment), and the *Kreis* itself remained unthought and therefore concealed. *Aletheia* is the realm of unconcealment and thus is the concealed clue, the implicit unthought horizon, the unconceived realm, within which the Greek experience of Being unfolds (Caputo 1993a:19). It was not for the Greeks to raise the question of *aletheia*, but it was their fate/destiny to raise the question of the *to on* “in” its *aletheia* (*on/aletheia*) (Caputo 1993a:19). The early Greeks only experienced Being in *aletheia* in the Gesichtskreis of unconcealment.

This was the first beginning (*Anfang*) and in this beginning, Being was the most question-worthy (*Frag-würdigste*): “why is there something and not nothing?” This wonderment that there is something was the focus of early Greek thought, while *aletheia* was the concealed element within which the Greek thought on Being took place.

The second beginning is the task of the “latecomers”, who live in the wake or the ending of the first Beginning (*eschaton*), to transform this end time into a new beginning. The latecomers are those who live in a time where the question of Being has been flattened out into self-evidence and taken without question (*Fraglosigkeit*). The question, why is there something and not nothing, is no longer asked because only the usefulness and manipulability of beings is what is important in the technological period of modernity. In the time of *Machenschaft* of the *Gestell*, the question of Being is not thought as beings are purely seen in their technological usefulness or consumer value. It is the task, fate and destiny of those living in this end time to transform this *Fraglosigkeit* into a second beginning which is as powerful and originary as the first Beginning.

For Heidegger, the only way to do this was to go back and to think again what the early Greeks thought and thereby recapture the wonder of the beginning. This task is given to the latecomers. In Heidegger’s thinking it is the fate or the destiny of specifically the Germans to respond to this call to think again the first beginning and thereby usher in the second beginning as the redemption of the West. It is in this *two-beginnings-myth* that Heidegger’s myth of the great first beginning was interwoven into the National Socialist politics of Nazi Germany and their destiny in the history of the West. It is the task of the latecomers (German latecomers) to go back and to think that which was concealed in the first experience of Being, namely the unspoken and unthought element of *aletheia*.

With this myth in place the history of the West becomes a clear Grand-narrative of progression or regression, *Seinsgeschichte der Seinsvergessenheit*, and can be retold as follows:
First phase: Early Greek thought (pre-Plato and pre-Aristotle) who thought Being within the element of aletheia (on/aletheia), but without thinking aletheia. Being is beingness as presence (Anwesenheit) within the realm of unconcealment.

Second phase: Plato and Aristotle tried to clarify this with a definition of the link between thinking and being. The move from wonderment about being to seeking rational grounds to explain the existence of beings. This “definition” left the element of aletheia as unconcealment behind and it was no longer thought.

End phase: Oblivion set in when aletheia got Romanized and Christened as veritas, and then modernized as certitudo and Richtigkeit (Caputo 1993a:20), and what was discussed above happened: that the ground for truth as veritas, certitudo or Richtigkeit was no longer thought, namely that beings need to be manifest to be able to determine their Richtigkeit. That things are visible was taken for granted, and the Gesichtskreis in which they become visible was not thought as things were believed to be objectively there (present/Anwesend), ignoring the Gesichtskreis of unconcealment or circle of view (the point of view) within which objects are gegenwärtig (the time, namely the present time in which objects are present), and therefore the interpretation of a present object that is anwesend is determined by it being gegenwärtig (within a certain time horizon namely the present). What was ignored was the role of time, namely that in another Gegenwart the same object might be interpreted differently.

If history is interpreted as this narrative of regression, the question comes to mind: how can one correct this regression? The answer would be simple: one turns back to the Fragwürdigste (that which is worthy of the question), namely the question of Being within the Gesichtskreis of unconcealment – to think Being as truth (aletheia). How does one do that in a Fraglose (question-less) time where the question of Being is no longer asked? Heidegger’s answer is that it is not so much a question of our thinking turning towards Being, but Being’s Wendung (turning away) from thought that produces a Not-wendigkeit, Dürftigkeit (need) by which humanity is beset within modernity. The lack of wonder and the emptiness produced by machination in the Gestell creates a need and a desire for more. In other words, the sending of Being (Seinsgeschick) in the time of the Gestell is an epoch that is characterised by the withdrawal of Being and this withdrawal produces a neediness.

In the first great beginning Being filled human thought with wonder. In the Gestell there is a lack of wonder as Being seems to have forsaken the world (Seinsverlassenheit), and this is Being’s own doing. It is part and parcel of Being’s concealment, but exactly this
concealment is the way to discover the truth of Being as this withdrawal connects the final period to the primordial beginning. In the early beginning the Being of beings was thought in the realm (Gesichtskreis) of unconcealment and in the period of the Gestell Being has withdrawn (concealed) itself and thus beings are taken for granted without any question of Being (Fraglose Zeit). Aletheia, truth of Being as unconcealment and concealment, connects these two periods to each other. In the first beginning Being is interpreted as unconcealment, thus thought in the Gesichtskreis of aletheia, and in the end time Being is not thought, but it is not thought because of a withdrawal of Being (concealed). It is the idea of aletheia that connects these two periods to each other as aletheia is always both concealment and unconcealment, and thus the early Greeks thought Being in terms of unconcealment and in modernity Being is concealed and thus the double meaning of aletheia spans these two periods (beginnings).

In the primordial beginning there was wonderment at Being as unconcealing. In modernity there is the lack of wonderment because Being is concealed. Thus thinking in the time of the Gestell is not to return to wonderment over Being, but rather to focus on the withdrawal (concealment) of Being (Heidegger 1984:§40). In the long history of the West the wonderment over Being has been flattened out into a triviality, a self-evidence, a tautology, and so thinking in this age is to see exactly that: the withdrawal of Being. It is not to think against that history (Rückgang), as in the previous thought-path, but to think in the direction of that history and the progressive withdrawal of Being.

Heidegger interprets the ‘progress’ of Western tradition, the Seinsgeschichte of Western tradition, as an ever-increasing withdrawal or forgottenness of Being (Seinsvergessenheit). This withdrawal manifests itself in the modern determination of Being from the sole perspective of beings, where the question of Being is no longer thought, and thus the abandonment of Being which culminates in the dominance of technological and calculational ways of thinking and handling objects which is interpreted as machination. In this time (technological time) all beings become raw material for quantitative measurement, calculation, and manipulation according to the natural-scientific understanding of matter (Livingston 2003:327). Yet, even in such a technological time, in such a Fraglose time, Heidegger believes it is possible to hear the faint echo [Anklang] of the original happening or swaying of Being. This echo is perceivable, because the original happening or swaying of Being is the beginning of this very narrative and thus the beginning must still echo in it.
In the Beiträge zur Philosophie there is a section entitled Anklang, translated as ‘Echo’. This Anklang is the resonance of the ‘essential swaying of be-ing’ [der Wesung des Seyns] in an age of complete abandonment and loss (Heidegger 1999:§§50,51). The essential swaying of Being is Being’s way of concretely happening, abiding or enduring, then the Anklang is the resonance (echo) of Being’s happening that one can still hear in the Gestell, even when Being has almost completely withdrawn (Livingston 2003:326). Perceiving this Anklang will enable one to gain a first hint or intimation of the Ereignis\(^{33}\).

Suspended between these two beginnings, Heidegger’s discussion on machination uses two distinct terms to refer to that which has withdrawn from beings in modern (technological) times and to that which may come again into its own in the ‘other beginning’. He uses Sein to refer to Being as it is understood within Western tradition of metaphysics. The other term he uses is Seyn which refers to Be-ing, thought outside metaphysics, “as it must be thought in the future” (Livingston 2003:327). It is Seyn that must be thought in order to formulate the question of the truth of Be-ing\(^{34}\) [Wahrheit des Seyns] (Livingston 2003:327).

What is interesting in Heidegger’s reflections on machination, which is a manner of the essential swaying of Being (eine Art der Wesung des Seins), is that as such it is a metaphysical determination of Being as beingness and in this determination there is a faint hint of the truth of Be-ing itself. In a sense one can say that the modern period of machination is the site for the truth of Be-ing (Seyn). As Heidegger says, Die Machenschaft als Wesung der Seinheit gibt einen ersten Wink in der Wahrheit des Seyns selbst (Heidegger 1999:§61). So machination, as the end of the history of Being (eschaton), is in modernity interpreted as beingness, but this withdrawal of Being nevertheless provides one, through its distant echoing of the first beginning, with a long-suppressed insight into the possibility of the “other beginning”, namely the thinking of the truth of Be-ing. So it is exactly into this abandonment of Being (Seinsverlassenheit) and the loss of the question of Being (Fraglosigkeit) that this generation (Spätlinge) must look to discern the faint echo of the first beginning.

The history of Being began, in the first beginning, with the withdrawal of Being, in other words not thinking aletheia, namely the realm of un concealment, which is the concealed clue, the implicit horizon, the unconceived realm, within which the Greek experience of

\(^{33}\) “Perceiving this echo even in the completion of the dominant processes of technological thinking and machination, Heidegger suggests, will simultaneously enable us to gain a first premonition, hint, or intimation of the event of being, as Ereignis, in the ‘other’ beginning, the one for which the thinking of the Beiträge aims to prepare” (Livingston 2003:327).

\(^{34}\) To make the distinction between Sein and Seyn clear in the English translation, Sein will be translated as Being and Seyn as Be-ing.
Being unfolds. Now, at the end of that history of Being, this withdrawal comes to its completion with the total abandonment of Being (Seinsverlassenheit) and even of the question of Being (Fraglose Zeit). Machination fosters what is not proper to Being (das Unwesen des Seins) as that which is not thought in Being, and in that it futhers its withdrawal to the extent of completion.

This is the ambiguity that exists in Heidegger’s understanding of technology as both a product of Being (one of its sendings) and at the same time the total alienation from what is proper to Being. Technology, machination, is thus the utter and complete withdrawal of Being from thought and therefore it harbours an echo of the first beginning of Being’s withdrawal in the thought of Plato. It is for this reason that Heidegger in Die Frage Nach Technik, translated as The Question Concerning Technology, defines the essence of technology as ‘a revealing that conceals’ (Heidegger 1993). Technology is the utmost of forgetting of Being (Seinsvergessenheit) and in that it is the site of utmost danger, but because of that it conceals the ‘saving power’, namely the possibility of a new beginning (Heidegger 1993:338).

To understand this ambiguity of machination one needs to think machination together with what seems to be totally opposed to it, namely lived-experience (Erlebnis). Heidegger insists that the spread and completion of the dominance of machination leads incessantly to the dominance of lived-experience as an ‘insipid sentimentality’, where every undertaking and event exists as an experience to be experienced (Heidegger 1999:§58).

2.2.5 Machination and lived experience and the truth of Be-ing

It is in thinking machination and lived-experience together\(^35\) that one can arrive at the truth of Be-ing. If one understands what machination and lived-experience have to do with each other then one will understand the deepest sense of how Western metaphysics, from the first beginning, has interpreted Being and the nature of beings, and from this awareness or awakening will glimpse the site of the other beginning.

Heidegger’s critique of lived-experience includes a critique of all kinds and forms of subjectivity developed in the nineteenth century. His problem with lived-experience in a nutshell, is that all kinds of beings (things and happenings) become graspable through lived-experience and thus the human being becomes defined as animal rationale. In other

\(^{35}\) “If machination and lived-experience are named together, then this points to an essential belongingness of both to each other – a belongingness that is concealed but is also essentially non-simultaneous within the ‘time’ of the history of be-ing... when thinking-mindfulness (as questioning the truth of be-ing and only as this) attains the knowing awareness of this mutual belongingness, then the basic thrust of the history of the first beginning (history of Western metaphysics) is grasped along with that, in terms of knowing awareness of the other beginning” (Heidegger 1999:§61)
words, firstly the human is defined biologically as an animal and added to this animal comes the faculty of rationality, which is interpreted as the faculty of representing (Heidegger 1999:§63). Thus beings are restricted to a certain limited range of things that are representable as ‘lived-through live-experience’. This makes the liveability of any being as an experienced representation the criterion of its being altogether. Only that exists which can be reduced to an experienced representation by a subject. This kind of thinking reduced beings to objectivity, understood and set over and against subjectivity (Livingston 2003:331). It is the subject over and against objective reality. What is forgotten in this distinction is that objectivity is thought “upon which” of subjectivity. The objectivity of beings is dependent on the Being of subjectivity.

It is clear from the above that machination and lived-experience are internally connected because machination represents the outcome and totalization of the pre-delineation of beings as experienceable. If only those things exist that are experienceable by a subject then all objects become dependent on the subject who experiences them. This is a strange contradiction because on the one hand this history of ontology ignored the Gesichtskreis and sought objective knowledge and yet on the other hand this objective knowledge is dependent on the lived-experience of a subject and thus is no longer objective, but subjective, but that is not thought, as the “upon which” (Worauthin) of objectivity, which is subjectivity, is not thought. This dependence on the subject that “objectively” views objects (beings), and objectifies objects into things that can be manipulated and technologically transformed so as to enhance the lived-experience of a modern subject, is not thought. That subjectivity is the Being of objectivity is not thought and thus Being is perceived to have withdrawn as all there is are objectively present objects that are present (unconcealed) to the subject, and thus modernity was celebrated as the victory of immanence – the withdrawal of Being.

Yet Being has not withdrawn, but was concealed in subjectivity and was thus not thought. This withdrawal of Being in the modern technological age thus becomes the site to think the truth of Being: aletheia (the unconcealing concealing). The objects are perceived to be objectively there and therefore completely unconcealed for the subject to perceive, but this objective presence of the objects (things of the world) can only be thought “upon which” of subjectivity and lived experience, and thus Being of subjectivity is concealed.

This connection explains how the totalization of the interpretation of beings as experienceable by humanity means the totalization of the systematization of objects as definable, calculable and representable (Livingston 2003:331).
This joint arising of machination and lived-experience, Heidegger describes in terms of three essential ‘laws’.

i. The first law is the ambiguity inherent in machination referred to earlier, namely the more powerfully machination unfolds the more stubbornly and more machinatingly it hides itself as such. In modern times machination hides itself behind the priority of objectivity as the basic form of actuality. Machination is seen to be “natural” (as being obvious) as beings are objects that can be neutrally (objectively) studied, grasped, comprehended and thus manipulated.

ii. The second law is that the more machination hides itself in this way the more it leads to the dominance of what seems to be opposed to it, namely lived-experience - subjectivity. In an objectively explainable world, where everything is grasped and comprehended, the human subject should eventually disappear into the machine-like working and connections of all that is within a scientifically-ontologically defined world, and yet in this objectively comprehended world the role of subjective experience becomes more important as it is the subject that has this objective view of the world.

iii. The third law draws the epistemological consequence and a kind of absoluteness: the “more unconditionally lived-experience becomes the measure for correctness and truth (and thus for ‘actuality’ and constancy), the less is the prospect of gaining, from this vantage point, knowledge of machination as such” (Heidegger 1999:§61).

Lived-experience becomes the measure of truth, as all things (beings) can only be if they can be represented as objects to the lived-experience of the subject. Objectivity presents itself as the unquestionable form of actuality and thus hides the joint pre-determination of objects by machination and lived-experience. In lived-experience the subject becomes important as rational animal to whom objects are represented and yet this representation of objects flattens out objects as they are only seen (interpreted) in their technological usefulness to the subject. Objects presented to the subject have meaning only if seen in the light (“upon which”) of their technological usefulness, or later within the capitalist consumer market they are interpreted according to their consumer value. If one follows through and reflects on the capitalist consumer market with Heidegger’s thoughts on technology and machination, one can interpret objects taking on value, thus meaning, only insofar as they have consumer value as commodities, which in turn is connected to the interpretation of the subject as a consumer (the lived-experience of consumption). Objects (beings) have value (meaning) to the degree that they are desirable to the subject and
they are desirable to the subject to the degree that they have gained in commodity value. These objects of consumption also begin to determine the identity of the subject and they determine the lived-experience, and thus the *Gestell* of the market becomes its own truth\(^36\) and closed (enframed) system.

In this way, lived-experience and objectivity are linked in their historical birth; “the more that objectivity is developed as a universal system, the more it demands subjective lived-experience as its criterion and standard” (Livingston 2003:332). This pre-delineated framework in which beings come to meaning, Heidegger calls *Gestell* or enframing, which is the essence of technology, and these thoughts are very useful in interpreting consumerism/capitalism\(^37\).

Heidegger continues to trace the hidden history of the development of machination and he does this through a related concept, the gigantic [*Das Riesenhafte*]. At first gigantic refers to the unlimited processes of quantification and assumptions of quantifiability that makes possible modern technological means of expression and control. Once this is placed into a broader historical perspective the ground for the gigantic is not just the absence of limits on the process of quantification, but a fundamental aspect or feature of quantity itself\(^38\).

In the gigantic, quality becomes quantity, thus the basic determination of the nature of beings becomes their calculability and quantifiability. Heidegger always seeks the ground, the hidden ground, and in the context of the gigantic it means to seek the emergence of the quantitative from the qualitative, the emergence of what is not proper to Being from what is proper to it, namely quality. In his attempt to try and understand how everything becomes quantifiable (non-proper to Being) from the quality that something has, which is proper to Being, he argues that it can only happen if quality remains the hidden core of quantity. If one can once more translate this gigantic into the gigantic of the capitalist consumer market and return to the above example: an object (being) has a certain quality (which is proper to its Being), but this quality is determined by its value (consumer value or technological value) and this value in turn determines its desirability, which in its turn determines the quantity of production of this object. If one takes the i-pad 2 as an

\(^{36}\) For further exploration of the capitalist market and the self-sustaining truth of the market see Meylahn 2010.

\(^{37}\) I am aware that Heidegger wrote these thoughts in the 1940s and thus was referring to the techno-scientific objectification of the world, but following the élan of his work, his ideas concerning his thoughts on machination and specifically the *Gestell* and the *Riesenhafte* are very illuminative with regards to interpreting the *Gestell* of the capitalist market that characterises so much of the global world today, and therefore I will bring in examples from the market.

\(^{38}\) “But as soon as machination is in turn grasped being-historical, the gigantic reveals itself as ‘something’ else. It is no longer the re-presentable objectness of an unlimited quantification but rather quantity as quality. Quality is meant here as the basic character of the quale, of the what, of the ownmost, of be-ing itself” (Heidegger 1999:§70).
example, there were hints of the i-pad 2 being released onto the market. Immediately pre-
orders were placed as it was believed to be highly desirable (that is necessary to be
successful in the digital age and therefore it had a very high quality = consumer value).
The factory in China burnt down and there were various other hitches with the result that
there were limited stocks (limited quantity), but this limitation increased its consumer value
(quality). Once everyone has an i-pad 2 the novelty of the idea will fade and thus its value
will decrease (quality) and the stocks will decrease (quantity). Therefore one can argue
that quality remains the hidden core of quantity and it is only on the basis of the
relationship between the two that quantity can emerge to completion in the total system of
machination and thus the gigantic (Livingston 2003:333).

From a capitalist consumer market perspective one can translate this by arguing that by
controlling the quantity one controls the quality. There is nothing that increases an object’s
value (quality) more than the addition of the words “limited stock” or “limited edition”,
because this means that not everyone will have this particular object as it is limited to a
privileged few. Therefore to have X (this limited object) gives one (the subject) the edge
over others and one’s lived-experience of oneself (identity) is unique or at least a “cut
above the rest”. In this way quality is thought from quantity (thus what is “proper” to Being
is deduced from what is non-proper) and this in turn determines one’s lived-experience of
oneself (subjectivity – one is determined by the consumed goods as a consumer) and
thus the Gestell is complete and absolute and therefore truly is Riesenhaft.

As always, Heidegger is not content to interpret the present, but seeks the roots of what is
happening today in the past, and thus the relationship between quantity and quality, which
partially explains the relationship between machination and lived-experience, needs to be
sought in the past. The phenomenon, which in modern times is taken as obvious, that any
object can be calculated, measured and accordingly manipulated, is based on a forgetting
and covering up of the distinction between quality and quantity. Heidegger argues that
there was an original qualitative understanding of the nature of beings that reigned at the
time of the first beginning. This understanding was an understanding of the nature of
beings themselves as phusis.

2.2.6 The Greek origin of machination and the possible other beginning
The origin of technology is to be found in the early Greek understanding of techne. 
Techne is a Greek term that describes a particular attitude towards beings and this
attitude culminates in the technological age of modernity. Yet techne originally does not
arise from calculation or quantification as in modernity, but began as a basic attitude of
wonder (thaumazein) as described in a previous section. Yet even in this basic attitude of
wonder there is already an against, as in over against phusis, but not in the sense of the modern opposition of subjective over against objective, but an over and against in the sense of wonder\(^3\). So although the primordial techne was understood as openness and wonder towards the self-showing of beings (unconcealment) within aletheia, it already brought with it the over and against and as such prepares the way for the objectification of machination and thus for the withdrawal of Being.

In returning to the early Greeks, an historical narrative is constructed that tells the story of the movement from wonderment in the early Greeks to objectification in modernity, and the change in attitude is the result of a process of forgetting and covering over, whereby beings become objects and truth (aletheia) is no longer the Gesichtskreis in which beings are manifest, but becomes correctness (Richtigkeit) and eventually objective correctness. The origin or cause of this narrative Heidegger finds in the idea of homoiosis (similarity, sameness, likeness) and the idea of identity being based on likeness. This interpretation of identity is interpreted as the origin of the disturbance and destruction that transforms the early Greek experience of wonder and attunement towards beings, into objectification and representation (Livingston 2003:336). It is the thought of identity and particularly the tautological principle of the self-identity of objects that is at the deepest level the origin of the arising of machination and lived-experience as the universal standard for beings within the Gestell. If identity is interpreted as likeness (similarity) it follows the same route as already described with regards to truth of assertions. In other words, the identity of beings is determined by their likeness or sameness or similarity, but again this is thought whilst forgetting that one can only come to the conclusion about the likeness or sameness of something if it is in the open. The being in the open so as to establish the likeness (identity), is once more forgotten or taken for granted. The identity of objects (beings or entities) is seen not in the light of the “upon which” they are revealed, that is within the Gesichtskreis of unconcealment, but “as such” where Being is forgotten or concealed.

In Heidegger’s later works, namely Identity and Difference and What is Called Thinking?, he reflects on a fragment of Parmenides, translated as: For it is the same thing to think and to be. This fragment captures for Heidegger the basic theme of all Western thinking (Heidegger 1968:244). Yet the to auto, ‘sameness’, of Parmenides’ fragment is not homoiosis, or identity, even though these two are treated as interchangeable in the metaphysical Western tradition. It is here that one of the basic foundations of Western

\(^3\) “This primordial techne seeks to grasp beings as emerging out of themselves in the way they show themselves.... And in accord with this, to care for beings themselves and to let them grow, i.e., to order oneself within beings as a whole through productions and institutions” (Heidegger 1994:155).
thinking comes to light if one understands the difference between sameness and identity. Throughout Western tradition identity has been considered in connection with unity – whatever is self-identical is unified with itself.

In *Identity and Difference* (1969) Heidegger argues against this idea of identity\(^{40}\). Thus sameness as identity becomes the Being of beings. The Being of beings is to be self-identical, and the *Gesichtskreis* in which beings are revealed so as to be able to determine their sameness, is forgotten. Thus Western thought is built on this forgotten *Gesichtskreis* as Being is reduced to identity and identity to the same, which is only possible if the being is in the open, but that open space of unconcealment is not thought.

Parmenides’ fragment speaks of the sameness of thinking and Being. The Western tradition interpreted this sameness as identity. Is there another way of thinking this identity or sameness – *hoimoiosis* – without interpreting it as self-identity?

Heidegger suggests a way of thinking, but this way will have to be thought beyond metaphysics. Heidegger suggests a mutual appropriation of Being and humanity, their appropriate and reciprocal belonging together and to each other (Heidegger 1969:31). Cristina Lafont says Heidegger “seeks to develop a perspective which is no longer that of an observing subject over against the world it objectifies, but rather that of an understanding *Dasein* which always already finds itself in a symbolically structured world” (Lafont 2000:29). It has to be a way beyond metaphysics where the self (subject) is not seen as separate from beings that she or he observes, but where the “subject” as well as beings (things) are together in the *Gesichtskreis* of unconcealment (*aletheia*) – the *Gesichtskreis* of *Dasein*. The truth of Be-ing of *Dasein* (*aletheia*) is that the self and beings are *of* or in a *Gesichtskreis* of unconcealment where the self and beings are revealed (manifest) out of concealment.

Heidegger thus traces the root of the problem of machination and lived-experience to the early Greek beginning and the forgetting of the *Gesichtskreis* in which things are revealed. Modern humanity has completely forgotten this *Gesichtskreis* and thinks beings

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\(^{40}\) *For the proposition really says: ‘A is A’. What do we hear? With this ‘is’, the principle tells us how every being is, namely: it itself is the same with itself. The principle of identity speaks of the Being of beings. As a law of thought, the principle is valid only insofar as it is a principle of Being that reads: To every being as such there belongs identity, the unity with itself. What the principle of identity, heard in its fundamental key, states is exactly what the whole of Western European thinking has in mind – and that is: the unity of identity forms a basic characteristic in the Being of beings. Everywhere, wherever and however we are related to beings of every kind, we find identity making its claim on us* (Heidegger 1969:25-26).
objectively as if there is no Gesichtskreis. In other words, objects are seen as being self-identical irrespective of the Gesichtskreis in which they come to view.

If the sameness (identity) is thought along these lines then the togetherness of Being and thinking has nothing to do with the unity of a philosophical system (Heidegger 1969:29), but it has to do with a mutual belonging together and appropriation of Being and humanity which is brought out in thinking the truth of Be-ing as aletheia, in other words to think the truth of Be-ing by thinking that which was unthought in the early Greek beginning. What this sameness or unity of thinking and Being means can only be understood in terms of aletheia, as it can only be understood in terms of the Gesichtskreis of unconcealment. Humans in the Seinsgeschichte of Seinsvergessenheit have developed various metaphysical theories of Being and these various metaphysical theories of Being are possible because of this forgetting of Be-ing or forgetting of the Gesichtskreis. In other words, these theories are only possible as long as humanity believes that it can think Being by standing outside of Being and looking at “it” from an objective point of view.

What is forgotten in this understanding or thinking of Being is that humanity is part of the very Gesichtskreis in which the various Seinsgeschicke (metaphysical theories of Being) become manifest. Humanity is part of the Dasein within aletheia of a particular Seinsgeschick. This forgetfulness reached its peak in modernity where this idea of objectivity became absolute and Being was reduced to the beingness of things. The identity of beings was reduced to self-identity – in other words, beings were no longer thought upon a “upon which”, but purely upon “themselves”, their self-identity, and thus Being withdrew. Yet what is forgotten or not thought in this modern period is that this objectivity, and together with it the importance of lived-experience of the subject, is the “upon which” beings are thought, thus objectivity and lived-experience becomes the Being (Gesichtskreis) of modernity, which is the forgotten or not-thought. The concealment of Being in the objectivity of beings became the Being of modernity and thus Being in modernity is concealment, as Being in the early Greeks period was unconcealment.

2.2.7 Aletheia: truth of Being

It was not the destiny of the early Greeks to think aletheia, as aletheia provided the necessary space of play in which the early Greek thinking (wonderment) could unfold. Heidegger argues that to put the question of aletheia as such to that space would have destroyed that space (Heidegger 1984:137-138). Aletheia functions like a hidden clue and not like a manifest theme to be thought. Aletheia is exactly what it is when it is not found, when it constitutes the silence of the opening whose sole function is to let-be. As a horizon for letting-be aletheia must be overlooked (Heidegger 1984:147). Aletheia itself
cannot appear as it is the Gesichtskreis, the realm of unconcealment in which beings appear, but the Kreis itself does not appear. It can only be pointed out subsequently as the Kreis (element) within which a given historical form of life unfolds – a particular historical epoch. If aletheia itself cannot appear, but can only be thought subsequently as the element in which historical forms of Being play, then it cannot belong to any historical epoch, but is a-historical. In this sense aletheia is not a Greek word, because it does not belong to any historical epoch (Caputo 1993a:21). One needs to think aletheia “over and beyond” the early Greeks, in other words, think aletheia in a way that is no longer Greek (Caputo 1993a:21).

Aletheia needs to be thought as such, namely as a structure that cannot occur in history as it is not an event in history, and that means to think aletheia beyond merely thinking being in its aletheia as the early Greeks did. A very clear distinction needs to be made between the early Greek experience of Being in aletheia (on/aletheia) and aletheia as such. The beauty of the early Greek thinking is that they let being be as they saw being as a self-showing rising into unconcealment (on/aletheia) and they did not objectify being. This is their unique contribution.

Thus the Greeks thought the phenomenality of being in its radiant self-showing, but they left something out. What they left out is what is presupposed, namely the openness of the open (Gesichtskreis) in which the self-showing takes place, in other words what they did not think was the clearing (Lichtung) of Being itself, and that is what is meant with aletheia as such.

Heidegger understands there to be two steps in this regression:

1. From understanding aletheia as correctness of assertions to the manifestness of being (phenomenality: on/aletheia);
2. From the manifestness of being to the openness of Being, to Being as the open, as Seyn, as Lichtung (aletheia as such) (Caputo 1993a:21-22).

The challenge is to think beyond the Greek on/aletheia towards a thinking of aletheia as such and this is done by pursuing more originally what the Greeks have thought, to see it in the source of its reality.

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41 “The Greeks were the first to experience and think of phainomena as phenomena. But in that experience it is thoroughly alien to the Greeks to press present being into an opposing objectness; phainesthai means to them that a being assumes its radiance, and in that radiance it appears. Thus appearance is still the basic trait of the presence of all present things, as they rise into unconcealment” (Heidegger 1971c:38).

42 “To see it so is in its own way Greek, and yet in respect of what it sees is no longer, is never again, Greek” (Heidegger 1971c:39).
To distinguish these two elements of *aletheia*, Caputo suggests hyphenating the second understanding of *aletheia as such, a-letheia*. *A-letheia* is not a historical word, but that which makes historical words, like *aletheia*, possible. If a-letheia is ante-historical, why then did Heidegger grant historical privilege to the early Greeks? He believed that a-letheia leaves traces in the early Greek experience of *aletheia* as *phainesthai*. This is where Heidegger made that fatal and fateful mistake of privileging one historical period over others, as if it is possible that the opening leaves more traces in one epoch than in others, and so it is with Heidegger’s own thought that his myth of the great Beginning can be deconstructed.

Heidegger’s *truth of Being* fatally and fatefuly wounds ontology and metaphysics: fatally in the sense that it brings metaphysics to its limits, thinks it to its end – not end in the sense of never thinking metaphysics again, but end as limit; fatefuly as metaphysics, the history of Being, is always the history of different sendings of Being into the openness of the clearing (*Lichtung*)— a-letheia.

### 2.3 Ereignis (the event of Being or disclosure of appropriation)

In the first thought-path (*Gedankenweg*) Heidegger thought the *meaning of Being* by identifying “upon which” the various projections of the Being of beings is made possible. For Heidegger this *meaning of Being* was too tied up with transcendental subjectivity.

The second thought-path was an effort to find the *truth of Being*. This middle period was the mythological period with the belief that somewhere in the distant past there were a people who actually experienced Being in its truth (or at least there are more traces of the truth of Being in that period) and that the modern time is also privileged with regard to the truth of Being as the site of the *Ereignis*.

In the *Vier Seminare* Heidegger refers to the final thought-path as thinking the “place” of Being (*Ortschaft*). The *Ortschaft* of Being is the open space within which Being and time

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43 “In the first sense, *alethiea* means the unconcealment which adheres to the presence of what is present, the self-showing being, *phainesthai*. In the second sense, which is withheld from the Greeks, *a-letheia* means that granting which bestows presence in its phenomenality, that opening which, always out of sight, is that within which every epoch of presence takes place. In this sense, a-letheia means that a-letic process which grants the epochs of presence. A-letheia means alethiea-as-such, the unthought element within which early Greek thought took place. In the first sense, *aletheia* means the epoch of presence as phenomenality. In the second sense, a-letheia means the granting of the epochs of presence, including the Greek epoch, even the early Greek epoch. More simply still, in the first case it means presence; in the second, that which grants presence” (Caputo 1993a:22-23).
play themselves out and here the guideword is neither meaning nor truth, but Ereignis. What is to be thought in this final stage is to think the happening or the place of the epochs, that which grants the space and time of the metaphysical or ontological epochs their play – Zeit-Spiel-Raum (Caputo 1993a:30). It is clear from the journey into the wounding of metaphysics so far that there is always an “upon which” the meaning of Being is thought and that this “upon which” is the Gesichtskreis, aletheia – the truth of Being – but now the question is how to think the site (Ortschaft) of these various meanings of Being in the various Gesichtskreise of metaphysical history: the Zeit-Spiel-Raum? It was discovered in the first thought-path that meaning of Being is dependent on time (Zeit). In the second thought-path it became clear that the truth of Being is thought within the realm (Raum) of aletheia (Gesichtskreis of unconcealment). In this second thought-path these various Zeit-Räume were woven together into a Grand-narrative of Seinsgeschichte der Seinsvergessenheit. In this third thought-path Heidegger returns not to this single Grand-narrative, but he concedes the multiplicity of Zeit-Räume and the play of Being that cannot be tied down to a single narrative.

In this final thought-path there is no privileged meaning of Being nor is there a privileged time for the truth of Being, but only the repetitive unfolding of multiple meanings and multiple truths of Being across the epochs, all relative to each other and to the Zeit-Spiel-Raum. Caputo (Caputo 1993a:30) argues that Heidegger’s thought-path has come a full circle as his journey began when he read the book by Brentano, Die Mannigfache Bedeutung des Seienden. In this early stage Heidegger began the journey by asking about the multiple senses of Being and this thought-path ended up conceding its multiplicity. In this final stage, Wiederholung as a theory of historical retrieval of the early Greek beginning, is replaced with a much more radical repetition “conceived as the springing up of the different, the emergence of diversity, without hierarchical privilege” (Caputo 1993a:31). What is left to be thought is this Ortschaft, the Zeit-Spiel-Raum with its multiple Seinsgeschicke that cannot be reduced into a single grand narrative – Seinsgeschichte.

This last thought-path will focus on Heidegger’s understanding of this Ortschaft of Being which is the site of das Ereignis, as this is an important part in the fatal wounding of

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44 “The truth of Being is the delimitation of truth and the proliferation of truth across the epochs. He began by trying to make a reduction of that multiplicity and ended by making a reduction to it. He began and ended with the “there is/it gives,” the multiple sendings of Being and truth” (Caputo 1993a:30).
metaphysics and it is also the site where Heidegger thought the role of language (his linguistic turn).

2.3.1 The Translation of Ereignis

Heidegger’s Ereignis is notoriously difficult to define and thus also to translate. Heidegger himself argued that Ereignis is as little translatable as the Greek logos or the Chinese Tao (Heidegger 1969:36). The English-language translators of Beiträge render Ereignis as ‘enowing’ in order to reflect the sense of openness and movement present in the German prefix Er, but this together with the sense of something’s coming into its own (eigen) or proper domain (Livingston 2003:326).

Ereignis can mean the event of appropriation “as the event that sends Being to thought and makes the history of metaphysics possible” (Caputo 1982:4), or as disclosure of appropriation as Albert Hofstadter (Hofstadter 1971b:xxi) translates Ereignis. The dictionary translation of Ereignis is “event” or “happening” or “occurrence”, but as Hofstadter argues, such a translation makes little sense in the context of Heidegger’s thought. The concept Ereignis gained importance in the third thought-path. In The Thing Heidegger refers to “this appropriating [ereigende] mirror-play of the simple onefold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals” (Heidegger 1971b:179). The four members of the fourfold mirror each other each in their own way. “Each therewith reflects itself, in its own way, into its Eigenes, its own, within the simpleness of the four. The mirroring, lighting each other of the four, ereignet their eignes presencing into simple belonging to one another” (Hofstadter 1971b:xix). Heidegger is making use of the “own” [eignes] to read the verbal sense of ereignen as to make one’s own – to appropriate. Yet “appropriate” is not satisfactory because it conveys the meaning of appropriating something for oneself (sich etwas aneignen) and yet Heidegger wants to convey an activity or process in which nothing selfish occurs, but rather a process (activity or event) where the different members of the world (the fourfold: divinities, mortals, earth and sky) are brought into belonging to the world whilst belonging to each other, and in belonging to each other they create (gestate) the world, and whilst realising themselves and each other they realise their belonging to the world (Hofstadter 1971:xx).

In the worlding of the world, Heidegger finds the ‘nearing’ by which the world’s fourfold can be gathered in a round dance of appropriating and self-appropriating, in which the four (earth, sky, mortals and divinities) fouring can unite in their belonging together. Ereignen is the verb that names the appropriating by which there can be a “meaningful, entrusting and belonging of the four to each other” (Hofstadter 1971:xx). Yet Hofstadter
argues that this is only one side of the meaning of this verb for Heidegger as the verb *ereignen* was not historically constructed from the prefix *er-* and the adjective *eigen* (own), but there was an earlier verb *eräugen*. *Eräugen* means to place before the eyes and it is derived from the noun, *Auge* (Hofstadter 1971:xx). Hofstadter argues that some pronunciations pronounce *äu* like *ei*, and therefore *eräugen* can sound like *ereignen* (Hofstadter 1971:xx). The noun *Ereignis* is thus similarly related to both *ereignen* and *eräugen*. Hofstadter’s view of this older etymological meaning of the word is echoed by the “Translators’ Foreword” to *Contributions* (Heidegger 1999:xix-xxi). This older etymology implies connotations of ‘opening up’ and ‘appearing’ and these connotations should be kept in mind together with the more traditional translations of *Ereignis* (Sheehan 2001). This second meaning can also be linked to the discussion of the previous section and the *Gesichtskreis*, which refers to the *Kreis* (circle) of sight (the circle of the eye) that comes to view, namely that which the eye can see [*eräugen*].

*Ereignen* comes to mean\(^{45}\)

“...the joint process by which the four of the fourfold are able, first, to come out into light and clearing of truth [*aletheia*], and thus each to exist in its own truthful way, and secondly, to exist in appropriation of and to each other, belonging together in the round dance of their being; and what is more, this mutual appropriation becomes the very process by which the emergence into the light and clearing occurs, for it happens through the sublimely simple play of their mutual mirroring. The mutual lighting-up, reflecting, *eräugnen*, is at the same time the mutual belonging, appropriating, *ereignen*; and conversely, the happening, *das Ereignis*, by which alone the meaning of Being can be determined, is this play of *eräugnen* and *ereignen*: it is an *Eräugnen* which is an *Ereignen* and an *Ereignen* which is an *Eräugnen*” (Hofstadter 1971:xxi)

It is for this reason that Hofstadter translates *Ereignis* as the *disclosure of appropriation* (Hofstadter 1971:xxi), thereby bringing in both *Ereignen* and *Eräugnen* into the translation.

2.3.2 Understanding *Ereignis*

In the “Addendum” to *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger refers to *das Ereignis* as that by which the *meaning of Being* can alone be determined (Heidegger, 1971b:86). In

\(^{45}\) I will include this long quote within the text of my argument because I find Hofstadter’s interpretation very illuminating and useful, and to try and transcribe that into my own words would be an interpretation of an interpretation. Thus, for the purpose of this study Hofstadter’s interpretation will be used and therefore the full quote is given in the text rather than as a footnote, as it is crucial for understanding the argument that follows.
other words, that which Heidegger sought in the beginning of his journey can only truly be understood here in his final thought-path.

Humanity is continually moving about in the distinction (Unterscheidung) between beings and Being\(^{46}\). This was discussed at the end of the previous thought-path, that humanity finds itself in the Gesichtskreis where beings are manifest and they are made manifest upon their unconcealment, which is the truth (aletheia) of Being. In reference to the previous thought-path, thinking and Being are the same just as humanity and Being are part of the same Gesichtskreis of a particular Seinsgeschick. This distinction between Being and beings of a particular Seinsgeschick (Gesichtskreis) rules over humanity but without humanity paying it any heed (Heidegger 1961:207). In his article, Overcoming Metaphysics, he says it evenmore clearly: “How does metaphysics belong to man’s nature? Metaphysically represented, man is constituted with faculties as a being among others. His essence is constituted in such a way, his nature, the what and how of his Being, are in themselves metaphysical: animal (sensuousness) and rationale (nonsensuous). Thus confined to what is metaphysical, man is caught in the difference of beings and Being which he never experiences” (Heidegger 2003:87).

Heidegger’s early thought focussed on exactly this difference, the ontological difference, but in his later thought, after the Kehre, he refined this ontological difference as he argues that humans do not pay heed to this distinction because their attention is drawn to that which is opened up by the distinction, while the distinction itself remains unthought. This is true not only in metaphysics, but also in common sense. Metaphysics concerns itself with being as such (to one on) which is why it is called ontology. It concerns itself with the thatness and the whatness of what is, which is ontology and thus the beginning of metaphysics. Yet what gives being as that-it-is and as what-it-is to thought is not thought in these disciplines, but gives birth to these disciplines\(^{47}\).

Heidegger names this distinction, difference\(^{48}\)– the ontological difference. The ontological difference is the occasion and impulse for the question into this difference. It is the site or the place for the question and this brings one to the Ortschaft of or for the Ereignis. To truly understand and appreciate Ereignis one needs to unpack a few concepts and terms

\(^{46}\)“We stand in the distinction between beings and Being” (Heidegger 1961:207).

\(^{47}\)“Yet this distinction is the unknown root from which metaphysics springs, the soil which nourishes its roots” (Caputo 1982:148).

\(^{48}\)“The distinction is more suitably named by the word “difference”, by which it is indicated that beings and Being somehow are carried outside of one another, separated and yet related to one another.... This distinction as a difference means that a diference exists between Being and beings. Whence and how it comes to such a diference is not said. Let diference be for a moment only named as the occasion and impulse for the question into this diference” (Heidegger 1961:209).
that are associated with Ereignis, namely the difference between difference (Differenz) and dif-ference (Austrag). It is with these terms that Heidegger tries to go beyond metaphysics in order to understand metaphysics, in other words to understand the Ereignis of Being. In an attempt to understand that which makes the ontological difference possible one needs to step back out of the ontological difference. One of these steps back or out of is done by using the word dif-ference to understand the ontological difference.

Dif-ference (Austrag) names that which is differing in the difference (Differenz), the way in which Being and beings are borne or carried outside of one another, yet at the same time are borne toward one another. The dif-fERENCE is more fundamental than the ontological difference, or one could argue it is the depth dimension in it. This dif-fering (Austrag) is a refinement in the later thought of Heidegger that he brings into his ontological difference. One can argue that metaphysics thinks the ontological difference, namely the difference between whatness and thatness, but no metaphysics thinks the dif-fering in this difference. Heidegger continues to argue that this is not because of some neglect of thought on the part of humanity, but it is that this dif-fering withdraws itself from what is opened up in the difference. With this Heidegger does not only argue that the dif-fERENCE is real rather than just a rational construction (distinctio rationis), but he also argues that this dif-ference is not based on human nature, but rather the other way around, that human nature is based on this dif-ference49.

It is this unthought dif-ference which opens the space for the difference between Being and beings and thus opens the space for metaphysics as the history of Being. It is this unthought dif-ference that needs to be thought (das Zudenkende), and what is to be thought is precisely the oblivion into which the difference has withdrawn.

Metaphysics, as the history of Being, is possible only within this difference. “The difference between being and Being is the area within which metaphysics, Western thinking in the totality of its essence, can be what it is” (Heidegger 1969:51). Metaphysics takes place in and as this difference. The task of thought for Heidegger is to go one step further than metaphysics and thus to think through metaphysics to its limits and thereby wound metaphysics. “Consequently the step back moves out of metaphysics into the essence of metaphysics” (Heidegger 1969:51). This step back moves from a naïve acceptance of the difference to that which makes the difference possible, which opens the

49 “Man comes to be insofar as he enters into this distinction, into the open space which is cleared by the difference between Being and beings. Hence, what is dif-fering in the difference is the doing not of man, but of Being itself, which in opening up this difference recedes immediatly behind it” (Caputo 1982:149).
space for the difference. This thinking attains the essence (*Wesen*) of metaphysics in the verbal sense of its originative rising up (Caputo 1982:150).

How does one step back from something that one is part of and cannot get out of? How does one step back from something that one remains in as *animal rationale*? In other words, how does one explain Being and being and their relation when oneself is part of their differentiation? This will necessarily end in circular thought as beings and Being seek to explain the one via the other. Thought seeks to explain beings with Being. Being is the ground (*Grund*) and beings are understood as the grounded and so it thinks the difference between Being and beings as the difference between ground and grounded. This is a circular argument and the only way to get beyond such a circular argument is to think the ultimate ground, or at least that is how metaphysics was traditionally understood.

There must be an ultimate ground that is not grounded, otherwise all grounds are always also grounded and thus there is an infinite recession in the search for the ultimate ground or prime ground. Even the ultimate ground will always have another ground unless one comes to a groundless ground. This is how God enters metaphysics within Western tradition as highest ground or first cause (prime mover) (Heidegger 1969:60). Therefore metaphysics is always onto-theo-logical, because of the very nature of the difference between Being and beings, and the need to ground the one upon the other one will end with an ultimate ground often interpreted as God. If one wants to overcome (think through) metaphysics, one needs to take a step back and face this difference by thinking this difference that humanity is implicated in. This is what Heidegger attempts to do and this is also the reason why his thoughts are so complicated, as he seeks to step back without being able to step out. So the stepping back needs to think all the possibilities of the difference to their limit so as to come to an understanding of the difference itself and that which gives the difference, namely the dif-ference. How does one think the “upon which” of the ontological difference?

Being is always the Being of beings, that is, Being passes over into beings; it is transitive, in transition [*übergehend*]\(^{50}\). Being is the Being of beings inasmuch as Being gives itself (goes over) to beings. It is in beings that Being comes to pass in and as beings, because in beings Being discloses itself, reveals itself and unconceals itself. Being “is” as the process of “coming-over” (Caputo 1982:150-151).

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\(^{50}\)“Being ‘is’ here in the mode of a going-over to beings” (Heidegger 1969:64-65).
One should not understand beings as being already there, thus pre-existing Being, in a sense waiting for Being to come. No, beings only appear in and through this coming-over of Being. “Being comes over into, comes unconcealingly over, that which arrives as something unconcealed only through such a coming-over” (Heidegger 1969:65). One can express this coming-over in two ways:

i. The coming-over [Überkommnis] of Being into beings is at the same time the coming on [an-kommen] the scene of beings.

ii. The beings appear on the scene only in the coming-over of Being.

This means that although the coming-over of Being in beings is the unconcealment (arrival/appearing/presencing) of beings, it is also the concealment (withdrawal) of Being.

The word that Heidegger uses, Unter-schied translated as “dif-ference”, is based on the difference in this two-fold process which is but a single process. It is the scission between Being and beings, or as Stambaugh translates it, the “differentiating” between the two processes of the one process.

In this Unter-schied, the coming-over (Überkommnis) and the arrival (Ankunft) “are borne away from and toward one another” (auseinander-zueinander-tragen), that is, kept apart while bearing in on each other (Caputo 1982:151). Heidegger gives this long phrase, auseinander-zueinander-tragen, a shorthand version, Austragen. Austragen is a literal translation of the Latin, dif-fere, dif-ferns, to carry away from, to bear outside of.

This shorthand version, Austrag, is the dif-fering in the difference between Being and beings. It is that which makes the difference between them possible in that it opens up the difference by holding Being and beings apart. It holds them apart while sending them to one another in the appropriate manner so that Being can revealingly conceal itself in beings. Austrag, which is the literal translation of dif-fere, is thus the Unter-Schied which is translated as dif-ference and is the revealing-concealing dif-fering of Being and beings (der entbergende-bergende Austrag) (Caputo 1982:151-152).

Heidegger’s step back from metaphysics is indeed two steps:

i. The first step is to step back from a focus on beings to Being and this step establishes the difference (Differenz) between Being and beings.

ii. The second step is to step back from the ontological difference within which metaphysics moves and lives, to the Austrag – the dif-ference which makes the metaphysical difference possible.
Metaphysics thinks the difference between beings and Being as it always tries to understand beings in terms of some understanding of Being, but it does not go further than that, namely to the origin of the difference which makes the difference possible, that which opens it up as the kind of difference it is. Metaphysics can thus be understood as the way in which this difference (Differenz) is understood, but this is itself a function of the dif-ference (Austrag) which opens up the difference, but this is not thought and is forgotten.\(^{51}\)

As the circularity in the above diagram illustrates, the dif-ference (Austrag) does not only hold Being and beings apart, but it also holds them together. In Hegel’s metaphysics the two are held apart as ground (Being) and grounded (beings), but they are also held together, as Being grounds being, but beings in turn ground Being. The coming-over and the arrival mutually determine each other and thus constitute a circle, “the circling of Being and beings around each other” (Heidegger 1969:69). This is a basic pattern of any metaphysical epoch that distinguishes between Being and beings, but this difference is governed by that which is beyond metaphysics, namely the dif-ference which breaks open the difference.

God can easily enter into metaphysics understood as the difference between Being and beings. God (Being) is then the ground, the cause or the creator of beings, but as Heidegger says, to such a God “Man can neither pray nor sacrifice; man can neither fall to his knees in awe nor play music and dance before [him]” (Heidegger 1969:72).

Such a God, who is understood as the ground, cause or creator of beings, is just one more possibility of the dif-ference. This God is just one possible name for Being among numerous other possible names for Being in the history of metaphysics. Heidegger’s dif-ference deconstructs and limits the God of metaphysics to a possible sending of the various epochs of metaphysical history. Yet Heidegger would argue that such god-less or atheistic thought, which excludes the God of metaphysics, is closer to the really divine God (der göttliche Gott) than onto-theo-logic would like to admit (Caputo 1982:153). Is it possible to think God, to talk God in his/her true divinity? Maybe in another dispensation or sending of the dif-ference (Geschick... des Austrags) (Heidegger 1969:72) God would appear in his/her true divinity. Yet that is impossible to say, because such a sending/dispensation (Geschick des Austrags) would not be governed by such a true

\(^{51}\) “The only thing which matters for our task is an insight into a possiblility of thinking the difference as the dif-ference so as to clarify to what extent the onto-theo-logical constitution of metaphysics has its essential origin in the dif-ference which begins the history of metaphysics, governs all its epochs, and yet everywhere remains concealed as dif-ference, and remains thus forgotten in an oblivion which escapes even itself” (Heidegger 1969:68).
God, but by the difference. Does this bring one to the limit of metaphysical God-talk, in other words God-talk that is always already implicated, just as humans are, in the difference between Being and beings? This certainly does limit metaphysical God-talk.

This thought of Heidegger has moved beyond the grammar of metaphysics. Here, there is clearly a move beyond metaphysics (postmetaphysics), but through metaphysics, thereby incorporating metaphysics, thus wounded-metaphysics. It is this understanding of wounded-metaphysics, as a thinking through metaphysics, that will be pursued in this study. As mentioned in the introductory chapter the God-talk that will be pursued in this study will not opt for a God-talk that ignores these wounds as in some forms of fundamentalism, nor will it opt for a God-talk that moves on to non-metaphysical God-talk, but it will seek a postmetaphysical, thought-to-the-limits-metaphysical, God-talk.

When Heidegger speaks of Seinsvergessenheit (the oblivion of Being) he does not mean that metaphysics does not think Being, because all metaphysics thinks Being and it thinks Being in terms of presencing. What he is referring to is an oblivion of the difference which makes the difference between Being and beings possible, the difference which makes the ontological difference possible and thus offers to metaphysics its subject matter. In the marginalia to Holzwege Heidegger later wrote that the Unter-schied is infinitely different from Being, as Being always remains the Being of beings. Thus it would be inappropriate to still name the distinction with Being, be it with or without a y [Sein or Seyn] (Heidegger 1971a).

It is this Ereignis of the difference which makes metaphysics possible as it sends the ontological difference into time of the different metaphysical epochs. Difference has a historical-alethiological structure as it is a process of clearing, Lichtung (it opens the space for Being and beings), and dispensation (sends into this space), and this structure makes Western historical tradition possible with its different metaphysical epochs (Caputo 1982:156).

This Lichtung grants an historical horizon in which any given metaphysics takes place and thus metaphysics is the history of Being (Heidegger 1973) in the literal sense of this phrase, the history not of the subject matter, ‘Being’, but the history of Being. The history of how Being has sent itself into the historical horizon of the Lichtung. Metaphysics, as the history of Being, thinks the gift of the “it gives” (Es gibt), but the “Es” that gives remains

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52 “That which bears such a name (Difference) refers our thinking into the region for which the guiding words of metaphysics – Being and beings, ground and grounded – no longer suffice. For what these words name, what the manner of thinking which is guided by them represents, originates as that which differs by virtue of the difference, the origin of which can no longer be thought within the scope of metaphysics” (Heidegger 1969:71).
unthought. Thus humanity finds itself in the destiny of Being of a specific historical epoch. Humanity is within that sending of Being, as the grammar of that historical epoch in which humanity thinks as *animal rationales*.

In thinking the *Ereignis*, one needs to turn to language (grammar), to try and understand how humans are implicated in the ontological difference, in other words how one is implicated in the grammar of metaphysics where the difference remains unthought or beyond grammar.

### 3. LANGUAGE, THE HOUSE OF BEING

For Heidegger, language played an important part right from the first period of *Being and Time* (1996) in his reflections about logos (*Rede*), where he argues that logos (λόγος) as speech should be primarily understood as *apophainesthai*, as that which lets what is talked about be seen (*phainesthai*) as it is in itself (*apo*) (Heidegger 1996:280).

This 'making manifest' Heidegger understands as 'letting something be seen'. Logos pulls out of obscurity and into focus and thus lets us see what is under consideration. This section will unpack this role of language, specifically in the context of the wounding of metaphysics, and how this wounding is a function of language.

The role of language in traditional metaphysics was understood within the parameters of the distinction between meaning (*Bedeutung*) as something interior, and expression (*Ausdruck*) as something exterior (Caputo 1982:158). Language or words are seen as external signs of meaning that has been constituted internally in the mind. This is an essentially Aristotelian conception of language and it has dominated all subsequent theories of language. This view believes that the primary function and purpose of language is communication. Language does not play a role in constituting meaning, but communicates meaning that is already constituted. Merleau-Ponty describes this communicative function of language as a twofold process. He argues that speaking is first thinking, then externalizing; hearing is first listening, then decoding (Merleau-Ponty 1962:177-179). Heidegger (Heidegger 1971b), in his essay *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, translated as *Language*, rejects such a dualist theory and argues that language gives birth to meaning in that it gives birth to the appearance of what appears. Thus language can no longer be understood as primarily communication, but as the way things emerge into presence (Caputo 1982:159). Language, in Heidegger’s view, is not a tool for something
humanity does, as if it was humanity who brings things into presence, but language is the
doing of Being in humanity (in human speech). Thus properly speaking it is not humanity
which speaks, but language itself that speaks. Human speaking is a response to a more
primordial address which issues from Being or language itself53.

To understand the above a return is necessary to Heidegger’s understanding of dif-
fERENCE (Austrag) and how this is profoundly linguistic. In the history of metaphysics not
only was the dif-ference (Austrag) not thought, but the role of language was not thought
either. The all important role that language plays in bringing beings to appearance, in
letting them be in their Being, was not thought. Heidegger’s radical critique of metaphysics
is also a critique of Western conceptualisation of language. In a sense one can argue that
Heidegger’s metaphysical turn (Überwindung der Metaphysik) is also and fundamentally a
linguistic turn in that it is a turn towards a new understanding of language and how
humanity is of language.

For Heidegger, it is language that opens up the metaphysical difference and thus
humanity is implicated in that difference through language or through difference in
language. That means that the dif-fering in the difference which belongs to all
metaphysics is an essentially linguistic event (Caputo 1982:158). It is not only the Being of
beings that is a linguistic event, but humanity as humanity is a linguistic event54.

Language belongs to the closest neighbourhood of humanity’s being (Heidegger
1971b:189). Language is encountered everywhere and thus as soon as humanity reflects
thoughtfully on that which is around him/herself s/he will hit upon language. Heidegger
argues that one needs to try and discover what language is universally, namely its
essence (Heidegger 1971b:189).

Yet again, how does one think about language if all thinking is a happening of language?
“To discuss language, to place it, means to bring to its place of being not so much
language as ourselves: our own gathering into the appropriation” (Heidegger 1971b:190).

Language is language and nothing else besides. This statement, language is language, in
logic, would be called an empty tautology, namely saying identical things twice and that

53 “Speaking is not man’s representation of Being; rather, language is Being’s own way of coming to words in human
speech” (Caputo 1982:159).
54 “Man speaks. We speak when we are awake and we speak in our dreams. We are always speaking, even when we
do not utter a single word aloud, but merely listen or read, and even when we are not particularly listening or speaking
but are attending to some work or taking a rest. We are continually speaking in one way or another. We speak because
speaking is natural to us. It does not first arise out of some special volition. Man is said to have language by nature. It is
held that man, in distinction from plant and animal, is the living being capable of speech. This statement does not mean
that only that, along with other faculties, man also possesses the faculty of speech. It means to say that only speech
enables man to be the living being he is as man. It is as one who speaks that man is – man” (Heidegger 1971b:189).
does not get one anywhere, but he argues that one does not want to get anywhere, but on the contrary would like for once to get to where one already is (Heidegger 1971b:190). The question that needs to be asked in this place where one already is, is: “In what way does language occur as language?” The answer is: Language speaks. Heidegger argues that this is only an answer once it becomes clear what speaking is. To reflect on language demands that one enters into the speaking of language. It is not about studying language as an object, but to enter into its speaking in order to take up one’s stay with language (its speaking). This is the only way to arrive at that place within which it may happen that language “will call to us from there and grant us its nature” (Heidegger 1971b:191).

Hamann wrote to Herder the following concerning the connection between thought and language: “If I were as eloquent as Demosthenes I would yet have to do nothing more than repeat a single word three times: reason is language, logos. I gnaw at this marrow bone and will gnaw myself to death over it. There still remains darkness, always, over this depth for me; I am still waiting for an apocalyptic angel with a key to this abyss” (Hamann 1821:VII,151f).

The abyss for Hamann is that reason is language and therefore there can be no reason beyond language with which to understand language as all reasonable attempts to interpret language will be in language. There is no answer to the question of the why of language which is not expressed in language. Heidegger asks if the reason for the abyss is that reason resides in language, or can it be that language itself is the abyss (Heidegger 1971b:191)? The statement, language is language, says two things in that it says nothing, because it is an empty tautology:

i. This tautology does not lead one to something else in which language is grounded which is not language,

ii. nor does it say anything about whether language itself may be a ground for something else (Heidegger 1971b:191).

Thus this statement leads one to hover over an abyss, namely a groundlessness, but if one falls into this abyss one does not fall into emptiness, Heidegger argues, but to a height, a loftiness that opens up a depth, thus the abyss as groundless depth. This loftiness in the groundless depth creates a space or a realm, a home, which is a dwelling place for humanity.55

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55 “To reflect on language means – to reach the speaking of language in such a way that this speaking takes place as that which grants an abode for the being of mortals” (Heidegger 1971b:192).
To come to such an understanding of the speaking of language as a dwelling for the being of mortals (house of being) one needs to deconstruct traditional views of what speaking is.

Traditionally, speaking is understood as three things:

i. First the most common understanding of speech is expression (utterance). Something internal is expressed (uttered) and thus externalised. If language (speech) is expression it refers to something externalised with recourse to something internal (the internal which is externalised in the utterance).

ii. It is an activity of humankind. Humans speak. To say that language speaks would be to imply that language brings about human existence and thus humans would be bespoken by language.

iii. Human expression is always presentation and representation of the real and the unreal.

This is certainly how language has been understood for many millennia in grammar, logic, philosophy of language and linguistics. Language is identified as “audible utterance of inner emotions, as human activity, as a representation by image and by concept” (Heidegger 1971b:193). This view of language is correct, but it ignores completely the oldest natural cast of language. For Heidegger this oldest natural cast of language is in what is spoken. Heidegger turns to the oldest natural cast of language, in what is spoken, as in what is spoken speaking gathers the way in which “speaking persists as well as that which persists by it – its persistence, its presencing” (Heidegger 1971b:194).

To truly arrive at the speaking of language one needs to turn to that which is spoken and more specifically to that which is spoken purely, which for Heidegger is the poem. One needs to think the bond between what one thinks and what one is told by language and to think this bond one needs to choose something spoken purely: the poem. Why does a poem speak purely? A poem speaks purely exactly because it gathers world and thing in its speaking and in the spoken it persists and thereby presences – makes present (poeisis).

The specific poem that Heidegger refers to in his essay, Language, is the poem by Trakl, A Winter Evening. If one takes the title of the poem, A Winter Evening, one expects from

56 “In its essence, language is neither expression nor an activity of man. Language speaks. We are now seeking the speaking of language in the poem. Accordingly, what we seek lies in the poetry of the spoken word” (Heidegger 1971b:197).

57 A Winter Evening
Window with falling snow is arrayed,
Long tolls the vesper bell,
this title a description of a winter evening as it “actually is”. One expects from language, in the traditional understanding, that speaking leaves a semblance or an impression of something that is not currently present, or one expects the speaking to give one a description of something, even if that something is not here. Yet poems are different from what one would expect from “ordinary” language, because everybody knows that poems are imaginative even when they seem to be descriptive. The poet pictures for him/herself something that could be present in its presence. “The poem, as composed, images what is thus fashioned for our own act of imaging. In the poem’s speaking the poetic imagination gives itself utterance” (Heidegger 1971b:197). What is uttered (spoken out) in poetry speaks by enunciating58. Yet if this is one’s understanding of the speaking of poems one has not left the traditional understanding of language as expression, but what Heidegger argued was that language speaks, assuming that speaking, in its essential nature, is not expressing. The expression “language speaks”, means that at some time and before all else: language speaks. In other words, at some point it is not humanity that speaks, but language. One cannot avoid the correctness that language is expression, although that is insufficient to understand language, and in the same way one cannot avoid that humanity speaks, but that also is insufficient to understand the essence of language.

Heidegger explains and argues that in a poem the poem names certain things, but he argues that this naming is not just handing out titles, nor is it applying terms, but it calls into the word59. Language calls into the realm of the absent, summoning into presence. Thus he argues that language does not represent things, rather lets them be in their Being as the speaking of language is not representative, but manifestative.

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The house is provided well,
The table is for many laid.

Wandering ones, more than a few,
Come to the door on darksome courses
Golden blooms the tree of graces
Drawing up the earth’s cool dew.

Wanderer quietly steps within;
Pain has turned the threshold to stone.
There lie, in limpid brightness shown,
Upon the table bread and wine (Heidegger 1971b:194-195).

58 “The language of the poem is manifold enunciation” (Heidegger 1971b:197).
59 “The naming calls. Calling brings closer what it calls. However this bringing closer does not fetch what is called only in order to set it down in closest proximity to what is present, to find a place for it here. The call does indeed call. Thus it brings the presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness. But the call, in calling it here, has already called out to what it calls. Where to? Into the distance in which what is called remains, still absent” (Heidegger 1971b:198).
The calling of the poem calls into nearness what remains absent and thus the calling is always here and there – here into presence and there into absence.

The poem calls things into nearness, into presence, but those things that are called are not present in the sense that they are present in the lounge where the poem is read, yet they are there, but not here. If one reads for example Harry Potter (Rowling 1997)\textsuperscript{60}, the magical school Hogwarts is called into nearness and it is there, but it is not here.

Hogwarts is brought into nearness by all the things that J K Rowling describes (calls into nearness). Thus everything she describes about Hogwarts, the characters, the moving stairs, the owls, the Hogwarts express is brought into nearness, but in absence.

Thus language calls into absence and by calling into absence brings into nearness the things called. The things called arrive in the calling into a presence that is sheltered in absence (Heidegger 1971b:199). The naming of the speaking of language bids things come into such a sheltered arrival. Thus calling or bidding is inviting, as it invites things in, so that these called things bear upon humanity as things\textsuperscript{61}.

The place of arrival is the world of Harry Potter in which all the things called find their place and yet this world and all the things (characters, London, Hogwarts, etcetera) are near in that they are sheltered in absence.

What does language summon to presence? It summons both “thing” and “world”. Each “thing” is summoned to presence as what it is (\textit{apophaiesthai}) within the constellation of the “fourfold” (\textit{Geviert}) which is the world. In a sense, this world and the things of this world can be nearer than the coffee shop one is sitting in whilst reading Harry Potter, yet that world and the things of that world are sheltered in absence.

This has still not solved our problem as the Harry Potter series is still expression, namely the creative expression of J K Rowling, and thus one has not gone beyond language as expression, and language as human activity (J K Rowling speaks). That is indeed true and the correctness of that cannot be contested. Yet when one is reading the novel it is not J K Rowling speaking. Yes, she is the author (the text is her expression), but it is not she who is speaking to one, but the text that speaks. It is the language of the text that speaks in that it names things (Hogwarts, Hogwarts Express, and etcetera) and in naming, the things named are called into their thinging, and in thinging they unfold a world in which the things abide. The text, through naming various things, creates a world in which these things find a home. “By thinging, things carry out world” (Heidegger 1971b:200). There is

\textsuperscript{60}Although Harry Potter is a novel and not a poem, I believe what Heidegger says of poetry can also be said of narrative.

\textsuperscript{61}“The place of arrival which is also called in the calling is a presence sheltered in absence. The naming calls and bids things come into such an arrival. Bidding is inviting. It invites things in, so that they may bear upon men as things” (Heidegger 1971b:199).
a very close relationship between the things called into nearness and the place of arrival (world into which they are called). The world grants things their presence, but things bear (carry, gebären, give birth) to the world. The world of Harry Potter gives all the things their place and yet it is these very things that give birth to the world of Harry Potter. Both world and thing are called by the speaking of language.

World and things belong together. The world of Harry Potter and the things of that world belong together. The world of Harry Potter and the things of that world penetrate each other as they cross over to one another and so transverse a middle which is their intimacy (Innigkeit) with each other.62

The two (things and world) need to remain separate and yet they are intimate, and this intimate separation is difference. “The intimacy of world and thing is present in the separation of the between; it is present in the difference” (Heidegger 1971b:202).

Thus one can say that the middle of the two is intimacy – in Latin, inter. The corresponding German is unter-. The intimacy of world and thing is not a fusion. Intimacy obtains only where the intimate – world and thing – divides itself cleanly and remains separated. In the midst of the two, in the between of world and thing, in their inter (Unter-), division (Schied) prevails (Heidegger 1971b:202).

Difference is the open space between world and thing, but which also binds them together as it keeps them apart. Difference allows the place for both world and things, but in the allotment it first opens up the separateness and towardness of world and thing. “Such an opening up is the way in which the difference (Unter-Schied) here spans the two. The difference (Unter-Schied), as the middle for world and things, metes out the measure of their presence” (Heidegger 1971b:203).

Thus the difference for world and things “disclosingly appropriates things into bearing a world; it disclosingly appropriates world into the granting of things” (Heidegger 1971b:202-203). Difference is thus the difference between world and thing, the bearing towards one another of world and thing, whose unity it (difference) carries out. As has been reflected above, difference (Austrag) means the mutual carrying outside of one another and

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62 “The two modes of bidding are different but not separated. But neither are they merely coupled together. For world and things do not subsist alongside one another. They penetrate each other. Thus the two traverse a middle. In it, they are at one. Thus at one they are intimate. The middle of the two is intimacy – in Latin, inter (Heidegger 1971b:202).

63 "Of itself, it holds apart the middle in and through which world and things are at one with each other. The intimacy of the difference is the unifying element of the diaphora, the carrying out that carries through. The difference carries out world in its worlding, carries out things in their thinging. Thus carrying them out, it carries them toward one another. The difference does not mediate after the fact by connecting world and things through a middle added on to them. Being the middle, it first determines world and things in their presence, i.e., in their being towards one another, whose unity it carries out" (Heidegger 1971b:202).

64 This is Hofstadter's translation of Ereignis as both to come to one's own (ereignen) as well as to place before one's eyes (eräuugnen).
bearing in on one another of Being (world) and beings (things). It is in this carrying out and bearing in on one another that the field of presence is opened up – the presence of what is present (das Anwesen des Anwesenden) (Caputo 1982:161).

![Diagram](image)

The world grants to things their presence. World grants things (Heidegger 1971b:202)

World and thing being toward one another they come to their own as world and thing, but also and simultaneously they are brought before the eye as world and thing. The difference names the event (Ereignis) (disclosingly appropriates) of this carrying out and bearing in of world (Being) and thing (beings). It is the event in which the dimension is opened up in which world and thing are allotted their proper places. The difference is dimension in so far as it measures out, apportions, world and thing, each to its own. “Its allotment of them first opens up the separateness and towardness of world and thing. Such an opening up is the way in which the difference here spans the two” (Heidegger 1971b:203).

What has all this to do with the essence of language and what does it have to do with poetry as pure language? The poets call this difference by its poetic name “pain” as the rending or rift (Riss) or even wound between Being (world) and beings (things) (Caputo 1982:161). The speaking of the poet summons up world and thing in the intimacy in which they belong together as the Harry Potter novel does. Poetic speech allows the difference between world and thing to come into presence, therefore the difference itself (Unterschied, Austrag) requires language. The difference between world and thing emerges from the difference and this is linguistic as it is the difference which does the bidding which is experienced in the poet’s words (Caputo 1982:161). Therefore what is really
called (bid) is the difference. What is called is bidden to come out of the difference into
the difference. This calling of difference into difference lets the thinging of the thing rest
in the worlding of the world (Heidegger 1971b:206). The difference, calling into difference,
expropriates the thing into the repose of the world (fourfold). Such expropriation
does not diminish the thing as only thus is ‘the thing exalted into its own’ so that it ‘stays
world’ (Heidegger 1971b:206). Heidegger argues that to keep in repose is to still and thus
difference “stills the thing, as thing, into the world” (Heidegger 1971:206).
The difference is that which calls inasmuch as it is the silent source (stillness) from which
thing and world emerge.
The difference stills in a twofold manner, as it stills by letting things rest in the world’s
favour, and secondly by letting the world suffice itself in the thing. In this double stilling of
the difference there takes place: stillness (Heidegger 1971b:206).

What is stillness? Heidegger asks. It is certainly not merely soundlessness, as in
soundless there persists merely a lack of motion of entoning. The difference stills, but it
also calls as it gathers the two out of itself as it calls them into the rift that is the difference
itself. The difference is at once that which does the bidding/calling and that into which
world and thing are called. It is that which calls as it is the silent source, the stillness from
which thing and world emerge. This gathering calling Heidegger calls pealing. This is
without excitation or the spreading of sound.

Mortal speech is a calling that names, a bidding which out of the simple onefold of the
difference, bids things and world to come. The call of difference is taken up in human
language when humanity hears its address, then “thing and world and so the intimacy and
difference in which they subsist come into words” (Caputo 1982:162). It is the difference
that stirs human talk to name world and thing, but the original call of the difference, which
preceeds human talk, is itself silent. This is what Heidegger meant when he said,

65 “The primal calling, which bids the intimacy of world and thing to come, is the authentic bidding. This bidding is the
nature of speaking. Speaking occurs in what is spoken in the poem. It is the speaking of language. Language speaks. It
speaks by bidding the hidden, thing-world and world-thing, to come to the between of the dif-ference” (Heidegger
1971b:206).
66 “The motionless always remains, as it were, merely the other side of that which is at rest. The motionless itself still
rests on rest. But rest has its being in the fact that it stills. As the stilling of stillness, rest, conceived strictly, is always
more in motion than all motion and always more restlessly active than any agitation” (Heidegger 1971b:207).
67 “When the difference gather world and things into the simple onefold of the pain of intimacy, it bids the two to come
into their very nature. The difference is the command out of which every bidding itself is first called, so that each may
follow the command. The command of the difference has ever already gathered all bidding within itself. The calling,
gathered together within itself, which gathers to itself in the calling, is the peal as the peal. The calling of the dif-
ference is the double stilling. The gathered bidding, the command, in the form of which the difference calls world and
things, is the peal of stillness. Language speaks in that the command of the difference calls world and things into the
simple onefold of their intimacy. Language speaks as the peal of stillness” (Heidegger 1971b:207).
language speaks. Language (the original dif-ference) calls out to human speech to let world and thing be in their intimacy and dif-ference (Caputo 1982:162).

This peal of stillness is nothing human. On the contrary, the human is in its nature given to speech – it is linguistic. Linguistic for Heidegger means: having taken place out of the speaking of language. “What has thus taken place, human being, has been brought into its own by language, so that it remains given over or appropriated to the nature of language, the peal of stillness” (Heidegger 1971b:208). This appropriation takes place in the very nature of language, namely presencing. For this it needs and uses the speaking of mortals in order to sound as the peal of stillness for the hearing of mortals. The speaking of humanity is not expression of something internal, but it is the response of humanity to the call which is addressed to him/her by the dif-ference. Language speaks by bidding humanity and humanity speak by heeding the bidding and responding.

Poetry is pure speaking, not because it is a higher mode than ordinary language, but because everyday language is a forgotten and used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer (Heidegger 1971b:208).

The dif-ference is for Heidegger essentially a linguistic event and thus the wounding of metaphysics is essentially a linguistic event, not in the sense that it happens in language, but in the sense that it is the happening of language (Caputo 1982:162). Thus the metaphysical turn is a linguistic turn, not in language, but of language. Beings (things) appear in the opening which the dif-ference opens up, but this opening is cleared by language. “The dif-ference prompts the speech of mortals within which the distinction between Being and beings is brought to words” (Caputo 1982:162-163). The dif-ference bids metaphysics, ontology, to come into thought and that is a function of language, the speaking or calling (peal of stillness) of language. It does not only take place in language, but it is a function of language – a response to the calling, the bidding, of the dif-ference into the dif-ference which is the speaking of language. The structure of appearance is governed by the structure of language and thus the appearance of the world is different according to the different languages. Language opens up the field of presence in which

68 “Only as men belong within the peal of stillness are mortals able to speak in their own way in sounds” (Heidegger 1971b:208).

69 “The way in which mortals, called out of the dif-ference into the dif-ference, speak on their own part, is by responding” (Heidegger 1971b:209).
we dwell (house of Being) and thus language structures and shapes the whole understanding of Being which is at work in any given age.\(^\text{70}\)

In the history of metaphysics the distinction between Being and beings is itself a bestowal of language, a gift of the historical movement of “Es gibt”. The “Es gibt” gives to the thinker the following:

i. the sphere of openness in which the distinction between Being and beings is manifest,

ii. the historical moment (Zeit-spiel-Raum) in which to say it and

iii. the language in which it comes to birth.

This wounds metaphysics fatally and fatefuly as all epochal sendings of Being into a specific grammar of a particular time is relative to previous and future sendings of Being and different “simultaneous” sendings into different openings (places). Heidegger’s understanding fatally wounds any God-talk that speaks within the language that is given. In a sense it makes God-talk that speaks within the grammar of any metaphysics impossible (or relative). However, Heidegger never believed this to be the end of God-talk, but the possibility of a beginning – a beginning for God-talk (metaphysics) that is fully aware of (awakened to) its limitations.

4. LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF WOUNDED METAPHYSICAL GOD-TALK

Heidegger did not believe his own thought to be the new beginning, but he understood his own thinking to be a step back, which makes a new beginning possible, namely a new revelation of Being through attunement. In The End of Philosophy he says: “seeing brings mortals to the path of thinking, poetizing, building” (Heidegger 2003:110). This is what Heidegger believed was his task: to bring people to see the path of thinking, poetizing and building, but he did not see himself as building and poetizing. Heidegger’s thought-path takes one through metaphysics to the limits of metaphysics and at the limits (the end of metaphysics) a new path is revealed. It is to this new path that the rest of the study turns, discovering what possibilities and what limits this path offers for wounded-metaphysical God-talk. Heidegger himself never ventured down that path, but he gave one a clear

\(^{70}\) “The destiny of Being which is bestowed on each epoch is a function of the linguistic structure in which it is articulated…. The difference itself, as a pre-linguistic structure, opens up the shape of appearance in a given age by addressing a call to that age, the response to which constitutes its language” (Caputo 1982:163).
indication of the site (Ortschaft) where the thinking (speaking) of God could take place. In other words, he gave one the site (Ortschaft) where this new path of God-talk can begin. It is the Ortschaft of the Ereignis, the Es gibt, that was described above: the sphere of openness (Lichtung) in which the distinction between Being and beings is manifest, the historical moment (Zeit-spiel-Raum) in which to say it and the language in which it comes to birth.

In this last section of this chapter a short reflecting on this Ortschaft will be offered where the thought-path of wounded-metaphysical God-talk can begin. Heidegger reflects on this in his article, Contributions to Philosophy: Concerning the Event (Heidegger 1999), where he speaks about the Last God. To understand the limitations and possibilities of Heidegger’s Last God one has to interpret the Ortschaft where this Last God is to be thought. The Ortschaft where this Last God is to be thought is in and as the Event. “In der Wesung der Wahrheit des Seyns, im Ereignis und als Ereignis, verbirgt der letzte Gott” (Heidegger 1989:24).

4.1 The limitations of the Last God in and as Ereignis

The first limitation that is clear from all the above is that the word being is not a possible predicate for this Last God, in other words this Last God would have to be thought without Being. This is something that Jean-Luc Marion did in his book, God without Being (Marion 1991). Marion’s work will not be engaged in this study, as I agree with Derrida’s critique of Marion’s book. Derrida argues that one cannot equate intuitive Gegebenheit of the phenomenologist with the Gabe of the Es Gibt in Heidegger’s thought (Kearney 1999:58). Gegebenheit refers to the passivity of intuition, namely something is there, but it is not a gift. Yet Marion argues that Gegebenheit is a gift – a gift of God. Marion, in the tradition of the negative theologians, believes that God is beyond naming because of an excess of intuition that goes beyond concept or signification71. Both Derrida and Marion return and radicalise Husserl’s distinction made in Logical Investigations, “between “intention” (meaning, signification) and “fulfilment” (givenness), according to which the ego “intends” or “means” an object which can only in varying degrees be “fulfilled” or “given” to intuition,

71 “… the fact that no concept is able to give us the presence of what is at stake, and that presence not only is impossible but cannot be claimed. If there could be any revelation, I would say that no heart, no mind, and no word would be wide enough to host that revelation” (Kearney 1999:69).
whose total givenness remains always a regulative ideal for further experience” (Caputo & Scanlon 1999:6). Both Derrida and Marion push against the boundaries of the possible of Husserl’s phenomenology, but they do this from opposite sides. Derrida (Derrida 1973) pushes against the limits (conditions) of possibility that liberates the signifier (text) from the demands of intuition and he argues that intuitive fulfilment or givenness is impossible. It is exactly this impossibility that makes everything possible, from science to poetry and art and religion, and that is the essential structure of faith.

Marion on the other hand does not contemplate the emptiness like Derrida, but goes in the opposite direction in that intention is not fulfilled by givenness but is saturated by an overflow of givenness. Derrida is closer to Heidegger’s limits and possibilities of God-talk and thus Derrida will be the focus in this study.

4.2 Possibilities of talking of the Last God

How to talk of God if one cannot refer to God as being? Heidegger says the question of God being or not being is not a question that is answered by human religiosity, still less by theological aspirations or philosophy and science, but whether God is God happens out of, and within, the situation of being (Heidegger 1962:46). Some form of the verb “to be” might have to enter into God-talk, but Heidegger, like Kierkegaard, draws a sharp distinction between being and existence. This distinction he also makes with regard to Dasein, namely that Dasein exists – open-stanced – in the truth of being. A rock is, but Dasein exists. It is along these lines that God-talk for Heidegger becomes possible. In Beiträge he argues that Seyn determines that human beings should become the property (Eigentum) of Seyn as a result of their encounter (Ent-gegnung), and decision (Entscheidung) for Da-sein, the “being” that is authentically “there” (Heidegger 1989:263). The encounter between the divine (Gods) and the human occurs in this Er-eignung (Heidegger 1989:477). Heidegger writes Da-sein in this work hyphenated as it describes the “in between” (das Zwischen) between beings and the gods. Heidegger argues that the Being- unto-death of Da-sein does not end in nothing, but rather the opposite; it opens up from beyond the openness of Seyn. Thus death is not the outermost possibility of Da (of Da-sein), but the inmost possibility of its transformation towards authentic Da-sein (Heidegger 1989:283,325). This intrinsic infinitude of Seyn reveals itself in the beckoning of the Last God.
This is the place (*Ortshaft*) where one can think the last God, yet as described above this is also the place in Heidegger’s thought where the great Greek-German myth played such an important role. In an attempt to escape the unbearable lightness of Being in the *Zeit-spiel-Raum*, Heidegger thought this lightness within the German-Greek metanarrative, and thus the Last God is not the biblical God of the Jewish-Christian tradition, God forbid, but the poetic Greek gods of the fourfold.

Heidegger shows us the *Ortshaft* where the thought-path for wounded-metaphysical God-talk can begin. The *Ortshaft* for this thought-path to begin is the *Ereignis* and it is into that postmetaphysical linguistic *Ortshaft* that the study will venture and where the limits and possibilities of wounded-metaphysical God-talk will be discussed in a continued conversation with Heidegger, but also bringing in Levinas and Derrida.

Heidegger’s thought-paths led to this postmetaphysical linguistic *Ortshaft* and will be further explored in conversation with Levinas, whose work can be understood as a critical engagement with Heidegger, and who thinks the God who comes to mind (given to thought), as otherwise than Being. It is not one who thinks God, but God who comes to mind (thought)/ language in the *Ereignis* of language as the Infinite Other. This thought-path leads one towards ethics as first philosophy, and thus towards the limits and possibilities of such a thought-path.

This Ortschaft will be further explored in conversation with the work of Derrida, who critically engaged Heidegger and Levinas and explored the possibilities of a grammar of faith.
Chapter Three  The limits and possibilities of Levinas’ ‘other otherwise’ and the limits and possibilities it offers to postmetaphysical God-talk

1. INTRODUCTION

Heidegger’s three thought-paths led the way towards an Ortschaft of possible, yet limited (wounded), postmetaphysical God-talk. What becomes clear in this Ortschaft is that a completely new semantics for God-talk is necessary for it to be postmetaphysical, a semantics that resides outside the “house of Being” (Schrag 2002:72). Thus what is needed for postmetaphysical God-talk is a semantics that resides outside of language (house of Being) because the language of every epochal sending (Seinsgeschick), which is a human response to the speaking of language, is metaphysical as it is structured within the ontological difference.

In taking Heidegger’s three thought-paths into consideration one can say that what is needed is a semantics that propels one beyond language (Heidegger II) as an articulation of the structures of Dasein (Heidegger I) to the veritiable edifice of Being (Heidegger III), where one can speak of God only in the language of poetry, which means to speak of the poetic gods of the Geviert (Fourfold). What is sought is God-talk that moves beyond the concept of God fettered by the categories of metaphysics, or God-talk framed by fundamental ontology, as well as God-talk embedded in poetic thinking and dwelling. Schrag argues that if God-talk is truly to be postmetaphysical, post-ontological as well as post-poetic imagination, a semantic shift in the discourse about Deity is necessary (Schrag 2002:72). Levinas enters into the conversation in this postmetaphysical Ortschaft offering a possible semantic shift in thinking God. Levinas seeks to offer a God-talk that is not embedded in the grammar of the ontological difference, but is prior to that difference as the origin of that difference. In that sense Levinas’ God-talk is post-ontological and yet, specifically in the language of Totality and Infinity (1969), this move of wounding Heidegger’s fundamental ontology remains captive to the langauge of metaphysics as it proposes an ethical metaphysics. Ethics becomes Being, that is the “upon which” everything is thought. Thus Levinas’ move beyond (wounding) Heidegger’s fundamental ontology in Totality and Infinity is not successful as it becomes just one more sending of Being (Seinsgeschick). Derrida (1978b) points this out to which Levinas responds in Otherwise than Being (1981) and he turns towards the language of saying to wound the said that is captive to the ontological difference.
In Levinas’ thought God comes to mind or God comes to language not in ontological terms, but in responsibility towards the other. Levinas thus transposes God-talk (transcendence) from an ontological to an ethical key. This transposition opens new possibilities (new semantics) of thinking God or speaking of God as the other than the other or thinking the other otherwise in that the other is thought beyond the categories of Being and beings. This turn to ethics will be helpful as ethics is not a moment of Being, “it is otherwise and better than being: the very possibility of the beyond” (Levinas 1998:69, 108). Levinas thinks God, or God comes to mind in this ethical relation, but God comes to mind, “other otherwise” (Levinas 1998:69). It was for this reason that the title of this chapter refers to other otherwise. To think God as another being is not really a semantic shift as thinking God for example as the big Other would fit perfectly with thinking God as a being or God as Being and therefore still within the terms of ontology, fundamental ontology and metaphysics, but Levinas’ thoughts on God are other otherwise. It was therefore fitting to refer to Levinas’ interpretation of God as other otherwise beyond the categories of Being.

The question this chapter grapples with, is: what does this thinking offer to postmetaphysical God-talk? Levinas’ thought in one stroke challenges the metaphysical, ontological, the transcendental as well as the existential notions of transcendence and offers the event of the ethical as a possible meaning of transcendence.

Besides Levinas thinking the other otherwise beyond ontology and the categories of Being, he is also ideally situated to further explore the possibilities and limitations of such postmetaphysical God-talk as he was a philosophical thinker and writer as well as a religious (theological) thinker and writer. Interestingly he kept these two disciplines separate in that he published them with different publishers (Meskin 1998:90), although this does not mean that one can separate his theological reflection from his philosophical and the other way around, as they mutually influenced and shaped each other. It is because of his expertise in both these disciplines that his thoughts can offer important insights to the possibilities and limits of postmetaphysical or post-onto-theo-logical Jewish-Christian God-talk.

This chapter on Levinas will begin with his attempt at wounding Heidegger’s fundamental ontology and the move towards ethical metaphysics, which does not completely move

72 “…God is not simply the “first other,” or the “other par excellence,” or the “absolutely other,” but other than the other, other otherwise, and other with an alterity prior to the alterity of the other, prior to the ethical obligation to the other and different from every neighbour, transcendent to the point of absence, to the point of his possible confusion with the agitation of the there is [il y a]” (Levinas 1998:69)
beyond Heidegger’s criticism, which was pointed out by Derrida (1978b), and to which Levinas responded in his second major work *Otherwise than Being* and his linguistic turn towards *saying*. This will be followed by a reflection on transcendence and the idea of the Infinite and how subjectivity is related to the Infinite as an introduction to the (im)possibilities of a Levinasian God-talk. This chapter lies between the chapters on Heidegger and Derrida as it is between these two thinkers that the thoughts of Levinas will be discussed. Levinas was not only a student of Heidegger, but also one of his major critics and thus the thoughts of Heidegger play an important role in his thinking. Derrida challenged Levinas’ interpretation of Heidegger in *Totality and Infinity* to which Levinas responded in *Otherwise than Being* and thus the conversation between the three philosophers comes to life in the work of Levinas.

Levinas, and all those who interpreted Heidegger through his lens, believed that a major problem with Heidegger is his interpretation of the possibilities of the sacred (*das Heilige*). Heidegger’s sacred, according to this tradition of critique, does not open to ethics, justice and a concern for human suffering, which means that this interpretation of Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* leaves little room for an ethical response to human atrocities and an active striving towards greater justice. Levinas interpreted Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* to the *Ereignis* of Being as being too fatalistic. For Levinas it was impossible to conceive that humans passively receive the *Seinsgeschick* of a particular epoch of metaphysical history without any active responsibility for the suffering that is caused in that particular *Seinsgeschick*. It was impossible for Levinas to think that one is *Gelassen* about the tremendous suffering of the Jews in Nazi Germany or the suffering and exploitation of humans in the *Gestell*. Therefore Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity*, argues that “*Dasein* in Heidegger is never hungry” (Levinas 1969:134), and in *Otherwise than Being* he argues that Heidegger’s *Dasein* is never exposed to “outrage and wounding, to sickness and ageing” (Levinas 1981:55). The finer details of these arguments will be unpacked within this chapter as Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* does not necessarily need to be interpreted as such a fatalistic passive attitude to the *Seinsgeschichte*.

It is in this regard that Levinas offers his critique against Heidegger’s postmetaphysical God-talk as a move towards ethics. Levinas was critical about the locus (site) of the sacred as a positive notion altogether and preferred to think and reflect about *le sainteté* (the holy or the saintly) (Levinas 1977), which already indicates a more active response as alternative to *Gelassenheit*. 
Derrida argues that Levinas’ critique of Heidegger with its frequent misinterpretations is more an expression of an allergy\(^{73}\) to the climate (political association to the Nazi party) of Heidegger’s thought. In other words, that Levinas is allergic to the political climate of Heidegger’s thought and his involvement in that climate and this allergy influenced and determined Levinas’ interpretation of Heidegger.

Although this chapter is on Levinas, it will be in dialogue with the thoughts of both Heidegger and Derrida. The reflection on Levinas’ thoughts will take place in the site, Ortschaft, that Heidegger showed and in this Ortschaft, or rather concerning this Ortschaft, the conversation between and with these three thinkers will take place.

2. ETHICS AND TOWARDS A LANGUAGE OF ALTERITY

Before one so boldly ventures into this Ortschaft (the site of the wounding of metaphysics and thus the limits of language) of the conversation, where in this chapter Levinas’ thoughts are presented or represented, a short proviso needs to be offered. This chapter will not attempt to offer a comprehensive view (presentation or representation) of Levinas’ thoughts or try and systematise his thoughts into a comprehensive argument and from such a whole attempt to discover what possibilities and limitations this “system of thought” offers to God-talk. The style of Levinas’ writing is of unusual difficulty and thus it is impossible to offer an overall grasp of his thoughts (Peperzak 1995:184). More important than the difficulty of his thoughts is that any attempt at a systematisation of his thoughts would be a denial of the language of alterity that Levinas tried to communicate in a said (the books and texts that are available to one)\(^{74}\). Such an attempt at comprehensively representing his thoughts would be a denial of the saying\(^{75}\) in the said of Levinas’ text. Richard Cohen strongly advises against any attempt to simplify or systematise Levinas’ thoughts as it would then too easily be reduced to moral imperatives (Cohen 2000:59-61). Yet Levinas’ thoughts remains important to God-talk as mentioned above as he offers a possibility of saying “God” that overcomes or evades the semantics of metaphysics, and in that sense it can be described as postmetaphysical. As Morrison argues, if the word “God”

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73 “…allergy – the word, the accusation, which Levinas plays upon so often – to the ‘climate’ of Heidegger’s philosophy” (Derrida 1978b:145).

74 The said is the reduction of otherness to the same of a text or book or even a dissertation, but this will be discussed in more detail at a later stage in this chapter.

75 Saying is the exposure to the other, which will be further explored in more detail at a later stage in the chapter.
is going to be pronounced, a difficult condition of alterity is demanded, which in turn demands that \textit{theoria} and \textit{praxis} must coincide (Morrison 2008b:138).

How to express this difficult condition of alterity, how to find a language of alterity, and how transcendence, Infinite and eventually the word God comes to mind in this language will be explored. But where does one start? The place to start this journey of reflecting on the thoughts of Levinas is where Heidegger also started, namely lived experience or the facticity of lived life. What is to follow might appear like a coherent systemisation of Levinas’ thoughts, thereby denying what was mentioned above, but it is not intended as a systemisation of his thoughts on alterity, but it is, if anything, one’s attempt at identifying how Levinas' thoughts can open and limit postmetaphysical God-talk.

2.1 The self and the face of the Other towards ethical metaphysics

The site, \textit{Ortschaft}, of this discussion is the site of lived experience where the totality of the conscious self is disrupted by the ethical encounter with the Other. In Levinas’ early critique of Husserl he sides with Heidegger and specifically Heidegger’s focus on the experience of life – to be situated (thrown) in real life experience. Part of this experience (facticity) is the realisation that there are certain things that one intentionally encounters that cannot be reduced to the same, but that frustrate intentionally by obstinately remaining other, which means that there are certain things that offer resistance to any attempt to reduce otherness to the same. There are certain things in everyday experience that remain beyond the grasp of the same and thus remain other, for example the experience of another person. One is always again surprised by other people that one thought one knew and then they do or say something that breaks out of the categories that one had used to define, understand or interpret them. Yet before one can think of this experience of persistent otherness one has to start with the self who is thinking or experiencing everyday experiences, namely the subject of everyday experience (the conscious self). Subjectivity is one of the themes of traditional metaphysics where the subject has been interpreted as a conscious subject. This conscious subject is placed into the lived-experience of modernity as this is where both Levinas and Heidegger begin: the lived experience of everyday life within modernity.

A conscious subject is a subject that is conscious of her/his being, which means it is a self-conscious subject with regards to itself. In the previous chapter this was discussed as
care, namely the meaning of the Being of Dasein\textsuperscript{76} is care. Dasein is concerned (cares) about being there (Da-sein). If this is translated into the meaning of the Dasein of an individual subject then the meaning of the Being of a subject is to be concerned about being there. One can only be concerned about being there (Da-sein) if one is conscious of being there. The subject is a conscious subject in that it is conscious and concerned about being there and thus seeks to understand and comprehend its being there, that is, its being in the world. How does the conscious modern subject care about its being there? How does the conscious subject interpret his/her world? The other beings/things of the conscious subject’s world (that is the beings/things that make up his/her world) are present only insofar as they are re-presented to the consciousness of the subject.

One could say that the world of the conscious subject is, insofar as the world is re-presented to the self. In this sense the self-conscious subject is the arché of the world\textsuperscript{77}. In the metaphysical sense the conscious life of subjectivity forms a totality as it consists in representing, and by representing identifies beings, which through the process of representation become present, and therefore are. They are present, not because they present themselves, but because they are represented. They come to be because they find a place in the conscious subject’s world. This was discussed in the previous chapter, that thinging things gestate world and world grants things their place.

The next question is: How is the world (beings/things of the world) represented to the conscious subject? The modern answer is that they are represented objectively, that is they are re-presented as if they are objectively present. If the world, beings of the world, are objectively present, that gives the modern scientific subject the freedom to fully understand, categorise and thus manipulate these objects to complement his/her needs and desires.

This view of subjectivity over against objectivity of the world was part of the forgetting or withdrawal of Being in the Modern Seinsgeschick of the Gestell as discussed under the second thought-path in the previous chapter\textsuperscript{78}. What was forgotten was that objectivity of the world is the “upon which” beings are thought or represented to the conscious subject who is the arché of the objectively represented world, but this, as it was forgotten, was not

\textsuperscript{76} One must be careful not to equate Heidegger’s Dasein with individual subjectivity, but this will be discussed at a later stage.

\textsuperscript{77} Subject was the Being of what is, as beings only are insofar as they have their origin, arché, their ground in consciousness (Kosky 1996:238). It is when the subject (consciousness) reflects upon itself, “seeing itself as the act of representing and identifying beings, it becomes, in truth, self-consciousness” (Kosky 1996:238). It is only when the subject realises that it is the “upon which” the beings are thought that it becomes truly self-conscious.

\textsuperscript{78} See chapter 2 the section: 2.2.5 Machination and lived experience and the truth of Be-ing
thought and thus the world was perceived to be objectively present to the subject, but this “upon which” [Woraufhin] was not thought (it was taken for granted or seen as being obvious as that is the way the world is). Objectivity is the “upon which” beings are thought, but this “upon which” was not thought, as beings are believed to be objectively present. The Being of beings is that they are objectively present. Objectivity as the “upon which” beings can be thought gave the subject the freedom to manipulate these objective beings to his or her own purposes and therefore the rise of machination.

Heidegger and Levinas are largely in agreement about this interpretation of lived experience of the conscious self and his/her world in modernity. Where they differ is that Heidegger thinks through the “upon which” in Being and Time and thus thinks the fundamental ontological structure of the ontological difference: beings/things thought upon which of Being or the Being of beings. Levinas on the other hand did not seek to interpret the ontological structure of this upon which, but thought a way to escape the circularity which forms a totality, namely the totality of the circularity of ontological difference. Heidegger thought through this structure and thereby wounded metaphysics, Levinas wanted to open this structure by returning to metaphysical desire: the other (exteriority).

In Totality and Infinity, Levinas argues that metaphysical desire is the essence of theory (Levinas 1969:42). Metaphysical desire is the desire for what is other or exterior to the interiority of consciousness and this desire drives the hunger for knowledge. The metaphysical desire drives the hunger for knowledge, but knowledge (epistemology) is to include what is other or what is exterior within the interiority of the same. The external world of modern scientific subjectivity is explored and there is a passion/desire to discover new things, but these newly discovered objects are categorised and given a very specific place in the ontological modern scheme of things. The great discoveries in science and specifically biology are about discovering new creatures, insects for example, and then categorising that insect within an ontological structure which is thought “upon which” of a certain theory, for example evolution or the categorisation into species, etcetera. What is other (new insect) is included into the same of the specific ontological structure of that specific scientific paradigm (theory). Yet the scientist is not consciously aware that s/he is thinking this new discovery “upon which” of a specific scientific theory, but rather believes that the “facts”, for example that this newly discovered creature has eight legs, must place it in the family (genus) of spiders. The scientist is not aware of the “upon which”, but believes this “upon which” is the way the world is objectively structured. Theory designates comprehension, namely a way of approaching a known being in such a way
that the alterity with regard to the known being vanishes: the unknown creature becomes something known namely a spider.

This process of knowing (ontology and/or epistemology) can be described as a process of *greifen*, *Griff*, *begreifen*, *Begriff*, a process of taking hold of (*prend*) and comprehending (*comprend*) what is other within the same. Thus it is a process of reducing otherness to the same by including the other within the totality of a system (*theoria*) of either ontology or epistemology (Levinas 1969:158-159). This is a description of modern epistemology or ontology, science or theory, which is the basis of machination of the *Gestell*, and thus Heidegger and Levinas would still agree on this interpretation of modern lived experience.

The difference between the two begins with the question of how to go beyond this? Levinas hoped to move beyond this circularity by opening the totality to the other without reducing the other to the same in an ethical relation to the Other. Heidegger had his doubts if it was possible to get beyond this circularity, as the self that attempts any such thought is always already implicated in the ontological difference of that particular *Seinsgeschick* of *Dasein*. Heidegger therefore did not seek to get beyond, but sought to understand why it is the way it is and in that sense wounded the system by discovering its possibility and, understanding its possibility, discovered its limits. Levinas attempted to break out of this circularity and thus his criticism of Heidegger begins. As Derrida mentioned, Levinas’ criticism of Heidegger is an allergy to the climate of his thought. Heidegger’s support of the totalitarian Nazi party in Germany influenced the way in which Levinas read Heidegger’s texts. Thus Levinas read Heidegger within the context of totalitarianism, specifically in *Totality and Infinity* (1969), and thus he interpreted Heidegger’s ontological difference as a totality that needed to be broken open.

The mode of depriving the discovered being of its alterity can only be accomplished through a third term (Levinas 1969:42): the “upon which” this being (object) is thought. This third term needs to be neutral and is itself not a being. In this third neutral term, which is not a being, the shock of alterity in the encounter of the other within the same is deadened. The newly discovered (known) insect-like creature loses its alterity in that it is categorised as a spider.

This third term may appear as a concept thought (Levinas 1969:42). The individual, that exists with his/her metaphysical desire for that which is exterior, abdicates into this neutral that is thought, the third term, which may be called sensation, in which objective quality
and subjective affection are merged (Levinas 1969:42). Only that exists which can be experienced by a conscious subject and yet that which is experienced is believed to be objectively present.

It is here that Levinas’ criticism of Heidegger unfolds with regards to Heidegger’s first thought-path, specifically from *Being and Time*, by arguing that this third neutral term may appear as being distinguished from the existent. For example, in modern lived experience, objectivity is the Being upon which objects are thought. This objectivity appears to be distinguished from the subject and distinguished from the beings (objects) as it is the upon which both are thought. It is the neutral *concept thought* upon which objects are thought - Being, which is not an existent in that it is clearly distinguished from beings, as it is the “upon which” beings (existents) become intelligible (Levinas 1969:42).

Levinas argues that the self, with the metaphysical desire towards that which is exterior, comprehends (takes hold of) what is other through this neutral third term of Being, through which the alterity of what is exterior is deadened. This is ontology, according to Levinas, where the other is reduced to the same through the neutral third term of Being. The modern conscious self experiences the world as being objectively present. Objectivity is the “upon which” the exterior world is thought and yet this objectivity which appears as a neutral term is dependent on the subject. It is through this objectivity that the subject believes him/herself to be free. This freedom is possible by identification of the same and by not allowing the self to be alienated by the other. Levinas argues that this theory (ontology) renounces the desire of metaphysics, the aspiration towards exteriority, as it reduces everything to the same in its circularity (Levinas 1969:42). Levinas wants to wound the circularity of the ontological difference, by returning this difference to metaphysical desire for what is exterior without reduction to the same. Levinas argues that this circularity creates a totality (enclosed circle) that denies the metaphysical desire for exteriority.

As mentioned above it is a matter of understanding (that is knowing) the other (ontology or epistemology), through a third term, which is the thought of the identical as one’s own and in this process reducing one’s other to the same. Thus the other becomes one’s own, the I’s very own in knowledge, which in turn secures the marvel of immanence (Levinas 2002:77) and it in its turn ensures the freedom of the self which is so characteristic of the modern self.

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79 Heidegger argued for the thinking together of machination (objective quality on the basis of quantity) and lived experience which can be compared to sensation, see Chapter 2 section: 2.2.5.
The desire of metaphysics (for what is other), Levinas believed, can be kept alive if exteriority is not neutralised (deadened) through the third term of Being, thereby keeping the marvel of exteriority alive from which metaphysical desire lives. Heidegger’s fundamental ontology is not an ontological theory, but is the transcendental explanation of ontological theories.

The question is whether Levinas’ metaphysics with its desire for exteriority ever really escapes this circularity? Or is this circularity the Being of Dasein which one cannot escape as one cannot get out beyond the world that one is implicated in? In Heidegger’s third thought-path he interprets the Ereignis of Being as an event of language and thus as long as one is in language (which one always is) one is implicated in the ontological difference of that particular language of the particular Seinsgeschick. In other words, the question is: can language (thinking) escape this circularity of language or is this circularity the only possibility to speak?

Levinas attempted to get beyond this by focussing on the knowing subject and what calls that subject into being as subject that knows. Levinas argues that the reduction of what is external (exteriority) to the same keeps the movement of knowing (ontology or epistemology) circular. This is a circular movement in the sense that the intentionality, the desire of metaphysics, the aiming at what is other (the being exterior to the self) in the thematising of Being, which means the thematising in presence, returns to the self as much as it issued from the self (Levinas 2002:77). The self represents the world to itself “upon which” of the third term Being and thus the self becomes the very ground of Being and of itself, and therefore subjectivity in traditional metaphysics is equated with self-consciousness, understood as presence to self. Such a knowing of oneself is only possible, according to Levinas, because of a forgetting of the subjecthood of the subject – the very act of being a subject by being subjected.

Heidegger argues that what is forgotten is the “upon which” of the ontological difference, which he describes in the third thought-path as difference. What is forgotten in modernity is Being, or as Heidegger would say it: Being’s withdrawal. Thus the subject forgets that the conscious subject is the “upon which” the objectivity of objects can be thought and more importantly the subject forgets that this “upon which” is relative to the Seinsgeschick of this particular Dasein of modernity. The subject in Heidegger is thus not subjected to the Other as Levinas proposes, but is subjected to difference in the sense that it is relative to the speaking of language. It is because of difference, the speaking of language, that the subject of modernity is the subject that it is. Difference thus fatally
wounds metaphysics, and specifically wounds the metaphysics of modernity that believes itself to be beyond metaphysics in pure immanence of objective reality where Being has completely unconcealed itself in beings or beings have completely concealed Being, and thus opens the modern epoch to think the truth of Being.

Levinas on the other hand argues otherwise and says that there is something that disrupts this subjectivity, namely the face of the Other. It is the face of the Other that breaks up the totality. He argues that what breaks up this totality is “the gleam of exteriority or of transcendence in the face of the Other” (Levinas 1969:24), which disrupts the totality so as to reveal the very conditions of its possibility. In Heidegger’s third thought-path it is to think the difference, which is an Ereignis of language (the speaking of language) which disrupts this totality, as it is that which gives the circularity of the ontological difference to thought. In the next section the similarity and difference between Heidegger’s disruption of the totality of ontology (metaphysics) and Levinas’ disruption, not of the face, but of saying, will be explored. Before one can turn to the similarities and differences in Levinas’ Otherwise than Being, Levinas’ argument in Totality and Infinity will be followed.

2.1.1 The face as the disruption of the totality
For Levinas it is the face that signifies this radical otherness that cannot be reduced to a theme or Being, because the face signifies the living presence as it is expression (Levinas 1969:66). The face of the Other cannot be thought “upon which” of Being so as to deaden its otherness in the thinking of the same. The face is unique in this sense because for Levinas, different from objects, it has expression. One can see an object, and the face of another can even become an object to be scrutinised “upon which” of some or other theory. For example, a face can be scrutinised according to a racial theory as was done in Nazi Germany. Certain facial features (“facts”) were identified as being Arian and other features were identified as being Semitic. Thus the facial features of the other could be reduced to the same of one or other racial theory. However, when Levinas speaks of the face he is not referring to facial features, but he is referring to the face as expression. Expression defies objectification via a neutral third term (theory) and that is why it was so incomprehensible that people (soldiers) could see the faces of the women and children in the concentration camps and not be moved to respond. It is easy to treat people and animals as objects as long as one does not see their facial expressions, as facial expression calls the self to account, because expression is beyond objectification. The facial expression undoes the theories upon which the other is thought. One can classify a face according to its features within a specific racial group, but the expression of that classified face undoes any such objectifications, it defies such objectifications. The subject
can however ignore that call and history is full of such atrocities (crimes against humanity).

The face is living expression and thus the Other cannot be completely grasped in knowledge, for the Other’s otherness is infinite and overflows the totality of any comprehension and Being, and this otherness of the Other is the gleam of exteriority that signifies in the living expression of the face. What is it about expression that transcends Being (the third neutral term)? The life of expression undoes the self (subject) that seeks to comprehend the other via the theme (the third neutral term). Thus the face remains exterior to the interiority of the circularity of the ontological difference and opens this circularity. Thus Levinas interprets exteriority (that which transcends the circularity) as face (visage) and he describes the face as “the way in which the other [l’Autre] presents himself, exceeding the idea of the other in me” (Levinas 1969:50). The gleam of exteriority is thus ‘given’ in the face of the Other, as the self’s experience of the Other is utterly beyond and in excess of the self. Or as Horner (2001:65) interprets it: “Who the other person ‘is’ can never be present to me: our presents are never synchronous”.

The face breaks up this totality because the face cannot be encompassed in a theme as there is always a difference and this difference is the life of expression. The alterity of the Other is not just a matter of a few differences as one compares oneself with the other, because in such a comparison and listing of differences the self and the Other would then still be more or less on the same plane (Levinas 1969:215) where differences can be identified. The Other does not inhabit the same plane as the Other does not belong to the economy of Being (the economy of the upon which) and as such there must remain an asymmetry. Levinas refers to the Other as above the self. Height is an important dimension for Levinas (Levinas, 1969:34-35,215). The facial expression that cannot be reduced to the same calls from on high, as it calls from beyond (above) the “upon which” with which the subject attempts to comprehend the other. The Other is removed from the self by virtue of a curvature of space that prevents the self’s comprehension of the Other (Horner 2001:69).

It is not just a matter of the Other negating the self, as such a negation would still imply the mutual existence, but within a larger relation. The Other signifies differently in that “the Other proceeds as an epiphany that comes to me from utterly elsewhere” (Horner 2001:69).

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80 “The life of expression consists in undoing the form in which the existent, exposed as a theme, is thereby dissimulated” (Levinas 1969:66).
The face is an epiphany as it reveals itself from beyond the Being “upon which” the world (beings) is thought.

The face, according to Levinas, assigns me to myself in responsibility, but without the self being able to conceive the Other to whom s/he is responsible, as the face does not signify the Other to whom the self is responsible. The face does not signify like a sign does when it presents a meaning to another who can then grasp and understand the meaning (comprehensible significance) of this sign (Kosky 1996:249). Thus the phenomenality of the face is always exceeded by its removal to transcendence, that which cannot be recuperable in the present. In the face transcendence is made to appear. For this reason, Levinas began to speak of the trace in the face which will be further explored in a later section on transcendence and the Infinite.

For Levinas, metaphysical desire for what is other is kept alive and finds its truth or royal road (Levinas 1969:29) through ethics – ethics as the response to the call of the face of the Other without the reduction of the Other to the same. Ethics is beyond the ontological difference, as it is the response to the Other without thinking (theorising) the Other “upon which” of some or other theory (Being), and thereby reduces him/her to a being (thing/object), and therefore Levinas could argue that ethics breaks the totality of the circularity of fundamental ontology. If ethics is the royal road of metaphysics because it keeps the metaphysical desire alive then one can speak of this relation to the Other as ethical metaphysics.

Levinas defines ethics as “the putting into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other” (Levinas 1969:43). The ethical is thus the location of a point of alterity, or what Levinas calls exteriority, that cannot be reduced to the same (Critchley 1999:5). Yet more than that, “metaphysics, transcendence, the welcoming of the Other by the same, of the Other by me, is concretely produced as the calling into question of the same by the Other, that is, as the ethics that accomplishes the critical essence of knowledge” (Levinas 1969:43). In this sense ethics precedes dogmatism and ethical metaphysics precedes ontology. Thus one can speak of ethics as first philosophy. The self (subject) of metaphysics comes into being only through being subjected by the Other.

Levinas, in criticising Heidegger, argues that if one affirms the priority of Being over existents (beings) it means also to subordinate the relation with someone, who is an

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81 "...the visible is thought in terms of the nonvisible, the not-yet-visible, the infravisible, etc. In this sense, the not-visible is tied to the visible as both opened and limited by it. The transcendent is dominated by the opposition visible/invisible" (Wyschogrod 1982:151).
existent, (the ethical relation) to a relation with the Being of existents (Being of beings). The relation with the Being of beings is impersonal and thus permits the apprehension, the domination of existents (a relationship of knowing), the manipulation of beings and therefore subordinates justice to individual freedom of the subject (Levinas 1969:45). The subject defines and creates his/her world “upon which” of his/her theory/thought concept (Being) and thus has control over the beings of this created world and in that sense is free to do with the world as s/he pleases. With such an understanding of the world the totalitarian atrocities of Modern Western history are possible. Thus, according to Levinas, Heideggerian ontology affirms the priority of freedom over ethics, but this freedom comes from the obedience to Being and thus it is not humanity that possesses freedom, but freedom that possesses humanity. The whole of Western philosophy has been dominated by the primacy of the same.

It is important to note that the same refers not only to the res cogitans, but also the cogitata, or in Husserlian terms it refers to both the intentional acts of consciousness (noeses) and the intentional objects which give meaning to those acts. In Heideggerian terms it means both Dasein as well as the world that is constitutive of the Being of Dasein (Critchley 1999:4).

Ethics is the overcoming of ontology and a return to the desire of metaphysics. The ethical relationship is metaphysics itself (Levinas 1969:52). This overcoming of ontology, as in the case with Heidegger’s overcoming of Metaphysics, is not an overcoming as in destroying ontology, but exposing (deconstructing) the limits and its comprehensive claims to mastery, by seeking that which is prior to ontology. Levinas thought that he had found what is prior to ontology by investigating the subject (conscious self), who through (upon which) Being interprets the beings of the world; but prior to this subject, who through (upon which) Being grasps the beings of his/her world and includes them into his/her world, is that which constitutes the subject as subject. It is the Other that constitutes (calls the subject into being) the subject as conscious subject. Is this move towards the Other a move beyond Heidegger’s language of ontology?

Exteriority is located in the face of the Other, but this exteriority is articulated in the language of ontology. “Being is exteriority” (Levinas 1969:290). In Heideggerian terms, the meaning of Being of beings, which is the basic question of metaphysics, is determined as exteriority, which is Levinas’ word for Being (Critchley 1999:7). Thus the Being of the modern subject upon which s/he interpreted the beings of his/her world was objectivity, but this Being is replaced with exteriority (alterity) and ethics. The objective metaphysics
of modernity is replaced with an ethical metaphysics. In an interview after *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas says the following about his ontological language in *Totality and Infinity*: “*Totality and Infinity* was my first book. I find it very difficult to tell you, in a few words, in what way it is different from what I’ve said afterwards. There is the ontological terminology: I spoke of being. I have since tried to get away from that language” (Levinas 1988:171). In his later works Levinas moved away from this language of metaphysics towards postmetaphysics and towards *saying* rather than *face*.

Levinas’ critique of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology returns to metaphysics in the form of an ethical metaphysics. Derrida criticises this move in Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity*. Levinas responds to this critique, without directly mentioning Derrida, in his second great work *Otherwise than Being* (Levinas 1981), which can be interpreted as a move towards linguistics. Levinas attempted to destroy the totality of the circularity of the ontological difference by returning to the metaphysical desire for exteriority, which he believed to find in the face of the Other. His disruption of the totality was to replace it with a new totality where alterity (exteriority) became the Being of beings and thus in *Totality and Infinity*, he never really moved beyond the language of ontology, but remained in the ontological difference.

Levinas’ disruption of the modern subject by subjecting the subject to the face of the Other was an attempt to move beyond the totality of the circularity of the ontological difference. Heidegger disrupted the ontological difference of modernity by thinking the structural possibility of this difference. In this third thought-path he thought the ontological difference of the various *Seinsgeschicke* in terms of the speaking of language (difference). That was Heidegger’s linguistic turn. Levinas also turned to language in *Otherwise than Being*.

### 2.2 The naked self and the signification of substitution: saying

To understand how Levinas’ thoughts have developed from ontological language in *Totality and Infinity* and the signification of the Other as a *trace in the face* to the language of *saying* in *Otherwise than Being*, the responsible self (subjected self) needs to be thought together with language and the role that language plays in the being of subjectivity. In reflecting on Levinas’ thought concerning subjectivity and language one needs to keep in mind the conversation with various interlocutors. The main traditions of thought that he is in conversation with are the metaphysical tradition with the central role played by the self-conscious subject that culminates in Hegel and is still very much
present in Husserl’s phenomenology, structuralism, Derrida’s critique of Totality and Infinity and as always, Heidegger. It is in this conversational context that Levinas’ linguistic turn needs to be interpreted.

The traditional metaphysical notion of subjectivity as the arché of the world was questioned and critiqued in Totality and Infinity, and the move towards ethical metaphysics and the primacy of alterity revealed in the epiphany of the face was discussed in the previous section. Levinas also responded to the critique of subjectivity, specifically from structuralism (cf. de Saussure 1974). Levinas argued that structuralism has its roots in the philosophical ideal of mathesis universalis proposed by Descartes and Leibniz (Levinas 1981:96). In structuralism’s questioning and critique the subject was dethroned and there was talk of the death of the subject, in the sense that one can no longer argue that it is the subject in his or her freedom speaking, but that there is a system like a mathematical structure (mathesis universalis) that thinks and speaks through the subject. It is thus not the subject that speaks, but this universal structure (‘it’) thinks in me or ‘it’ speaks in me (Llewelyn 2004:121).

In Heidegger there is a similar thought in the sense that language speaks, but Heidegger’s speaking of language and the Gelassenheit towards the Es-gibt cannot simply be equated with the passivity of the death of the subject in structuralism because of the active role that Dasein still plays as the shepherd of Being. Heidegger, in his Letter on Humanism, describes humanity as the Lichtung of Being (Heidegger 1978). Language speaks, and human speech is a response to this speaking of language (peal of stillness). Thus human speech is secondary (it is a response) to the speaking of language, as humans with their speaking are ‘only’ the Lichtung of Being and thus also secondary to that which comes to light in the Lichtung. Humans are thus seen as both special and privileged in the sense that they are the locus of the Lichtung, but they are also a means to an end (Sikka 1998:305). One might not be able to deny that Dasein is the origin of the world in the sense of being the ground, site, Lichtung for the Ereignis of Being. The Ereignis of Being, the speaking of language as the peal of stillness, is where the world and the beings (things) of the world are called by and into the difference and there the things called gestate the world and the world grants things their place (Heidegger 1971b:202-203).

If this is the speaking of language and humans are the Lichtung where this speaking is translated into mortal speech of the specific ontological difference of that time (Seinsgeschick), then humans have the responsibility of being the shepherds of Being (Llewelyn 2004:122). So, although the attitude appropriate to the speaking of language is
Gelassenheit humans have a relative responsibility as they are the Lichtung where the epochal sending (Seinsgeschick) is revealed and they shepherd that revealing in the sense that it is in human speech that the epochal sending of the particular ontological differences comes to thought.

Thus in Heidegger’s thought it is language that speaks and humans respond by being possessed by language, yet there remains a responsibility towards Being as humans are the shepherds of Being. Levinas describes this responsibility of Dasein towards Being as either to be absorbed by Being or to be at the service of Being (Levinas 1981:131-134). If language is the house of Being, and if it is that language speaks, then the subject is absorbed in the speaking of language and as such s/he is absorbed in Being or s/he is at the service of Being. As discussed in the previous chapter humans exist in the differentiation of the ontological difference and thus they are at the service of Being.

Levinas interprets Heidegger’s understanding of the relationship between the thinking subject and language as a detour. The thinking subject searches for the intelligible arrangement of the Being of beings (thinking human seeks to understand the relationship between Being and beings), but this is only a detour for Being’s essence to get arranged and to truly appear. Human thinking seeks to interpret the Being of beings of the particular epochal sending of Being (Seinsgeschick) of which they are part (their Dasein) and thus their thinking becomes the occasion for Being to reveal this particular sending of the ontological difference.

It remains Being’s doing as it is the Seinsgeschick of the Es-gibt that sends the ontological difference into a specific historical epoch whilst also giving the language with which to think the ontological difference of that particular sending (Seinsgeschick). The task of the thinking subject is to figure out this ontological difference, but the difference is already given, as is the language with which to express this difference. In this situation the subjectivity of the subject would consist of effacing itself so as to let Being be [Gelassenheit], by “assembling structures into a signification, a global proposition in a

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82 See Chapter 2 section 3. Language, the House of Being.
83 “The thinking subject, called up to search for this intelligible arrangement, is then, despite the activity of its searching, despite its spontaneity, to be interpreted as a detour that being’s essence takes to get arranged and thus to truly appear, to appear in truth. Intelligibility or signifyingness is part of the very exercise of being, of the *ipsum esse*” (Levinas 1981:134).
84 The “Es gibt” gives to the thinker the following:
  i. the sphere of openness in which the distinction between Being and beings is manifest,
  ii. the historical moment (Zeit-spiel-Raum) in which to say it and
  iii. the language in which it comes to birth (taken from Chapter 2 section 3. Language, the House of Being).
said" (Levinas 1981:134). In this context a hierarchy is created in which the veracity of the saying of the subject, which would be interpreted as only being an emission of signs insignificant in their own figures and thus subordinate to the signified (said), would need to conform to the Being that reveals itself in Dasein. The subject would not be the source of any signification independent of the truth of Being which s/he serves (Levinas 1981:134). In this argument the said (the particular sending of the ontological difference in its particular language) is primary and is prior to all communication and therefore communication between individuals (subjects) would be an inter-subjective representation of Being.

Heidegger’s thinking was too enclosed, too circular, too much a totality for Levinas and thus – although he does not deny the Heideggerian interpretation of Dasein as the site of the Ereignis of Being, the site of the speaking of language – he believes that there is still something prior to this. There is something that breaks open this circularity of the ontological difference of a particular epochal sending (Seinsgeschick). There must be something prior to this circularity. Prior to our being possessed by language is that which calls language (signification) forth, namely the Other. So prior to being possessed by language, the self is possessed by the face of the other human being (Llewelyn 2004:123).

It would be a too simple distinction between Heidegger and Levinas to reduce their differences to monologue against dialogue. In Heidegger’s thoughts, mortal speech is a response (answer) to the speaking of language, but the language of the response is pre-given by the particular Seinsgeschick of Es-gibt and therefore his thoughts certainly appear as a monologue of the speaking of language, which can only be received, and therefore the attitude of Gelassenheit is appropriate.

Levinas, on the other hand, interprets human speech as a response to the Other and thus dialogue and ethics (response and responsibility) is an appropriate response. Thus it would appear as if the distinction between the two can be interpreted as monologue and Gelassenheit on Heidegger’s side and dialogue and ethics on Levinas’ side. This would be an oversimplification because Dasein’s being, possessed by language, is always also a Mitsein, and language (Sprache) is Gespräch for Heidegger. The difference between Heidegger and Levinas cannot be reduced to such a simple distinction between monologue and dialogue and therefore the difference needs to be discovered on a different plane. To reduce Heidegger’s thought to monologue, and thus not really taking the ethical into consideration, has been questioned by a re-reading of Heidegger’s thoughts. This re-reading argues that Gelassenheit to the Es gibt is not unethical, as
Habermas has argued, but rather that Heidegger’s Mitsein is indeed highly ethical and even “essentially” ethical.

Heidegger’s thoughts should not be read as being unethical or only marginally ethical, but his work can be read with ethics playing a central role in a form of fundamental ethics of liberating solicitude, and in his later works the centrality of justice, but this will not be further explored as it is not central to the argument of this study. In the last section of this chapter, Levinas’ interpretation of Heidegger’s Dasein will be reflected on once more as he interprets Dasein as individual Dasein separated from Mitsein. It is important at this stage to have a closer look at how Heidegger interpreted Mitsein and how this relates to Levinas’ interpretation of ethics.

Heidegger formulated being with others (Mitsein) as substitution which is a word that plays such an important part in Otherwise than Being (Levinas 1981:xxix). The other as another Dasein [Lichtung] is not perceived in the sense of objectifying him or her, but that the other Dasein is to be taken exactly as another Da-sein, like oneself, where the Da of the other’s Sein is another locus [Lichtung] from which the world comes into view. The world-for-me through substitution becomes the world. Yet these individual worlds-for-me of the different Lichtungen are subordinated to the world (Being), the universal logos, which ordains all the perspectives.

Levinas thus understands Heidegger as subjecting and/or subordinating the individual Daseins to Being, thereby engaging in a form of “ontological imperialism” (Levinas

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85 Habermas describes Heidegger’s stance as a form of fatalistic mysticism, “a diffuse readiness to obey in relation to an aauratic but indeterminate authority” (Habermas 1993:140).

86 Two important readings in this regard are Lawrence Vogel (1994) and Fred Dallmayr (1993). Vogel defends Heidegger by arguing that authentic self-responsibility “implies neither “subjectivism” nor “relativism”, for it makes possible “authentic Being-with-Others”: a posture in which one feels an obligation to respect the dignity of other persons and compassion for the suffering of others” (Vogel 1994:9). In his book, The Fragile “We”, Vogel argues for three possible ways of interpreting Being and Time, namely existentialist, historicist and cosmopolitan. Vogel understands his own interpretation as a cosmopolitan interpretation of Being and Time. Yet he argues that such a cosmopolitan interpretation and classification is only possible by supplementing Heidegger’s text, which is at odds with the author’s intention (Vogel 1994:9). Vogel, in his specific cosmopolitan reading of Heidegger, argues that fundamental ontology of authentic Mitsein as ‘liberating solicitude’ is a fundamental ethics (Vogel 1994:68). Fred Dallmayr (1993) argues similar to Vogel by drawing his readers’ attention to the centrality of Mitsein in Being and Time (Dallmayr 1993:60-62). He specifically focuses on Gelegenheit (the attitude of letting-be) which is captured in the notion of ‘anticipating-emancipatory solicitude’ (Dallmayr 1993:64). Dallmayr’s defence of Heidegger is a metaphysical defence in relation to ethics as Sonia Sikka argues (Sikka 1998:303). Dallmayr mainly focuses on the later works of Heidegger, specifically The Anaximander Fragment. In these later works Heidegger develops the notion of Seinsfüße with special emphasis on issues of social and cosmic justice (Dallmayr 1993:118), “juncture and hence justice is the readiness to let others be and to attend to them with considerate care; by contrast, disjuncture or injustice involves the insurgence of selfish conceit bent on permanently monopolizing the space of presence while shuffling others out of the way” (Dallmayr 1993:125).

87 “Heideggerian ontology, which subordinates the relationship with the Other to the relation with Being in general, remains under obedience to the anonymous, and leads inevitably to another power, to imperialist domination, to tyranny” (Levinas, 1969:46-47).
1969:44). This is Levinas’ reading, or mis-reading, of Heidegger. Thus according to Levinas, Heidegger’s substitution, commanded by the exigency for truth, has a moral tone (Levinas 1981:xxxix) in the sense that the others’ Dasein offers another site for the revealing of Being and one would be morally obliged to listen to these other revelations of the world. Being reveals itself in the speaking of language through Dasein. It is not different forms of Being that reveals itself in other Dasein(s), but Being that reveals itself in different sites and thus offering an inter-site (inter-subjective/inter-Dasein) representation of Being.

The difference between the two is that which commands substitution: in Heidegger it is the cosmic order of Being, the order by which the world becomes world, and in Levinas it is the order of the imperious transcendence of alterity (Levinas 1981:xxix). Alphonso Lingis, in the Translator’s Introduction to Otherwise than Being, argues that “The other is not experienced as an empty pure place and means for the world to exhibit another perspective, but as a contestation of my appropriation of the world, as a disturbance in the play of the world, a break in its cohesion” (Levinas 1981:xxix).

For Heidegger and Levinas, language is being with others (Mitsein). For Heidegger it is the signification of Being, which is prior to all human signification, in the Geläut der Stille that comes to mortal speech only through poetry (Levinas 1981:135). For Levinas, being with others is more than just being with others – it is to be possessed by the Other (Llewelyn 2004:123). It is a substitution of the one-for-the-other (Levinas 1981:13; 99ff). “Substitution is signification” (Levinas 1981:13). Thus prior to the self’s responsibility to Being, as shepherd of Being, is the responsibility toward the Other, the face of the Other, as described in the previous section on ethical metaphysics. The Other breaks into the house of Being like a thief, thus calling (subjecting) Dasein to responsibility for-the-other, prior to Dasein’s responsibility toward Being (Levinas 1981:13).

It is here that one can identify the linguistic shift in Levinas’ thinking from the signification of the face to the signification of saying. The face signifies an irreducible order or command that summons the self to respond to the Other but signifies it before the self is present to respond. In the face, “a command come as though from an immemorial past, which was never present” (Levinas 1981:88) is heard. The Other, which the face signifies, has already passed when the self is there to respond and thus was always absent from the meeting of the self with the face. It is for this reason that Levinas calls the face a trace
as the Other is never present in the face, as s/he has already passed\textsuperscript{88}. A face, as trace, does not signify an indeterminate phenomenon, but it is an invitation to the “fine risk of approach qua approach, to the exposure of the one to the other, to the exposure of this exposedness, the expression of exposure, saying” (Levinas 1981:94). This exposure of the one to the other is the exposure of substitution. Prior to the speaking subject is what Levinas calls the signification of substitution – the expression of exposure, which is saying\textsuperscript{89}.

Substitution is a language (signification), expression of exposure, prior to any mortal language. It is this signification of substitution that subjects the subject to being a subject that is unavoidably and thus passively exposed to the approach of the Other, and this expression of exposure (saying) is the constitution of the subject as one subjected to this exposure in expression. The approach of the Other subjects the subject to the exposure of expression. The approach of the Other is “the bursting forth, the very raising up of speech” (Derrida 1978b:103).

In probing these limits of traditional metaphysics, fundamental ontology, as well as arguing against structuralism, Levinas argues that the conditions for subjectivity must lie prior to consciousness in immemoriality. The conditions for subjectivity lie in this signification of substitution. Prior to the ‘I’ of subjectivity there is a ‘me’ who, through his/her existence, has taken up a space that could have been the space for another \textit{Dasein}\textsuperscript{90} and is thus called to account. Prior to the ‘I’ of subjectivity is a ‘me’, accused, and thus called to responsibility. The responsibility toward the Other is the responsibility of substitution which is the responsibility of signification of the one-for-the-other. Thus subjectivity is not self-consciousness, as before being consciousness it is signification. Subjectivity is the giving of oneself (expression of exposure) for/to the Other in substitution. Thus subjectivity cannot be seen separate from the gift of signification of the one-for-the-other.

Levinas would agree with structuralism that the subject is removed from the centre, but this does not translate for him into the death of the subject, but rather the \textit{subjectification} of the subject which is the coming to being of the subject. The subject is subject precisely

\textsuperscript{88} “…the face is a trace left by the passing of what never entered the present in which I have experiences but is always already past without this past being recuperable in a present” (Kosky 1996:249).
\textsuperscript{89} “The Saying is my exposure – corporeal, sensible – to the Other, my inability to refuse the Other’s approach. It is the performative stating, proposing, or expressive position of myself facing the Other. It is a verbal or non-verbal ethical performance, whose essence cannot be caught in constative propositions. It is a performative \textit{doing} that cannot be reduced to a constative description” (Critchley 1999:7).
\textsuperscript{90} In this discussion of Levinas’ work \textit{Dasein} will be used as Levinas interpreted it: as individual \textit{Dasein}. 
because of this subjection to something which it did not itself institute or constitute (Visker 1996:119) as it is subjected to the other. Thus the subject is no longer the one who subjects the other into the same via Being, but is the one subjected by the Other into being a subject.

Subjectivity, understood as consciousness and more specifically self-consciousness, is not all there is with regard to the notion of subjectivity, as Levinas argues that subjectivity as self-consciousness rests on a prior subjective condition (Levinas 1981:102). This self-conscious subjectivity rests on an identity that one calls ego \( [\text{Moi}] \) or I (Levinas 1981:102). This subjective condition, an identity that one calls ego \( [m\text{o}l] \), on which self-conscious subjectivity rests, Levinas calls the responsible self. Subjectivity rests on a ‘subjective condition’ that is diachronic to consciousness and the synchrony of self-consciousness, as the responsible self is a self that is subjected to the demands of the Other, and this is the very condition of being a subject, but this is the unthought and forgotten “underside of a fabric woven where there is consciousness” (Levinas 1981:103).

Levinas contrasts the metaphysical self, who exists-for-itself through relations with others, with a responsible self who is a being that is not for-it-self, but for all. The responsible self, in contrast to the self-conscious self who creates the world, is sub-jectum, under the weight of the universe, responsible for the universe \(^91\). There seems to be a very fine but important distinction here, between the metaphysical subject that is arché of the world and the responsible subject who is responsible for everything subjected to everything. The metaphysical subject is the arché of the world, whereas the responsible subject becomes subject because of the subjection to the world. The distinction lies in the responsible subject who is the unconditioned condition and the traditional metaphysical subject who is the arché or ground and who self-consciously grounds itself and thus re-produces (re-presences) the objective world on the basis of this ground (Being). The responsible subject does not have the status of principle or ground (Levinas 1981:116). The responsible subject is not a ground or an arché that grounds the world by preceding it, but it supports the world as it is thrown under the world (sub-jected to the world), and in that sense the responsible subject is responsible for the world.

Levinas argues that such responsibility should not be interpreted in a moral light in the sense that it is an active or conscious choice to be responsible and engage with the world. Levinas is not preaching a morality of responsibility towards the world and the Other,

\(^91\) “The unity of the universe is not what my gaze embraces in its unity of apperception, but what is incumbent on me from all sides” (Levinas 1981:116).
because this responsibility of which he speaks is prior to any choice of an autonomous subject. On the contrary, it is a responsibility despite the conscious self, a responsibility from which the self receives, and has no interest, and undergoes responsibility before freely and voluntarily committing itself to it. “From the first: that is, the self answers “gratuitously,” without worrying about reciprocity” (Levinas 2002:78). In this sense, it is a first philosophy, but it is also the impossible possibility of philosophy because it opens the space, but as it opens it challenges the very space in which philosophy as conscious reflection can take place. Thus this turn towards the responsible self, which is the condition on which the conscious self rests, is a wounding of philosophy and thus a wounding of metaphysics and therefore the site for a possible semantic shift to think God otherwise than in the grammar of metaphysics.

The challenge that Levinas faces in *Otherwise than Being*, is: how is the saying (the exposure to the Other) to be said in the writing of the book, without completely betraying the saying? How does this relationship, which is primary but at the same time anarchical, this impossible possibility, become a philosophy that can be written in a book? In other words, how is it said? Levinas becomes conscious of the fact that it is impossible, because the moment the saying is said it is betrayed (Levinas 1981:6). The option Levinas finds is the way of reduction – to explore ways in which the Said can be unsaid or reduced, thereby letting the saying reside as a residue, or interruption, within the said (Levinas 1981:7). The task of the philosopher consists in the reduction of the said to the saying and the disruption of the limit that divides the ethical from the ontological (Levinas 1981:43-45).

This section began with the site, *Ortschaft*, that Heidegger showed us of lived experience and Levinas thought this site otherwise as naked experience, as the Other denudes the self by subjecting the self to substitution of oneself-for-the-other in the signification of saying. Levinas brought this alterity to language with the concepts of *trace in the face* as discussed in the first section and *saying* as discussed above. Thus the *trace in the face* and *saying* is the language of radical alterity; a language of alterity that cannot be reduced to a said and yet it signifies and it signifies fundamentally. It is an impossible possibility because before “I” can hear the “me” of being addressed (accused) by the Other, I am already addressed as a me of substitution. A substitution in which *Dasein* (the site of the revealing of responsible self through accusation by the Other, because the Da of *Dasein* is a space taken from the Other in the sense that the Other could have been in that space) passively offers it/him/herself, before any conscious choice to do so, to the Other as a non-conscious gift of signification of the one-for-the-other [substitution].
This is a true gift (Levinas 2002:78; cf. Derrida 1995e) as it is given gratuitously without the expectation of a return. This gift of substitution of self-for-the-other is what Levinas describes as saying. It is a saying that is prior to any consciousness and self-consciousness of being me. It is this saying that constitutes the subject as a me being addressed by the Other (Levinas 1981:142). Before one can respond in speaking, one’s exposure to the Other is already a saying (signification).

This is the difficulty, as this substitution cannot be said because it is prior to any said. It is prior to any Being and in that sense beyond Being, like Plato’s Good which is beyond Being. The psyche, as Levinas argues, is the inspiration of the Other in the same. It is the effect of proximity of the Other that calls the same into question and calls the same to responsibility, but a passive responsibility, before conscious choice, and in that sense it is a psychosis – a seed of folly as the psyche, the inspiration of the Other in the same, is a uniqueness outside of concepts in the language of the same (Levinas 1981:142). If the self is so denuded by the Other, then the same (self) loses all contact with reality (psychosis) created on the basis of the language of the same as the self is denucleated by the Other beyond concepts (language of the same), and thus this can only appear as folly (madness). If one is addressed (called to responsibility) by the Other who is beyond the language of the same and one responds to this address, not in the language of the same (said) but in saying, then this will appear as madness (psychosis: to be no longer in touch with “reality” as one no longer speaks the language of the same, but responds in saying: gift of substitution of self-for-the-other). This idea of madness (folly), being an effect of (in response to) the Other, will be further explored in the last chapter with regard to holy folly. It is not an ego that responds to the Other, but a “me” under assignation (Levinas 1981:142).

In this proximity to the Other there is an assignation to an identity for the response of responsibility. The self can only respond to this inspiration with “Here I am”, which is a saying with inspiration of the Other in the self, but this “Here I am is not a gift for fine words or songs” (Levinas 1981:142), but it is a signification (saying) prior to speaking in one’s native language, that is prior to speaking in the language of the same. It is a response where an identity is assigned as responsibility but prior to speaking in one’s own language (the language of the same), thus it is not a conscious choice where one, out of the goodness of one’s heart, decides to respond to the Other, but it is an assignation where the potential “I” that could make such moral choices is first of all assigned an
identity (“I”) by the Other as a “me” for the response of responsibility. Thus an identity is assigned by the Other, not as an “I” that can respond in the I’s language of the same, but firstly as “me” that can only signify “Here I am” (one-for-the-Other), which is saying – the gift of substitution of self-for-the-other. As discussed above this is a true gift and to be a true gift it needs to be an unconscious gift and beyond the economy of the same (see Derrida 1995e), which is prior to consciousness (“I”). Prior to consciousness and self-consciousness there is a “me” who is assigned this “identity as a me” by the Other for the response of responsibility by signifying: “Here I am”!

This responsibility is not a responsibility that one can accomplish and then move on with one’s conscious and self-conscious life and construct a world within the totality (circularity) of the specific ontological difference in the language of the same. The responsibility toward the Other is infinite and this infinite responsibility disrupts and disturbs (wounds) this language of the same. The Other and the responsibility towards the Other, signified in “Here I am”, is prior to the language of the same of a conscious subject, but it is not only prior; it also continually (infinitely) disturbs the language of the same. This infinite responsibility is the Infinite (absolutely infinite) in a dual sense. Firstly, it is infinite, for it breaks the synchrony of time as it is absolutely diachronic, because it is prior to anything of which one can have a memory. It is prior to memory because it is prior to consciousness, and being prior to the synchrony of consciousness, it is diachronic. One is not conscious of this assignation of an identity as a “me” for response of responsibility to the Other, as the “I” of consciousness is born in this assignation by the Other. Secondly, it is a responsibility that can never be fulfilled, an obligation that is never lifted, and thus it is an infinite responsibility towards the Other.

In this Infinite responsibility the Good beyond being comes to mind. It is the Good of disinterestedness (prior to consciousness) before and beyond the choice of good and evil (Levinas 1981:136). The Good beyond being is the site where traditionally in metaphysics God-talk is located. The Good of substitution, responding to the Other, is beyond the choice of good and evil, as it is prior to conscious choice (Levinas 1981:138) as already discussed above. The “Here I am”, which is the assigning of an identity by the Other in the response of responsibility, is not the response of a conscious self that out of the goodness of his or her heart (choice between good and evil) decides to respond to the Other in its own language (language of the same where what is good and what is evil is defined), but it is a Good that is beyond such moral choices based on the ontological language of the same. If the ego chooses the Good and thus responds to the Other then this response will
be within the language of the same and thus within the totality (circularity) of the same. If it is the ego (I) who chooses to respond to the Other with a helping hand (as it is believed in the language of the “I” (same), that to be good is the right thing to do), then this whole moral action is within the totality of the same and thus both the Other as well as the Good are reduced to the same of the ego. The Good would thus not be beyond Being, but within the grip and comprehension of the same. To this moral good which is within the language of the same, Levinas responds with an ethical good that is beyond, not as in another world behind the scenes but beyond because it is the good of naked substituted experience of the one-for-the-other; naked experience in the sense that there is no language of the same with which to clothe this exposed and substituted experience of the one-for-the-other, as it is prior to conscious (clothed) experience. This good of responding to the Other is beyond because it is prior to consciousness. It is prior to the conscious moral choice to do a good thing.

It is in this everyday experience of being exposed to the Other, which is a naked experience, that transcendence (beyond) can be thought and thus where the idea of the infinite comes to mind (Levinas 1981:140). The ethical is the good that is otherwise than Being as it is prior to the language of the same and thus prior to the ontological difference of that language and thus beyond the categories of Being and beings. That which is otherwise than Being signifies and offers to thought and thus knocks on the door of the house of Being, seeking hospitality, but language as the house of Being can never truly offer hospitality to this otherness without being destroyed or wounded by this otherness. Derrida says it so poignantly, “The poetic force of metaphor is often the trace of this rejected alternative, this wounding of language. Through it, in its opening, experience itself is silently revealed” (Derrida 1978b:90) – naked experience as mentioned earlier.

In the above two sections the relation to the Other was unpacked with regards to the ethics of the face as well as the ethics of saying, but what was only touched on towards the end was the idea of transcendence. In other words, how the Other is and remains transcendent to the self and how the naked experience of the Other, in the saying of substitution, is transcendent, in the sense that it is beyond the self-conscious and any conscious said. How the infinite comes to mind in this naked experience of transcendence was not discussed? and is a necessary bridge towards the (im)possibilities of God-talk.

It is here, in the site of lived experience (Heidegger), or of the naked (denuded) experience (Levinas) of substitution, that not the Sacred but the holy or saintly can truly come to mind in ethics, beyond ontology and beyond metaphysics. This focus on the
locus of the ethical can stand as a critique against Heidegger in the sense that Michael Zimmerman claims that the burden of Levinas’ critique of Heidegger resides in noting how “Heidegger’s fascination with the Greeks led him to discount Jewish and Christian insistence on the importance of personal responsibility for the concrete other” (Zimmerman 1992:81). Before the (im)possibilities of Jewish-Christian God-talk are discussed a reflection will be given of how transcendence and the Infinite comes to thought in the ethics of saying.

3. THE LANGUAGE OF ALTERITY: TRANSCENDENCE AND INFINITY TOWARDS POSSIBILITIES OF GOD-TALK

Heidegger sought to move beyond philosophy towards thinking and thinking through the possibilities of philosophy, thereby discovering the limits of philosophy (Heidegger 1968). It is exactly at this site of the possibilities and impossibilities of philosophy and the beginning of thinking that the thoughts of Levinas will be discussed with regards to transcendence and the Infinite, which will form a bridge towards the (im)possibilities of God-talk. This space of lived experience, which has been the site of reflection so far, will be further explored in this section, as Levinas’ thoughts as discussed above are a way of thinking this Ortschaft otherwise by looking at some of the ways in which the Infinite signifies in this Ortschaft. It does not signify in this space (Ortschaft) in the sense that this site is a site where divinities are part of the Geviert, but the Infinite comes to mind, it signifies, in the ethical relation: the good otherwise than Being. To understand Levinas’ otherwise one needs to bring it into conversation with Heidegger’s reflection on this site and his thinking the impossible possibilities of philosophy.

If one brings Heidegger’s and Levinas’ thoughts together this site of lived experience is the site of the Ereignis of Being and it is the site where the Infinite comes to mind. Yet, before one can think the Infinite that comes to mind a step back needs to be taken. This event (Ereignis of Being) is the birth of consciousness where a self becomes conscious of itself and the world by thinking the world in the ontological categories of that particular metaphysical epoch and in the language of that epoch (Seinsgeschick). It is the Ereignis that makes philosophy possible. Heidegger thought through philosophy to its limit: its possibility in the Ereignis of Being. Traditionally God has been found in this site at the limits of thought or at the limits of philosophy. In this section these limits will be thought together with the question, what possibilities does this open for God-talk?
Levinas focussed on the self-conscious subject. In Heidegger’s thinking, the self becomes conscious when the self discovers him/herself within the ontological difference (Heidegger 1961:207). Levinas interprets this birth of consciousness otherwise, namely as the self constructing the ontological difference in that the self interprets beings (what is other or exterior) in terms of the third term (Being) as discussed previously. The self becomes conscious the moment that s/he can interpret or construct the world (Being) and the things of the world (beings) within the language of that particular Seinsgeschick, which is the language of the self, who is part of the Dasein of that Geschick. Thus the world (Being) and the things of the world (beings) are interpreted within the language of the same (the language of that particular Seinsgeschick) of which the self is part. Heidegger’s thinking does not leave much room for thinking the infinite or thinking God.

God enters into the site when thinking the fundamental structure of this ontological difference. This structure, Heidegger tried to understand in his three thought-paths. He discovered in the third thought-path the role that language plays in the Ereignis of Being. The Ereignis of Being is an event of language to which human language responds. In this Ortschaft of the Ereignis of Being divinity comes to thought for Heidegger. Divinity comes to thought within the language of the same (the language of a particular Seinsgeschick) where God or divinity comes to language of a particular Seinsgeschick as part of the Geviert. Thus every language of the same has some inclination of divinity that is part of Being “upon which” the world and the things of the world are understood and interpreted. Yet God also comes to thought in the intrinsic infinitude of Be-ing (Seyn)⁹². God comes to mind in the infinitude of Be-ing, thus not the infinite of Being, but the infinite of the truth of Be-ing.

Levinas interprets this Ortschaft of the Ereignis of Being otherwise, not in terms of the truth of Be-ing in which Heidegger’s last God beckons, but in relation to the infinite responsibility toward the Other. Heidegger clearly showed the way towards this site. His thought opened the space, Lichtung, but this space was embedded in the poetic imagination of Greek-German myths rather than within the prophetic imagination of Jewish-Christian tradition, demanding an ethical relation in this space of lived (naked) experience. Heidegger’s three thought-paths showed the way to the site (Ortschaft) of the overcoming of metaphysics, which is also the Lichtung where the gods can be thought, and Levinas interprets this site beyond the Greek-German myth towards an ethics and how the Infinite signifies in the ethical relation and how the word “God” comes to mind in the signification of the Infinite of the ethical relation.

⁹² See the last paragraphs of Chapter Two.
Heidegger’s thought was interpreted in the previous chapter as an overcoming of metaphysics. Levinas argues that metaphysics is a radical aspiration to physical exteriority (transcendence) (Levinas 1969:29). Yet he argues that this aspiration in theoretical thought, guided by the ideal of objectivity, is not exhausted, but remains on this side of its ambitions, as it does not reach that exteriority and cannot reduce that exteriority to the same of interiority. In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas says in the preface, that transcendence can only be truly thought in terms of the ethical relations (Levinas 1969:29). This ethical relation, which is beyond (transcendent), is what the previous sections tried to show, first in the face of the Other and then in the saying of substitution.

Levinas says, in conversation with Heidegger’s thoughts on thinking, that “To think the infinite, the transcendent, the Stranger, is hence not to think an object. But to think what does not have the lineaments of an object is in reality to do more or better than think” (Levinas 1969:49). To do more and better than think is to think beyond the *said* and think *saying* as the “condition” (impossible possibility) of thought or philosophy (*said*). This was exactly Levinas’ struggle in *Otherwise than Being*, how to think saying without reducing it to a said: a philosophy. How does one think this relationship with the Other (*saying*) that is prior to the consciousness of ontological difference in the language of the same (*said*)? The relationship to the Other is prior to consciousness and thus the Other is transcendent (beyond consciousness) and infinite as the approach of the Other is beyond memory of a conscious subject (prior to consciousness) and holds the subject infinitely accountable as the responsibility is never fulfilled. How does one think this relationship that is prior to consciousness and thus prior to the thinking of a said in the language of the same, without reducing it to a said?

Levinas tries to find a way of reflecting on the relationship between subjectivity and the Infinite in the transcendence of the Other (alterity or exteriority), and he does that by thinking the *trace* of the face of the Other (that cannot be reduced to the same) and in thinking *saying* (that cannot be reduced to a said). Alterity or exteriority is absolutely beyond our theoretical comprehension (*said*), as it is beyond the realm of being (ontology) and of knowledge (epistemology), beyond what can be reduced to the same (Levinas 1969:28-29). In this sense exteriority is transcendence. Stoker (2010) refers to Levinas’ transcendence, as *transcendence as alterity*. It is beyond any *theoria*, not because it is shrouded or hidden in another inaccessible world in some or other spatial beyond, but because exteriority (transcendence) is the radical otherness in the nakedness of experience that calls the self to respond. Exteriority is experienced as exposure in the
approach of the Other and the expression of this exposure is saying - the saying of substitution. Thus it is the coinciding of *theoria* and *praxis* in naked experience.\(^{93}\)

The distinction between theory and practice has been overcome because Levinas turns to naked experience where there is the experience of what is other and what remains other and in that sense exterior (transcendent), by resisting the taking hold of and comprehending of the same. This alterity (exteriority) by its resistance to the taking hold of the same, puts the same in question. This exteriority can be understood as absolute transcendence, as mentioned earlier – a transcendence as in diachrony, proximity and responsibility that is prior to consciousness and that is infinite as it is never fulfilled. Thus this transcendence as exteriority, or alterity, cannot be confused with a transcendent object, entity or being (Horner 2001:60).

It is useful at this point to clarify the use of the term transcendence, as it might cause some confusion with regards to what Levinas has in mind. Horner offers some important insights as to how transcendence needs to be understood in Levinas' thought (Horner 2001:70-71). There are three terms, namely transcendence, the Transcendent (or transcendental signified) and the transcendental, and these three terms cannot be equated with each other and thus the distinction between them will need to be shown. The first term, transcendence, is the opposite of immanence and thus refers to that which lies beyond consciousness. The second term, the Transcendent, is related to the first in the sense that it is beyond consciousness, but it has been capitalised to suggest that it needs to be distinguished from transcendence in that the Transcendent is that which is not only not reducible to immanence, but it is beyond the world as such and often referred to in positive terms as a kind of being, for example God. The third term, the transcendental, Horner suggests can be understood with a Kantian-Derridian inflection and should not be confused with the “transcendental” of medieval theology: “The transcendental in Kant's sense is that which “establishes, and draws consequences from, the possibility and limits of experience”. The transcendental in Derrida’s sense (to which we should rightly refer to as the quasi-transcendental) is the condition of possibility and impossibility for meaning, which, without delaying further with the details here, is infinite interpretability” (Horner 2001:70-71).

Transcendence in Levinas can be thought as Horner's first term, transcendence,\(^{94}\) but transcendence as exteriority, or as Stoker argues, transcendence as alterity.

\(^{93}\)”The traditional opposition between theory and practice will disappear before metaphysical transcendence by which a relation with the absolutely other, or truth, is established, and of which ethics is the royal road” (Levinas 1969:29).
Transcendence as alterity does not come to thought in some theory of a beyond, but it comes to thought in the naked experience of the ethical response to the Other and therefore theory and practice coincide. The ethical relationship in which transcendence comes to thought is the condition of the possibility of metaphysics as ethics awakens the desire for metaphysics: the desire to understand and interpret the Other who assigns one to respond for responsibility. The ethical relationship is the relationship with the Other of naked experience where the self is assigned as a me of the one-for-the-other in response for responsibility to the Other. This ethical relationship is primary, prior to consciousness, as it awakens consciousness and only in consciousness is the world thought in metaphysical terms in an attempt to understand one-self and the Other within ontological categories. In Otherwise than Being, the ethical becomes the condition of signification or signification itself the giving of oneself-for-the-other (Levinas 1981:77-78; 100-101) in saying. It is in saying that transcendence and the Infinite signify, as saying signifies the Infinite transcendence (beyond consciousness) of the Other and the Infinite responsibility of one-for-the-other.

“Substitution is signification” (Levinas 1981:13), and as substitution (one-for-the-other) is saying, one can say that saying is signification. The signification of saying needs to be interpreted otherwise as it is, not in the mode of representation, nor as the symbolic evocation of an absence because of a failing of presence (Levinas 1981:136). The signification of saying signifies more (outdoing in signification), but not in the sense of negative theology where God is seen to be more and thus outdoes any naming or signifying. The outdoing of signification of saying is also not because of a surplus of concealment in unconcealment, as in Heidegger’s truth of Being (aletheia). It is an outdoing of signification in the substitution of saying because it goes beyond the representable unity of the identical (the same) and not by a surplus or a lack, but by the unique, unavoidable responsibility of the me, before being a conscious me. The outdoing of the signification of saying is because the “Here I am” (the saying of substitution) is prior to the native language (language of the same) of the one responding. In the sense that it is prior to consciousness and thus prior to memory, it is the primordial origin signification and therefore it makes possible the language of the same (said) of traditional understanding of signification. The signification of saying breaks open the said as its very

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94 Transcendence is the opposite of immanence and thus refers to that which lies beyond consciousness.
95 “It is because subjectivity is sensibility – an exposure to others, a vulnerability and a responsibility in the proximity of the others, the one-for-the-other, that is, signification –” (Levinas 1981:77), as well as “Signification is witness or martyrdom” (Levinas 1981:77-78).
96 “...my uniqueness as a respondent, a hostage, for whom no one else could be substituted without transforming responsibility into a theatrical role” (Levinas 1981:136).
condition and possibility and secondly it outdoes signification as it is a responsibility that cannot be avoided (the self is unique and cannot pass the responsibility to another), nor can the responsibility be fulfilled. In this double sense signification of saying is outdone by an infinite beyond: beyond (prior) consciousness and beyond fulfilment.

This is a beyond, outdoing of signification, on a different level. It is not transcendent in the sense of another world behind the world, but transcendent in the sense that it is beyond language of the same, beyond the said, and in that sense beyond signification. It is the signification of the one-for-the-other of responsibility that is prior to (beyond) consciousness and beyond fulfilment. Yet it is the condition of possibility of consciousness and thus of the language of the same and the said. It is the condition of possibility of the said and at the same time that which disrupts the said and therefore the impossible possibility of the said in the language of the same. In this sense it is a foundation for Levinas, as he says: “The one-for-the-other is the foundation of theory, for it makes possible relationship, and the point outside of being, the point of disinterestedness, necessary for a truth that does not wish to be pure ideology” (Levinas 1981:136). Levinas’ interpretation of metaphysics as the desire for exteriority without reducing this exteriority to the language of the same (ideology) is only possible on the foundation of the signification of saying.

In classical metaphysics, that which is beyond (beyond Being) is the good, and thus Levinas once more turns towards this good that is beyond (otherwise than) Being as already discussed above. The lived experience in proximity to the Other is understood as signification and this signification is the good, the good beyond Being, but this goodness cannot be understood as altruistic inclination that is to be satisfied, because the signification of the one-for-the-other is never enough and its movement does not return (Levinas 1981:138). This is not a goodness of choice, but the Good to be responsible for the world before a choice between good and evil. Thus it is not the subject that chooses the Good, but the Good that has chosen the subject in the birth of the subject in responsibility (Levinas 1981:122). Therefore it is an absolute passivity.

The birth of the subject occurs in the obligation where no commitment was made, prior to a conscious choice. Thus the subject is born in the “beginninglessness of an anarchy and in the endlessness of obligation, gloriously augmenting as though infinity came to pass in it” (Levinas 1981:140). This passive responsibility of exposure in which the subject is born is a responsibility prior to any said of consciousness, and beyond any said of
consciousness, and in that sense the idea of the Infinite is born in the birth of the responsible (ethical) subject – an idea that is transcendent in the immanence of proximity of the Other and the utter exposedness of proximity: the naked experience.

Derrida speaks of this move in Levinas’ thought as “messianic eschatology” (1978:83), designating the coincidence of praxis and theoria in the space or hollow of naked experience where this eschatology is understood and where it resonates. Derrida argues that this space or hollow within naked experience is not an opening amongst other openings, but it is the opening of openings that cannot be enclosed (clothed) within a category or totality (Derrida 1978b:83). It is a space within naked experience, that is naked in the sense that praxis (experience) and theoria coincide, in that there is no theory or traditional concepts or philosophemes, not even the category of Es gibt and the epochal sendings of Es-gibt, that can cover or clothe this experience, but it is utterly exposed (denuded) to/for the Other. In this naked experience of the Other there is a trace of the Infinite as any attempt at clothing will not sufficiently cover the experience as it remains denuded for-the-other as even the clothes on one’s back, like the bread in one’s mouth (Levinas 1981:74) are offered in the for-the-other. The self is made responsible for-the-other to such a degree that it overwhelms the intentionality of consciousness and as result the self is obliged to sacrifice for-the-other to the point of expiation. This ethical relationship, which is a non-violent relationship to the infinite as infinitely other, that is to the Other, is the only relationship that is capable of opening the space of transcendence and of liberating metaphysics, and it does this without supporting ethics and metaphysics by anything other than themselves (Derrida 1978b:83).

The Good (responsibility) assigns the “me” of passive responsibility. This is a relation that survives the death of God (Levinas 1981:123). Thus God is dead, God does not exist as God is not a being, and therefore Levinas’ thought can be described as ontological atheism (Turner & Turrell 2007:375). Yet this non-existent God still leaves its mark in the face of the Other. There is a trace in the face of the Other and it is in thinking this trace of the Infinite that the word God comes to mind. The word God that comes to mind in the trace in the face of the Other is a God who is wholly human, always good and does not exist (Turner & Turrell 2007:376). Yet this non-existent God continually comes to language in Levinas’ works. Levinas mentions this word God very often in his works and this is a strange enigma. In the following section this enigma will be unpacked. This leads the study in the direction of divinity or the talk of God. Kosky points out that the responsibility of the self in Levinas’ thought opens up the possibility of a religiosity that
survives the end of metaphysics (Kosky 1996:242). Levinas accepts the death of the metaphysical God of the hither world and yet he finds a way in which the word God can still signify, and this “way” is in the ethical relation to the Other.

Levinas argues that “in the deposition by the me [moi] of the sovereignty of the ego [moi]… there signifies ethics but probably also the very spirituality of the soul” (Levinas 1982:265). In Otherwise than Being, he argues “that beyond egoism and altruism is the religiosity of the self” (Levinas 1981:117). He argues that the “ethical relation is a religious relation. Not a religion, but the religion, the religiosity of the religious” (Derrida 1978b:96). This religiosity of the responsible self survives the death of God and the end of metaphysics exactly because it belongs to the responsible self that precedes the modern metaphysical subject. Levinas is not describing any specific religion, but he is describing the possibility of religiosity based on ethics and not on religious experience.

4. THE (IM)POSSIBILITIES OF LEVINAS’ GOD-TALK

The title of this section refers to the (im)possibilities of Levinas’ God-talk and specifically Christian God-talk, indicating that Levinas’ thought offers both possibilities and impossibilities for God-talk, or one could argue the impossible possibilities of his thought for God-talk. It is possible because his thought has inspired both philosophers and more specifically Christian theologians and there have been attempts by a growing number of authors, in particular Michael Purcell, Graham Ward, Michael Barnes, David Ford, Terry Veling and Glenn Morrison, to relate Levinas’ ideas to specific theologians and/or theological themes. Yet often these attempts to integrate Levinas’ thoughts with

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97 “A possible religiosity will open after the end of metaphysics only insofar as the critique of subjectivity describes its genesis in responsibility” (Kosky 1996:242).

98 The study will limit itself on Christian and marginally on Jewish God-talk and thus not enter into dialogue with other religious traditions.


theological themes remain too dependent on the categories of objectivity, being and presence (Morrison 2008b:138).

In this section (im)possibilities will be written with brackets\(^{101}\), thereby indicating that although it is impossible to categorise and capture (Begreifen) Levinas’ thoughts into a theological (systematic) system (totality), it does not follow that his thoughts are irrelevant or impossible for theology. On the contrary, Levinas’ difficult texts are inspiring for theological reflection and thus offer possibilities for God-talk – inspiring in the sense that the alterity of the texts (in the sense of both the difficulty as well as impossibility to totalise Levinas’ thoughts into a coherent system) can breathe (inspire) Christian God-talk, just as the Other breathes and thus inspires the same. Thus, in a sense, what Levinas says about the Glory of the Infinite (Levinas 1981:140) can be said about his work, and how the inability to capture his work in a totality orders one to the Other whilst not showing itself, “save through the trace of its reclusion...There is the trace of a withdrawal which no actuality had preceded, and which becomes present only in my own voice, already obedient in the harsh present of offerings and gifts” (Levinas 1981:140). In other words, Levinas’ thought is possible for God-talk, as it inspires\(^{102}\) – not as a complete system, but in its withdrawal from all systemizations (impossibility) – to talk of God in “my own voice”.

God-talk with Levinas is both possible and impossible and thus (im)possible. It is possible, as mentioned above, as an inspiration, motivated by the treasury of terms in Levinas’ thought, such as subjectivity, there is, trace, diachrony, ambiguity, immemorial past, the face, the Other, otherness, illeity, the saying, testimony, incarnation, God, encounter, passivity, substitution, expiation, sacrifice, gift, conscience, death, prayer, truth, transcendence and humiliation. All these terms cry out to be translated into Christian theology as they invite alternatives for God-talk, yet Levinas sought a language of alterity, and this language of alterity cannot be totalised, but remains a deconstructive challenge towards a more just (that is open) God-talk.

This section will be divided into two main sections. The first is in response to the question, where to situate the possibilities of Levinas’ God-talk? The second section will respond to the question, what are the impossibilities (limitations) of this God-talk?

\(^{101}\) It is from Glenn Morrison (2008) that I borrowed the idea of writing (im)possibilities with brackets.

\(^{102}\) “...the claiming of the same by the other, or inspiration, beyond the logic of the same and the other...” (Levinas 1981:141).
4.1 The possibilities of Levinas' God-talk

The possibilities of Levinas’ God-talk, is where the word “God” comes to mind. There are three important sites where the word God comes to mind and that is the *trace in the face* of the Other (*Illeity*), the *Infinite*, and the *Good*. These sites are not different sites, but are all still within the site (*Lichtung*), or the opening, of naked experience of the ethical saying of the one-for-the-other. It is in this site that the word God comes to mind. It is this coming-to-the-idea of God that is the life of God (Levinas 1998:xv). This God-talk, as the coming-to-the-idea, is the only possibility of God as it is the life of God. This idea will be unpacked in this section.

What God is Levinas speaking of when he uses the word God? It is the Jewish-Christian God of the Bible. This word “God”, which signifies in the coming-to-the-idea in the site of ethical saying, is the God of the Bible. Thus philosophical discourse must be able to embrace the God of whom the Bible speaks if this God is to have meaning (coming-to-the-idea) within thinking through thought (Levinas 1998:56). The problem is that once God is thought, or one can even say, once God is said, this said (thought) God is immediately situated within Being’s move (Levinas 1998:56). Thus the challenge is to think the coming-to-the-idea of God in the saying which is beyond the gesture or movement of Being (Levinas 1998:55).

God can be thought, but the moment God is thought, God becomes part of Being. Most often in religious traditions God becomes the being par excellence and thus immanent and no longer transcendent. Yet, Levinas argues that the God of the Bible signifies otherwise than being. “That is, the God of the Bible signifies without analogy to an idea exposed to the summons to show itself true or false” (Levinas 1998:56). He continues and argues that rational theology and fundamental ontology has tried to accommodate transcendence within the domain of Being by expressing it with adverbs of height applied to the verb to be (Levinas 1998:56). God is seen as the Ultimate Being or as the prime mover. But the idea of height or the idea of coming-to-the-idea of a height in the sense of being beyond the graspable of the same is beyond ontology, but does that still have meaning? Is the God of the Bible beyond meaning in the sense that God is not thinkable properly speaking (Levinas 1998:56)? Does the God of the Bible have meaning beyond the categories of thought (said)? Levinas argues that the biblical God does have meaning, but now the question is, how does the biblical God have meaning? How can God signify?
The main problem that Levinas addresses in his essay “God and Philosophy” in the book *Of God who comes to mind* (Levinas 1998:55-78), is that God is too closely related to Being, and this is because meaning is too closely related to Being, but is it necessary for meaning to be so absolutely linked to Being? Levinas challenges the link between meaning and Being, thereby once more criticising Heidegger’s first thought-path concerning the meaning of Being. Levinas asks if it is necessary to think meaning as being equivalent to the essence of Being (Levinas 1998:57)? He argues that the interpretation of “meaning” in philosophy is already a restriction of meaning and thus a drift or derivation from meaning. He says that this interpretation of meaning is possible because meaning is interpreted as the meaning of Being’s move that is the Being of beings and this is approached in the presence which is the time of the same (Levinas 1998:57). The question is if it is possible to go back to the alleged conditioning of meaning, namely to a meaning that no longer expresses itself in terms of Being or beings? Thus one needs to go back to or beyond intelligibility and the rationalisms of identity, consciousness, present and being, which means to go beyond the intelligibility of immanence. The question that Levinas pursues in this article is, if “beyond being, a meaning might not show itself whose priority, translated into ontological language, will be called prior to being” (Levinas 1998:57). The problem is that traditionally, the only language that is available to think and speak about that which is beyond Being, is the language of opinion and faith. Levinas argues that even the language of faith or opinion is still tied to Being and speaks the language of Being qua beings. The language of faith or opinion is not an alternative to the language of ontology. On the contrary, the language of faith is totally embedded in the language of ontology.

Levinas is not making a simple distinction between the God of the philosophers and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as for Levinas a rational faith is vitally important and faith or theology should not be reduced to opinion (Burggraeve 2000). He is arguing that the God that comes to thought in the Bible must be embraced by theological discourse as this God comes-to-the-idea in what is beyond, prior to Being and beings. This view of God is “diametrically opposed to the traditional idea of God” (Levinas 2000:207). He argues that traditional theology “thematizes the transcending in the logos, assigns a term to the passing of transcendence, congeals it into a world behind the scenes” (Levinas 1981:5). This world behind the scenes is the result of theological language that “destroys the religious situation of transcendence” and thus “language about God rings false or becomes a myth, that is, can never be taken literally” (Levinas 1981:197). Levinas is seeking to save the name of the Biblical God, from the other-world of onto-theology.
In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas sought to overcome the language of ontology, discussed previously, and he discovered a language of alterity, which is beyond ontology, in the trace of the face of the Other. In this trace, exteriority or transcendence signifies in the ethical relation of responsibility. This idea was further developed in *Otherwise than Being* where the ethical relation was further explored, but beyond the ethical metaphysics of the face with a shift towards saying (substitution) that is prior to any said as a possible language in which alterity signifies, which is beyond the categories of the ontological difference: Being and beings.

4.1.1  God coming-to-idea in the thought of the trace in the face of the Other: *illeity*

As mentioned above, Levinas suggests this removal to transcendence when he speaks of the trace\(^{103}\) in the face. The trace is not present and thus has been removed from presence and thus opens the possibility to think otherwise than in the time of the same. Thus the face becomes a trace and this is interpreted as the removal of the face to transcendence. This removal towards transcendence in the trace in the face is a movement toward a third order that is neither presence nor absence, and in that sense is beyond the categories of ontology and therefore an absolute otherness (Horner 2001:66).

Levinas speaks of this third order as *illeity*\(^{104}\), literally based on the Latin for ‘he’. He argues that a trace signifies beyond Being and beings as it is a personal order to which the face obliges one and this is beyond Being in the sense that it is prior to the distinction between Being and beings. The trace in the face cannot be reduced to a neutral third term whereby the otherness is deadened and the Other is reduced to the same. The neutral third term is Being whereby beings are grasped within the totality of the same. In *Otherwise than Being* he combines the idea of the trace in the face of the Other with saying of substitution\(^{105}\). The proximity of the Other, which is the saying of substitution, is in response to the infinite yet unheard command of the Other who obliges me before the “me” is a conscious “I”. This obligation is infinite as it is prior to any consciousness and in

\(^{103}\) “A trace is a presence of that which properly speaking has never been there” (Levinas 1986:358).

\(^{104}\) “Beyond being is a third person, which is not definable by oneself, by *ipseity*. It is the possibility of this third direction of radical unrightness which escapes the bipolar play of immanence and transcendence proper to being, where immanence wins against transcendence. Through a trace the irreversible past takes on the profile of a ‘He’. The *beyond* from which a face comes is in the third person. The pronoun He expresses exactly its inexpressible irreversibility, already escaping every relation as well as every dissimulation, and in this sense absolutely unencompassable or absolute, a transcendence in an ab-solute past. The *illeity* of the third person is the condition for the irreversibility” (Levinas 1986:356).

\(^{105}\) “A trace is sketched out and effaced in the face in the equivocation of a saying” (Levinas 1981:12).
that sense is diachronic\textsuperscript{106}, and is infinite in the sense that the obligation is never fulfilled. The trace in the face of the Other effaces itself, because it transcends the present in which it commands me. This trace that effaces itself, Levinas calls \textit{illeity} (Levinas 1981:12).

\textit{Illeity} is the trace of saying in the said and thereby signifies a plot which is other than a theme, other than that which attaches a \textit{noesis} to a \textit{noema}, a cause to an effect, the memorable past to the present. \textit{Illeity} is the trace that cannot be thought as it is prior to conscious thought and infinitely disturbs thought as it calls thought to responsibility towards the Other, and in that sense it signifies a plot. A plot of that which disturbs, disrupts, as it assigns to responsibility, but because it is removed (detached) to transcendence it detaches itself absolutely and so the plot of \textit{illeity} “connects” to the Absolute. This movement of infinition (\textit{illeity}\textsuperscript{107}), both the Infinity of an immemorial past as well as an infinite obligation, Levinas names God (Levinas 1981:xxxix). Thus Levinas argues that one is tempted to call this plot religious, yet it is not stated in terms of certainty and uncertainty, nor does it rest on any positive theology (Levinas 1981:147).

In his essay, \textit{God and Philosophy}, Levinas describes this pre-conscious plot of the non-relation relation with \textit{illeity} as insomnia (Levinas 1998:58). In the search to understand that which is beyond being one needs to move to something prior to consciousness. Levinas speaks of something higher or earlier than consciousness itself. Consciousness refers one to a more ancient modality from which it derives and in which it justifies itself and is justified by its source. “This modality is precisely wakefulness or keeping watch \([\text{la veille}], \text{which does not consist in keeping watch over } [\text{veiller – à}]) (something)” (Levinas 2000:208). Levinas argues that the entire consciousness would already be a turning towards something over which wakefulness watches. This opening, to be truly beyond the language of Being, needs to be prior to intentionality, “a primordial opening that is an impossibility of hiding; one that is an assignation, an impossibility of hiding in oneself: this opening is an insomnia (Levinas 2000:208-209). From this insomnia of saying, of the exposedness to the approach of the other, one cannot hide or flee as it is an exposedness prior to any conscious choice of hiding or fleeing.

In this sense, consciousness would be a modality or a modification of prior insomnia. Consciousness is always a consciousness-of as it is conscious of beings, and this

\textsuperscript{106} It is not part of the synchrony of a conscious self as it is prior to the birth of the conscious self or it is the condition of the birth of the conscious self.

\textsuperscript{107} “The detachment of the Infinite from the thought that seeks to thematize it and the language that tries to hold it in the said is what we have called \textit{illeity}” (Levinas 1981:147).
consciousness is possible by assembling these beings into Being and presence (to think beings upon which of Being and presence). Insomnia as wakefulness is not the same as attending to or being conscious of. Insomnia must be understood as a meta-category as it does not come to be inscribed in a table of categories. One cannot say that insomnia is the determining activity exerted upon the Other as a given, namely the unity of the same (Levinas 1998:58). Insomnia must not be thought within the categories of some theory (upon which), as it is grasped and included within the totality of the same, but remains other. Levinas relates insomnia to the Other in the following way: “Insomnia – the wakefulness of awakening – is disturbed at the heart of its formal or categorical equality by the Other who cores out [dénoyauté] all that which in insomnia forms a core as the substance of the Same, as identity, as repose, as presence, as sleep” (Levinas 1998:59). This is precisely the categorical character of insomnia – the Other in the same, who does not alienate the Same, but precisely wakes him/her. The Other in the same that awakes the same to saying – an exposedness to the approach of the Other. This awakening or saying is a demand that cannot be met and that cannot be put to sleep – it is the more in the less. Thus consciousness, like the said, focuses on presence and is always a representation as in a recovery of the rupture caused by the Other that awakened it to saying. This recovery from the rupture is consciousness that brings everything into presence, into re-presentation. Even the past is re-presented in the presence and thus one can say that “Philosophy is not only knowledge of immanence, but is immanence itself” (Levinas 1998:61). There is no beyond immanence that can be said or that one can be conscious of.

Thus the language of philosophy, which is immanence itself, cannot help with God-talk and cannot speak of that which is beyond Being, as it cannot speak of transcendence. Yet, as already mentioned earlier, religious experience or the language of faith follows a similar path and thus befalls a similar fate – it is also immanence. Levinas argues that religious thought, God-talk, which appeals to religious experiences as separate from philosophy, inasmuch as it is founded on experience, necessarily refers to the “I think” of consciousness and thus is completely connected to philosophy (Levinas 1998:62). This is the reason why God-talk based on religious experience is doomed to the same fate as metaphysics, and thus the death of God, as “it reduces the meaning of all phenomena to the sphere of immanence constituted by, and constitutive of, the I” (Kosky 1996:245). For Levinas, religiosity should rather start with, as he calls it, “the latent birth of religion in the other, prior to emotions and voices, before ‘religious experience’” (Levinas 1982:118).

The trace in the face of the Other (Illeity), the saying of substitution of insomnia, is the site
for God-talk, but not the God-talk of philosophy, nor the God-talk of religious experience, but God-talk as the latent birth of religion – the infinite relation to the Other that is prior to all themes of consciousness, both philosophy and religious experience. This possibility of religion is before both religious experience and the recourse to the revelations kept by the historical traditions of certain religions. Derrida (1995e:50) questions if this clear separation is possible in *The Gift of Death*. Is it possible to argue that Levinas’ thoughts on responsibility were not influenced by his religious tradition? There are others who are more critical, for example Janicaud, who argues that “phenomenology was taken hostage by a theology which does not want to say its name” (Janicaud 1991:31).

Be that as it may, Levinas has something to offer postmetaphysical God-talk. Although he uses concepts from the historical religions, these concepts are re-interpreted towards postmetaphysical God-talk. Levinas in no way returns to theism inherent to metaphysical thought and God-talk, but like most postmetaphysical thinkers he insists that the self is an atheist\(^\text{108}\). The creature cannot know its origin because it is forever delayed behind and in this sense it is an atheist. The subject is an atheist because s/he is subjected by being affected by the Other, but this Other cannot be known because the relationship is irreversible and therefore it cannot change into universal thought or theories of the Transcendent or God (Levinas 1981:84). Levinas uses the term atheism for two radically opposed meanings (Kosky 1996:248). The one is the meaning proposed here and the other is that philosophy reduces all affectedness by that which transcends the subject to the immanence of consciousness; reduces it to the said (Kosky 1996:248). In philosophy the saying is reduced to a said and thus the death of saying: the death of that which transcends the said.

The word “God” comes-to-the-idea in the Infinite of the trace in the face of the other (*illeity*), the infinite of saying of substitution and of insomnia. In this way Levinas utterly humanises God, as there can be no ‘knowledge’ of God separated from the relationship with humanity\(^\text{109}\). In another place, Levinas argues that God reveals in the face of the other human the secret of his semantics (Levinas 1999:96). In more poetic fashion he says: “The dimension of the divine opens forth from the human face” (Levinas 1969:78–79).

\(^{108}\) He argues that the responsible self “is a creature, but an orphan by birth or an atheist no doubt ignorant of its Creator” (Levinas 1981:105).

\(^{109}\) “God is not approached outside of all human presence” and “rises to his supreme and ultimate presence as correlative to the justice rendered unto men” (Levinas 1969:78).
4.1.2  God coming-to-idea in the idea of the Infinite, the Infinite in me

If the self is always late in responding to the trace of the Other, signified by the face, and if the Other is always absent from the face and the coming to presence of the self, then the command of the Other is never fulfilled. This command summons the self to an approach whose term cannot be fulfilled, but which recedes into infinity as the self draws near. This infinity should not be interpreted as an infinite end, because as an infinite end, the infinite would be able to put to rest the responsibility of the self. Yet Levinas' understanding of an infinite responsibility to which the self is summoned, is without end, as the more the self answers, the more the self is responsible. The debt increases and this infinite debt is Infinity (Levinas 1981:93). Thus, Infinity signifies in the self's unending and ever increasing response to the face of the Other in saying or insomnia. Therefore responsibility is an obligation without term or whose term is not an end and therefore is infinite. The visible face signifies a depth of infinity. It is an infinity that does not appear, but precisely as an absence or disappearance affects the self, and in that sense the Infinite affects the finite and therefore one can speak of in-finite. It is an affect in the finite self of the infinite Other, as was discussed earlier: the Other (Infinite) in the self (finite).

Levinas finds a way to speak of God in references to the idea of the Infinite, but the Infinite in the self (me). Or put differently, it is in the idea of the Infinite, of Infinite responsibility, of saying and insomnia that the idea of God comes to mind, and not in some other worldly sphere.

Levinas' ideas of the Infinite in the self are taken from the idea of the Infinite in the meditations of René Descartes – as that which breaks the unity of the “I think”. Descartes, in his meditation on the idea of God, has rigorously sketched the extraordinary course of thought that proceeds to the point of breakup, the breakup of the I think by the Infinite – that which is beyond the I think. For Descartes, the idea of God cannot be contained as it overflows the capacity of I think and thus the cogitatum breaks up the formal reality of the cogitatio. Levinas picks up these ideas of Descartes, but not with the intention to prove the existence of God. He focuses on the breaking up of consciousness (I think), not by an overflowing in the sense of any form of hyper-essentialism or hyper-presence, nor is it a breaking up in the sense of a repression to the subconscious or unconscious. The idea of the Infinite comes to mind as a sobering or a waking up [réveil] that shakes the “dogmatic slumber” that sleeps at the bottom of all consciousness (Levinas 1998:63). The idea of the Infinite comes to mind in the idea of insomnia and saying of substitution. In that sense the

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110 “This infinity of my responsibility, then, accounts for the absence that arises in my experience of the face: there will be such an absence because of the very incommensurability of the infinite and my finite being, my finite capacity to respond, and the finitude of the present which I experience” (Kosky 1996:249-250).
idea of Infinite, in which God comes to mind, breaks up and opens thought. It breaks up and opens philosophy which is, as mentioned previously, immanence (Levinas 1998:61). In another place, Levinas asks, “Does not God signify the other than being...the bursting and subversion of being?” (Levinas 2000:124–125).

Levinas argues that God signifies in the Infinite, but what does that mean? Does it mean that he affirms a belief in God as the Infinite or that the Transcendent causes the idea of the Infinite? No, for Levinas it is not a matter of trying to prove the existence of God as the divine origin of the idea of Infinity. In Levinas’ thought there is no movement from the signification of the Infinite in saying to a transcendental signified. For Levinas there is no transcendental signified behind the idea of the Infinite as its cause. What is important to Levinas, as has been explained in the above, is that the circular totality of ontological difference of the conscious subject is interrupted, consciousness is interrupted, by that which is otherwise than Being, namely: Infinity. What one is left with is not a proof, because what is otherwise is also beyond any proof, thus all there is, is interruption. The important matter is not to prove the existence of God in this way – indeed, Levinas disavows such a “positivistic” approach, citing Simone Weil, for whom God “does not exist” because “existence is not enough for God” (Levinas 2000:143). The Infinite overflows consciousness and all that this means is that the Infinite can be located in its resistance to consciousness and thus also its resistance (exteriority or alterity) to intentionality. The Infinite signifies as a trace, a mark of erasure, that is suggestive, but which proves nothing (Levinas 1986:356-359). It is this depth of infinity, signified in the face, that for Levinas is the possibility of God-talk, and therefore he speaks of “the face as á-dieu” (Levinas 1982:253). It is important to distinguish this á-dieu – unto God – from a manifestation of God. For Levinas, the face does not show, reveal or manifest God and it does not indicate God as a sign that synchronizes signifiers and signifieds, but the face summons the self unto God [á-dieu]. Yet, the God who summons the self unto God-self is forever departing – one could say bidding adieu – from the particular face that is presented to the self. This departing from the face to the third order is illeity. The God that signifies in the face is according to Levinas “transcendent to the point of absence” (Levinas 1982:115). For this reason, God-talk is only possible in the language of Infinity, as this is the closest language will get to say what is otherwise than Being. Thus the idea
of the Infinite cannot be encompassed by thought, yet it is in thought, and therefore one can speak of infinity in the self.\footnote{\textit{“The idea of God is God in me, but it is already God breaking up the consciousness that aims at ideas, already differing from all content” (Levinas 1998:63).}}

The negation of the finite, which is included in Infinity, signifies not just some negative judgement, but is precisely the idea of the Infinite which is the Infinite \textit{in} the self (finite). “… the \textit{in} of the Infinite signified at once the \textit{non-} and the \textit{within}” (Levinas 1998:63). The idea of the Infinite can be compared to an inspiration of the Other in the same (cf. Levinas 1981:140-145). It is the Infinite responsibility towards the departing Other (\textit{illeity}) that inspires the saying of substitution and it is in this that the idea of the Infinite in me comes to mind. Yet this inspiration of the Other (Infinite) in the same is pre-conscious, in other words before the self chooses, and thus the idea of the \textit{infinite}, Infinity in me, is not an active idea that is grasped by the self, but it is an absolute passivity of consciousness. It is an “idea that is put into us”, but this is not proper to consciousness as consciousness always has to leave some traces of its grasp on things. Levinas asks if such an “in” of the Infinite, an absolute passivity, is still consciousness? Can this passivity, which cannot be likened to receptivity, be available to consciousness to be thought and thus to give rise to God-talk? How does this God, Infinite \textit{in} me, signify?

The Infinite awakens the finite, the Infinite signifies in a command which is a demand (Levinas 1998:63) that is witnessed to in the saying of substitution. “The Infinite passes in saying” (Levinas 1981:147), thus one can argue that God passes (is witnessed to) in saying in that the idea of God comes to mind in saying – the self’s substitution in the one-for-the-other. This theme will be further discussed in a later section as witnessing.

What has this idea of God in the Infinite got to do with the biblical God? Or how is this coming-to-the-idea of the word “God” in the Infinite related to the biblical God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? The idea of the Infinite is in the above named, recognized and operative only in terms of mathematical meaning and usage as infinity of responsibility, yet this idea remains for reflection the “paradoxical knot that is already tied in religious revelation” (Levinas 2006:189). The God of religious (Jewish-Christian) revelation is bound from the start in its concreteness to commandments directed towards human beings (Abraham, Moses, etcetera). Yet this God who offers Himself within this openness of commandments remains absolutely other or transcendent (Levinas 2006:189). God comes-to-the-idea in the Infinite command and obligation that assigns a “me” to response for responsibility to which the “me” responds, before conscious choice, in saying “Here I am!” (Exodus 3:1-15).
4.1.3 God coming-to-idea in the Good beyond Being

It is clear from the above that the idea of the Infinite should not be thought as the negation of the finite by the Infinite, but that the Infinite must be interpreted as the idea of the Infinite, or the Infinite in finite thought – the Infinite in me. Yet the Infinite can only be thought as otherwise than Being, or as Levinas says in *Otherwise than Being* the “other-in-himself”, which is the Other (Infinite or trace in the face of the Other) in the self, which he calls the soul (Levinas 1981:191). “The in- of the infinite is not a non or not of some kind: its negation is the subjectivity of the subject, which is behind intentionality” (Levinas 1998:65) as was discussed in a previous section, *The Self and the face of the Other towards ethical metaphysics*. The Infinite signifies in such a way that it affects the finite, the said, as it affects subjectivity of the subject, which is behind intentionality.

This takes one back to the beginning of this chapter and Levinas’ critique of Heidegger and his attempt to move beyond the circularity (totality) of the ontological difference. Levinas believed that the way to go beyond this circularity or to break out of this circularity is not to seek the fundamental ontological structure of this circularity as Heidegger did, but to understand the subject of this circularity, namely the conscious self. This conscious self is behind the intentionality of grasping and comprehending everything that is other within the enclosure of the same. Levinas argued that this subject is not the starting point of understanding lived experience, but that there is something prior to the subject, namely that which subjects the subject into being the subject of intentionality.

So far it has been discovered that it is the infinite otherness of the Other, signified first in the face of the Other and secondly in saying, and that this infinite otherness affects the subject by subjecting the subject. How does the Infinite affect subjectivity? Taking Levinas’ second great work into consideration, *Otherwise than Being*, it can be argued that the Infinite affects the said (the enclosure/totality) of the subject by unsaying (questioning) the said that is questioning the “upon which” (Being) the world is grasped, as it is represented to the transcendental subject.

The Infinite affects subjectivity and the said in that the *cogitato* cannot comprehend the *cogitatum*, but this *cogitatum* affects it utterly. The Infinite in the trace of the face of the Other affects thought by devastating it\(^{112}\) (calling the subject to complete substitution of the one-for-the-other), and yet at the same time calling upon it; in a “putting it back in its place”, it puts thought (said) in place. The Infinite awakens thought (Levinas 1998:66).

\[112\] In *Otherwise than Being* Levinas uses words like: turned inside out, denucleated, disposed, uprooted, abdicated, and all this despite myself to describe this affect of the Other on the self.
The intending conscious subject seeks to comprehend the world by representing all that is to itself, yet it cannot represent the Infinite and thus it is exactly this Infinite that awakens thought and awakens the desire to comprehend. This awakening of thought should not be understood as a conscious welcoming of the Infinite, as it is not a recollection or an assuming which is necessary and sufficient for an experience of the Infinite of a conscious self. The Infinite awakens the conscious self (subject) by first placing “me” (accusing me) in infinite responsibility. It is in response to this prior (immemorial) and infinite obligation that the self is constituted as self, and that thought is thought as a said in response to the prior saying which is utter exposedness (denucleation).

The Infinite cannot be thought as a manifestation or an experience of a conscious subject because it is prior to any conscious subject of experience and prior to any conscious subject to which it can appear as a manifestation. Thus the meaning of the Infinite cannot be reduced to manifestation, representation, the representation of presence or even teleology. The meaning of the Infinite shows itself only through the trace in the enigmas involved in saying (Levinas 1998:66). The meaning of the Infinite cannot be reduced to an idea, as it is a monstrosity placed in me, and in that sense it is an “idea” which in its passivity beyond all receptivity is no longer an idea (Levinas 1998:66).

What then is the meaning of this traumatism of awakening by the Infinite in me? What is the meaning of this insomnia prior to conscious awakening? How does it signify in these enigmas involved in saying? It signifies, firstly, in that it affects subjectivity utterly in that it is the creation of the subject, as the subjectivity of the subject. It signifies in the calling to passive responsibility of “me”, before the “me” is a conscious “I” that can actively choose to respond or not, and in that sense it is a calling of the subject into being as an accused self. The second form of signification is the desire that Infinity awakens in the self. It is the desire of the “more in the less” – a desire of a thought given over to thinking more than it thinks (Levinas 1998:67). Levinas speaks of a “passivity, or passion, in which Desire is recognised, in which the “more in the less” awakens with its most ardent, most noble, and most ancient flame, a thought destined to think more than it thinks” (Levinas 1998:67). This Desire that is recognised in the passivity or passion of thinking the more in the less, must not be confused with the desire involved in hedonist or eudaimonic affectivity and activity where the desirable is invested, reached, and identified as an object of need (Levinas 1998:67). It is a Desire beyond Being (Levinas 1998:67) in that it is not the desire to enclose the external world (other) in representation via the neutral third term (Being).
It is the negativity of the *in* of the *In*finite (that is the not finite) – otherwise than Being – that hallows out a Desire which cannot be filled. It is a Desire beyond satisfaction, and unlike a need it does not identify a term or an end. The Infinite in me signifies as a Desire for the Infinite. How is it possible that the Desirable (Infinite) does not become an interestedness, where the desirable becomes something that is grasped by the intention of desiring? It is in this regard that Levinas brings in the idea of the Good beyond being.

This endless Desire for what is beyond Being is dis-interestedness, transcendence – a Desire for the Good (Levinas 1998:67). Before the study continues with Levinas’ article, *God and Philosophy*, a short deviation will be made with regards to the Good beyond being, as Levinas employs this idea to speak of the Infinite which signifies God. The study will focus on the work of Calvin Schrag (2002:58-64), who explores the relationship between Levinas’ transcendence as alterity and Plato’s Good beyond Being (otherwise than Being).

It is clear from the journey so far in Levinas’ article, *God and Philosophy*, that God-talk can no longer take place in the language of being, presence and immanence, in other words in the language of ontology or in the language of metaphysics. Schrag would argue that with the epistemological turn and the linguistic turn these possibilities have been closed, thus God-talk needs to take place in a language that is *otherwise than Being* – on the hither side of Being (Schrag 2002:58). Both Levinas and Derrida refer back to the most explicit course of beyond or otherwise than being in book VI of Plato’s *Republic*. Socrates introduces the simile of the divided line to explain the correlative distinction between opinion and knowledge and between being and becoming (Schrag 2002:58). It is argued that opinion (*doxa*) remains stuck in a changing world of becoming and only knowledge (*epistēmē*) can truly lay hold of the world or rigorous being. Socrates then instructs Glaucon that there is still something else to be considered, namely the Good, “which as the author of knowledge and all things known exceeds even being in power and dignity” (Schrag 2002:58). This Good is *epekeina tes ousias*. This is a play of “beyond”, “above”, “otherwise than”, “surpassing”, and “transcendent to”. *Epekeina*, as *otherwise than* or beyond, is not a pure negativity as an explicit denial, but is rather the discontinuity of a robust transcendence that places the Good outside the reach of the categories of being (Schrag 2002:59). Plato was very careful not to conflate the idea of Good with God, but in the tradition that followed in Platonian mysticism and in Neoplatonism of the church fathers, the distinction between Good and God became rather blurred. Schrag argues that to truly clarify the concept of otherwise than being as a radical transcendence one will
need to return to Plato's dialogues, specifically the discussion on the concept of being in the *Sophist* and the non-concept of the khōra in the *Timaeus*.

In the *Sophist*, Plato explains that our search for knowledge needs to be governed by an understanding of that which combines and that which does not. For example, being, sameness and difference can all combine with each other, but rest cannot combine with motion. It is these principles of inclusion and exclusion, conjunction and disjunction, ontologically secured, which provide the foundation for knowledge (Schrag 2002:59). Knowledge is made possible by this natural cleavages within the structure of being, “a structure that falls out as a manifold landscape of forms of artefacts, forms of natural kinds, mathematical forms, moral forms, and the forms of the greatest kind” (Schrag 2002:60). It is against this background of ontological and epistemological commitments that one can understand Plato’s position on the role of negativity in negative statements. The fact that one cannot combine rest with motion does not mean that rest or motion does not exist, but that motion is different from rest. “Negation thus boils down not to a claim for absence but to recognition of difference” (Schrag 2002:60). Negation needs to be understood with the notion of the superform *difference* 113. The Good does not play a major role in the *Sophist*, and even if it would, it would still be otherwise than being, transcending even the forms of the greatest kind, sameness as identity and otherness as difference. It is for this reason that one would need to install another sense of otherness so as to be able to distinguish between the transcendence of the Good from otherness as difference within the determinations of being (Schrag 2002:61).

The *Timaeus* provides a narrative where khōra provides the central theme – to give meaning to that otherness which is not difference and which resides on the fringes of any discourse on being. It is difficult or impossible to describe khōra, commonly translated as receptacle, and thus the story can only be told in mythopoetic terms, where the khora is the ‘nurse of becoming’, or the ‘mother’. Khōra has some similarity with Aristotle’s prime matter, but it is not convertible with this Aristotelian notion, as prime matter designates that *out of which* things are made and khōra refers to the receptacle *in which* things appear. Closely related to khōra is the “quasi-phenomenon of “necessity”, the “errant” or “wandering” cause that keeps the empirical world of becoming short of a perfect

113 “As such, nonbeing needs to be accorded a place in the world of forms. Nonbeing retains an unbroken liaison with being. Indeed, it plays a role in the very constitution of being in that every instance of being appears within a horizon of finite determinations of what it is and infinite determinations of what it is not. It is only through a recognition of the relational character of nonbeing, nonbeing as relative rather than absolute, that positive and negative statements can be explained in a meaningful way” (Schrag 2002:60).
exemplification of the Good” (Schrag 2002:62). Plato’s khóra houses the errant cause and this is the link between the two and it is clearly otherwise than being, but this also makes it clear that khóra is otherwise than being, different from the good being otherwise than being, which means that although the Good is otherwise than being, not everything that is otherwise than being is Good. The difficulty of distinguishing what is beyond being will be further explored in the next section on the impossibilities of Levinas’ God-talk and a reflection on the difference between illeity and il y a.

How are desire, the Good and God related to each other in the thoughts of Levinas? Firstly, desire is for the Infinite, but the Infinite cannot be obtained as that would reduce it to immanence. “One did not ask oneself if demand, search, and desire – far from carrying in them only the hollowness of need – are not the bursting of the “more” in the “less” which Descartes called the idea of the infinite” (Levinas 1998:50).

The Desire is the Desire for the more in the less, in other words the desire for the Infinite. Infinite is a Desire that is beyond satisfaction, and it needs to be distinguished from a need, as a need would be linked to a specific term, object or end. The Desire for the Infinite (more in the less) is an endless desire for what is beyond Being and it is a passive desire (a desire in me) in the sense that it is pre-conscious and in that sense it is disinterestedness and transcendent, namely the desire for the Good (Levinas 1998:67). It is not an object of desire identified by the conscious self, but it is a desire placed in the self by the Infinite as it is the bursting of the less (same) by the more (Other). How does interestedness of desire (the desire for the more in the less) become disinterestedness?

Desire cannot go to an end to which it might be equal, and thus in desire the approach creates distance, and enjoyment is only an increase in hunger as the Desirable is not reached, but continually transcends the reaching. It is exactly in this reversal of terms - approach that creates distance and enjoyment that creates hunger - that transcendence or the disinterestedness of Desire comes to pass (Levinas 1998:68). Levinas argues that it is necessary that the Desirable remain separated in the Desire. The two must not coincide as that would be a return to immanence. Thus as desirable it is near, but it remains different, and this Levinas describes as Holy (Levinas 1998:68). Holy, understood in distinction from sacred, where holy describes this relation of nearness yet difference, and sacred describes absolute separateness. Heidegger’s sacred is the absolute separateness of the thoughts (ontological difference) that can be thought in the language given to a particular epoch of metaphysical history (Seinsgeschick) and that which gives (sends) these epochs into history (Es-gibt). The Es-gibt is absolutely separated and in that
sense sacred, whereas Levinas’ holy is difference in nearness. The Other in the self, the
Infinite in the finite. Heidegger’s sacred is for Levinas this absolute separation whilst his
Holy is a difference in nearness. In the last section this distinction will be taken up once
more.

The Desirable must remain separated in the Desire as desirable that is near yet different
and thus Holy (Levinas 1998:58). This can only happen if the Desirable commands the
self to what is non-desirable, the undesirable par excellence, to another (Levinas
1998:68). This is a conversion from interestedness to dis-interestedness (Horner
2001:72). This referring to another is the moment of awakening, the turn to responsibility
for the neighbour to the point of substitution for the neighbour in saying. The substitution
for the other (one-for-the-other) in responsibility is the enucleation of the transcendental
subject (the conscious subject to which all that is is represented via Being). Substitution
(the conversion of Desire in turning toward the other) is the nobility of pure enduring, an
ipseity of pure election (Levinas 1998:68). Thus the self is no longer the transcendental
subject of self consciousness, but it is the subjected (elected) subject of substitution 114.

It is through the desire placed in the accused “me” that the conscious self “I” is born or
awakened (Visker 1996:127). The subject created, called into being by the saying of
substitution, is created in this turning by Desire towards the Other (a love without eros,
prior to eros). This manner for the Infinite or for God to refer from the heart of its very
desirability, to the undesirable proximity of the other, Levinas terms illeity (Levinas
1998:69). The self conscious transcendental subject of modernity desires what is other,
desires what is external (exterior), yet by including what is other (external) in the interiority
of the same via a third neutral term (Being), s/he cancels desire. The desire is deadened.
It was the other (the external) that awoke the desire, yet once the other is included in the
same of being, represented in the Being of the world of the transcendental subject, the
desire is destroyed. The face of the other (expression) signifies the infinite otherness that
cannot be reduced to the same. This infinite otherness of the face awakens desire, but it
does that in that it denucleates the transcendental subject. It questions the subject. It
exposes the subject and places the subject in responsibility by calling the subject in the
accusative before it can be a nominative. The infinite otherness in the other that refuses to
be reduced to the same is where God comes to mind, and what Levinas terms illeity.

114 “The I is a passivity more passive than any passivity, because it is from the outset in the accusative, oneself - which
had never been in the nominative - under the accusation of another, although without sin. The hostage for another, the I
obeys a commandment before having heard it; it is faithful to an engagement that it never made, and to a past that was
never present. This is wakefulness – or opening of the self – absolutely exposed, and sobered up from the ecstasy of
intentionality” (Levinas 1998:68-69).
Illeity is the he in the depth of the you (Levinas 1998:69). It is the other (he) in the depth of the other (you), or one can say the other otherwise. The "you" is reduced to the theme of the transcendental subject’s representation of what is, in the sense that the “you” is included in the world of the subject, but in this “you” there is a persistent otherness (other otherwise) that cannot be reduced. It is that other otherwise that turns the desire for the other (exteriority) to responsibility by enucleating the subject, questing the theme (Being) in which the subject represents beings (the Being of beings), including the “you” as a being in the subject’s world.

This illeity thus turns the metaphysical desire of the transcendental subject “I” around by placing this subject in the accusative (me) and thus transforming the desire into true Desire\textsuperscript{115}. True desire is the rectilinear rectitude, in other words desire is no longer the circular desire of the totality of the transcendental subject, but the correct desire for the Desirable without the Desirable being destroyed in the totality of the same. This is a turning around where the Desirable escapes the Desire (Levinas 1998:69) and thus is true Desire: rectilinear rectitude of Desire. This is the goodness of the Good\textsuperscript{116}. Illeity is the Desirable that separates itself from the Desire. It calls forth and thus remains a third person (he) in the depth of the you (Levinas 1998:69). The Desirable that separates itself from desire in nearness is Levinas’ description of the holy and therefore the idea of God comes to mind in illeity. This He in the depth of the you is good as He compels the self toward goodness. It is in this He that the word God comes to mind, the Good that cannot be reached, but that turns the self towards the Other and thus toward the Good.

This goodness of substitution of love without eros is foolishness, yet it is an excellence and an elevation beyond Being (Levinas 1998:69). It is foolishness as it is substitution, a giving of oneself to the Other absolutely without holding back, and in that very sense it is beyond Being. A pre-conscious giving of self-to-the-other, of substitution, is beyond Being and thus ethics cannot be a moment of Being as "it is otherwise and better than being, the very possibility of the beyond" (Levinas 1998:69).

In this beyond Being, the word ‘God’ comes to ideation. The command of the Other would not have this force “were it not the echo of a word that preceded it, were it not the descendant of that first word: “God”" (Visker 1996:129). This first word is a word that one cannot help but hear and cannot help but answer (Levinas 1990:178).

\textsuperscript{115}"...the rectilinear rectitude of Desire" (Levinas 1998:69).

\textsuperscript{116}"The goodness of the Good ... inclines the movement it calls forth to turn it away from the Good and orient it towards the other, and only thus toward the Good (Levinas 1969:69).
God who comes to idea in *illeity* is neither an object nor an interlocutor. He is absolutely remote (separated) and yet He is as near as the Other to whom He turns the self in responsibility and therefore He is Holy. Who is this God who comes to mind? Can one positively respond to such a question? He is the He in the depth of the you and thus He is not simply the first Other, or the Other par excellence, or even the absolutely Other, but He is the “other than the Other, the otherwise other, with an alterity prior to the alterity of the Other, prior to the ethical bond with the Other and different from every neighbour, transcendent to the point of absence...” (Levinas 1998:69).

Levinas’ reflection began with the lived experience of the self in relation to the Other and a realisation that this ethical relation with the Other is a destitution and de-situation of the transcendental subject. Yet this destitution of the subject is not without signification with regards to God-talk. The God dwelling in the hinter-worlds is dead. Yet in the substitution of the hostage (the self giving itself to-the-other/ held hostage by the Other) Levinas discovers a trace, as he says, an unpronounceable writing (Levinas 1981:185), a trace of that which is always already past in the sense that it is infinite (beyond memory) and thus always He (*illeity*). This He does not enter into the present and thus this He cannot be given a name designating a being, but this He (Pro-name) marks with His seal (trace) everything that can bear a name (Levinas 1981:185). This always He is where the name God comes to mind that leaves a trace on the subjection of the subject as the subject is created in the ethical saying.

4.2 God-talk

If God comes to mind in *illeity*, as the He in the depth of the you of the ethical relation, and as Infinite otherness that awakens a desire for the more in the less, this desirable cannot be reached and therefore the desire turns from the desirable towards the Other and thus signifies as the Good beyond being. How then does this word ‘God’ relate to some of the theological themes of traditional Christian or Jewish theology? What kind of possibilities does such coming to mind of the word ‘God’ offer God-talk?

As mentioned in the introduction, Levinas wrote in two genres, one philosophical and the other religious. The possibility of Levinas’ God-talk is made possible by his reinterpretation, or one could say philosophical interpretation, of three traditional religious (specifically Jewish and Christian) themes, namely: creation, election and the “HERE I
Levinas’ analysis of responsibility also develops the significations of expiation, sacrifice and martyrdom, but these three will not be developed in this study. One could argue that Levinas uses specifically traditional religious significations and reinterprets them philosophically within his analysis of the ethics of a responsible subject, who is called to responsibility by the Other whose face signifies the trace of the Infinite, and thus moves beyond traditional metaphysical interpretations of these notions. Levinas takes these three religious concepts and interprets them within the ambit of the responsible self and thus moves beyond traditional metaphysics towards ethics, and thus one can say that these traditional religious significations are re-interpreted postmetaphysically and thus open a path for postmetaphysical God-talk.

4.2.1 Creation
The first is the religiosity of creation which has already been touched on in the previous section as the creation of the self in the ethical relation. This self has been called into being before it exists as a conscious self and thus it is a creature, but who is the creator? Is the creator the traditional metaphysical God, the prime mover? Levinas offers an ethical metaphysical interpretation of creation and thus hints at an alternative interpretation of the creation. He says: “in creation, what is called to being answers to a call that could not have reached it since, brought out of nothingness, it obeyed before hearing the order” (Levinas 1981:113). Levinas’ idea can be compared to the theological tradition of creation ex nihilo, but differently interpreted, not in the context of matter or non-matter, but in the context of absolute passivity - a passivity more passive than matter (Levinas 1981:113).

This creation is pure passivity and thus the creature cannot assume to be the master of its own origin. Levinas’ turn towards ethics defies any fixed myths about the origin of creation (Levinas 1981:177) and rather turns to the ethical subject. Creation signifies, not in terms of comprehension for a knowing consciousness, but in terms of the ethical subject. Levinas turns from a metaphysical notion of creation towards an ethical notion of creation. Thus Levinas’ notion of creation survives the end of metaphysics, as his notion of creation is thought in terms of a “more ancient significance opened up by the description of responsibility, its meaning no longer depends on the synchronizing effects of causality but on the diachrony (temporal delay and belatedness) of a subject called out of nothingness to be” (Kosky 1996:243). This more ancient meaning (from time immemorial) of the responsible subject or the ethical subject allows its significance to survive the end of metaphysics. One can thus say that the subject is created in this ethical encounter as the subject comes into being as an accused one. The word God comes to mind (comes-to-idea) in this ethics, but postmetaphysically. God comes to idea in this ethical creation, but
not as the creator in the traditional sense of a being hovering over prime matter or nothingness. God comes to mind as Infinite responsibility to which the accused responds with saying. This coming-to-idea of God is beyond proof of the existence or non-existence of a metaphysical God, but it is purely a coming-to-idea of the word “God” in this Infinite responsibility and the Desire for the Good beyond being.

4.2.2 Election
Levinas’ description of the responsible self also leads to the significance of election. The responsible self has been assigned and this assignment is unique – one can say that the self is elected as the chosen one and she/he cannot abdicate this responsibility to someone else and in that sense is elected. Identity is not based on some essential characteristics or essence, but is based alone on the election of the self by the Other (Levinas 1981:145). Levinas’ interpretation of election does not contain the traditional religious undertones of salvation and the fate of the chosen individual after death, but it specifically focuses on the ethical notion of the self that is radically singular in its assignation to responsibility. The responsible self is chosen, elected for responsibility, even before it is free to choose or commit itself to responsibility as argued above. In the whole concept of election of the self the word God comes to mind, but not as the subject or being who elects the self, but the thought of God comes to mind in the plot of election of a singular unique self that cannot escape or hide in any inwardness from the demand of the Other.

4.2.3 “Here I am”
The last of the philosophically interpreted religious concepts is the religious response “HERE I AM”. The self is created in response to the call of responsibility, but the call calls even before I can answer the call. The only response to this call is the response uttered by the prophets, and is: Here I am! In French [me voici] as well as in Hebrew [hinneni] it is not the nominative “I”, but it employs the accusative “me”. As Levinas says: “to this command continually put forth only a ‘here I am’ [me voici] can answer, where the pronoun ‘I’ is in the accusative” (Levinas 1981:142). ‘Here I am’ is the only answer to the creation of the self in responsibility, but this does not claim the place ‘here’ as my own, but it marks the “first experience of myself as reception of a me that I did not first constitute” (Kosky 1996:244). The “Here I am” is the signification of saying in which the subject is constituted as subject.

It is this ethical relation with the Other of creation, election and “Here I am” that is the latent birth in the Other of religion, which is prior to emotions and the voice and even prior to any religious experience (Levinas 1998:72). It is this ethical relation that binds (religare)
the self to the Other and through the Other to my neighbour. This site or this time (immemorial past that was never present), this diachronic rapture, is the birthplace of religion and the possibility of God-talk, but it is also the (im)possibility of God-talk.

4.3 The impossibility of Levinas' God-talk

The God-talk mentioned in the previous section in reflecting on creation, election and "Here I am", reveals the site where the thought (word) “God” comes-to-idea in the ethical relation, but it is also the very site of the impossibility of God-talk if God-talk refers to a being or any kind of phenomenon, even the phenomenon of religious experience.

This signification of God in the creation of the subject, in the election of the subject, and in the subjects’ signification in Saying ‘Here I am’ in response to a voice s/he has never heard, prior to hearing this voice in the proximity of the Other, does not mean that saying includes or comprehends the Infinite or God. Rather, “the Infinite concerns and closes in on me while speaking through my mouth” (Levinas 1998:75). This first word ‘God’ that one cannot help but hear, that one cannot help but answer before being conscious of hearing and answering, is not revealed and is not comprehended, but is testified to in the saying.

The subject, in becoming (subjuction) subject in the “Here I am” of saying, is a testimony to the first word, which is never heard nor uttered, “God”. The subject is testimony of a trace of the glory of the Infinite (Levinas 1998:75). The Infinite (God) is not a phenomenon in front of me. Yet I give expression to it, precisely by giving the sign of giving signs, namely the saying of the one-for-the-other of substitution in the “Here I am”. In this “Here I am” the I is dis-interested as the I is in the accusative, accused by the trace in the face of the Other, accused by Him/Her (illeity), the Infinite. The subject passively finds (that is pre-consciousness) that s/he is under His (illeity) eyes, at His service, as the obedient servant to the Other. This relation to the infinitely removed He (illeity), which is a relation of passive inspiration, can be said to be in the name of God (Levinas 1998:75) as it is thus in this relation that the name “God” comes to mind.

This is how God comes to mind or how God comes to saying, as the inspiration (Infinite in me), but this coming-to-idea in the saying is without thematization and thus it can never be a proof of God. This coming-to-idea of the word “God” in saying is not even the possibility of a statement that says: “I believe in God!” It is, if anything at all, a coming-to-idea of the
word “God” prior to all religious discourse and any positive reflection about the being or
existence of God (Theology). The coming-to-idea of God that is prior to all religious
discourse is the signification of substitution in the saying, “Here I am”, prior to the use of
words; a silent signification of saying to the neighbour to whom the self is given over: Here
I am (Levinas 1998:75), and in this given over the word God signifies. The self is created
in the sub-jection to the Other, uniquely elected without the possibility of escape to which
s/he can only respond prior to consciousness and without words, in the saying (signifying):
“Here I am”. In this plot of the ethical relation to the face of the Other, in which the trace
of the Infinite signifies, God comes to mind. “Here I am” said to the neighbour is the first
signification where God comes-to-idea and it is not any statement about belief in God or
the basis for a dialogue about religion (Levinas 1998:75).

4.3.1 (Im)possibility of God-talk as prophetic signification

The ethical relation of substitution should not be confused with the transcendental
conditions for some kind of ethical experience. Ethics, as substitution for the other, breaks
up the unity of transcendental apperception and as such cannot function as the condition
for some kind of being or experience. It is a radical dis-interestedness and thus it cannot
be the basis of any kind of experience or the apperception of a being and yet it is a
relationship between the finite and the Infinite, but it is a relationship where the Infinite is
not contradicted in that it becomes a finite idea or even the conditions for a finite idea. It
does not appear in any sense as a manifestation or as a presence, but it comes to pass as
Infinity, as the disruption of the finite by the Infinite Otherness, and this disruption is an
awakening. The Infinite transcends itself in the finite as it passes the finite in the third
order of illéity or the goodness beyond Being and thereby directs the neighbor to me
without exposing itself to me and thus remains unrepresentable (Levinas 1998:75).

Levinas suggests that one can speak of this intrigue of the Infinity as inspiration, where I
make myself the author of what I hear, and inspiration of prophetism, where I make myself
the interpreter of what I utter. The I only comes into being (creation, election) in
interpreting what was signified prior to consciousness in the Here I am. Heidegger spoke
of poetry as pure speaking and Levinas speaks of prophecy as pure testimony.
“Prophesying is pure testimony, pure because prior to all disclosure; it is subjection to an
order before understanding the order” (Levinas 1998:76). It is in prophesying, like in
Heidegger’s poetry, that the Infinite passes – and awakens. The infinite passes as a
radical transcendence in that it refuses objectification and dialogue, it signifies only in an
ethical way as it orders the self to the neighbour (Levinas 1998:76). It is here in the
subject that the Infinite signifies as either the temple or the theatre of transcendence (Levinas 1998:76) and thus the subject becomes the witness of the Infinite.

How does God signify? How is God-talk possible in Levinas’ thought? As witness! Yet, when Levinas speaks of the subject being a witness of the glory of the Infinite or a witness of God, he is not referring to the typical sense of witnessing to something that one has seen or heard (Levinas 2000:180). Witnessing is thus not about the clarity of something visible and that can thus be signified. In a strange paradox the atheism of the subject (responsible self) is a witness to God, but without this witness becoming a new figure of a form of theism (Kosky 1996:251).

The atheism of the responsible subject who is not conscious and therefore present at its becoming subject is a witness to the Infinite (God). The self witnesses to the infinite in the statement: ‘Here I am’. Levinas says: “In my ‘here I am,’ from the first present in the accusative, I bear witness to the Infinite” (Levinas 1981:149). Bearing witness is not because the self is in front of the Infinite or in the presence of the Infinite and therefore can witness to its presence, as the Infinite is beyond presence on the “other side of presence” in an immemorial past and an infinite future as a thought behind thoughts (Levinas 1981:149). The “Here I am” of saying is in the name of God, but where the word “God” is still absent from the phrase in which the word “God” signifies for the first time. To bear witness to God is precisely not to state the word “God” (Levinas 1981:149).

The responsibility itself that summons me [accusative], signified in the “Here I am”, is thus the revelation of God, but it is a revelation in which God is “revealed before all appearing, before all presentation before a subject” (Levinas 1981:147), and as such it is a revelation which precedes the conscious subject, who can respond and say: I believe in this God whom I experience! The me voici of infinite responsibility reveals God in the sense that it is here that the word “God” comes-to-idea, but this revelation is completely without affirming any concept of God (positive Theology), it is without stating the word “God”, and it is not an encounter of God in the presence of an experience made by a conscious subject (Kosky 1996:251).

Thus to bear witness to God in the “Here I am” can never function as a new proof of the existence of God (Levinas 1982:252). To try and prove the existence of God in this bearing witness would be a grave misinterpretation of the trace of the infinite, signified by the face of the Other in which the word “God” comes to mind. Such a misreading of the signification of the face would not lead to the witnessing of responsibility, but to knowledge, namely knowledge of the existence or non-existence of God interpreted “upon
which” of some theory of the self-conscious subject. Levinas argues that God does not need to be witnessed to if “one puts forth the Platonic word, Good beyond Being” (Levinas 1981:95). In this sense the self’s responsibility for the other does not witness the existence of God, but witnesses God as the Good. “[T]he á-dieu of the face incites me not to divine being but to the Good, which forever escapes and absolves itself from the present of my consciousness” (Kosky 1996:252). It is as the ‘Good beyond Being’ that God departs from the self’s presence, because it is the very goodness of the Good to “decline the desire it calls forth so as to separate from the Good and orient it towards the other” (Levinas 1982:114). Levinas refers to this bearing witness to God in turning towards the neighbour to whom I say: “Here I am”, as prophetic witnessing (Levinas 1998:75-76).

Therefore the word “God” does have meaning and signifies in that God affects the self by turning the self to responsibility for the other (neighbour). God-self remains absolutely remote or transcendent to the point of absence. God, for Levinas, is inseparable from responsibility, but not as an Other for whom the self is responsible, but as an other Other, in other words, as an Other whose absence inclines the self towards responsibility for others. God remains the He in the depth of the you (illéity) for whom the self is responsible (Levinas 1982:114). It is for this reason, God who is always already absent, that Levinas names God with neither a proper noun nor a common noun, but with the pronoun, Il. With the use of the pronoun Levinas seeks to reflect the way in which the responsible self, after the death of God, is affected, but without being able to fix or give meaning to the absent source of the obligation that binds him or her. “This way for the order to come from I know not where… we have called illéité“ (Levinas 1981:150). In this sense God is inseparable from responsibility as God is the he [Il] in the depth of the you and thus anonymity haunts responsibility.

4.3.2 The (im)possibility of God-talk between illéity and il y a

In Levinas’ first work, Totality and Infinity, ethics was conceived as an interpersonal affair of the face to face encounter “which marked an interruption of obedience to the violence and horror of an anonymous existence – what Levinas calls the anonymity of the “there is” (il y a)“ (Kosky 1996:254). The horror and the violence of il y a is that the self is

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117 A neologism that Levinas formed from the French pronoun il or the Latin ille (Kosky 1996:253).
118 “The il y a, inasmuch as it resists a personal form is “being in general”…il y a, in general, without it mattering what there is, without our being able to fix a substantive to this term. Il y a is an impersonal form, like in it rains or it is warm. Its anonymity is essential. The mind does not find itself faced with an apprehended exterior… What we call the I is itself submerged by the night, invaded, depersonalized, stifled by it. The disappearance of the I and of all things leaves what cannot disappear, the sheer fact of being in which one participates whether one wants to or not, without having taken initiative, anonymously” (Levinas 1978:57-88).
completely exposed to it without any possibility of shelter from it (Levinas 1978:59). The *il y a* transcends inwardness as well as exteriority as it is even impossible to distinguish these (Levinas 1978:57). This anonymity was interrupted by the exteriority of the face of the Other and thus “offered an escape from the irremissibility of Being in general or the anonymity of the *il y a*”. (Kosky 1996:255). The violence of anonymity which the face of the other helped the self escape from, returns in *Otherwise than Being* in the form of infinite anonymous responsibility. This anonymous violence returns in the form of the anonymous God (the anonymous He in the depth of the you) of *Otherwise than Being* as the self is exposed, without an interiority to which s/he can flee before this anonymous responsibility. One cannot escape God (Levinas 1981:128). “Thus, in both the phenomenon of being delivered over to the *il y a* and the phenomenon of the responsible self turning *á-dieu*, one is exposed without the possibility of withdrawing or taking shelter in an interiority that can be called mine” (Kosky 1996:255).

Kosky argues that for Levinas it is a matter of distinguishing two forms of anonymity, namely the anonymity of *il y a* and the anonymity of the *á-dieu* in responsibility. This is an impossible task as the very concept of anonymity is that it cannot be distinguished. This anonymity does not need to be named God, it could be named anything else as well. So why call this trace, a trace of God, and not of something other? The study reflected on this in a previous section with regards to the Good beyond Being and khôra, as what is beyond Being does not have to be good.

In the light of these questions, Kosky argues that Levinas’ attempt is seen as an attempt to save the name God. This is the title of a work by Derrida (*Sauf le nom*), where he argues that this name (God) “that names nothing that might hold, not even a divinity (*Gottheit*), nothing whose withdrawal [*dérébement*] does not carry away every phrase that tries to measure itself against him. “God” “is” the name of this bottomless collapse, of this endless desertification of language” (Derrida 1995b:55-56). After the end of metaphysics and the death of God, Levinas saves alone the name: God. Levinas was aware of this possible confusion between God and *il y a* as he writes: “...transcendence to the point of absence, to the point of possible confusion with the stirring of the there is [*il y a*]” (Levinas 1998:69).

It is clear from Levinas that this beyond metaphysics, beyond epistemology, is also and necessarily a beyond theology. The wounding of metaphysics is a move beyond not only metaphysics, but also beyond epistemology, ontology and thus also theology (cf. Schrag 1999:71). This beyond is nameless and faceless. It can either be God or *il y a* or just the
void of difference from which comes the silent speaking of language. The difference between the murmuring of the ‘il y a’ and illeity cannot be distinguished as “they” are both anonymous. The difference only comes to thought in the infinite call to responsibility in Dasein. It is in the “Here I am” of responsibility that ‘il y a’ becomes illeity. It is only in the saying in response to the Other in the Desire of the Good that there is a differentiation; the murmuring of il y a out of which the speaking of language (Geläut der Stille) calls things and world into their differentiation. But before this speaking of language, Levinas might argue, there is the approach of the Other and the trace of illeity that subjects Dasein into the site of the speaking of language. Thus the Good beyond Being that is in Dasein\(^{119}\) inspires the self with the Infinite Desire and thus hears the command of illeity in the murmuring of il y a, and it is in the murmuring of the ‘there is’ where the word ‘God’ comes to mind as the first word.

The infinite signifies in two ways: it signifies in the other person, as illeity, as desirability, as a trace, and there it is indistinguishable from the anonymity of il y a. Yet Infinite also signifies in me as goodness, as ethics, as kenotic love (Horner 2001:72), and that is the difference. Thus the difference between illeity and il y a cannot be distinguished as they are both anonymous, yet in the self they are distinguished. In the inspiration of the self they are distinguished as either the anxious murmuring of there is or as the inspiration toward the Good beyond Being of the He in the depth of the you.

4.3.3 (Im)possibility of God-talk: language, said and saying

Yet the question remains, what kind of witnessing is this that is bearing witness to the thought behind thought, in other words that witnesses to thinking through philosophy or the thinking of thinking?

As argued above the subject becomes this site (temple or theatre) of this bearing witness to transcendence in ethics (ethical relation to the Other). Transcendence comes to thought in the ethical creation, election and saying of the subject and thus transcendence is intelligible as ethics. Levinas argues that this idea of transcendence does not contradict the idea of the Good beyond Being (Levinas 1998:76), that cannot be thought as it is beyond Being, and yet it is the author of thought and beings. Levinas places his thoughts into this Platonic tradition of thinking through philosophy as immanence towards that which is otherwise than Being. He argues that Western tradition has abandoned this tradition as it has reduced intelligibility to terms set in conjunction with each other, where one term is posited relative to other term(s), or the one signifying the other (Levinas

\(^{119}\)In the sense that it is the pre-conscious subjection of Dasein into subjectivity.
In this Western tradition the significance of signification is: “the one-for-the-other”. In the traditional idea of signification significance becomes visibility, immanence, and ontology “to the degree to which the terms are united into a whole, in which their very history is systematized, in order to be clarified” (Levinas 1998:77). Levinas tried to formulate the intelligibility (coming-to-thought) and significance of transcendence in terms of the ethical one-for-the-other (Levinas 1998:76). Yet this intelligibility or significance is prior to that which is taken on by the terms in conjunction within a system. In other words, it is a significance that is more ancient than all patterns and forms.

The question is, can and does this significance or meaning ever take form, can it be said? Does the significance or intelligibility (coming-to-idea) of the word God ever take form in a said, maybe the said of Theology? No, Levinas argues, because the intelligibility of transcendence is not something ontological and thus the transcendence of God cannot be said nor thought in terms of Being. Behind or beyond Being, philosophy sees only night, but although beyond Being there is only night there is a rupture, a disturbance, an awakening of philosophical intelligibility by what is beyond Being. This already becomes clear in the contradiction there would be in any attempt at com-prehending the infinite. Thus, although there is only night beyond Being, that does not exclude “God from the significance that, although not ontological does not amount to simple thoughts bearing on a being in decline, nor to views without necessity, nor to words that play” (Levinas 1998:77).

Yet just because the thought of God does not take form does not mean that God does not signify or does not have meaning. In modernity there is the critical presumption of ideology that weighs upon philosophy (Levinas 1998:77). This critical presumption cannot appeal to philosophy to rid philosophy of ideology, but it needs to come from elsewhere beyond proofs as there can be no proof of God or a transcendent or a prime mover. This critical presumption from the beyond begins “in the cry of ethical revolt, bearing witness to responsibility; it begins in prophecy” (Levinas 1998:77).

The bearing witness to God in saying “Here I am” to the neighbour has meaning and a signification that bears witness to a beyond; not the beyond of a no-man’s land where opinions pile up, but a beyond of both knowledge and faith, but that affects knowledge and faith. Not to philosophize would not be still to philosophize, nor to succumb to opinions, Levinas argues (Levinas 1998:77), but to reflect on a “meaning borne witness to in interjections and in cries, before disclosing itself in propositions” (Levinas 1998:77). This ethical signification (“Here I am”) signifies, not for a consciousness, but to subjectivity that
is born (created) and elected in obedience, obeying with an obedience that precedes understanding and conscious choice to obey. Thus it is not about knowledge or about opinion, but about passivity more passive than the receptivity of knowing and more passive than the receptivity of assuming that which affects it. It is a signification in which the ethical moment is not founded upon any preliminary structure of theoretical thought, or of language, or the speaking of language.

Yet all this can only be said in language as the pages of Levinas’ works clearly indicate. A language exerts upon signification nothing more than the hold of a form (Levinas 1998:77), but this form of the said must immediately be unsaid. “This is a bursting open of the omnipotence of logos, of the logos of system and simultaneity; a bursting open of the logos into a signifier and a signified that is not only a signifier” (Levinas 1998:78). The Infinite, transcendence comes to mind, comes to language (logos) in that it bursts open the language (house of Being) for that which is beyond Being, but to speak of this beyond (otherwise than Being) in terms of signifier and signified is not possible as this signified is more or less than a signifier. Transcendence (saying) owes it to itself to interrupt its own demonstration and monstration, its phenomenality that is only possible in the language of the said and thus immanence always triumphs over transcendence (Levinas 1998:78).

Can Levinas’ thoughts be useful for theology (God-talk)? As mentioned earlier, when referring to the (im)possibility of his God-talk, the answer must be yes and no. It depends on how one understands theology. If theology is the logos of God and God is understood as a being, even if God is a being in another world (metaphysical God-talk), then the answer is no. His thoughts will not be useful at all. Yet, if theology is interpreted as the plot (narrative) or even poetics, as in Theopoetics, where God comes to mind, then theology as a tradition, starting with the biblical narratives, can be seen as a plot (narrative/poetics) of inter-human relations inspired by the relation with the Infinite (Good beyond Being) in which the word/name God is mentioned (comes to mind), but not as proof of the existence or non-existence of God, but as the continuous interruption (deconstruction) of the said of theology by the saying of responsibility toward the Other which is the life-blood of theology in the sense that it keeps theology alive.
5. THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF CONCLUDING A CHAPTER ON LEVINAS’ GOD-TALK

How to conclude a chapter on Levinas? Is it possible to write a concluding section on a thinker like Levinas whose work is so complex and purposefully seeks a language of alterity so as to not fall into a trap of creating a closed system of which one could easily write a concluding and thus conclusive remark? To write a conclusion in the sense of a conclusive argument or conclusive statement on Levinas’ thought with regards to God-talk is an (im)possibility, again with brackets.

One cannot conclusively argue that this is what Levinas says about God-talk and thereby write a systematic account of his “Theology”. Likewise it would be difficult, if not impossible, to give a conclusive account of the critique levelled against Levinas’ work. The reason for this is, as Derrida argues, that any critical question that one might pose “against” Levinas’ work is a question that Levinas himself has already posed (Derrida 1978b:84). How does one expose the limits of somebody’s, especially Levinas’, thoughts? The major challenge/criticism/limitation towards Levinas’ work is with regards to his earlier work, Totality and Infinity. Yet Levinas responded to these questions or challenges such as those posed by Derrida in his later work Otherwise than Being.

When critically reflecting on the work of Levinas, what is needed is a double reading or a clôtural reading (Critchley 1999:88ff) of his work, in other words a careful reading just like Derrida’s close or deconstructive reading of Levinas. A close reading of the literal text is important, but then to read it together with the critical remarks, and in this reading and re-reading to hear the saying that cannot be reduced to a said. With a first literal reading of the text it would be easy to deduce that Levinas’ work (specifically Totality and Infinity) is too tied up with phenomenology, ontology and dialects, as argued by Derrida in Violence and Metaphysics, but that would amount to reducing this essay to a critique of Levinas, which was never Derrida’s intention. Derrida’s intention was a deconstructive reading of Levinas and to identify another strand of thought which is perhaps at odds with the idea of critique as Derrida himself states as quoted above.

In Violence and Metaphysics, Derrida argues that Levinas’ ethical overcoming of ontology is itself dependent upon the totalizing ontologies it sought to overcome, namely Husserlian phenomenology, Hegelian dialectic and Heidegger’s reflections on the truth of Being. As this study is a conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida, this section will focus on Derrida’s Heideggerian questions posed to Levinas.
The major challenge Derrida levels against Levinas’ earlier work is how to speak about that which is Other in the language of the same. The moment you speak or think (philosophise) the Other (what is beyond being), it is reduced to the same, so exactly what Levinas sought to overcome in *Totality and Infinity* he did not achieve, because of the limitations of language. In *Otherwise than Being* Levinas was very conscious of this problem of language and thus the whole complexity of his writing is an attempt to find a way to say the saying without destroying the saying in the said, and the only way to do this is to unsay the said by the saying.

Derrida argues that all discourse is obliged to employ “old signs” (Derrida 1973:102), specifically the old signs (the inherited language) of metaphysics. In other words, how does one say the saying in the said of old signs, when one is seeking to overcome the old signs, for example, of metaphysics or ontology? It is impossible to avoid these old signs, and therefore the said will always employ the old signs of metaphysics to say the saying.

Thus the task of reading and the task of this study’s reading of Levinas’ texts and any other text, is to read the text deconstructively, which means to read with an attempt to hear the unheard thoughts in the text, which glimmer beyond the metaphysical closure of the said. Thus the study will argue that a postmetaphysical reading is not so much about what is said, but it is a deconstructive reading, listening for the unheard thoughts (the saying) within texts (the said) (Derrida 1973:102). Yet, the moment one tries to conclusively identify the saying and put it to words of a conclusive said as in a study (dissertation), it is again lost and one falls into the same trap. Levinas tried to avoid this trap by rather exposing the cracks of philosophy (traditional logos), as Derrida says, by “masterfully progressing by negation, and by negation against negation. Its proper route is not that of an ‘either this… or that,’ but of a ‘neither this…nor that.’” (Derrida 1978b:80). Thus the poetic force of metaphor is employed, although Levinas was critical of the use of metaphor\(^\text{120}\), as the trace of this rejected alternative, this wounding of language. Levinas uses so many metaphors, many of them with a strong biblical connection, and thus through them he wounds language, but in this wounding (impossibility), experience (naked experience) is itself revealed (Derrida 1978b:90).

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\(^\text{120}\) Levinas once described his textual practice as ‘*mieux que les metaphores*’ (Bevis 2007:317).
Levinas’ attempt to say in a said what is beyond Being is impossible, as it necessarily has to employ old signs and these old signs will inevitably reduce what is other to the same. This paleonymy already becomes clear in Levinas’ use of the word “ethics”, which is a word embedded within a long tradition, yet Levinas seeks to say this old word differently. It is exactly the tradition in which the word ethics is embedded that makes both Heidegger and Derrida cautious to use the word. Heidegger argues that ethics is a newcomer to philosophy and only arrived on the scene of philosophy when philosophy was divided into the three disciplines of logic, physics and ethics. However, just because the term ethics arrived late on the scene of philosophy it does not imply that what was before its arrival was unethical.

Heidegger prefers to refer to ethos, referring back to Heraclitus' ethos anthropoi daimon. He describes ethos as follows: “The (familiar) abode is for man the open region for the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one)” (Heidegger 1978:234). Thus ethos is interpreted as dwelling place and abode for humanity. Ethics for Heidegger therefore needs to be understood in terms of ethos, as the abode of humanity – that is the familiar place where human beings dwell and come to stand out, to ek-sist, in the unfamiliar truth of Being.

Thus ethics for Heidegger is human dwelling upon the horizon of the truth of Being. Heidegger, as reflected on in the previous chapter, thinks this truth of Being non-metaphysically, insofar as metaphysics cannot think Being itself without regard for Being’s determination in terms of beings.

Levinas does not share this reservation with regards to the use of the term ethics, but he reinterprets it. In Totality and Infinity he interprets ethics as first philosophy and thus as metaphysics (Levinas 1969:304), and he opposes such an ethical metaphysics to ontology and thereby creates a metaphysical opposition, and this, Derrida argues, is to continue the oblivion of the truth of Being. He has placed Being as exteriority, but he has not thought through the being of Being, but only thought the relation between Being and beings. He thought the ethical relation of exteriority (alterity) to beings (subject) which is still metaphysics – ethical metaphysics.

Levinas seeks to think beyond any horizon, but it is impossible to think without horizon (upon which) as thought is always within a horizon (always already in the world) and therefore any attempt to think beyond a horizon implies a new horizon, namely the horizon...
of the beyond. His “new horizon of the beyond” is found either in the horizon of the Good beyond Being or the horizon of ethical responsibility. Ethics, as metaphysics or as first philosophy, is a new horizon, even if it is an attempt at getting beyond horizons.

Derrida’s criticism refers to Levinas’ thinking of the correlates: inside/outside, here/beyond, or being/being’s otherwise. Derrida observes: “However it is also a question of inaugurating, in a way that is to be new, quite new, a metaphysic of radical separation and exteriority. One anticipates that this metaphysics will have some difficulty finding its language in the medium of the traditional logos entirely governed by the structure ‘inside-outside,’ ‘interior-exterior’ (Derrida 1978b:88). Levinas wants to move beyond Being, but how to do this in the language of Being, as there is no escaping the violence inherent in language (Derrida 1978b:91-92)? Levinas wants to move beyond the violence of the same, but finds himself again and again in the same language he seeks to escape or get outside of.

Another problem, according to Derrida, is that Levinas wants to treat the face as a nonphenomenal phenomenon, but the result is that he cannot but recognise it phenomenally in that the Other becomes the ego’s alter ego (Derrida 1978b:128). Levinas recognises this as he argues in Otherwise than Being that there is no phenomenon, only phenomenology. Thus Levinas tries to escape, move beyond, outside the language of ontology and phenomenology, but finds himself again and again saying this beyond in the said of the same old signs. Levinas tries to escape this quantification as this quantification would once more be reducing the Other to the same, namely the Other as the ego’s alter ego, but is it possible? Any quantification would be denial of the Other’s genuine alterity and therefore quantification is not the basis of asymmetry.

It is for this reason that Levinas argues that the Other addresses the self as if the I were being addressed by Infinity or God (Hemming 2005:51). In bringing in the idea of infinite alterity, Levinas seeks to escape this return to the same in quantification. God signifies in the infinite alterity of the Other who is beyond quantification. Levinas argues that it is from the face of the Other in which God signifies or God comes to idea (God comes to mind) (Levinas 1995:46). One has power over the Other (Levinas 1995:111) and this relation needs to be reversed by finding in the one who is weaker the idea of the Infinite. The self has power over the Other irrespective of the strength or weakness of the Other because the self has the power to reduce the Other to the same of his/her conscious thought and in that sense has the “power of the life or death of the Other” in her/his hands. Only that

\[121 \text{“The phenomenon itself is a phenomenology” (Levinas 1981:37)}\]
which is represented to the conscious subject exists and therefore the other exists only insofar as the other can be represented to the self via the third neutral term Being, which is the “upon which” the other is thought.

Levinas argues that the self (I) has the order to answer for the life of the other human. The self (I) does not have the right to leave the Other to his/her death (Levinas 1995:114). It is in the face of the Other (over whom one has power) that one receives the command of the Decalogue: Thou shall not kill. This command for Levinas does not have so much to do with whether or not one may kill, but rather that the I is never acquitted with respect to the other (Levinas 1995:115). My holding the face of the other en l’égard (in view) is my holding and preserving the other in life. The self (subject) has power over the Other and thus stands before a choice to either respect the alterity of the Other or deny the Other his/her otherness by reducing the Other to the same and therefore is under the moral obligation of the commandment: Thou shall not kill!

This moral obligation is exactly that: a moral obligation, and thus the respect for the Other is still within the totality of the same as it is the self that chooses not to reduce the otherness of the Other to the same of his/her consciousness. This is how Hemming interprets Levinas, as the self holding and preserving the other in life through the face which is exposed to my gaze as a valuation of the face (Hemming 2005:52). He argues that it is the intentionality of my look, of the evaluative gaze, which decides how the face will be received and which performs the overturning and reversal (Hemming 2005:52). The reversal refers to the change from a self who is responsible in that s/he holds the Other’s life in his/her hands to a self who is assigned as a “me” of responsibility prior to being a conscious “I”. Levinas would respond to Hemming that it is not the intentionality of my look, but it is the Other in me, prior to the consciousness of intentionality. This interpretation is only half the truth, as the Other, as signified in the face, can never be reduced to the same as there remains a persistent difference (alterity). This respect for the otherness of the Other is taken further and reversed as the ethical relation is not a moral choice, but a substitution of oneself-for-the-other in saying. It is not the self that decides to respect the Other, but it is the Other that denucleates the same and thereby the relation is reversed.

This is how Levinas interprets everyday experience of being with others or being with the Other. This is Levinas’ interpretation of being in the world. In Heidegger’s terminology, this is Levinas’ response in the mortal language of the ontological difference to the speaking of language of the Ereignis of Being. It is in Levinas, as a conscious self (subject), that the
The face of the Other is assigned this place/height/infinite alterity. In other words, Levinas is already in the world, part of *Dasein*, where he (his conscious systematised thought) assigns a height to the Other which then assigns (sub-jects) a “me”. Thus Levinas is already in the world, wherein he assigns a height to exteriority over interiority, where exteriority becomes the “upon which” the world with the beings of the world are thought. He has not moved beyond Heidegger’s thoughts. The silent speaking of language which he sought to overcome by the approach of the Other is not overcome, as the Other and the self are called into their difference by the silent speaking of language, and this difference is still thought metaphysically as ethical metaphysics within the language of the ontological difference.

Thus the traditional metaphysical idea of the Being of beings is not overcome (thought through) as in Heidegger, but it is firmly in place. Heidegger argued that what is forgotten, or not thought, is the being of Being – the truth of Being, or the *Ereignis* of Being, in that it unconceals and conceals and its unconcealing is always the Being of beings, but in the Being of beings the concealment of Being is not thought. This *Ereignis* of Being is an event of language, where out of the difference and into the difference Being and beings are called. Levinas’ ethical metaphysics is within this speaking of language and does not challenge it as it is still within its circularity. Levinas has forgotten or not thought his being in the world, the being in language, the *Ereignis* of Being.

Levinas, in his attempt to move beyond toward exteriority, in *Totality and Infinity*, does this in language, the language of a said, and the language of a said can only be the language of the ontological difference. In *Otherwise than Being* he sought to overcome the ontological language by referring to saying, but he had to say the saying in the said of a book and thus as he says what is necessary is a reduction of the said to saying (Levinas 1981:43-45).

### 5.2 Being in the world and the coming to idea of God

Levinas proposes that the original place where transcendence summons an authority through a silent voice is where God comes to ideation (*Dieu qui vient a l'idée*) (Levinas 1995:29). “*Dieu qui vient a l'idée*” has been translated as God [who] comes to mind. This translation overlooks the strong Platonising intention of what is intended namely that the description of the encounter with the Other in Levinas is so that the idea which the Other
brings forth (venir) is the idea of Otherness as such\textsuperscript{122}. This is very similar to Aristotle's description of Plato's ideas and the thought of the Good (that is beyond Being) as the idea of ideas. It is through the ethical responsibility, ethical substitution, that the self is authorised (created and elected) to enter the world and that the world and the self are born. It is in this site that the idea of God comes to mind or the idea of God comes to ideation.

What is not thought in this is how it is possible that world and self come to be in the way that they come to be. What is not thought is the question that inspired Heidegger, namely how do the multiple senses of world and self come to be? Levinas was in conversation with Heidegger and he thought that he had overcome Heidegger's fundamental ontology, by wounding fundamental ontology with ethics. His thoughts were based on a specific interpretation of Heidegger's \textit{Dasein}. He interpreted Heidegger's \textit{Dasein} as being determined by Being and this determination is thought within a circularity of the ontological difference which forms the totality of the same and this totality is disrupted by the approach (proximity) of the Other. Levinas asks how my being there (\textit{Da-sein}) can be justified as my being there is taking up a space (a there) that could have been filled by another (Levinas 1998:165). Thus the self's Dasein is disrupted, questioned and disturbed by the Other.

In that sense the self has to account for his/her being there (taking up a space that could have been a space for someone else). This is a misinterpretation or an incorrect understanding of Heidegger's \textit{Dasein}. For Heidegger, \textit{Dasein} is always already an I-thou relation. It is already a \textit{Mitsein} even before the question of inter-subjectivity and inter-subjective relations becomes a question and thus inter-subjectivity can never explain or justify what \textit{Dasein} already is (Hemming 2005:56). \textit{Dasein} is being in the world of a particular epochal sending of Being (\textit{Seinsgeschick}). It does not refer to the individual in that world, but it refers to existence in that world. Existence in that particular world (\textit{Seinsgeschick}) can only be thought within the language of ontological difference of that particular \textit{Seinsgeschick}.

Heidegger argues that one cannot explain (justify) one's \textit{being there} through the ethical relation with the Other, but exactly the other way around. Being-with-others cannot be explained via the I-you relation, nor can it be justified by it. The I-you relation already presupposes for its possibility that both the Being of an I and a you (the Other) is already

\textsuperscript{122} "...thus it is the I (in its understanding) receiving what makes it understand – not just the idea of the Other, but the ideation of alterity as such, the very \textit{possibility} of anything coming to be as idea, and so is the idea of ideas or idea of the good" (Hemming 2005:54).
determined by the being-with-others of Dasein. The Being of beings, in other words, how beings relate to each other and how they relate to Being, is determined by the Dasein of the particular Seinsgeschick. The very concept of a self-conscious I can only occur on the basis of a being-with-others.\(^{123}\)

How can Dasein be subordinate to Being? The concept Dasein first came into use in the work of Kant and expresses existence, namely what is (Hemming 2005:55). Dasein is thus what it means to be, existence as a whole. Can this be subordinate to Being? Dasein can only be subordinate to Being if Being is understood as an existent, because there can be an order of priority only between two determined things, that is two existents (Derrida 1978b:136). Yet Heidegger’s thought of Being is not to be interpreted as a thought (concept/ neutral third term) of something which is determined (some existent) outside of the existent and thus it can in no way precede the existent, not in time nor in dignity (Derrida 1978b:136). Heidegger’s Being is always the Being-of this existent and does not exist outside of it as a foreign power or as a hostile or neutral impersonal element (Derrida 1978b:136), as Levinas interpreted it as the neutral third element, as discussed previously.

Thus there is no way in which Being can subordinate existence which is then interrupted by the approach of the Other. Such an argument is only possible if one thinks of the “I” as an isolated I.\(^{124}\) It is impossible to isolate such an I who is then in a relationship (ethical) with the Other, as this I and the Other are already embedded in the world (Seinsgeschick). One cannot think the I isolated from being-in-the-world, and thus isolated from the Being of beings. Humans, according to Heidegger, are always already implicated in the ontological difference.\(^{125}\)

The Dasein of this “I” is already a Mitsein. One cannot isolate oneself from the world. A being (self) cannot get an external view of his/her place in the world, because they are always and already in the world.\(^{126}\) The self, as a being or as a thing in the world, is only a

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123 "Das Miteinander ist also nicht durch die Ich-Du-Beziehung und aus ihr zu erklären, sondern umgekehrt: Diese Ich-Du-Beziehung setzt für ihre innere Möglichkeit voraus, daß je schon das Dasein, sowohl das als Ich fungierende als auch das Du, als Miteinandersein bestimmt ist, ja noch mehr: Sogar die Selbsterfassung eines Ich und der Begriff von Ichheit erwächst erst auf dem Grunde des Miteinander, aber nicht als Ich-Du-Beziehung. Es ist gleich irrig, das Miteinander erst von einem Ichrumpf aus entstehen zu lassen, wie zu meinen, die Ich-Du-Beziehung sei die Basis, um von ihr aus das Dasein als solches zu bestimmen" (Heidegger 2001:145f).


125 See Chapter 2 section 3. Language, the House of Being.

126 "Daß der Mensch „von seiner Welt nicht zu trennen ist“ dann liegt auch dieser Aussage die Vorstellung einer „Komposition“ von Mensch und Welt zugrunde, die den phänomenologisch-existenzialen Sachverhalt verfehlt..." He
being (thing/existent) in relation to the world. It is in the world that it finds its place, and it is together with the other beings (things) that it makes up the world, as the world grants to things their presence and thinging things gestate a world (Heidegger 1971b:202).

Heidegger’s critique of Descartes is that one cannot separate oneself from one’s world. Thus even Descartes’ doubt that subtracts everything in the world until nothing is left, . But I think is already a being in the world or a mode of being in the world; it is the way in which I think finds its place in the world and in finding its place gestates world. There is no beyond this dif-ference of which Heidegger speaks as there is no beyond the speaking of language. Thus Levinas’ ethics is just another mode of this speaking of language, this calling into the dif-ference between world and things, between Being and beings, and therefore it remains metaphysics.

Thus Heidegger’s thinking of Being (meaning of Being, truth of Being and Event of Being) cannot be interpreted as an ethical violence (reduction to the same), as Levinas critiques Heidegger, but it is the other way around, and that is that no ethics (as Levinas interprets ethics) can be opened without the thought of Being (Derrida 1978b:137). Ethics as metaphysics or ethical metaphysics is another epoch of the history of Being where Being reveals itself as ethics. In Otherwise than Being, Levinas sought to move beyond the language of Being towards saying.

How does one respond to the truth of Being (unconcealment and concealment)? Heidegger says, by letting be (Gelassenheit), which means to respect Being in essence and existence and to be responsible for one’s respect of Being (Derrida 1978b:141). But if this is how the meaning (truth) of Being is understood, as an event in language (language as the house of Being) where world and things are called out of and into the dif-ference between Being and beings, and Being unconceals itself in beings, and beings unconceal Being, but in this unconcealment Being conceals itself, then the meaning of Being concerns alterity and, as Derrida argues, “par excellence the alterity of the Other in all its originality: one can have to let be only that which one is not. If Being is always to be let be, and if to think is to let Being be, then Being is indeed the other of thought” (Derrida 1978b:141).

Being, specifically the Being of the Ereignis of Being in Heidegger’s third thought-path, is the Other par excellence, that which cannot be thought, but which gives (Es-gibt) to concludes, “Der Mensch ist nicht nur nicht von seiner Welt zu trennen, sondern die Vorstellung von Trennbarkeit und Untrennbarkeit hat hier überhaupt kein Fundament im Sachverhalt des In-der-Welt-seins” (Heidegger 1994 [1987]:181f).
thought. *Es-gibt* gives to thought in that it gives to thought the ontological difference of that particular *Seinsgeschick* as well as the language in which to think the ontological difference. *Es-gibt* gives to thought the said. Thus *Es-gibt* gives to thought in that it calls thought forth and humans respond in the language offered to thought, but that which gives to thought is beyond thinking: it is other. This other disrupts and fatally wounds all language (said), philosophy and metaphysics as both its limit and its possibility, but without becoming a new metaphysical foundation. In the next chapter these ideas will be further explored with the idea of a quasi-transcendental. The speaking of language is beyond thought as humans can only respond to it in the mortal speech of a said. The speaking of language is the other: the difference.

Levinas’ thought of ethico-metaphysical transcendence presupposes also ontological transcendence as an overcoming of ontology, but the otherwise than Being in Levinas’ interpretation does not lead beyond the thought or truth of Being itself, but it remains but one epochal sending of the truth of Being (Derrida 1978b:141). Derrida argues that Levinas proposes a humanism and a metaphysics as he (Levinas) tries to attain the supreme existent, the truly existent, as other, by inverting Heidegger’s Being, by proposing that ‘Being is exteriority’ (Levinas 1969:290). In other words, what it means to be a human being is to be open to the exteriority or the alterity of the Other, but this is still a humanistic determination of the truth or essence of Being. Such a determination of Being is still metaphysical on a Heideggerian account.

One can equate Being with God, or one can found God on Being, as Being (in its unconcealment) is always the Being of beings. Yet Being is not the absolute existent, nor the infinite existent, nor even the foundation of the existent general, as Being is nothing outside the determined existent, as Being can only be thought in its unconcealment in beings and not in its concealment. Thus Being *itself* can only be thought and stated and in that sense it is the contemporary of the Logos. The Logos can only be the Logos of Being, as *saying* Being (Derrida 1978b:143).

If one would try to think speech without this double genitivity (logos contemporary of Being and Logos of Being) as speech cut off from Being and enclosed in the determined existent, it would be only the cry of need before conscious desire and the gesture of the self (saying of substitution) in the realm of the homogenous (Derrida 1978b:143), and in that gesture the “me”, subjected by the Other, would become subject and the world would come into differentiated beings. This metaphysics of the face of the Other therefore encloses the thought of Being (truth of Being and the event of Being in language) in that it
presupposes the difference between Being and the existent and in that it stifles the thought of Being (Derrida 1978b:144).

In Levinas’ thought, Being is seen as exteriority, as the exteriority of the Other, and it is differentiated from the existent (self) and thus the self becomes a being of Being (a existent in relation to the Other), but that was Heidegger’s whole argument: that Being was not thought, but how Being unconceals itself in overcoming of Being in beings and the arrival of beings is the concealing of Being. This circular movement of the unconcealing of Being in coming over in beings and the concealing of Being in the arrival of beings is the *Ereignis* of Being, as the speaking of language. Being draws back in that it is disclosed in the existent and thus the thinking of Being is dominated by the idea of unveiling (Derrida 1978b:144). Being thus occurs as history (Derrida 1978b:144). “For historical “epochs” are metaphysical (onto-theological) determinations of the Being which thus brackets itself, reserves itself beneath metaphysical concepts” (Derrida 1978b:144). Levinas did not think the meaning of Being, but thought the Being of beings as one of the epochal sendings of Being.

In this last section the study turns once more to Heidegger’s “religious” thoughts, as already discussed in the previous chapter, with regards to both the truth of Being as well as the *Ereignis* and the epochal sendings of *Es gibt* (the various epochs of metaphysical onto-theological history of Being).

It is here, in the truth of Being, that the *Lichtung* (site) is opened for the thought of the sacred. It is in this historicity of Being that the thought of God comes to ideation (mind) in eschatology. In Heidegger it comes to mind in the thought of eschatology, as he says in *Holzwege* that Being itself that is in itself is eschatological (Heidegger 1971a:302).

Heidegger’s “return” of the God/gods has been interpreted by Levinas as too pagan and too connected to a specific land (Germany) as it was too intertwined in his Greek-German metanarrative. Yet Heidegger’s site for the return of the thought of God in eschatology is not a particular site or land, but it is in the site of the truth of Being, as a promise or as hope. He argues that it is only on the basis of the truth of Being that the essence of the sacred (eschatological) can be thought, and it is only on the basis of the essence of the sacred that the Divine can be thought, and it is only in the light of the essence of Divinity that one can think and say what the word ‘God’ must designate (Derrida 1978b:145-146).

The Sacred, as eschatological expectation, thought on the basis of the truth of Being, cannot be related to any particular religion (pagan or not), nor can it be related to religion
in general or any theology as it cannot be determined by any history of religion, thus it cannot be determined by any historical unconcealment of Being in a specific epoch of metaphysics or onto-theology. It has to be thought on the basis of the truth of Being (unconcealing and concealing of Being in the various metaphysical and onto-theological epochs of history) and thus it is thought as hope, promise and expectation – a hope that drives history in the realisation that every epoch of world history is an epoch of erring (Heidegger 1971a:311). These ideas of hope and promise will be further explored in the next chapter on Derrida and in the final chapter.

It is here, in this site or space of eschatological hope which is the site of the sacred, that God can be thought. God or gods cannot be indicated and thought except in the space of the sacred and in the light of the deity that comes to mind in the sacred. This space is both the well-spring of God-talk and the limit. It is the limit because the thought of divinity in this sacred “space” is not God and in a sense it is nothing. The “space” to which Being retreats (brackets itself) whilst revealing (unconcealing) itself in beings is a non-space, non-site, and in that sense it is nothing, but it is a “space” of eschatological hope that inspires the history of Being. Yet the sacred appears to thought in the meaning and the truth of Being. It appears to thought in the erring of the epochs of world history. But it is the sacred (eschatological) site which appears to thought and not God, and thus it is the limit. Yet it is also the wellspring, because it is the site of anticipation in which it sees God coming, and opens the possibility (the eventuality) of an encounter with God and of a dialogue with God (Derrida 1978b:146).

It is important to remember, as Derrida argues, that the Deity of God, which permits the thinking and naming (God who comes to mind or God who comes to ideation), is nothing, and above all is not God himself, which is also what Meister Eckhart said, and thus this brings these thoughts into close proximity to negative theology (Derrida 1978b:146). But negative theology is still theology and thus determined by ontic determinations even if they are negative determinations. Derrida argues that “negative theology is still a theology and, in its literality at least, it is concerned with liberating and acknowledging the ineffable transcendence of an infinite existent, “Being above Being and superessential negation”” (Derrida 1978b:146). Derrida specifically says “in its literality at least”, thereby stressing the importance of the letter. The letter is all one has to say things, to think things which are beyond Being, and all these different attempts to speak of this beyond Being, either metaphysical onto-theology or ethical metaphysics or negative theology and on the other hand Heidegger’s thought of Being (thinking differ-ence), signifies the essential importance of the letter.
The letter is of essential importance because as “everything occurs in movements of increasing explicitness, the literal difference is almost the entire difference of thought” (Derrida 1978b:146). The site where the thought of Being (truth of Being) goes beyond ontic determinations is not a negative theology or a negative ontology. This site can be spoken of as ontological anticipation (eschatology) and this transcendence towards Being permits an understanding of the word God, even if this understanding is but the ether in which dissonance can resonate (Derrida 1978b:146). What Heidegger reveals by the word God is a sacred Site which is a non-site, but a site of anticipation in which the word God resonates in all its dissonance. This transcendence (thought of Being as the Truth of Being and Event of Being) inhabits and founds language, as language is the house of Being and along with it the possibility of all Mitsein.

Levinas was aware of the centrality of language as he argues that: “[L]anguage would not be there to express states of consciousness, it would be the incomparable spiritual event of transcendence and sociality to which any effort of expression – any wanting to communicate a thought content – already refers” (Levinas 1998:146).

The thought of Being (truth of Being) in the house of Being is as close as one will get to non-violence and away from any form of totalisation that Levinas so criticised in Totality and Infinity. Thus, what Levinas sought in Totality and Infinity – a language of alterity that does not commit the violence of inclusion in a total system – is actually found in Heidegger’s thinking of the truth and the event of Being.

Levinas criticised Heidegger’s thought as a form of violence as things are comprehended within Being, but as discussed above, that was a misinterpretation of Heidegger. Levinas’ ethical metaphysics is exactly that kind of totalising violence that he accused Heidegger of, whilst Heidegger’s letting be in thinking the truth of Being is as non-violent as one can get within language (as non-violent as one can get because any form of coming to language is violent). An attempt to move towards a completely non-violent language would be “a language which would do without the verb to be, that is, without predication” (Derrida 1978b:147). Levinas desires such a completely non-violent language. He argues that it is a language that would be pure invocation, pure adoration, proffering only proper nouns in order to call to the other from afar, but such a language would not deserve the name language, as Plato already argued that there is no logos which does not suppose the interlacing of nouns and verbs (Derrida 1978b:147).

Levinas himself argues in Totality and Infinity that language must give the world to the other, and to be able to give the world it must articulate in the form of nouns interlaced
with verbs. Violence of language is unavoidable as violence appears with each articulation and articulation “is opened only by (the at first preconceptual) circulation of Being” (Derrida 1978b:148), the silent speaking of language (the house of Being). Any articulation is not possible without some form of conceptualisation. Yet for Levinas the origin and possibility of concepts is not the thought of Being, but the origin is the gift of the world to the Other (Levinas 1969:175). He argues that in this original possibility as gift in its silent intention, as signification in the saying of substitution, it is non-violent. It becomes violent only in historical languages where it is obliged to articulate itself in a conceptual syntax, opening the circulation of the same and being determined by ontology and what for Levinas remains the concept of concepts: Being.

Language for Levinas is non-violent only in its silent intention before Being. The moment one enters historical language there is violence and economy of war. Yet for Levinas the origin of meaning is unhistorical (diachronic). It is exactly this a-historicity of meaning at its “origin” which separates Heidegger from Levinas, although one cannot speak of an origin as it is beyond memory. For Heidegger, Being is history and therefore it is not outside of difference and thus it occurs as dissimulation of itself in its own unconcealment. The first violence would be this dissimulation of Being (concealment and unconcealment). If language is the house of Being then language hides its own origin, as language is the house of unconcealed Being where the difference calls into the difference, and thus beings are called into their Being, and beings – in being called – gestate Being.

To think Being, as Heidegger does, is thus less to think Being as the *primum cognitum* as was said, but to think Being as the *first dissimulated* (Derrida 1978b:149). Yet Being as *primum cognitum* and Being as *first dissimulated* should not be seen as contradictory. For Levinas, on the other hand, Being understood as concept is not the *first dissimulated*, but the *first dissimulating* into ontico-ontological difference, and thereby it would neutralise difference and bring everything into a whole of the Being of beings. Thus it would neutralise the difference of the infinite alterity of the Other by including the other in the same.

For Heidegger and Levinas, language would be both a coming forth and a holding back, enlightenment and obscurity, revealing and concealing. For both, dissimulation would be a conceptual gesture, yet on different planes. For Levinas, the concept of dissimulation would be on the plane of Being and for Heidegger on the plane of ontic determination (Derrida 1978b:149). This certainly highlights their difference, but as so often it also brings
them into close proximity, specifically with regards to their eschatologies, which in their own way both question the philosophical adventure since Plato (Derrida 1978b:149).

In conclusion, I will focus not so much on the differences between these two thinkers, although their differences are important as has been shown in the above paragraphs, but rather focus on what they together in their proximity offer for postmetaphysical God-talk.

It is clear that God cannot be thought as the prime mover. God comes to mind in Levinas in the thought of the Infinite in me. In other words, God comes to mind in that which breaks open the totality of the self; what breaks open the said for saying.

For both, God comes to mind as that which opens the ontological horizon instead of being indicated within the horizon. For Heidegger, God comes to mind in thinking the truth of Being and for Levinas, God comes to mind in thinking the Infinite alterity in the naked experience of the face of the Other. Thus, although there is important difference, they offer to the thought of God an anticipation, an eschatology and thus maybe a prayer.

There is no prior or beyond to the speaking language (Geläut der Stille), at least not anything that humans can have access to, as humans are in language and cannot get beyond language. Language is the event of Being where out of and into the difference Being and beings are called so that things make up world and world grants things their place. Levinas attempted to situate a prior to difference in ethics – that is the passive pre-conscious responsibility towards an infinite Other. Yet this ethics can only be stated in language, and thus it is but one of the many callings out of and into difference, and thus Levinas’ attempt will inevitably be said in the language of either metaphysics and/or the language of phenomenology.

In difference, out of which and into which Being and beings emerge in the silent speaking of language, Being is both unconcealed as it is concealed. Even in the speaking of language there remains an otherness (concealment) in the very unconcealing of Being. It is this otherness that Levinas tried to address or what he believes addresses humans as the trace of the Infinite, or in Heidegger’s language, the site for the Sacred.

They approached this Otherness differently. For Heidegger, it was the ontic-determination of the speaking of language, and for Levinas it was Being, and for both it is this site that is the site where God comes to ideation. This site will be further explored in the next chapter on Derrida. Heidegger was aware that one cannot move beyond the speaking of language and therefore the attitude of Gelassenheit. Levinas knew that one cannot grasp what is
beyond, but realised that this beyond affects subjectivity and he therefore tried to capture that affect in a language of alterity or a language of ethics.

Derrida sides with Heidegger in the realisation that it is impossible and any attempt to formalise it in a said will destroy its alterity and thus Derrida turns to the trace of the impossible in the possible, the trace of the impossible (saying beyond language) in the said; traces of dif-ference, traces of différance that open towards a deconstructive reading of the said.

This deconstructive reading opens a space for an event. Heidegger’s Sacred, that Levinas believed to be an absolute separation, is not that absolute in the sense that it is also near in that it leaves traces of its difference in the said, traces of Being’s concealment in the Being’s unconcealment.

The study would like to end this chapter on the limits and possibilities of Levinas’ God-talk by giving Levinas the word, thereby not giving a conclusive word, but maybe offering a prayer, a supplication in anticipation of a God to come.

“...the God of prayer, of invocation, would be more ancient than the God deduced from the world or from some sort of a priori radiance and stated in an indicative proposition (Levinas 1998:148).

This prayer is directed, not so much into the void or non-space (the nothing) into which Being retreats as it unconceals itself, but to the face of the Other.

The I is the servant of the you. “An inequality that may appear arbitrary; unless it be in the word addressed to the other man, in the ethics of the welcome – the first religious service, the first prayer, the first liturgy, the religion out of which God could first have come to mind and the word “God” have made its entry into language and into good philosophy ....The way in which God takes on meaning in the I-You relation, to become a word of language, invites us to new reflection” (Levinas 1998:150-151). Yet this new reflection on God-talk is limited by the void, non-space into which Being retreats as it is dissimulated into the Being of beings of every face to face encounter that is always also a speech.
Chapter Four The limits and possibilities of Derrida’s *différence* for postmetaphysical God-talk

1. IMPOSSIBLE YET NECESSARY INTRODUCTION TO DERRIDA’S THOUGHT

How to introduce Derrida into this discussion on the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk? How to introduce not the person Derrida, but the subject matter that Derrida’s name entitles or undersigns? Can one gather from the great oeuvre of Derrida’s writing a subject matter that can be introduced within a few pages? In the previous chapter it was already mentioned how difficult it is to get a grip (comprehension) of Levinas’ work and reduce it to a totality of one’s comprehension, which would be contrary to Levinas’ desire. With Derrida it is even more difficult to get a grasp of the subject matter for various reasons. One very obvious reason is the magnitude of Derrida’s oeuvre, but that could be overcome. The more important reason is that any attempt to capture the subject matter of Derrida’s thought would be an abstraction (totalisation destroying the heterogeneity of his texts). Derrida himself argued against any reading that attempts to reduce his or anybody else’s work to an abstract total system or theory. Derrida (1995c) reflects about such an abstraction with regards to Plato’s thought in the essay, *Khora*, in the book *On the Name*. Derrida does not criticise such abstractions because he argues that they are necessary, as a reader cannot but gather from the text his/her own abstraction of the meaning of the text, but what Derrida is pleading for is that one is conscious that such a reading is an abstraction (Derrida 1995:119). The danger of such an abstraction is that it is extended over all the folds and differences of the text – it reduces the otherness of the text to the same of the abstraction. Such an abstraction can then be called the philosophy of Derrida. He argues that such an abstraction would neither be arbitrary nor illegitimate “since a certain force of thetic abstraction at work in the heterogeneous text ... can recommend one to do so” (Derrida 1995c:120). There is a certain thetic abstraction at work in the text itself. This happens with any text, although it is the violence of domination and in a sense a reduction to the same of the heterogeneous text. So although this violence of reducing the text to some or other form of the same is legitimate and necessary it must never be understood as absolute. Derrida sees this as the task of deconstruction – to question the absoluteness of abstractions and to expose
the cracks of such abstractions\textsuperscript{127}. Thus one can say that it is both possible and impossible to introduce Derrida’s thought.

Geoffrey Bennington (1993) attempted such an impossible, yet necessary and therefore possible, within limitations, abstraction called \textit{Derridabase} in the book by Bennington and Derrida, \textit{Jacques Derrida}. Bennington’s idea was to capture (describe) “if not the totality of J.D.’s thought, then at least the general system of that thought”. Derrida responded to this attempt by writing a text literally underneath Derridabase (at the bottom of each page of Derridabase), but also figuratively a text underlying or under-cutting Derridabase whereby Derrida tried to “prove” that every text remains essentially open. Thus, although something like a Derridabase is both necessary and something that happens naturally\textsuperscript{128}, it is also impossible. Taking Derrida’s advice that it is not an error to try and grasp his thought in an abstraction the study will more or less follow Bennington’s Derridabase as an example, in an attempt to describe my reading of Derrida, but being aware of the impossibility of such an absolute description. The abstraction offered here is motivated by the theme of the study and it is with the theme of the study in mind that Derrida’s works were read and this reading with its special focus offered a “natural” abstraction which I wish to outline in the following pages. The outline of this chapter is based on a certain chronological reading of Derrida. Derrida suggest two alternative approaches to reading his major earlier works and the second alternative (Derrida 1978:x) was followed as outlined by Alan Bass in his \textit{Translator’s Introduction}. The reading was according to the following chronological order: beginning with \textit{Speech and Phenomena} (1973), then reading the first six chapters of \textit{Writing and Difference} (Derrida 1978), then \textit{Of Grammatology} (1997a) was read in its entirety before continuing with the last five chapters of \textit{Writing and Difference}, followed by \textit{Dissemination} (1981) and finally \textit{Margins of Philosophy} (1982). This reading certainly does not cover the full extent of the published work of Derrida, but it covers the major published work of his early years\textsuperscript{129} and it is a good basis to offer a description of his thought. In the later sections of this chapter numerous other works will also be consulted and brought into the conversation.

\textsuperscript{127} In constructing itself, in being posed in its dominant form at a given moment, the text is neutralized in it, numbed, self-destructed, or dissimulated: unequally, partially, provisionally. The forces that are thus inhibited continue to maintain a certain disorder, some potential incoherence, and some heterogeneity in the organization of the theses” (Derrida 1995c:120-121).

\textsuperscript{128} See Derrida (1997a:149) where he argues that the supplement comes naturally to put itself in Nature’s place. This can be translated into this context that it comes naturally to supplement Derrida’s oeuvre with an abstraction.

\textsuperscript{129} This does not mean that one can divide Derrida’s work into periodic sections. It is merely referring to the chronology of the publication dates of his work.
Thus this chapter will attempt a “description” of Derrida’s thought and how this relates to the theme of the study. It will begin, because there always has to be a beginning in such a study and not because there is a beginning to Derrida’s thought with which to get a grasp on his thought, as he would argue that we are always already in the text and thus there is no true beginning (origin), as we are always already in the moment of a text. This is exactly where the study finds itself at this very moment\(^\text{130}\) in the linguistic turn of both Heidegger and Levinas.

This chapter will begin by introducing some of the “basic” ideas of Derrida’s thought with regards to linguistics where the focus will be on the idea of différance and the closure of philosophy, and it is in this context that the conversation with Levinas and Heidegger will commence before venturing further to explore the limits and possibilities of these ideas for postmetaphysical God-talk with special reference to khôra and negative theology.

2. SPEECH – SIGN – WRITING – CONTEXT

2.1 Where to begin: a supplemented beginning

As already mentioned above it is not about finding an origin or an absolutely justified beginning from which one could construct or reconstruct Derrida’s thought into an abstract system. Derrida suggests that we begin wherever we are (Derrida 1997a:162) as it is impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. “Wherever we are: in a text where we already believe ourselves to be” (Derrida 1997a:162) would be the best place to start. Bennington (1993:15) says the best one can do is to give a strategic justification for the procedure of starting somewhere and ending somewhere else. The strategic justification for the procedure of this study is that it is the fourth chapter following a chapter on Heidegger and Levinas and at this moment it finds itself in the linguistic turns of Heidegger and Levinas. The “now” of the study, the now of the linguistic turn, is when language, concepts, institutions, and philosophy itself show themselves both to belong to a metaphysical or logocentric tradition, but this tradition has been exposed by both Heidegger and Levinas to be exhausted. The previous chapter ended at the site (Ortschaft) of how to speak beyond the exhausted philosophical metaphysical language. It was also shown that this site and the “end” of language is also the site where God comes

\(^{130}\) This reminds me of a title of one of Derrida’s articles on the work of Levinas: En ce moment meme dans cet ouvrage me voici (Derrida 1980) translated as: As we speak I am here in this book.
to mind. Derrida, in following Heidegger and in conversation with numerous other texts, explores this site and the possibilities and impossibilities of this site.

Heidegger’s turn was towards the double stilling of and in difference, namely the peal of stillness which is the speaking of language. This peal of stillness is best expressed (most purely spoken) in the poem. Levinas’ turn was towards the saying that disrupts and interrupts the said and which signifies in prophetic witness of the “Here I am” prior to words. Derrida responds to this linguistic turn in Levinas and criticises it as a form of phonocentrism, which translates as a form of logocentrism. Levinas, in an attempt to escape the opposition between speaking and writing chose to speak rather of the language of the skin. The language of the skin is the language of the proximity of the other to which one responds prior to verbal utterances with the “here I am” of substitution. This non-verbal language is revealed to the sensitivity of the skin. The sensibility of the skin to the Other grounds ethical subjectivity (Levinas 1981:15). In Violence and Metaphysics Derrida responds to Levinas’ attempt as he argues: “And, if you will, the attempt to achieve an opening towards the beyond of philosophical discourse, by means of philosophical discourse, which can never be shaken off completely, cannot possibly succeed within language – and Levinas recognizes that there is no thought before language and outside of it – except by formally and thematically posing the question of the relations between belonging and the opening, the question of closure” (Derrida 1978b:110). These questions Levinas grapples with and he seeks a language in which to grapple with this belonging (the same) and opening (the Other). How to speak of the opening without enclosing it within a belonging? There is no doubt Levinas’ work indicates this opening, but in that it indicates it, it encloses it.

Levinas thus never completely gave up speaking of that which was beyond language as he was not completely convinced of the impossibility of thinking this beyond, but sought a first philosophy (ethics) in which to say this beyond of language. Derrida suggests that one begins where one is, and taken literally in the context of this study, this is where the study is: the question of the possibility or impossibility of philosophy beyond philosophy or language. In other words the site, moment of this study is a reflection on the possibility and/or impossibility of moving beyond metaphysics and logocentrism – the end of philosophy or the closure of philosophy. This question becomes clear in a beautiful little exchange between Levinas and Derrida. Derrida, in his critical essay on Levinas (1978b:152), quotes a Greek who argued that not to philosophise is still to philosophise.

131 “It was a Greek who said, “If one has to philosophize, one has to philosophize; if one does not have to philosophize, one still has to philosophize (to say it and think it). One always has to philosophize” (Derrida 1978b:152).
to which Levinas (1998:77) in his essay, *God and Philosophy*, responded and argued that it is not necessary to still philosophise, as Levinas believed that there is a way beyond philosophy – a way of thinking and thus signifying that which is beyond the limit of philosophy and thus think outside of philosophy or philosophy’s other, without returning to philosophy.

Derrida argues that this is not possible, whereby he does not deny that there is an outside of philosophy or a beyond the limit of philosophy, but he denies that it is possible to think that beyond without returning that beyond to the grammar of philosophy. He denies the possibility of thinking outside of language and therefore one is always already in language (in the text) and there is no escape from that. Thus it is pointless to try and find an origin or an absolute starting point, not only of Derrida’s thought, but also of thought in general as one is always already in the text. In this sense Derrida’s thought can truly be described as postmetaphysical as it does not attempt to search for the *arkhē*.

If there is no origin or no *arkhē* then everything has already begun (Bennington 1993:19) and one is always already in the text. This leads one to probably the most infamous statement in Derrida’s oeuvre from the book, *Of Grammatology*, that there is nothing outside the text [there is no outside-text; *il n’y a pas de hors-texte*] (Derrida 1997a:158). I say infamous as it is probably the most quoted, but also most often misunderstood (read incorrectly) statements of Derrida’s works. In re-reading this statement within the context of the essay in which it appears it seems as if what Derrida is trying to say is that there is no origin, *arkhē* beyond the text. The chapter from which this statement comes has the title, “… That Dangerous Supplement…” and it is written, as a commentary or reading of Rousseau’s *Confessions* (Derrida 1997a:141-164). The idea of a supplement has a dual meaning. It means something is added and in that sense supplemented, as writing is added as a technique, as a supplement, to make speech present in its absence (Derrida 1997a:144). This idea of writing as a supplement comes from Rousseau where speech is seen as primary and natural and writing as artificial and supplementary. This is the first signification that is harboured in the concept of supplement as an addition. “It cumulates and accumulates presence. It is thus that art, *technē*, image, representation, convention,

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132 “A meaning thus seems to bear witness to a beyond which would not be the no-man’s-land of non-sense where opinions accumulate. *Not to philosophize would not be* “to philosophize still,” nor to succumb to opinions. There is meaning testified to in interjections and outcries, before being disclosed in propositions, a meaning that signifies as a command, like an order that one signifies” (Levinas 1998:77).

133 TN. The Greek *arkhē* combines the values of a founding principle and of government by a controlling principle (e.g. *archaeology, monarchy*) (Derrida 1982:6).

134 I specifically write this with certain openness to other interpretations as I would not want to reduce this text to a single absolute interpretation.
etc., come as supplements to nature and are rich with this entire cumulating function” (Derrida 1997a:144-145). The second signification harboured in the concept supplement is the idea that the supplement supplements in that it adds only to replace. “It intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void” (Derrida 1997a:145). Thus writing in Rousseau’s thinking is not only an addition to speech and in that sense a supplement, but it also replaces (takes-the-place-of) speech in the absence of speech.

These two significations are intertwined and it is not easy to separate them. In the same way the sign is a technical addition to the thing itself, but it also replaces the thing as the thing itself no longer has to be present to the sign, as the sign signifies the thing in its absence. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself.

For Rousseau such a supplement is not only dangerous, but it is also against both nature and reason (Derrida 1997a:148). It is against nature, because it is an artificial supplement (addition to nature) and it is against reason’s wish to deal with the “real thing” rather than with the artificial supplement, but it is blind to this second character of the supplement as it believes this addition to be natural and not against nature (signifying nature’s absence and thus signifying nature’s death). Yet reason is blind to this necessity of the artificial supplement to Nature as reason presumes that the addition (supplement) to Nature is natural. In adding for example the supplement of writing one “naturally” thinks that one is preserving presence beyond the presence of the present and one does not think that this addition to the present is also the death, that is absence, of the present. In Derrida’s essay in the book Dissemination, Plato’s Pharmacy (Derrida 1981:67ff), he describes this dual and unthought nature of the supplement or the pharmakon or writing beautifully. The pharmakon functions both as medicine (anti-dote) or remedy (Derrida 1981:99), but also as poison (Derrida 1981:99f). That the supplement is poison, that writing is poison, is often forgotten and it is forgotten in that writing (supplement) is believed to be a natural remedy and thus not against nature and thus not an “artificial” addition to nature, which would deny nature by taking-the-place-of nature or presence.

There are within Western tradition two main theories as to how this addition is natural and therefore not in contradiction to Nature, namely idealism and materialism. Yet reason is blind, as it is incapable of thinking this double infringement upon Nature (Derrida 1997a:149). The infringement of firstly that there is a lack in nature and because of this lack something has to be added to it, namely the supplement which is always not only an addition, but also an in-place-of. Reason is powerless to think this. Reason is not only

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135 The first infringement is that it is an addition and the second infringement is that it is supplemented in the sense of in-place-of Nature.
powerless to think this double infringement, but it is constituted by this lack of power (Derrida 1997a:149). Reason is founded on the idea that nature or presence can be supplemented by thought and that this addition of thought to nature or presence or reality is natural. It does not think that this addition is also the death (poison) of nature, presence and/or reality in the sense that it is its absence. It is powerless to think this lack and supplementarity as it presumes the self-identity of the natural being. It presumes and believes reasonably the self-identity of the natural being in that it is reasonable and logically necessary that the natural being is identical with itself in that it is present to itself. Reason cannot determine the supplement as it’s other, “as the irrational and non-natural, for the supplement comes naturally to put itself in Nature’s place” (Derrida 1997a:149). When a human “sees” a dog it seems natural and logical that this act of seeing is a self-presentation of a self-identity without any intermediary of some or other supplement (sign). It seems natural and logically necessary that the dog that presents itself to sight is self-identical and present to itself (self-present), that is that the idea “dog” forms a logical and necessary union with the “actual” naturally present dog. This union comes naturally. It is not thought. If it is thought it is logically necessary either on the foundation of idealism or on the foundation of materialism, but it is logically necessary that there be a direct connection (union) without any artificial supplement.

Yet Derrida argues that there is always a supplement because the sign or word dog is a supplement to the thing “out there” wagging its tail. Yet, the “thing” and “out there” are also signs and thus supplements and thus there is no outside text as there is no beyond supplements. The supplement is the image or representation of Nature, but this image is neither in nor out of Nature (Derrida 1997a:149). It is not in nature as it is a supplement (something added on); the image, sound-image or idea is not in nature, but it is something added, supplemented to nature, and yet it is also not completely external to nature and in that sense it is in nature, as seeing a dog and knowing it is a dog is the result of the supplement’s link to nature as it makes nature present in its absence. Yet this remedy that makes nature present in its absence is also the poison that makes it absent in its representation. This is the scandal of Reason: that nothing seems more natural than this unthought-of destruction of Nature (Derrida 1997a:151).

This is the dangerous supplement it promises itself as it escapes. The supplement, writing, sign is always a pharmakon – remedy and poison. Metaphysical history has either read the supplement as remedy in its various epochal forms or it has lately read it exclusively as poison, as some argue for the absolute relativism and arbitrariness of signs, supplements and writing. Derrida suggest that the idea is not to focus on the one or
the other, as either way one remains within the logocentric tradition of seeking the *arkhē*, but rather to think these two together and to think their difference (remedy-poison) and to think their deferral in time.

Should the supplement now become the new *arkhē*? It cannot, because it gives itself as it moves away and thus strictly speaking it cannot be called presence (Derrida 1997a:154) and therefore exceeds all language of metaphysics, but it is almost inconceivable to reason. “Almost inconceivable: simple irrationality, the opposite of reason, are less irritating and waylaying for classical logic. The supplement is maddening because it is neither presence nor absence and because it consequently breaches both our pleasure and our virginity” (Derrida 1997a:154). This is the strange “logic” of the supplement that deconstructs all the metaphysical concepts by arguing that the symbolic is immediate, presence is absence, the non-deferred is deferred and pleasure is the menace of death (Derrida 1997a:154). In this essay Derrida reflects on the supplement within Rousseau’s reflection on the supplement in the context of onanism – autoeroticism. The supplement is a terrifying menace, a dangerous supplement, yet it is also the surest protection against the very menace. In other words autoeroticism, masturbation is a supplement for heteroeroticism, but it is also what protects against the full disappearing in the other of heteroeroticism. The supplement is both the presence of the absence in that it is an image or a representation, but it is likewise the absence of the presence because it is only a representation and thus it has the ability to master the presence (Nature) which is both desired and feared. Yet this intermediary character of the supplement is inconceivable to reason. The supplement occupies the middle point between total absence and total presence (Derrida 1997a:157).

Where does that leave one if writing, language and thus thinking is such a dangerous and yet necessary supplement? If all we have is the supplement, the text, it becomes a question of reading that text, or as Derrida would more specifically say, a question of the task of reading (Derrida 1997a:158). Thus reading, or maybe first of all writing a text that is making use of supplements, is only in part that one adds something (supplements) consciously, but the other part is the inconceivable of the supplement, the middle point of the supplement, which is not conscious and thus beyond the conscious control of the writer. The writer uses supplements only by “letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point be governed by the system” (Derrida 1997a:158). The writer uses supplements to bring to presence what is absent. The writer calls with supplements (words/images/representations) into absence and thereby brings into presence, but unaware that this presence through calling is the absence of presence. This reminds one
of the chapter on Heidegger where words call into absence and bring into presence by calling out of dif-fer-ence into dif-fer-ence. The writer or the poet can, through supplements (words/images/representations), call what is absent into presence. One can speak or write about the dog without any dog being anywhere near (present) and by speaking the word dog or writing the word dog something of the presence of a dog is conjured up as it is called to mind or called to presence in that the idea of the dog presents itself as dog (supplements for the lack of an actually natural presence of a dog). But there is no dog present and that is often forgotten or remains inconceivable that one’s ideas, concepts, thoughts are supplements and thus death (poison).

The writer, poet, speaker who uses supplements (that is who writes) does invent these supplements anew each time that s/he writes, but receives these supplements from her/his historical-cultural context. Thus the supplements that the writer uses are conditioned by the historical epoch of their use. It is for this reason that they appear natural. A baby learns the word dog from the family when pointing to the favourite household pet. The dangerous character of the supplement might be more obvious if words (signs/supplements) were invented anew each time. There are many theories as to how language originated, in other words how signs came into being and what the connection is between the sign and nature, the image and nature. How humans mimic nature in an attempt to communicate, make nature present. But whatever theory is used to explain the creaturely mimicking of nature and how exactly nature is made present, the image/representation/sound-image/mimic is not nature and thus re-presents nature in something that is not nature (is not what it represents). If it was, then there would be no need to communicate in the first place, as all would be self-present to all. This will be further explored under the discussion of the sign.

Now if that is true of writing then the task of reading needs to take into consideration this logic or illogic of language or il-logic of the supplement. For Derrida, the task of reading is not only to reproduce the conscious, voluntary, intentional relationship that the writer institutes in his exchanges with history to which s/he belongs, thanks to the conventional element of language (Derrida 1997a:158). Derrida argues that this critical reading within the historical context is indispensible, because it guards against a reading that can go in any direction whatsoever and thus it brings in a certain responsibility in reading of texts (Derrida 1997a:158). Such a reading binds texts to their contexts and thus closes the door to absolute relativism of reading anything you like into a text. Yet he argues that such a

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136 It is justified to use this idea of conjure which is linked to magic as already in Plato’s thoughts writing (supplementation) was linked to wizardry: pharmakeus (Derrida 1981:119)
responsible reading can only be a doubling of a text, a commentary within the historical horizon, which certainly protects the text from relativism, but it cannot open the text (Derrida 1997a:158). The task of reading cannot just be a matter of reading the text within the historical-cultural context of the writer, but it also cannot legitimately transgress the text towards something other than the text. It is impossible to transgress the text towards some referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psycho-biographical, etcetera) or something “outside” the text that is some signified outside the text “whose content could take place, could have taken place outside of language, that is to say, in the sense that we give here to what word, outside of writing in general” (Derrida 1997a:158). Reading takes place like writing, always within a historical context of the absence of a referent or a transcendental signified (Derrida 1997a:158). Reading and writing take place through the medium or the intermediary of the supplement which is always both a calling into presence of an absence and the absence of what is called into presence, that is the absence of the referent. “There is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside-text; [il n'y a pas de hors-texte]” (Derrida 1997a:158). Derrida continues and argues, it is not because the “real” existence of what the text is about (what it is a supplement for) is not important to one, but that one does not have access to that “real” existence, except through the supplement.

There is no beginning, as any thought of a beginning, of an origin (arkhē) is already and always already a supplement of the arkhē, as one is always already within the text. There is no origin to which thought has access as these so-called “real” existences of flesh, bones and blood are called into presence (called to mind) through the intermediary of the supplement. They come to mind or thought through the addition of a supplement (name/sign/image/representation), yet this supplement is dangerous as through bringing these “real existence” into presence it absents them in that the supplement supplements them. The further one searches for the origin the more one finds supplements of supplements. This chain of supplements is to infinity. The so called absolute presence or Nature, that which names such as “real mother” name has always already escaped and thus that which opens meaning and thought is writing (the use of supplements) and thus the disappearance of natural presence (Derrida 1997a:159). From the above one can deduce that all one has is the text (as there is no outside-text), or written differently all one has are supplements and the use of supplements is traditionally attributed to writing. Thus writing for Derrida has priority over speech, if one can still speak of priority when there is no beginning as one is always already within writing. Derrida is thus questioning the long tradition of Western thought and Western metaphysics which, in reflecting on the
relationship between language and Nature, has always given priority to speech and seen writing as secondary.

**2.2 The priority of speech in Western thought**

It is important for this study to understand Derrida's “there is not outside-text” as this seems to be the final limitation of metaphysical God-talk, therefore the study will spend considerable time on understanding this linguistic limitation so as to identify the possibilities it offers to postmetaphysical God-talk.

Writing in the Western tradition is seen as being secondary because it is derivative and not primary (Derrida 1997a:30). It is derivative of the voice as it is “only” a representation (signifies) of the self-present voice. The reason why the voice receives this privileged position with regard to language’s relationship with natural presence is varied, but Husserl for example argues that only in speaking does one hear oneself speak, in other words one is present to oneself (Derrida 1973:77ff). One is self-present in the living present only through the voice in which one can hear oneself speak. Derrida explores these thoughts of Husserl in his first book, *Speech and Phenomena* (Derrida 1973). Writing would be an addition (supplement) to the self-present voice. Writing, as interpreted in Western tradition, is all about absence, both the absence of the speaker as well as the absence of the referent, and it is because of this reason that writing was given this secondary role as presence and thus voice which was interpreted as being present to presence must be primary. “The essential link of the *logos* to the voice, or *phonē*, has never been broken in this tradition: logocentrism is phonocentrism. Writing therefore is merely a species of general communication which is employed in the absence of the addressee, when he or she is no longer present within earshot” (Critchley 1999:33). These ideas of the "natural" or divine connection between the voice and reality are further explored in the essay, *The End of the Book and the Beginning of Writing*, (Derrida 1997a:1-26). It is because of the gap between voice and reality that there arose the need for the idea of divine writing, or natural or conventional writing which is enclosed in a book and the idea of the holy book or logos (Derrida1997a:12-14). The voice is connected to this divine writing.

In a written text the subject of the text (author) is not necessarily present (s/he is not self-present to the text) as a text can be read long after the subject’s (author’s) death. This theme of the link between speech and writing, language and Natural presence is further explored in *Of Grammatology*, reflecting on the work of Saussure and Rousseau amongst
others (Derrida 1997a). Derrida reflects on Saussure’s arguments in the first part of Of Grammatology as Saussure made the distinction that language and writing are two distinct systems of signs and writing exists for the sole purpose of re-presenting language (Derrida 1997a:30). In this tradition writing only re-presents language while language specifically in speech is self-present and not re-presented and thus it can be originary. This distinction between writing and language Saussure further unpacks as he argues that “the linguistic object is not defined by the combination of the written word and the spoken word: the spoken form alone constitutes the object (Saussure 1959:23-24). The written word would only be a re-presentation of the spoken word which is thus the linguistic object. What makes the voice primary for Saussure is the unity of sense and sound and a unity of concept and voice, or in Saussurian language, a unity of signified and signifier (Saussure 1959).

2.3 The impossibility of thinking the sign without writing: speech is already writing

Saussure thus proposed to retain the word “sign” to designate this unity. The sign designates the unity of sense and sound and the unity of concept and voice. The sign designates the whole, thus both concept (sense) and sound-image (sound). Saussure replaced sense and sound or concept and sound-image with signified (sense) and signifier (sound-image) (Saussure 1959:67).

The word “dog” that was used earlier as an example will be further used to try and illustrate the instituted and conventional unity between signified and signifier. In other words a conventional unity exists between the sound-image “dog” and the sense or concept of something that can be called a dog. It was mentioned above that a toddler sees the family pet and s/he learns that this “thing” is “called” dog. S/he learns that this word/sign “dog” refers to that thing sleeping next to the log fire. Now s/he learns this from her family context and if she was in another country, Germany for example, s/he would learn that that same thing is called “Hund”. What Saussure is arguing is that the sound image (Hund/dog) that forms the unity with the sense (canine creature often used as family pets) forms this unity by instituted convention, which means it is dependent on the cultural-historical-linguistic setting. He also argues that it is arbitrary in that there is nothing in the canine-creature-often-used-as-a-family-pet that would necessitate the use of the sound-image dog/Hund.
A conventional unity exists between the spoken word “dog” and the concept or sense that such a word conjures up in the human mind (canine-creature-often-used-as-family-pet). The word “dog” is this unity between the sound-image and the concept (canine-creature-often-used-as-family-pet) and this together forms the sign. Before continuing with Saussure, just a short reminder of the classical idea of a sign will be given and how Derrida challenges this classical idea by following Saussure to a point.

The sign to be a sign, like the supplement, needs to stand in for something that is absent as it represents what is absent at a distance. A sign is a detour, as the sign represents the presence of that which it stands for or supplements, but is itself different from the sign. The sign, like the supplement, is deferred presence. A sign is the supplement for the time of the absence of presence. In a world where presence is seen as primary any supplement that supplements the absence of presence must necessarily be seen as secondary. Derrida challenges this secondariness of the sign, which is also the secondariness of deferral, as he challenges the primacy of presence. He argues for an ‘originary’ différance as already discussed above with regards to the supplement. He argues that the sign/supplement/writing being a pharmakon (remedy for absence as well as poison – death of presence) and therefore always both presence and absence and that the difference between absence and presence, as well as the deferral of presence and absence, is constitutive of one’s understanding of presence. Thus presence is already “corrupted” by this différance and thus is not an absolute or primary presence, but a supplemented or secondariness. “This has two consequences: first, différance can no longer be contained within the classical theory of the sign, and second, and more significantly, it puts into question the authority of presence, and consequently the metaphysical demand to formulate the meaning of Being as presence” (Critchley 1999:36).

How does Derrida challenge this secondariness of the sign? He follows Saussure’s theory of linguistics exposing the unsaid in this theory. The sign, to be able to represent what is absent, needs to be sufficiently detached from what it represents to be able to re-present it in its absence, and yet needs to be sufficiently attached to what is absent so that it is not confused with something else. The sign “dog” must be sufficiently detached from the actually present canine wagging its tail to be able to re-present this creature in its

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137 “The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, state the present, the being-present, when present cannot be presented, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign” (Derrida 1982:9).

138 Derrida’s neologism of différance will be unpacked in a later section in more detail, but at this stage it can be said that it is a combination of two concepts – difference and deferral.
absence. Yet, for the sign to be effective it must be sufficiently attached to this canine so that when the sign is used in the absence of the canine it does not “recall” into presence (what is absent) something completely different, for example a feline creature.

The “thing” to which a sign refers is in itself also a sign as it can either be a sign of a referent such as the naturally existing dog or it can be a sign of the sense (signified) of the thing. For a sign to function, what must be absent is the referent (naturally present thing) and not the signified (sense or concept). The word dog (sound-image) makes sense even if there is no dog around, but the sound-image of the sign/word dog would not make any sense if it did not conjure up this meaning/sense (concept – canine-creature-often-used-as-family-pet) of the absent dog. It is for this reason that Saussure argued that the signified (sense/concept) is in-dissociable from the signifier (sound-image). You cannot separate the two from each other as there is a necessary link between the sound-image and its sense (meaning). Saussure argues that this unity is an effect of a “somewhat mysterious fact… that ‘thought-sound’ implies division” (Saussure 1959:112). The traditional perspective is that in the voice the sound-image is somehow related to natural presence which means that the signifier (sound-image) is somehow directly connected to the referent (natural presence). Yet for Saussure the unity of thought and sound-image is not natural, but an instituted and conventional unity and thus an arbitrary unity as discussed above. It is arbitrary and conventional why the sound-image “dog” is used to signify the concept dog (canine-creature-often-used-as-family-pet).

The connection between signifier and signified is an instituted (one could say an artificial 139 or cultural) connection and not a natural connection and thus does not escape the necessity of supplementation. In the previous section this was already discussed with regards to the idea of the supplement taking into consideration all the nuances of the meaning of supplement that transforms it into a dangerous supplement. This connection between signifier and signified is thus a supplemented connection and, as discussed above, the supplement functions like a pharmakon as it is both a remedy and a poison. The necessity of supplementation is the inscription of writing into the heart of speech (language) and this is what Saussure did not think. He believed that writing could be kept neatly out of speech and out of language (writing is secondary to language), but what Derrida showed was that writing is already inscribed in this basic unity of language, the unity between signifier and signified.

139 I use the word “artificial” in the sense of what is not natural.
One has to think the relationship between sign and supplement and thus the idea that one is always already in the text (in the supplementation and thus in writing) and therefore he argues: “Let us start, since we are already there, from the problematic of the sign and of writing” (Derrida 1982:9). Derrida argues that to understand the arbitrariness of the sign as Saussure interprets one can no longer think the division between speech and writing. In other words, once one starts to reflect about the arbitrariness of the sign one has to think the supplement and thus one has to think writing. The sound-image (signifier) forms an arbitrary and conventional unity with the sense (signified), yet the sense (canine-creature-often-used-as-family-pet) is made up of a set of signifiers in themselves that could just as well be replaced with other signifiers depending on the dictionary you read. One could open the dictionary and look up “dog” and find the following “sense”: “canine creature that is man’s best friend”. In other words, there is another set of signifiers signifying some sense, but this seems to continue ad–infinitum as one never fully reaches a final originary sense (signified) as there is always still another signifier. There is no signified, but only signifiers and these signifiers make sense because of their relation and differences to the other signifiers in the chain of signifiers.

Signs make sense because of these differential and connected chains of signifiers, these chains of supplements. A supplement is always both an addition to what it supplements (and this addition is sufficiently different (detached)) and a deferral of the thing for which it is a supplement of so as to re-connect (attach) to the thing at a later stage in time again. Writing is inscribed in the very make-up of the sign as it is inscribed in the unity between signifier and signified. Writing is “at the same time more exterior to speech, as it is not its image or its symbol, and it is more interior to speech, which is already in itself a writing” (Derrida 1997a:46).

Saussure maintains that writing is added or supplemented onto speech, where Derrida shows that the supplement of writing already plays a role in speech as speech is writing. To understand Derrida one first needs to continue following Saussure’s argument. The written word will be “phonetic” and it will be outside of language as the exterior representation of language – language understood as the unity of thought and sound. Derrida argues that writing, which Saussure perceives as exterior to language, operates from an already constituted unity of signification, but for Saussure writing has played no part in the formation of this unity between signifier and signified (Derrida 1997a:30-31). Saussure thus argues that writing is completely unrelated to the inner system of language (Saussure 1959:23). There is no natural connection between writing and language. There is a reason why Western tradition believed it necessary to keep language/speech pure
from this pharmakon since the time of Plato. Since Plato writing was known to have this
dual character of the pharmakon as being both a remedy and poison and thus there
needed to be something (opposite) to writing which was pure and not poisoned (only
remedy), otherwise the whole system of thought (episteme/science) would be poisoned as
all knowledge would be simultaneously a wonderful remedy, but likewise poisoned. This
necessity of a pure origin or pure foundation made the division possible between inside
and outside, where language was seen as a pure inside naturally related to nature and
writing was seen as the poisoned outside. Western tradition has never denied the value of
writing, as the value of writing as a remedy for absence has always been treasured, but
because of the absence of both the author and referent, writing in this tradition harboured
the dangerous poison as well – the dangerous poison of un-truth, as writing deals with
absence and therefore there can be no proof of its “truth”. That is where the problem of
writing was located: in the belief that truth was to be found in self-presence of speech.
This belief that truth is to be found in the self-presence of speech was the foundation of all
science and knowledge. In such a tradition it is clear that the poison needs to be kept
outside and is not allowed to come into the internal logic of language as self-presence.
This division into opposites is necessary just as the exclusion of writing to the outside is
necessary in Saussure’s theory to protect the inner logic of language (Derrida 1997a:33-
34). Various theories and theologies have been created to protect the inner logic of
language and thereby to protect the possibility of truth (truth as perfect imitation of
presence or adequate re-presentation of presence, thus truth thought on the basis of self-
presence).

Derrida, in his essay The end of the Book and the beginning of writing, argues that the
sign, to protect it from the outer menace of writing, must turn towards the absolute logos
or the light of the sun or God to protect it from this dangerous supplement that is not
natural, but in that it is a remedy for absence it is also a poison. To protect the inner logic
from this poison the word and face of God must be invoked. “The sign and divinity have
the same place and time of birth. The age of the sign is essentially theological. Perhaps it
will never end. Its historical closure is, however, outlined” (Derrida 1997a:14). He argues
that the intelligible face of the sign remains turned to the word and face of God (Derrida
1997a:13).

The supplement (sign = signifier-signified) for the sake of the protection of the inner logic
of language is perceived to be natural to the thing itself (referent). Thus within the tradition
from the very beginning this break, lack in nature, was perceived and needed to be
supplemented and this supplement, by its very nature of being a supplement, cannot be
the same as that of which it is a supplement, and therefore the supplement is an addition of something other to the same and it stands in-the-place-of the thing, thus carrying within itself the absence (death) of the presence of which it is a supplement. The danger of the supplement was perceived and thus the absolute logos or God needed to be invoked to protect against this danger. There was a denaturing of nature and this denaturing of nature by an outside of nature/other (something other than what was present naturally) needed to be contained within nature or divinity.

Writing is seen as the evil that comes from without to corrupt the internal system of language and yet it is a necessary evil. Plato already argued that the evil of writing comes from without (Derrida 1997a:34). In the *Phaedrus* he argues that it is an intrusion of an artful technique as a forced entry and an archetypal violence. It is an eruption of the outside within the inside (Derrida 1997a:34).

Saussure, in his attempt to save language, tries to do something impossible as he tries to show the following simultaneously:

i. Demonstrate the corruption of speech by writing
ii. Denounce the harm that the latter does to the former
iii. And to underline the inalterable and natural independence of language (Derrida 1997a:41).

This is an impossible and contradictory task. To say in the same breath that languages are independent of writing and that this is the truth of nature and yet “nature is affected – from without – by an overturning which modifies it in its interior, denatures it and obliges it to be separated from itself” (Derrida 1997a:41).

How does one understand this Nature and this natural process? As discussed previously, there is a lack in nature (nature needs something – mediator – with which to present itself) and this lack within nature is supplemented by the sign (language) which acts as a mediator, but this mediator, according to Saussure, is arbitrary and determined by convention. Through this supplementation by the sign, which is arbitrary and conventional, nature is denatured. Yet the argument necessary to protect language is that this denaturing must be in a way natural as it gathers its outside inside. Taking this dangerous supplement or unnatural supplement into consideration, it is the task of linguistics (science of language) to try and restore a natural bond between nature and language, to protect it from the poison of the dangerous supplement of writing. To protect the inner logic of language a natural bond must be found between the signifier (sense) and the signified.
(sound-image) and for Saussure the only true bond was the bond of sound and thus of voice; therefore giving priority to speech over writing (Derrida 1997a:40). Yet, he also argued that the connection between signifier (sound-image) and signified (sense) is arbitrary. His argument is thus contradictory.

Derrida would agree with Saussure that the unity is arbitrary, but if it is arbitrary then writing is inscribed within speech. The sound-image (signified) is already a supplement and thus the signifier (sense) and signified (sound-image) relationship of the sign, which is the unity of language, is already a form of writing. Speech, the so-called self-presence of the voice to itself, makes use of supplements as the signifier (sound-image) points to a sense which is made up of signifiers ad infinitum. There is no signified, only signifiers, which are related to each other in chains of signifiers with the necessary difference between them so as to convey sense/meaning.

Saussure’s arbitrary unity between signifier and signified, Derrida understands within the context of writing. Even before writing is linked to language and the sign (the unity of signifier and signified) “the concept of a graphie [unit of a possible graphic system] implies the framework of the instituted trace, as the possibility common to all systems of signification” (Derrida 1997a:46). For signification to be possible there needs to be, as mentioned earlier, both detachment and attachment. The sign must be both detached enough to re-present as well as attached enough to present what is absent. The sign is always both the representation of an absent presence and the absence of that presence and that is why the sign is by necessity a supplement and a pharmakon. Derrida interprets the sign, borrowing from Levinas the concept of trace, as a ‘trace’ is an immemorial past that has never been present (Derrida 1982:12,21) in its detachment (past never being present). The trace is attached “enough”, though not naturally attached, for the sign to work.

For the sign to work as sign there needs to be an instituted trace of the absent presence and the present absence. Thus the sign “works” on the basis of différance. It works because there is a difference between the sign and what it signifies and it works in the time between the absence of the thing signified and the return of presence of what it signifies. Thus it works because of difference and deferral of presence, which is not the same as absolute absence as there must be an instituted trace (a quasi-attachment – an immemorial past that was never present) in the absence of the presence that is represented in the differential and deferring work of the sign, but this attachment-detachment nature of the sign is not a natural attachment.
This instituted trace Derrida says is unmotivated (arbitrary), but not capricious (Derrida 1997a:46). The choice of the signifier is arbitrary in the sense that it does not have any natural attachment to the naturally present referent, yet it is not left entirely to the speaker to choose any signifier s/he likes. Derrida argues that the rupture of the “natural attachment” puts in question the idea of natural rather than attachment (Derrida 1997a:46). Thus between sign and thing via the infinitely signifying chain of signifiers there is attachment, although this attachment is not natural, but a supplement (something added to nature).

The idea of the instituted trace cannot be thought without thinking difference within the structure of reference. One cannot refer without difference, in other words reference is made possible via differentiation, because if there was no difference signification would not be necessary as things would be present to themselves. This difference necessary for signification cannot be touched or heard, yet it is essential for reference. The instituted trace thinks the necessary difference which makes reference and thus signification possible. The instituted trace thinks both the difference as well as the deferral.

The idea of the trace (a past that was never present) is useful in thinking the idea of attachment-detachment character of the sign and the arbitrariness of the sign. The instituted trace is the différance at work in the sign. It is the difference between sign and signified which is necessary for reference, because if there was no difference there would be no necessity for reference as things would be self-present and it thinks the deferral that is the time-lapse between the presence – absence – return of presence. This instituted trace in the sign thinks this différance which is not a natural attachment, but a necessary attachment, as it is a necessary detachment in the functioning of the sign and in that sense it is arbitrary, but instituted.

The signified concept is never present in and of itself. It signifies only because it is inscribed in a chain of differences (traces), and this chain of differences and this play of difference which his constitutive of meaning, is called différance (Critchley 1999:37) It is for this reason that différance is neither a word nor a concept, but rather the condition of possibility for conceptuality and words as such.

Derrida says that it is because of différance that the movement of signification is possible (Derrida 1982:13). One could say that it is because of différance that logocentrism is possible, but also in the same breath impossible. Différance is thus the remedy that constitutes logocentrism, but it is likewise the poison because it is the archi-writing that is inscribed in all thinking of presence – thus making presence the primary of all
metaphysics secondary to archi-writing. How to understand this différance or archi-writing that is inscribed in all presence? The linguistic turn has now turned to writing, archi-writing, and the primary of secondariness of always already being in the text.

Thus this supplementation of nature was either interpreted as natural catastrophe or as a monstrosity (that is a natural deviation within nature) (Derrida 1997a:41). Rousseau argues that absolute self-presence is rest and thus rest is natural meaning that both origin and end are inertia (Derrida 1997a:256). The fact that there are differences, language and thus history, means that this state of total self-present, rest, must have been disturbed. If the rest of self-presence is natural this disturbance must logically have come from the outside. He invoked the finger of God who gently pushed the globe (Derrida 1997a:256ff) as a natural catastrophe that causes the necessary disturbance from rest to language and thus history. Saussure would not follow this route of natural catastrophe, but rather the idea of a monstrous deviation within nature. The idea of the monstrous deviation in nature is probably closer to the idea of the dangerous supplement.

But there is no outside, there is no outside text. There is not another here-and-now and there is no other transcendental presence or another origin of the world that could be the cause of this disturbance, this monstrosity. It is this irreducible absence of the other (another here and now, another transcendental present, another origin) within the presence of the trace which is not a metaphysical formula substituted for a scientific concept of writing (Derrida 1997a:47). The idea of trace, différance, archi-writing, supplement¹⁴⁰ is not a new metaphysics as it is not a new explanation of the origin of the world, language. It is not a new arkhē upon which the rest of thought can be systematically built. Yet this idea of the trace, archi-writing, does raise the question: well, what is it? What is it that disturbs self-presence? With this question one is immediately in the province of theology – where the word “God” and face of God come to mind. As already mentioned, the birth place of the sign is also the birth place of divinity (Derrida 1997a:14). Différance is the “birth” place of the sign, that is if one can speak of birth as birth is again an origin, but what différance witnesses to is that there is no arkhē, as one is always already in the play of differences and in the play of deferral and thus différance is not God. Therefore différance, trace, archi-writing is not another name for God or logos, but it is the questioning of metaphysics and of original names that present themselves as the arkhē. The idea of différance, trace, archi-writing questions the possibility of an

¹⁴⁰ By placing these concepts together like this I am not suggesting that they are synonyms and thereby denying the differences between them, but they point towards a specific site (Ortschaft) – where we are at this moment: already in the text.
absolute origin and questions the priority of pure self-presence as self-presence is always already disturbed by the inscription of this monstrosity called writing. Derrida’s thoughts on trace, archi-writing, différance is not intended as a new kind of metaphysics, as a new foundation, because it is not foundation, and cannot be a foundation because it is the play of differences and deferral of possible foundations. The moment one would attempt to think presence and self-presence as the foundation of thought this is only possible in the occultation of absence. Thus presence can only be thought in forgetting that the thought of presence is already the absence of presence, because thought of presence (sign/concept/sense/meaning) is only possible via the supplement, supplementing naturally present presence, and thus any thought of presence is the absence of presence in the thought (via supplement) of presence.

This is what Derrida wanted to show the inscription of writing (supplement) in the very foundation of language (thought): that thought/language is always already inscribed in writing and thus secondary. Derrida’s purpose was to describe “the structure implied by the “arbitrariness of the sign” (Derrida 1997a:47), and never to develop a new foundation of language. The arbitrariness of the sign (as described above) needs to be thought without any recourse to a derived opposition between nature and convention, symbol and sign (Derrida 1997a:47), where the one is seen as primary and the other as derived from this primary. Thus, the sign is arbitrary not in the sense of being absolutely contingent, but, as described above, in the sense of being beyond any priority of the one over the other and therefore arbitrary in the sense of the play of différance (difference between one and the other and deferral of the one by the other). Therefore the sign cannot be defined metaphysically as being derived from either nature or convention, symbol or sign, but is “born” in différance, and it is only on the basis of this différance (trace/supplement/pharmakon) that oppositions (presence/absence, nature/convention, sign/symbol) have meaning (Derrida 1997a:47).

The arbitrariness of the sign (unmotivatedness) requires a synthesis in which the other is announced as such. For the sign to be a sign it is both attached and detached to the thing (referent or signified) of which it is a sign of – absence and presence – and it needs to think these two oppositions together, like both the meanings of the supplement, which is always both addition and an in-the-place-of. It is a synthesis of presence and absence, attachment and detachment, addition and in-the-place-of, and remedy and poison. Yet, in this synthesis the other is announced without forming a simplicity in which the difference is destroyed. This synthesis is not an identity or a resemblance or continuity with the other, but where the other is announced within what is not it (Derrida 1997a:47).
For a sign to be a sign, for example for the word “dog” to be a sign of the dog wagging its tail, it needs to be a synthesis of attachment and detachment (addition and supplementation, presence and absence), but it is not a simple synthesis of these opposites, as difference is necessary for reference to be possible in opposition to silent self-presence. It certainly does not think these opposites together nor are they deduced from each other. The trace of the other is occulted as it produces itself as self-occultation. In the sign “dog” the presence of the dog is called to mind in the occultation of the absence of the dog. Likewise the attachment of the sign “dog” to the sense of the word “dog” is thought whilst forgetting its detachment. The sign becomes possible in this process of occultation of the other. The sound-image “dog” conjures up the presence of the dog (sense of a dog) in the absence of the dog, yet the absence of the dog is occulted. This means that if the difference between sound-image and sense is momentarily forgotten and they are thought as one thought, meaning and sense becomes possible. “When the other announces itself as such, it presents itself in the dissimulation of itself” (Derrida 1997a:47). This seems crazy and illogical and thus outside the grasp of the simple alternative between genesis and structure, of fact and principle, or historical and philosophical reason (Derrida 1997a:259). Rousseau explains it as the non-rational origin of reason. “The graphic of supplementarity is irreducible to logic, primarily because it comprehends logic as one of its cases and may alone produce its origin” (Derrida 1997a:259). This thought of trace, writing gives one a glimpse of the closure of a historic-metaphysical epoch, but as Derrida says, closure and not end (Derrida 1997a:4)

Derrida and Heidegger agree, certainly with numerous different nuances, that these different constructions of the origin of language or of the relationship between language and natural presence (reality) are all based on the unquestioned value of presence. In other words, what unites this tradition is the primacy of presence as the arkhē. It is on the basis of this unquestioned value of presence that such construction (explanations) becomes necessary. “The metaphysics of presence thinks in two (logical and often historical) moments: presence first, of the world to a gaze, of a consciousness to its own inspection, of a meaning to a mind, of life to itself, of a breast to a mouth; absence next – the world veiled, consciousness astray, nonsense, death, debauchery, language, weaning” (Bennington 1993:16-18). Tradition has always thought the second as being derived with respect to the first, thus one returns the complex to the simple, the secondary to the primary, the contingent to the necessary. This is the very idea of reason, of logos – and this tradition (logocentrism) is impossible to escape. There certainly have been attempts to escape logocentrism and Derrida has in Writing and Difference as well as
Dissemination explored some of these attempts, but exposed these attempts to remain still within the very tradition they wished to transgress. Some of these attempts turned the opposition around and thus rather than trying to explain absence in the light of presence, tried focussing on the opposite. They focussed on the materiality (sensibility) of signs rather their intelligibility (Ideality) or the other way round, but one cannot think the one without the other and thus they implicate each other. As long as one seeks an absolute beginning, arkhē, such as seeking to explain presence in the light of absence, consciousness in the light of unconscious, signification in the light of matter and force, reason in the light of madness or the other way round (this does not matter as whichever way, it remains an explanation that seeks an arkhē), is an explanatory origin upon which the system of thought can be founded. It does not really matter which of the opposites one gives priority: absence or presence, infinity or finite, nothingness or there is, conscious or unconscious, the thing that is not thought in the battle for priority between opposites is that one cannot think the one without the other and thus there can be no priority of the one over the other. What needs to be thought is their dependence on each other and the difference and deferral between them and that this différance is what makes the distinction between them possible in the first place, and thus différance and the occultation of the other in presenting itself as other, is what makes the philosophical discourse possible, founded on an arkhē. Therefore Derrida describes his thoughts not as the end of metaphysics or logocentrism, but the closure of metaphysics, as he does not thereby say that metaphysics is destroyed, but that it is enclosed, made possible by this writing or archi-writing, this différance of the sign, this trace of the forgotten (occulted) immemorable other. The conditions of the possibility of metaphysics and logocentrism are the very conditions of its impossibility (Critchley 1999:35).

A thought that does not strictly speaking follow this schema of an arkhē would no longer be philosophy. It would be madness, as Foucault tries to argue, and this madness is the origin of reason. But that is not what Derrida is saying. He is not arguing for the originality of différance, but that one is already in différance and its play (Derrida 1978:36-76) – not the play of total relativism, as some have believed Derrida to be saying, but the play of the trace and the one and the other. This play includes all experience, as there is no experience of pure presence, but only chains of differential marks (Derrida 1988:10). It is a play that affects experience in general, what Derrida calls le texte en général. Writing

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141 I use the word immemorable because it is not another origin which is forgotten (beyond present memory), but now discovered by Derrida, but rather immemorable in the sense of always already being secondary beyond the idea of an absolute origin arkhē and thus beyond the power of memory to discover because it is always already in the text in writing.
(archi-writing) is inscribed wherever there is language, and thus where there is reflection and thought, and this general space of writing or general writing, what makes experience possible\textsuperscript{142}, is the space that Derrida refers to as "le texte en général" (Derrida 1997a:26). It is in this space that deconstruction takes place and thus it can be called auto-deconstruction.

2.4 \textit{Le texte en général} and autodeconstruction

If all one has is the text, which means that all one has is a chain of differential marks (Derrida 1988:10), then this inscription of writing into language into the basic unit of language (signifier – signified) does not only affect linguistics, but all the sciences and all forms of episteme and experience in general. The chain of differential marks or the play of différance leaves nothing unscathed. For example, an existential reflection on experience begins with presence, in trying to interpret or understand what is given to presence in the presence of experience. There is no direct access to this presence, even the self-presence of speech was shown above to be "poisoned" by this differential trace of writing. Whatever "is" is constituted by the written sign. The written sign as was shown above is constituted by the following:

i. a sign is arbitrary and according to convention,
ii. a sign needs a level of ideality so that it can be repeated in different contexts – iterability,
iii. a sign is made up of delay and difference (différance),
iv. a sign is the addition of something exterior which is other (supplement) to what it is a sign of
v. a sign is always in-the-place-of and thus there is \textit{restance} [non-present remainder – a trace of the other] (a sign is a sign of what it is not)

\textsuperscript{142} *...everything that for at least some twenty centuries tended toward and finally succeeded in being gathered under the name of language is beginning to let itself be transferred to, or at least summarized under, the name of writing. By a hardly perceptible necessity, it seems as though the concept of writing – no longer indicating a particular, derivative, auxiliary form of language in general (whether understood as communication, relation, expression, signification, constitution of meaning or thought, etc.), no longer designating the exterior surface, the insubstantial double of a major signifier, the signifier of the signifier – is beginning to go beyond the extension of language. In all senses of the word, writing thus \textit{comprehends} language" (Derrida 1997a:6-7).
vi. a sign is the transgression of every closed structure (totality) – it is the necessary remedy, but simultaneously the poison that opens the wound that was sought to be healed.

This is the work of the sign and this work is the condition of possibility for experience in general (Critchley 1999:35). Thus experience is not the perception of phenomena present to self-consciousness, but rather experience is produced by these chains of differentially ordered signs, or ‘marks’, in which one always and already is and it is through them that meaning is produced, yet there remains a non-present remainder (trace of the other) and therefore meaning remains open exceeding any determinate structure.

This archi-writing that is inscribed will constitute a field of a new science of writing – grammatology and the primacy of writing. A new science (episteme) where writing is primary, not in the sense of a new archē, but in the sense that one is always already in the text and therefore writing comprehends language (Derrida 1997a:7) as there is no linguistic sign before writing (Derrida 1997a:14). Writing is always already there as supplementation; is always already there in any attempt to mimic/represent/present nature/experience/presence through the use of a supplement and thus writing. Derrida argues that writing – the grammē, the grapheme; differentially ordered inscription in general – determines the element through which something like experience becomes possible (Derrida 1997a:9). Experience, the ability to reflect or think or come to terms with presence, is only possible via supplement otherwise it would be pure self-present silence. There is a certain distancing necessary for experience to be experienced – the space opened by the necessary supplement: the espacement of writing, but this is not thought.

The rationality of writing no longer issues from a logos or a ratio that is separate from writing or prior to writing, but the other way around. The logos and the rationality of the systems of thought that are developed on the basis of logocentrism or metaphysics are made possible by this necessity of an inscription of writing (supplement/pharmakon). The supplement (written sign) as addition functions as the necessary remedy to make experience possible, but it is always also a supplement in the sense of in-place-of and thus it is poison and therefore the absence (death) of presence and the trace of a remainder of that which is other and not “in” the sign.

Rousseau argued, as mentioned above, that the foundation of reason is non-rational. It is folly as it is poison. It is this archi-writing that provides the rationale for dé-construction of the logos (Derrida 1997a:10) as it opens the closure (totality of logos) to the trace of the other. The remainder, which is not in the sense (the absence in the presence), opens the
closure of any science (logocentrism). Metaphysics and the meaning of Being can no longer be sought in presence, but rather in terms of a determined or instituted signifying trace (Derrida 1997a:23).

The grammatological space of a general writing is what makes experience possible and it is this space that Derrida refers to as ‘le texte en général’ (Derrida 1997a:26). This general text can be described as a limitless network of differentially ordered signs, “which is not preceded by any meaning, structure, or eidos, but itself constitutes each of these. It is here upon the surface of the general text, that there ‘is’ deconstruction, that deconstruction takes place” (Critchley 1999:38). What Derrida means when he speaks of the text of context is explained in Limited Inc.

“What I call ‘text’ implies all the structures called ‘real’, ‘economic’, ‘historical’, socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that ‘there is nothing outside the text’. That does not mean that all referents are suspended, denied, or enclosed in a book, as people have claimed, or have been naïve enough to believe and to have accused me of believing. But it does mean that every referent and all reality has the structure of a différantial trace, and that one cannot refer to this ‘real’ except in an interpretative experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of différantial referring. That’s all” (Derrida 1988a:148).

The fact that experience is made possible by the inscription of the written sign does not, as Derrida argued in the above quote, translate into a naïve understanding of a text, in the sense that all is a literary work (book or novel), but that writing – understood beyond the inscription of ink on paper, understood as the use of supplements, understood as that necessary espacement of difference and temporal delay which Derrida has termed différance – is primary, and there is no escaping that. There is no escaping text (writing) and thus there is no escaping context. So, although there is no escaping the context as there is no escaping writing, that does not translate into absolute relativism (as the discussion on the arbitrariness of the instituted trace already revealed), nor does it translate into being caught within a book without any connection to “reality”143, as this context remains because of writing structurally open to its other (the non-present remainder or the trace of the other that the sign is not). There is a non-closure to the text/context and thus an irreducible opening (Derrida 1988a:152).

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143 See discussion in the previous section on the arbitrariness of the institute trace.
In the afterword to Limited Inc. Derrida argues that the context (archi-writing) of experience is itself conditioned by the unconditioned; that is by that which is independent of ‘a context in general’ (Derrida 1988a:152). The irreducible opening of the text or context is the unconditional of the conditional determined text. He argues and says that he uses this word unconditional very conscious of the reference to Kant’s categorical imperative (Derrida 1988a:152), because that is exactly what the unconditional is. It cannot be questioned as it is part of the logic writing – a sign is a sign by the fact that it is not what it is a sign of (the absence in the presence). It is that poison of writing that keeps the text open, but it is simultaneously the sign (supplement) that conditions the possibility of a text or context. It is the difficulty of thinking these two together.

Derrida is thereby not contradicting himself and saying that there is something outside the text, outside the context, as the unconditional is not something (some transcendental signified) outside the text, but it is a necessary instituted trace of the other in the sign and as such it arises as the interruption, or non-closure, of any determinate context. There is nothing outside of context and yet the determinate context contains a clause of non-closure whereby the unconditioned injunction comes to interrupt the conditioned context. This is linked to affirmation: YES! The absence of the presence in the sign does not lead to negativity, negation or nihilism as these would be just the opposite of logocentrism and positivism, but the absence of the presence in the sign is an affirmation and a welcome for what is outside and thus still to come in.

This kind of language can tempt one to ask the question: To whom or what does one affirm or offer this welcome, this YES? Who or what is this other/outside? It is not a determinate other or outside. It is the différance in the structure of the functioning of the sign as sign. Différance does not have an essence, it does not have a name, and yet it is what makes possible nominal effects. This unnameable one must affirm (Derrida 1982:27). This is what deconstruction does. It affirms the unnameableness of différance that motivates deconstruction. Deconstruction, Derrida says in Limited Inc., is “the effort to take this limitless context into account” (Derrida 1988a:136).

2.5 Deconstruction

This leads the study to what Derrida refers to as deconstruction, which takes place (autodeconstruction) wherever something takes place (Critchley 1999:22). The question that immediately comes to mind, is how does it (deconstruction) take place? The way of
Deconstruction is always opened through reading (Derrida 1986a:41). Deconstruction has to do with reading of a text or a context. It is a double reading of the text. The first reading can be compared to a commentary, but with commentary Derrida refers to what Heidegger already referred to as *Wiederholung*, in other words careful and faithful repetition. This first reading is vitally important because the moment of deconstruction cannot take place without this faithful *Wiederholung* of a text. A faithful reading of the text, in line with the traditional interpretations of that text, is the first moment, and the second moment, which takes place only in the first faithful reading, is reading that which the text does not say, but is saying. It is in this space between the two readings that deconstruction takes place. It is the “space between the writer’s intentions and the text, between what the writer commands and fails to command in a language. It is into this space between intentions and text that Derrida inserts what he calls the ‘signifying structure’” (Derrida 1997a:158). In *Of Spirit* Derrida says that it is only in the faithful repetition that the wholly other of the text can be found. “…I follow the path of repetition which crosses the path of the wholly other. The wholly other announces itself within the most rigorous repetition” (Derrida 1989:113).

The autodeconstruction that Derrida here proposes becomes clear in his reading of Heidegger and Levinas. One can say Derrida is faithful to both Heidegger and Levinas, as what he offers is not a critique in the traditional sense of exposing what is wrong (untrue) about Heidegger and Levinas and then proposing a better (more truthful) model, as such a reading would still be metaphysical and ontological. What Derrida does is to faithfully read their attempts to capture what is beyond language in language, and yes, such attempts will necessarily be riddled with contradiction as Derrida’s texts are themselves, as Levinas argues, in *Noms Propres* (Levinas 1976).

Derrida faithfully reads Heidegger and Levinas amongst others, and by following this path of repetition, the *Wiederholung* of a text or a tradition. It is in this *Wiederholung* that one inevitably crosses the path of something wholly other, something that cannot be reduced to what that text or tradition wants to say. It is at this point that the similarities between Derrida’s deconstruction and Heidegger’s *Destruktion* become apparent. It is this double movement of reading that best describes Derrida’s deconstruction. If philosophy is understood as the very activity of thinking, which lies at the basis of epistemology,

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144 “…Derrida initially employed the term deconstruction as an attempt to render into French the Heideggerian notion of *Destruktion* (de-struction, or non-negative de-structuring) and *Abbau* (demolition or, better, dismantling)” (Critchley 1999:27).
ontological, and veridical comprehension, this activity is the reduction of plurality to unity and alterity to sameness. “In seeking to think the other, its otherness is reduced or appropriated to our understanding. To think philosophically is to comprehend – comprendre, comprehendere, begreifen, to include, to seize, to grasp – and master the other, thereby reducing its alterity” (Critchley 1999:29). Deconstruction can be interpreted as the desire to keep open a dimension of alterity which can neither be reduced, comprehended, nor strictly speaking, even thought by philosophy. So the goal of deconstruction is not so much the unthought of tradition, but that which cannot be thought, to point toward that which philosophy is unable to say.

In an interview with Jean-Luc Nancy Derrida speaks of an unconditional affirmation that motivates deconstruction. He says: “The affirmation that motivates deconstruction is unconditional, imperative and immediate” (Critchley 1999:31). Derrida continues expressing this thought in the concluding pages of his ‘Afterword’ to Limited Inc. He writes:

This leads me to elaborate rapidly what I suggested above concerning the question of context, of its non-closure or, if you prefer, of its irreducible opening…. In the different texts I have written on (against) apartheid, I have on several occasions spoken of ‘unconditional’ affirmation or of ‘unconditional’ ‘appeal’. This has also happened to be in other ‘contexts’ and each time that I speak of the link between deconstruction and the ‘yes’. Now, the very least that can be said of unconditionality (a word that I use not by accident to recall the character of the categorical imperative in its Kantian form) is that it is independent of every determinate context, even of the determination of context in general. It announces itself as such only in the opening of context. Not that it is simply present (existent) elsewhere, outside of all context; rather it intervenes in the determination of the context from its very opening, and from an injunction, a law, a responsibility that transcends this or that determination of a given context. Following this, what remains is to articulate this unconditionality with the determinate (Kant would say, hypothethical) conditions of this or that context; and this is the moment of strategies, of rhetorics, of ethics, and of politics. The structure thus described supposes both that there are only contexts, that nothing exists outside context, as I have often said, but also that the limit of the frame or the border of the context always entails a clause of non-closure. The outside penetrates and thus determines the inside (Derrida 1988a:152-153).
This is an important quote which certainly links to the quote from *Of Grammatology* where Derrida argues that "there is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside-text; il n’y a pas de hors-texte]" (Derrida 1997a:158). What does this mean, that there is no outside-text and nothing exists outside context? There is nothing outside context means that there is no thing, no entity that has existence outside of context. There is no external referent outside the context. There is no God, transcendental signified or self-consciousness or any other form of dominant referent outside the context. Yet, and this is important, the context itself contains a clause of non-closure. In other words, there is something that exceeds the context, but that something is not a transcendental signified, dominant referent or any entity or thing. That which exceeds the context interrupts the context, it is an alterity or an exteriority that interrupts the context and, referring back to the above passage, this – which exceeds – is an unconditional affirmation. An unconditional affirmation that exceeds the context, exceeds the text and motivates deconstruction. This brings one back to where one started this chapter on Derrida – that any attempt to formulate Derrida’s thoughts into a system of thought is an abstraction, an abstraction that will autodeconstruct as there is always a remainder (trace of the other) that challenges such an abstraction. This section attempted to introduce Derrida’s linguistics or his grammattology, conscious that this is an abstraction and différence remains in the make-up the text.

3 DIFFÉRENCE AND THE CLOSURE OF METAPHYSICS

In this section on différence not much new will be added to what was already discussed in the previous sections, but a separate section on différence, even if it is a repetition, is important as it is here in différence that Derrida’s unique contribution lies. It is necessary to understand différence before one tries to understand how Derrida’s thoughts can contribute to postmetaphysical God-talk. If différence has to do with the text in general as mentioned in the previous section and the text in general includes just about everything, it also includes theology. Theology is thus not left unscathed by différence. The trace or writing is inscribed in theology just as it is inscribed in all other disciplines and thus différence affects or determines theology. This section on différence will thus function as a bridge to the final section of this chapter, the limits and possibilities of God-talk, but this needs to take place in conversation with Heidegger and Levinas. This discussion on
différence is important as it indicates the site (Ortschaft) on the margin of philosophy\textsuperscript{145}, both questioning philosophy and/or metaphysics and/or logocentrism and/or theology and being its very condition of possibility. Thus différence (the trace or writing) encloses philosophy and/or logocentrism and/or metaphysics as both its possibility and its impossibility. It is for this reason that Derrida chose to not speak of the end of philosophy or the end of metaphysics, but rather the closure thereof (Derrida 1997a:4). It is from this margin, the closure of metaphysics that the conversation between the three, Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida becomes pertinent with regards to the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk. It is in this sense that this section forms the bridge between an introduction to Derrida's thoughts and what his thoughts offer to God-talk in conversation with Heidegger and Levinas.

3.1 Différence

Différence is not a word or a concept\textsuperscript{146} and thus not really an idea. Maybe it is more like a description of something that happens, an effect and/or a determination (Derrida 1982:16-17) through the inscription of writing, through the trace, the supplement, and thus it is an effect and determination and therefore an instituted necessity in or of texts and contexts. He writes in his essay Différance\textsuperscript{147} that it is impossible and impossible for essential reasons to “reassemble in a sheaf the different directions in which I have been able to utilize what I would call provisionally the word or concept of différance, or rather to let it impose itself upon me in its neographism, although we shall see that, différance is literally neither a word nor a concept” (Derrida 1982:3).

Derrida begins this essay with a play of vowels and the difference between a and e in the spelling and misspelling of difference as différance. This play of the difference between the two vowels only comes into play in writing as the difference between a and e in speaking the word difference as différance is not heard (Derrida 1982:3). This play of the two vowels in the word difference as différance, which is only visible in the inscription of the word in writing, reminds one of the previous sections and how différance is inscribed in speech as writing (writing understood as making use of a supplement which turns about

\textsuperscript{145} This is also a title of a book containing a collection of Derrida’s essays which was published in 1982, as well as the essay Différance which will be the main source of reference for this section.

\textsuperscript{146} This will be explained a little later on in this section.

\textsuperscript{147} This essay appears twice in his translated works, first it appears at the end of Speech and Phenomena (Derrida 1973:129ff) and again as the first essay in Margins of Philosophy (Derrida 1982). The references in this section will be to the 1982 version in Margins of Philosophy.
to be a pharmakon). It is the play of archi-writing, which is prior to speech and yet it is not an origin, because it is a play of the different origins that cannot be decided one way or the other. It is the undecided play between presence and absence which was described previously that is instituted by the use of the sign as supplement (pharmakon) – the play of writing, but this play of writing is not only linguistic as was said above, but it affects and determines the text in general (context). It is the play between absence and presence, conscious and unconscious and cogito and madness. A play instituted by the graphic sign, the inscription of an a or an e. It is an undecided play that comes into play once there is writing and there is always writing, archi-writing, because it is this archi-writing that is the condition of the possibility that there is something. As mentioned in a quote in a previous section (Derrida 1988a:148) this does not mean that oneself and the world are enclosed in a book, but it means that what is beyond language is only accessible through the inscription of language (through the addition of a supplement of a sign). The simple phrase, “that there is something” something or thing, is a sign and as such it signifies and thus refers to something else as it is not the thing itself, but only its sign. Thus that there is something is made possible through the use of signs with which to refer to what one wishes to refer to and therefore, through these signs, things or something stands out to perception and experience and exists. The thing “itself” is never just ‘in your face’ without the mediation of the sign, which is never the thing itself.

The use of signs is the instituted play between remedy and poison of writing (pharmakon), the play between supplement as addition and thus the survival of presence, but also in-the-place-of and thus the death of presence (its absence). It is a play that cannot be solved one way or the other, but remains a play – not an absolute arbitrary play, but an instituted play. It is an undecided and thus arbitrary play, but it is instituted by the trace of the other and thus its arbitrariness does not lead to absolute relativism, but nor is there a “natural” absolute determined connection. This play has an effect and a determination on all texts and contexts.

This play and the effect and determination of this play is what is captured and also not captured in the neologism, différance. This play between two vowels in the word différance is a play of the play described above (the play inscribed by writing) as it is a play between the a and the e, which is a play that is not heard and therefore not apprehended in speech, and as Derrida argues it thus also bypasses the order of

148 In the essay (Derrida 1982:175-205), The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy before Linguistics, Derrida plays with this copula “is” and the copula “and”. To say that something is, is only possible through “and”. In other words it is only possible to say that something is because of the sign, the addition of the supplement. There is never pure “is” there is always a supplement and thus “and”.
apprehension in general (Derrida 1982:3-4). It is a play that only becomes visible because of writing and thus reading: it is a play instituted by writing. It is a play forgotten and necessarily forgotten for there to be meaning without difference, thus absolute knowledge. Although the play is forgotten it does not mean that it is not there. This play becomes “visible” in history and the autodeconstruction of texts and contexts as history unfolds.

The play of différance is forgotten just as the a of difféance is silent, secret and discreet as a tomb: oikēsis (Derrida 1982:4). A tomb, as in the death of the proper (Derrida 1982:4), as writing, supplement (in-place-of), also means the absence of presence which is death. Yet this tomb “a” of difféance, if it is capitalised “A”, can be compared to the Egyptian pyramid (Derrida 1982:4) and thus it is not only a tomb, but a monument preserving the dead for the living: difféance can thus be described as the economy of death (Derrida 1982:4). It is the economy of death as it preserves the dead for the living, but in preserving the dead for the living it is also the death (absence) of the present as it is only a monument (a sign of past presence and not presence itself). Derrida says all this without mentioning the sign, the supplement, the pharmakon of his previous works, but says this by playing with the spelling or misspelling of the word difféance, but this play already reveals so much of what he wants to say that one can say that the misspelling of difféance is a play of difféance.

This play is only possible in the context of phonic writing, but phonic writing can only function and make sense by the use of non-phonic “signs” (spaces and punctuation) (Derrida 1982:5). As discussed above signs only become signs through difference. It is the play of difference that makes a sign possible. The difference is silent as it is inaudible as the difference between two phonemes and it is this inaudible difference that allows them to operate as phonemes. There are sound units and each sound unit has to be different from other sound units so as to stand out (to be heard out). The difference between two sound units is not heard, the difference itself is not a sound unit as it is silent and yet the different sound units are only because of this silent difference between sound units so that the sound units can stand out in their differences. The differ( )nce between a and e can neither be seen nor heard. Obviously one can see that there are differences between the letter a and the letter e, but the space that separates them from each other so that each can stand out “on its own”, the space of difféance ( ) between the two letters, is beyond sight and hearing. It is the space that “differentiates” and thus is the condition for the two vowels to stand out in their respective differences. One can list the pen strokes

149 I use this word with caution and thus in inverted commas, as Derrida argues that difféance is not differentiation although there are some similarities, but this will be explained later in this section.
that are different between these two letters, but one cannot list the space that differentiates them and that separates them and makes them stand out with their different pen strokes. It is thus the inaudible and invisible space that is the condition for the different pen strokes: it is the condition for differences.

The space that allows them to stand out in their differences is beyond hearing and beyond seeing and thus Derrida writes: “...we must be permitted to refer to an order which no longer belongs to sensibility. But neither can it belong to intelligibility, to the ideality which is not fortuitously affiliated with the objectivity of the theōrein or understanding” (Derrida 1982:5). To understand this sentence, Alan Bass gives an explanation in a footnote as this sentence is constructed on a play of words which is lost in the translation (Bass in Derrida 1982:5 n3). The différance between (the space between and thus not the differences in pen strokes) is not sensible as it cannot be seen nor heard, but then he goes on to argue that it is not intelligible, thereby challenging the old metaphysical distinction between sensible and intelligible. It is not intelligible because the very names by which we conceive of objective intelligibility are already in complicity with sensibility (Bass in Derrida 1982:5 n3). The Greek word theōrein literally means to look at and the word that Derrida uses for understanding is entendement, which is the noun of entendre which means to hear.

Différance is not a word or a concept and thus not an idea, which seems absolutely contradictory, because here in this sentence it is used as a word or concept. So how can it not be a word or concept if it functions in the sentence above exactly like a word? From the above it becomes clear that obviously différance is a word and even a concept so much so that it is in the title of this section, but it is also not a word nor a concept because it refers to something which is beyond seeing, hearing and beyond the intelligible. It “refers” to something that is not conceptualisable or signifiable. The reference of this word is beyond in the sense that it cannot be exposed as it cannot be brought to light (sight) or heard or made intelligible. One can only expose (refer) to something that can be made manifest as something that can be shown, presented as something (Derrida 1982:5). Now différance is that space that makes it possible for something to be presented as being-present (Derrida 1982:6). Différance is that space of difference that allows something to be seen for what it is as different from something other. Derrida writes it as crossed out, because what différance is, is impossible to say as it is beyond seeing, hearing and intelligibility. Différance is that silent invisible space that allows different things to stand out in their differences. It is the space that allows a dog to stand out as a dog and not a cat with all the differences between a dog and a cat that can be seen and conceptualised.
A dog stands out as dog by a list of features that define the dog, for example in comparison to a cat, but each of these features is itself a sign and thus a signifier. What makes the dog have meaning (stand out) is a signifying chain of signifiers different from each other yet referring to each other. It is an unending chain of supplements, supplementing each other and the arbitrary nature of these supplements. A supplement, as was discussed previously, is an inscription of something other to present in the absence of that specific presence, that presence, by being that presence’s other (something added to supplement the absence, but by being added it is in-the-place-of). The difference between the presence and its other (sign/supplement) that re-presences it in its absence is beyond sight and beyond hearing. Yet the two are connected by a trace and thus, although arbitrary, it is instituted.

This space between the sign and its other (the sign is a sign of what it is not) is différance and thus the space in which things can be presented as being-present. Différance is the space of inscription, the space of archi-writing. It is the space where the play of absence and presence comes to be in writing: the play of the pharmakon. It is the space of the play and therefore one cannot say that différance is neither presence nor absence, but it is the space that makes it possible to talk of presence and absence. It is the space in which presence can come to mind, but likewise the space in which absence can come to mind as it is the space of the inscription of the sign (supplement).

This strange “negativity” of différance being neither this nor that, as the essence or existence of différance cannot be captured, brings the language used to describe difference into very close proximity with the language used in negative theology (Derrida 1982:6). Différance does not exist, it is not a present-being in any form, but the space in which present-being comes to light (mind or thought), or its opposite, the space where the absence of being comes to mind. The language that is used to describe différance, which is no thing, is very similar to the language used to describe God in negative theology. Différance is no thing as it does not have essence nor existence. It can be derived from no category of being, whether present or absent (Derrida 1982:6). Yet différance is not theological, not even the most negative of theologies (Derrida 1982:6). In negative theology God is perceived to be beyond the categories of being as a super essence or a super-existence. There is nothing super about différance as it is “only” the space between sign and it’s other, between what a sign is and what it is not, where the play of absence and presence is instituted. The space of the supplement that is both always the presence

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150 In the previous section this was already discussed with regards to Saussure’s thoughts on the play of difference which makes signs and the arbitrary nature of signs possible.
of absence and the absence of presence and this difference is différance wherein the sign functions as sign. There is nothing particularly divine about this space and yet it is the opening of the space in which theology, onto-theology, metaphysics comes to mind (Derrida 1982:6). In the next section the possibilities and impossibilities of God-talk within this space will be further explored.

This space of différance is the space of play that remains undecided on absence or presence as well as the various other oppositions of metaphysics and philosophy and yet makes these oppositions possible, opens the space for them. This play keeps it beyond oppositions, “announcing, on the eve of philosophy and beyond it, the unity of chance and necessity in calculations without end” (Derrida 1982:7). Différance is the play of chance undecided if the sign or the supplement is a remedy (presence) or a poison (absence) and in that sense it is arbitrary, but it is also necessary as it is an instituted play and thus not arbitrary in the absolute sense as there is the trace of the other.

Différance refers to that space of differentiation, which allows the being-present to come to light to exist (stand out). Yet it also refers to the time of that which comes to light. The sign or supplement stands in for what is not present. It stands in (re-presents) for what is absent and in re-presenting what is absent it is not only an addition to absence, but also poisons the presence with absence by being the present’s other (its sign), but it does this under the condition of a delay in time. The sign stands in only for the duration of the absence. A sign represent what is absent for the time of its absence and thus when whatever was absent returns the sign (supplement) is no longer necessary. Différance refers to both these senses of difference as the space of difference between what a sign is and what it is not as well as the deferred time of the absence of presence (Derrida 1982:7). Derrida refers to the Latin, différer, which has these two meanings of both defer and to differ (Derrida 1982:7 n7). “Différer, in the sense of ‘to differ’, means that something is different from something else; it has a spatial sense,...... Différer, in the sense of ‘to defer,’ means to postpone the completion of an act; it thus has a temporal meaning, conveyed by the verbs ‘to temporize’, ‘to delay’, or ‘to put off’ (Critchley 1999:35).

If one takes both these meanings into consideration in the light of the above discussion then différance can be described as the becoming-time of space and the becoming-space of time (Derrida 1982:8). The space of inscription, the space of the sign, is a space necessary for the time of absence. Thus one can say that the time of absence necessitates this space of writing. Yet likewise one can say that the space of writing
necessitates time as both memory and hope, the faint memory of a past that was never present and the glimmer of hope for a future presence always still to come. Both these meanings are part of différance and thus différance is polysemic as it has these numerous meanings that cannot be reduced to one meaning, but these meanings need to be thought simultaneously. It is because of this polysemic character of différance that it produces or constitutes different things and differences (Derrida 1982:9). The space-time of différance constitutes and produces signs and thus gives meaning to life, yet in this very giving of meaning to life it also questions that meaning.

If one speaks of giving and questioning of différance it seems as if différance is in some way active as it gives and it questions. Yet it is impossible to speak of différance being active or passive. It gives meaning in the sense that it is the space of the sign and in that sense it is neither completely active nor completely passive, and it questions in the same way without an active agenda; it questions in the passive giving of space and temporisation. Différance can be interpreted as the opening of the time-space for the sign and the time-space of the sign is also the time-space of meaning, but in that it is the time-space of meaning it is also the questioning of that meaning and thus it is the play of meaning and non-meaning in the time-space of writing. Différance opens (not actively nor passively) the time-space or what Caputo referring to Heidegger might refer to as the Zeit-Spiel-Raum (Caputo 1993a:30). Zeit-Spiel-Raum thus captures something of the time-space, but also the play in that time-space between meaning and non-meaning, absence and presence, etcetera.

This opening of the Zeit-Spiel-Raum is neither an active nor a passive opening by différance and to explain this beyond active-passive Derrida uses the concept of the trace. Derrida also uses the idea of the trace to explain the arbitrariness and the institutedness of writing, as discussed in a previous section. For Derrida the trace is an effect rather than a cause (Derrida 1982:12). Différance is the movement (en-space-ing–temporisation) according to which any language, code or system of reference is constituted historically as a weave of differences (Derrida 1982:12) (chain of signifiers or chain of supplements). Différance is the space-time of the sign, but the sign is never just the sign of itself as it is the sign of its other and in that space-time there is an inflation of signs (Derrida 1997a:6) as the sign refers to its other, but its other only becomes meaningful through the use of another sign and thus one has this inflation of signs. Thus signs refer to other signs, other supplements in the space-time of différance, and this space-time of différance can only be thought of via a trace (a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present and the glimmer of a hope of a presence still to come).
The trace helps one think the beyond active-passive nature of différance’s opening of a Zeit-Spiel-Raum in which meaning and the questioning of meaning become possible. Meaning becomes possible through the trace and yet it is also through the trace that meaning is questioned. Meaning becomes possible and meaningful because of the trace of a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present and the glimmer of hope of a presence still to come. Meaning is made possible by the idea that the signs that are used are an effect of an immemorial past that was never present. In other words, that these chains of signifiers are somehow (however faintly) connected (an effect) to this past that was never present, because of the signifier, chain of signifiers, and the idea that the sign is an effect and a determination of the hope of a presence still to come. The trace is an effect and determination of the time of the sign that harbours within itself the trace of a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present as well as the faint glimmer of hope of a presence always still to come.

The trace, which allows for meaning to be meaningful, is exactly also what questions meaning, exactly because it is a trace (a past that was never present and a future that is still to come) and thus leaves meaning “essentially” open, which is why deconstruction takes place as an effect of différance. Différance can be thought as this active-passive (neither being active nor passive) effect and determination, but in using these terms, one is using the very terms (of metaphysics) that one seeks to delimit (Derrida 1982:17), but for strategic purposes there are no other terms to use. By using terms like effect and determination it conjures up the idea that différance is some kind of conscious being that can have this effect or this determination on something and yet différance questions the possibility of such a transcendental signified and thus challenges metaphysics.

In the rest of the chapter on différance Derrida thinks the consequences of différance beyond linguistics. As argued in a previous section, différance does not only concern linguistics and the literal written text, but it is an inscription of writing (archi-writing) that is “original”, but origin in the sense that it is secondary – it is always already there as one cannot get beyond signs and thus supplements (secondary additions). Supplementation has always already been there and thus writing has always already been there and for that reason one is in the text. This secondariness (always already being deferred and differed by the sign or supplement – archi-writing) that is primary, affects all texts and thus all contexts. It affects all fields of philosophy and science as it affects epistemology and specifically affects metaphysics and all the categories of metaphysics and thus it is the closure rather than the end of philosophy or metaphysics or logocentrism (Derrida 1997a:4). Derrida refers to it as the closure rather than the end, because différance
encloses philosophy and metaphysics within the active – passive effect and determination\textsuperscript{151} of différance. It thereby does not offer a final judgement on metaphysics, but places it within (encloses it within) the active-passive effect and determination of différance and thus one can say that différance is both the possibility and impossibility of metaphysics and in that sense différance opens the door to postmetaphysical thought, just like Heidegger’s postmetaphysical thought is not the end of metaphysics, but being conscious of its impossible possibility.

3.2 The closure of metaphysics

The privileging of presence is the ether of metaphysics (Derrida 1982:16). Presence is made possible and impossible by différance and thus différance both constitutes presence and questions it. Each so-called present element is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark (trace) of the past element and likewise already letting itself be vitiated by the mark (trace) of its relation to the future element (Derrida 1982:13). This trace that is related both to the past and to the future constitutes the present by what it is not, just as the sign is constituted by what it is not. Derrida argues that an “interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject” (Derrida 1982:13).

If différance through the trace is the constitution of presence on the basis of what it is not, could différance not simply be equated with differentiation? Derrida argues that it cannot as the idea of differentiation leaves open the idea of an “organic original, and homogeneous unity that eventually would come to be divided, to receive difference as an event” (Derrida 1982:13). The idea of differentiation would also not take into consideration the idea of delay and thus of deferral. Thus différance needs to be understood as both differed and deferred. Presence, understood within the categories of time as argued above, can only be understood on the basis of it being different from past and future and deferred (time delay), but likewise understanding presence is only possible by the

\textsuperscript{151} As mentioned above, these words (active passive, effect, determination) operate according to the lexicon of metaphysics that Derrida is challenging, but due to a lack of alternative words these words need to be used, but conscious of their metaphysical embeddedness.
difference as well as the deferred time relay of that understanding as described above, namely the time of the sign: the absence of presence. Thus presence is constituted in the Zeit-Spiel-Raum of différence.

This kind of thinking raises the question as mentioned in the previous section: Who or what is différence? Derrida argues that if we would accept this kind of question, with this question one would have to accept and thus conclude that différence “has been derived, has happened, is to be mastered and governed on the basis of the point of a present being, which itself could be some thing, a form, a state, a power in the world to which all kinds of names might be given, a what, or a present being as a subject, a who” (Derrida 1982:15). It is clear from the above arguments that such reasoning would not be possible, because such a who would be constituted by différence as it (who) would only be possible because of différence.

Derrida then turns in the essay, Différance, to one of the central arguments of metaphysics, namely: the subject (being present to one-self, self-consciousness), and how différence affects and determines (encloses) the subject as one of the central themes of metaphysics and thus delimits the subject, as well as metaphysics. A subject, understood as an identity that is self-conscious (Derrida 1982:15), can only be self-conscious – that is, conscious of its self-presence via the detour of a sign as it can only be present to itself as presence via the mediator of a sign (concept/word - signifier “presence” which forms a unit with the sense of presence – the signified152). Once the sign is inscribed (writing is inscribed) everything that goes with writing is inscribed into the idea of the subject. Thus a subject can only be a subject due to language (the use of signs), in Saussure’s understanding, through the use of signifier – signified units, which as discussed earlier is the basic unit of language. The subject is thus a “function” of language (Derrida 1982:15), a function of writing. Within Western tradition there has long been a search for a subject prior to the use of language, in other words a subject who is present to herself or himself prior to language in a conscious silent intuitive presence to self. The problem with the idea of a conscious intuitive presence to self is that this idea is based on the idea that there is something like consciousness prior to language, prior to distributing signs in space and time that can gather itself into presence. But consciousness means exactly that to gather oneself in self-presence is a perception153 of self in presence. This perception of self in presence can only happen through signs, some form of re-fection of oneself in presence. This reflection, as the word indicates, can only take place by re-

152 It was discussed in the previous section that writing is inscribed into this very unit of language.

153 Seeing or hearing oneself in the present moment.
flecting (bouncing back of an image like on a mirror), thus a conscious reflection of self as present is only possible on the basis of the use of an image (sign) that is a reflection of presence, and immediately one has all the symptoms of a sign (supplement). To be present to oneself is only possible via the mediation of writing, and to be in the present moment ignores what was discussed above: that the constitution of the present is only possible via the division of the present from what it is not. To put this differently, the sense of presence (signified) to which the signifier (the word presence) refers, if one wants to use this Saussurian distinction only for the moment, thereby for a moment ignoring the writing inscribed, is constituted by a delayed past (a past that was never present) and a deferred future (a future that is always still to come), and thus it is constituted by the trace.

The self in self-presence is an effect and determination of différance in both these senses – a différance within the sense of presence itself, as well as the différance of the inscription of writing between signifier and signified. Presence of self-presence can only be thought on the basis of différance, as presence is constituted only by the interval of what it is not in the time of what it is not by the trace, and likewise the self of self-presence is constituted on the basis of what it is not in the time of what it is not by the trace. Both self and presence of self-presence are constituted in the space of différance as well as in the time of différance and thus in the time-space of différance. Thus the subject is enclosed in différance, possible and impossible, because of différance.

Différance does indeed deconstruct the subject, but this in no way implies the death of the subject in that it becomes an “unreal” fiction. Derrida argues in an interview with Kearney: “To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, ‘operations’ or ‘effect’ (effets) of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it says it is. The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure cogito of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language. My work does not, therefore, destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it” (Kearney 1984:125; cf. Derrida 1982:109ff).

One cannot think consciousness separate from presence, and différance constitutes the possibility and impossibility of presence, just as it constitutes the possibility and impossibility of consciousness. Presence can only be thought by what it is not. It is not the past, nor is it the future, but it needs to bear within itself a mark of the past and the future for it to differ and defer as presence. Nor can one think presence without the word “presence”, and this is only possible through the inscription of the sign as both different and deferred presence. Once the sign is inscribed in the interval of time (time-space)
presence is no longer there as there is something in place of it: the sign. Thus, the sign is both the life and the death of presence. This privilege granted to presence, Derrida says, is the ether of metaphysics (Derrida 1982:16). Any thought on presence is caught in the language of metaphysics. One can delimit such a closure within the language of metaphysics by soliciting the value of presence that Heidegger has shown to be the onto-theological determination of Being. In the light of these arguments, presence is no longer the central form of Being, but Being is an active-passive determination and effect of différance. Yet keeping in mind that différance is a “system” “that no longer tolerates the opposition of activity and passivity, nor that of cause and effect, or of indetermination and determination, etc” (Derrida 1982:16-17).

Philosophy (metaphysics) lives in and on différance, thereby blinding itself to the same, which is not the identical (Derrida 1982:17). To explain what Derrida means by this, one has to understand that for him the same is différance, “as the displaced and equivocal passage of one different thing to another, from one term of an opposition to the other” (Derrida 1982:17) remains in the same logic (thus the same, but not identical). The oppositions of philosophy: absence-presence, consciousness-unconsciousness, cogito-madness, concept-intuition, culture-nature, physis-tekhné, can only appear as opposites if the other is seen as the différance of the one. The other is the deferred and differed of the one in the economy of the same or the same economy. Thus to give priority to absence rather than presence is still within the same economy. One has only chosen to make the one primary over the other, but forgotten that the one is differed and deferred from the other. Presence comes to meaning and thus to being only through the difference and deferment of its other. It is the same with thinking cogito as the absence of madness or madness as the absence of cogito. The one is always thought on the basis of the other. The same can only be thought on the basis of the other and the other can only be thought on the basis of the same. What is not thought is the difference and deferment (différance) that is prior to this distinction and thus makes this distinction possible. The differed and deferred, (différance) that makes the difference between oppositions possible, is not thought. The same or the other, cogito or madness, presence or absence, can be thought because of a prior Zeit-Spiel-Raum. It can be thought because of the space that allows one to differentiate between absence and presence, or cogito and madness, or the same and the other. It can be thought because of time, deferred and delayed time of the one and the other, which allows the differences (oppositions) to be thought.

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154 Soliciting means to call, but it is derived from the Latin which means to shake the whole, to make something tremble in its entirety (Derrida 1982:16 n18).
It is in this time-space that the oppositions play in their differences and the undecidability between which one has priority, but it is still within the economy of the same. Yet there is more to difféance (Zeit-Spiel-Raum) than this economy of the same in which differences play. Here one is touching on the greatest obscurity of the enigma of difféance – that which divides this concept by means of a strange cleavage (Derrida 1982:19). One cannot decide too hastily how to think this simultaneousness of difféance. How to think, at the same time, supplementation as both addition and in-place-of one for the other, through which the one becomes thinkable, and through this very supplementation the destruction and thus death of the other of which the one is a supplement of? How does one think this simultaneously, that presence can only be thought, through the supplementation of so-called “actual” presence through the addition of a sign, but through this addition of the sign presence is destroyed by what it is not – it is sign in which presence is absent.

Difféance is always thinking both at the same time. It is thinking both the economic detour within the element of the same as well as the relationship with an impossible presence as the irreparable loss of presence (Derrida 1982:19). To think difféance within the economy of the same, is to think the economic detour, which is always aiming at coming back to presence. Within this economic interpretation the sign is different to what it is a sign of, and it is a sign in the time of absence, the deferred presence. Yet there is nothing in the economic character of difféance that implies that the deferred presence can be found again (Derrida 1982:20). To think difféance is also to think it in the context of the impossibility of a return to presence and thus to think the impossible presence which is absolute absence and thus death. This second thinking of difféance interrupts the economic thinking of difféance and the question is, how does one think these two together? How does one think the economical, as well as the uneconomical, together? It cannot be thought together (Derrida 1982:19).

It does not make sense to try and think them together, because how does one think that this Zeit-Spiel-Raum of difféance is the possibility and the impossibility (questioning) of both presence and absence, cogito and madness, the same and the other, consciousness and unconsciousness? The Zeit-Spiel-Raum of difféance makes it possible to think the differences and the oppositions of metaphysics and philosophy, but what is forgotten, that what makes it possible, is also the impossibility thereof.

Difféance is the inscription of the time-space, the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space, in which the differences can play, but it is and remains an inscription (time-space), an archi-writing and thus in this time-space it constitutes
meaning, yet within the economy of the same, but it also destroys (deconstructs as it opens it for the other other) the very meaning it constitutes by opening the restricted economy of the same for the other – the general economy.

One can think of the first meaning of différance as an inscription and this inscription constitutes a restricted economy with investment and the profit of this investment is meaning and sense. The second meaning of différance as inscription is the inscription's relation to the general economy which is without profit, but absolute loss of meaning. These two economies that are both thought or not thought simultaneously in différance are related to each other. Hegel helps in understanding this relation between the two economies. Derrida turns to Hegel to try and understand how these two can be thought together in the essay "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve", in Writing and Difference (Derrida 1987:317-350).

“Through such a relating of a restricted and a general economy the very project of philosophy, under the privilege heading of Hegelianism, is displaced and reinscribed (Derrida 1982:19). For Hegel there is nothing that cannot be made sense of, as even nothing, nothingness or the impossible is given meaning the moment it is thought. The moment it “appears” to thought it enters into the work of thought, the work of philosophy. This work can be described as speculative philosophy. Speculative as it invests (inscribes) meaning in non-meaning. Sign (sense or meaning) is invested (added or supplemented) to the non-meaning (silence) of the murmuring of undifferentiated mass of there is. It inscribes (invests) meaning in non-meaning and the profit of this investment is presence and meaning. The profit of this investment is life as experienced – a life of meaning. There is nothing other than meaning as one is always already in the text of inscribed (invested) meaning. This meaningful life is the restricted economy of speculative philosophy. Yet in giving meaning to non-meaning, inscribing meaning (signs) in non-meaning (silence) it simultaneously blinds itself “to the baselessness of the non-meaning from which the basis of meaning is drawn, and in which this basis of meaning is exhausted” (Derrida 1978:325). This is the general economy. The relation between these two, Hegel thinks within dialectics and the concept of Aufhebung. Aufhebung means different things in German. It literally means to lift up. Yet it also means to preserve (to keep something), and it means to negate something, for example, debt can be Aufgehoben in that it is cancelled. Dialectics is the process of Aufhebung in all these meanings in which a concept is negated, lifted up to a higher sphere and there preserved (Derrida 1982:20 n23). In such a dialectical process there is nothing from which Aufhebung cannot profit.
For example Bataille describes the non-meaning into which meaning is inscribed (invested) as the burst of sovereign laughter. Yet, for Hegel this laughter is contained as it is given meaning (meaning is invested) and thus placed under the lordship of the work of philosophy, the work of dialectics, the work of Aufhebung (see Derrida 1978:323f). This work of Aufhebung limits the play, laughter, and is in control of play by giving it form and meaning [die Arbeit.... bildet] (Derrida 1978:323). Yet the seriousness of this investment (inscription) of meaning, the restricted economy of the work of philosophy, becomes a comedy. This serious work of philosophy is laughable because it is an investment without any guarantees as it is purely speculative. This whole serious empire of thought that is built, is built (constructed) on an unguaranteed (risky) investment. It is built on an inscription, as it is built on writing (archi-writing), of the Zeit-Spiel-Raum. “Laughter alone exceeds dialectics and the dialectician: it bursts out only on the basis of an absolute renunciation of meaning, an absolute risking of death, what Hegel calls abstract negativity” (Derrida 1978:323). Yet, this negativity (absolute lack of meaning) never takes place, because if it would take place (that is if it is thought), it would begin the work again of being taken up in the dialectical process of meaning, and therefore it has to be a laughter that never appears and thus is not thought.

This sovereign (the absolute degree of putting at stake) laughter makes the seriousness (work) of meaning appear as an abstraction inscribed in play. What Hegel did not think of was that the conscientious suspension of play was itself a phase of play; “and to the fact that play includes the work of meaning or the meaning of work, and includes them not in terms of knowledge, but in terms of inscription: meaning is a function of play, is inscribed in a certain place in the configuration of a meaningless play” (Derrida 1982:329). Hegel had revealed the general economy (abstract negativity), that is without reserve and absolute expenditure, as the resource of the serious work of meaning, thus linking the general economy to the restricted economy through the labour (dialectics) of negativity. Non-meaning (general economy) is invested, inscribed with meaning, because of the negativity of non-meaning. To negate the negativity is the labour of philosophy or the labour of dialectics. Through negation (negation of the negative meaning is created as a positive) meaning is lifted out of non-meaning and conserved: Aufhebung. So meaning is created out of non-meaning through the speculative system of dialectics and Aufhebung. It is for this reason that Derrida describes Hegel as the last philosopher of the book and the first philosopher of writing (Derrida 1997a:26). The last philosopher of the book, because he still reduces everything to an absolute system of dialectics, but the first philosopher of writing, because he invested between these two economies a purely
speculative inscription of meaning instituted by the negative (where the negative is the resource). Yet in revealing the importance of the absolute negative in the seriousness of work (philosophy) he forgot that the seriousness of work, or taming the play, is itself a play: a risky investment beyond securities and without foundation. Dialectics (philosophy) is enclosed in the play of différance, the play of writing. His dialectics remains only a speculative play, as a writing inscribed, and thus “subject” to différance. Dialectical thought of Aufhebung inscribes a restricted economy into the general economy and thus one has only an “investment that provisionally and calculatedly delays the perception of its profit or the profit of its perception” (Derrida 1982:20).

Therefore, contrary to the Hegelian dialectic, one needs to interpret the economic movement of différance as a play in which whoever loses wins, and in which one loses and wins on every turn (Derrida 1982:20). The inscription (investment) of the same (restricted economy) in the general economy are related to each other in exactly this sense of investment and inscription rather than dialectics, as dialectics is itself only possible on the condition of the inscription. The inscription of the time-space of difference and deferment makes the investment of dialects possible, but without guarantees. There is no guarantee, and if there are no guarantees it could mean that the displaced presentation remains definitively and implacably postponed, deferred, which does not mean that the present remains absent or hidden. On the contrary, différance maintains the “relation with that which we necessarily misconstrue, and which exceeds the alternative of presence and absence. A certain alterity” (Derrida 1982:20).

Hegel’s idea of Aufhebung helps one understand the relationship between general and restricted economy, as it reveals the necessity of investment (inscription) without guarantees, but it forgets that it is an investment, it forgets that it is an inscription, without guarantees. Where does that leave one, if différance is both the condition of possibility and impossibility of philosophy, and thus the closure of philosophy within différance? How is the possibility of philosophy (restricted economy) related to the impossibility of philosophy (general economy), if it is not related in any way that would open the door to absolute relativism and the idea that everything goes? Where does that leave one at the end or rather closure of the book, at the end or rather closure of logocentrism, and at the end or rather closure of metaphysics? “Closure is that hinge that articulates the double movement between logocentrism, or metaphysics, and its other” (Critchley 1999:21) and can add that hinge that articulates the double movement between dialectics and its other, but how are they related?
Closure can be described as the double refusal of both remaining within a tradition and of the possibility of transgressing the limit (Critchley 1999:20). Différance, as described above, reveals the impossibility of remaining within dialectics, but it also reveals the impossibility of going beyond. Dialectics is the curbing of the play of the burst of laughter and yet what is laughable is exactly this curbing. Différance effects and determines this circularity of making things possible and impossible at the same time. One cannot go beyond this circularity of possibility and impossibility, and thus one is enclosed in différance, or enclosed in writing, as one is always already in the text and/or context. The text or the context that is given to be read is always simultaneously dependent upon the presuppositions of a metaphysics of presence or logocentrism, dialectics and transgresses it. However, even these words, the text is always, is the language of logocentrism or ontology of P is P1. Can language move beyond the is of ontology? "What should the language be such that seeing it and falling into it would be the same event? What is the relation between light and lucidity, between the essence of language and the fall to the bottom of the abyss?" (Derrida 2002c:198)

This for Derrida is any text which identifies truth with presence or logos, occurring in the voice and entailing the debasement of writing and all forms of exteriority (Derrida 1997a:3), yet the text itself radically questions the metaphysics it presupposes, thereby entering into contradiction with itself, and pointing, maybe only indicating, the way toward thinking that would be other to logocentrism. So where does one begin in such a double bind? If there is no origin, no ground, no foundation and no end, where to start? Does it mean that one can start at random, which is the critique that is often thrown at Derrida: that his thought makes anything possible? One always starts somewhere and that somewhere is never just anywhere (Bennington 1993:20). The starting point is radically contingent, and that is a necessity, and therefore the starting point is always given – as one is always responding to (as Levinas would say) the Other, or responding to the "Come" that is received and suffered as necessity itself. This come is imposed, but because it is intertwined with the necessity of contingency it never stops wandering (Derrida 1978:11, 292). The limitation of reference opens it to a hyper sensitivity to otherness: tout autre. This sensitivity towards otherness: tout autre can be thought with the help of the trace, and not negativity, but affirmation (the affirmation of the tout autre as was discussed at the end of the previous section). Derrida borrows this idea of the trace being a past that was never present, but by being a past that was never present it is not an absolute absence, from Levinas (Derrida 1982:21). A trace is the faint immemorial memory of a past that was never present and a glimmer of hope for a future that is always
still to come, and thus links the restricted economy to the general economy without the one determining the other, but without opening the door to absolute relativism.

4 HEIDEGGER, LEVINAS AND DERRIDA AT THE END OF PHILOSOPHY OR THE CLOSURE OF METAPHYSICS AND A VULNERABILITY TOWARD THE TOUT AUTRE

4.1 Derrida’s interpretation of Heidegger

Derrida argues that nothing he does would have been possible without Heidegger (Derrida 1982:22ff). This close connection and even dependence of Derrida's thoughts on Heidegger already becomes apparent in the similarity or rather proximity of the words they both used. Heidegger introduced the idea of Destruktion and Derrida uses the term deconstruction, and the relationship between them cannot be denied. There are those who argue, for example Bennington (1993), that “what Derrida does” is in part a translation into French of Heidegger’s Destruktion. Besides deconstruction and Destruktion Heidegger's use of the term dif-ference (Austrag) is in close proximity to Derrida's différance. The close proximity of dif-ference and différance becomes clear, Bennington argues, when reading Heidegger's Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics (Bennington 1993:272). Bennington also argues that the quasi-concept of the trace, elaborated by Derrida, “occupies a position that it has been possible to think is identical with that of Being in Heidegger, which would come down to making différance into a repetition of the ontic-ontological difference, in spite of what Derrida himself says about it” (Bennington 1993:273-274). Bennington is right and wrong as will become clear in this section, as Being cannot simply be translated as trace, although there is a very close proximity.

It could be argued that it is difficult to separate Heidegger and Derrida and that Derrida could be seen as a sort of perfected Heidegger. Even the great critical work, Of Spirit, where Derrida is in critical conversation with Heidegger, could be read as a Heideggerian deconstruction of a term (Geist) inadequately deconstructed by Heidegger himself (Bennington 1993:274). However, such a comparison or even identification of two thinkers would be totally contrary to both these thinkers’ work, as it would deny the work of dif-ference and or différance and thus Destruktion or deconstruction. To truly be able to compare these two thinkers would be possible only if one had the “truth” of Heidegger’s
work and the “truth” of Derrida’s work. To “have” the “truth” would be an abstraction and
the impossibility thereof has already been discussed, but besides that it would also be
contrary to their thinking to attempt such an abstraction, as it is exactly this difference
between the self and the other that is important to them. “Derrida is right up against
Heidegger” (Bennington 1993:276), and yet there is a difference, and the difference
between the two will be the main thrust of this section.

The ‘difference’ between the two thinkers is important for the theme of this study because
the fine points of their differences are to be found in the Ortschaft that this study finds
itself, namely at the end of philosophy, and this is exactly the first point of disagreement
between the two, as Derrida does not refer to this Ortschaft as the end of philosophy or
the end of metaphysics, but rather the closure of philosophy and/or metaphysics. Some
have read this disagreement in "reading" the Ortschaft in Derrida as a radical distancing
from Heidegger and others as proximity to Heidegger (Riddel 1976; Clark 1986; Hoy
1979).

In Of Grammatology Derrida specifically chooses the word closure and not the end of the
epoch, as he says the following: “For essential reasons, the unity of all that which lets
itself be caught sight of today across the most diverse concepts of science and writing is,
in principle, always more or less secretly determined by a historic-metaphysical epoch of
which we only catch a glimpse of the closure. We do not say end” (Derrida 1997a:4). It is
clear that Derrida is referring to the epochal sendings that determine a historic-
metaphysical epoch as discussed in the chapter on Heidegger. Yet he uses the word
closure rather than end and thus it indicates a disagreement with specifically Heidegger’s
second thought-path. As discussed in the chapter on Heidegger, it would be wrong to
overemphasise this difference in choice of words, as Heidegger’s interpretation of this
Ortschaft is not an end as in the death of metaphysics, but rather thinking through.
Critchley asks if Heidegger’s end of philosophy is to be thought in opposition to Derrida’s
closure of metaphysics (Critchley 1999:77)? To truly come to terms with this proximity and
difference between these two thinkers the study will shortly return to the thoughts in the
chapter on Heidegger with regards to the end of philosophy as the overcoming of
metaphysics. Heidegger very clearly states that the end of philosophy is not the coming to
an end of metaphysics, but the Vollendung der Metaphysik (Heidegger 1978:374). The
path that needs to be followed to overcome metaphysics, according to Heidegger, can
only be via a Verwindung which is an appropriation of the essence of metaphysics
(Heidegger 1973:91). He argues that one does not escape metaphysics just because its
end can be postulated: metaphysics overcome does not disappear (Heidegger 1973:85)
and thus, in the chapter on Heidegger, the study spoke of a wounding of metaphysics. Derrida (1981b) accepts this Heideggerian stance in Positions. He replies to the question on the possibility of overcoming metaphysics as follows: “There is not a transgression if we understand by that the pure and simple installation in a beyond of metaphysics” (Derrida 1981b:12). Heidegger and Derrida interpret this Ortschaft (end or closure of metaphysics) in very similar terms, therefore the difference between the two needs to be found elsewhere. Derrida does not have a problem with how Heidegger interprets the Ortschaft, but has a problem with Heidegger’s apocalyptic interpretation of the “end or closure”. Heidegger gave priority to certain epochs as being “closer” to the truth of Being or further from the truth of Being. For example, the pre-Socratic Greeks were closer and the present time was furthest, but by being furthest it is also very close to the revelation of the truth of Being. Derrida has a problem with this kind of valuating of epochal sendings of Being, as such an evaluation can only be possible on the basis of some or other kind of inclination of a transcendental signified. What Derrida thus had a problem with was with the Heideggerian idea of the truth of Being and Heidegger’s ontological commitment to the “truth of Being” (Hoy 1979:224).

There is thus a close proximity and also a difference between the two thinkers. The proximity between the two can be found in the way Derrida interprets the closure as it is very similar to the way Heidegger interpreted the end. “Every transgressive gesture re-encloses us…within the interior of the closure” (Derrida 1981b:13). Thus the closure of metaphysics is a moving limit that restores each transgression and transgresses each restoration. It is like the Verendung of completed (vollendeten) metaphysics and this Verendung (closure) is without end as it is infinite and inde-fin-ite. “That which is caught in the de-limited closure can continue indefinitely” (Derrida 1981b:13). Critchley argues that Derrida’s choice of word, closure rather than end, is not so much to distance his thought from Heidegger, but to correct a misunderstanding of Heidegger, namely a certain apocalyptism with regards to the end of philosophy and thus metaphysics (Critchley 1999:77).

The difference between the two is to be found in the choice of the word “closure” which encloses metaphysics in this circular process of transgression and restoration, and thus encloses whatever is within this circularity of the metaphysical text, and there is no outside text. In Heidegger’s thought there seems to be the idea of an outside text by which the epochal sendings of Being can be compared and evaluated. For Heidegger, what is present is still to some degree related to what is re-presented, even if it is through the
medium of language as the house of being. Thus beings (what is present) are still to a
degree dominated by the presencing.

What Derrida's thoughts challenge is the “domination of beings” (Derrida 1982:21), the
domination of presence that is challenged by difféance in that difféance solicits this very
domination of beings, but in the sense of the Latin *sollicitare*, which means to shake the
whole (Derrida 1982:21). This play of words: difféance solicits (calls) beings to come into
presence and thus be dominated by presence. Difféance calls presence, metaphysics, to
its dominion, but it calls it to its dominion in that it lets the whole system tremble. What
difféance calls forth it also fundamentally questions, but keeping in mind that difféance
does not call forth anything. This is another way of speaking of the transgression and
restoration – difféance restores or recalls what it transgresses and transgresses what it
recalls or restores. What is being challenged, thus, is the determination of Being as
presence or as beingness (Derrida 1982:21). Derrida argues that such a challenge would
not be possible if the difference between Being and beings is not broached (Derrida
1982:21).

“…différance is not. It is not a present being, however excellent, unique, principal,
or transcendent. It governs nothing, reigns over nothing, and nowhere exercises
any authority. It is not announced by any capital letter. Not only is there no
kingdom of différence, but différance instigates the subversion of every kingdom.
Which makes it obviously threatening and infallibly dreaded by everything within us
that desires a kingdom, the past or future presence of a kingdom. And it is always
in the name of a kingdom that one may reproach différance with wishing to reign,
believing that one sees it aggrandize itself with a capital letter” (Derrida 1982:21-
22).

From the above quote it is clear that différance is not Being and it is not the truth or the
meaning of Being and thus it cannot be the ontico-ontological difference, although they
are in very close proximity. Hoy argues that Derrida thinks that Heidegger is still
committed to an ultimate metaphysical reality (Hoy 1979:225), and according to him, this
would be a misunderstanding of Heidegger’s understanding of the “truth of Being”. For
Heidegger, according to Hoy, “‘Being’ is merely a metalinguistic notion resulting from a
transcendental deduction based on the need for something to which language could refer”
(Hoy 1979:232). Thus Derrida and Heidegger are not that far apart and Derrida was very
aware of his proximity to Heidegger.
Derrida asks the question, if différance can be equated with the ontico-ontological difference, and he argues that it is difficult to answer this question (Derrida 1982:22), because différance, in a certain sense, is exactly the historical and epochal unfolding of Being, or the ontological difference (Derrida 1982:22). Yet in another sense it is not. To understand this fine difference, Derrida turns to Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, and argues that Nietzsche actually went further than Heidegger in liberating the sign from a transcendental signified (Derrida 1997a:19), and it is here that the difference between the two becomes important. The difference can be stated bluntly by arguing that différance has "priority" over the ontico-ontological difference in the sense that one can say that Heidegger’s thinking of the meaning and the truth of Being, as discussed in the chapter on Heidegger, are determinations of différance as the ontico-ontological difference is an intrametaphysical effect of différance (Derrida 1982:22). Thus the unfolding of différance is not merely the truth or meaning of Being nor the epochality of Being, but it is "older" than the truth or meaning of Being. Derrida suggests that one needs to think the truth of Being and the epochality of Being as an epoch of the diapherein (Derrida 1982:22). For this reason it would not be correct to even call this an epoch, as epochality would still fall within the idea of the history of Being. Différance "is" older than the ontico-ontological difference and the truth of Being (Derrida 1982:22). Being does not have meaning or truth as such, but its meaning and truth is revealed in the dissimulation of itself in beings. In this sense, différance is older than the truth of Being and older than the ontico-ontological difference, and then "it’s age" can be called the play of the trace. A play of the trace which no longer belongs to the horizon of Being, “but whose play transports and encloses the meaning of Being: the play of the trace, or the différance, which has no meaning and is not” (Derrida 1982:22). Having said this, Derrida argues further that this does not mean that one can do away with Heidegger’s ontological difference or the thinking of the truth of Being. On the contrary, he argues that one needs to stay with this thinking (Derrida 1982:22-23).

The task according to Derrida is to permit to appear or disappear “the trace of what exceeds the truth of Being. The trace (of that) which can never be presented, the trace which itself can never be presented: that is, appear and manifest itself, as such, in its phenomenon” (Derrida 1982:23). This sounds very similar to Being in Heidegger’s thoughts. Yet Derrida’s trace cannot be equated with Being, contrary to what Bennington argues. Derrida turns to a re-reading of Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche as he argues that Nietzsche more than any other has liberated the sign “from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos and the related concept of truth or the primary
signified, in whatever sense that is understood” (Derrida 1997a:19). He argues that Heideggerian thought returns so as to reinstate a form of logos or a *primum signatum*: the transcendental signified (Derrida 1997a:20), that Nietzsche had fundamentally questioned. It would be a great injustice to argue that Heidegger reinstated a *primum signatum* in the classical metaphysical sense. Heidegger says in his Postface to *Was ist Metaphysik?*, “Thought obeying the Voice of Being….” (Heidegger 1960:46), which becomes the last resource of the sign. This quote certainly refers to the earlier Heidegger and the later Heidegger would probably not make such a statement, especially once he started writing Being under erasure. Derrida realises this and he says that Heidegger’s sense of Being is never simply and rigorously a “signified” (Derrida 1997a:22), but he continues his argument and says that even if Heidegger writes Being under erasure, the presence of a transcendental signified might be effaced, but it still remains legible (Derrida 1997a:23). The transcendental signified is destroyed, but it still makes possible the very idea of a sign. “In as much as it de-limits onto-theology, the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism, this last writing is also the first writing” (Derrida 1997a:23). Derrida’s thoughts on this delimitation of logocentrism, metaphysics and ontology being also its possibility, has been discussed at length above. To distinguish their paths is very difficult, but Derrida agrees with this as he argues: “To come to recognize, not within but on the horizon of the Heideggerian paths, and yet in them, that the sense of being is not a transcendental or trans-epochal signified” (Derrida 1997a:23).

Derrida engages with Heidegger in numerous texts. In *The Double Session* Derrida reflects on Heidegger’s interpretation of *mimesis* (Derrida 1981a:198). Derrida, reflecting on Heidegger’s interpretation of language as showing rather than signifying, brings in the idea of a stage as the space (the language) that shows rather than signifies. A stage can be interpreted as a presence which does not present itself as it disappears in the act of allowing to appear, and this is exactly how language works as well (Derrida 1981a:343ff). Derrida further explores the idea of the stage showing, but it is always believed to also represent, and yet using the play “*Pierrot Murderer of his wife*” challenges the idea of representation, but what it shows is an effect of the structure of the fold (Derrida 1981a:343ff).

This will be further explored by returning to Derrida’s interpretation of Heidegger’s *The Anaximander Fragment* to continue to argue for both the proximity and the difference between his thought and that of Heidegger (Derrida 1982:23). Heidegger in this text recalls that the forgetting of Being is to forget the difference between Being and beings.
The matter of Being (Sache des Seins) is to be the Being of beings (Derrida 1982:23). The grammatical form of this enigmatic, ambiguous genitive indicates the following:

i. a genesis (Genesis )
ii. the emergence (Herkunft) of what is present from presencing (des Anwesenden aus dem Anwesen) (Derrida 1982:23.).
iii. Yet the essence (Wesen) of this emergence remains concealed (Verborgen) along with the essence of the two other words (Present and presencing).

The relationship between presencing and present is not thought as it was necessarily believed that presencing becomes from itself something present. The ontological difference is the difference between presencing and present (Anwesen und Anwesenden). Derrida argues that what Heidegger is advancing is that the difference between Being and beings, Anwesen and Anwesenden, has been forgotten and has disappeared without a trace. It is the very trace of difference that has been submerged (Derrida 1982:23). Yet différance “is” neither presence nor absence, but other to both, and thus one can say that différance traces this forgetting of the difference between Being and beings, but “itself” is beyond presence and absence and thus one will have to speak of the trace of the trace if one speaks of différance. The difference between Being and beings, presence and presencing, are derivative of différance (Derrida 1997a:23).

It is the “essence” of Being to veil itself, as it unveils itself in the presencing of what is present, but in what is present it has disappeared (concealed itself). This sounds very similar to Derrida and yet the difference is that for Heidegger there remains the idea of an early trace (frühe Spur). Derrida also has the idea of a trace, which has been discussed in the previous sections. The difference between Derrida’s trace and Heidegger’s Spur is a very subtle difference. The difference between Heidegger’s interpretation of the Spur and Derrida’s trace can be understood if one understands Heidegger’s view of authentic language. Heidegger, in The Question of Being, speaks of a meaning-fullness of authentic language (Heidegger 1958:105). This plenitude (fullness) is not an historical accumulation, but a play of unfolding for Heidegger. “A play which, the more richly it unfolds, the more strictly it is bound by the hidden rules” (Heidegger 1958:105). Yet this play is always commanded by an origin it can never fully name (frühe Spur). Derrida’s trace is a play that is more playful than this play of the frühe Spur in Heidegger (Riddell 1976:587). Derrida’s play is without an origin outside the play – all one has is the text as there is no outside text.
The early trace (frühe Spur) is not a present, but a simulacrum (supplement) of a presence, and therefore it has no place as it dislocates itself, replaces itself and refers itself: it is under erasure. The present is all there is, but the present is a sign or a trace. As has been discussed, it is a sign of a sign and therefore the present is a trace of a trace (Derrida 1982:24).

This is how the text of metaphysics is to be comprehended. It is comprehended on the basis of this forgetting of the trace, forgetting of the difference between present and presencing and thus Being and beings. What is present is taken to be the highest present, thus totally forgetting the presencing, and that what is (present) is only a trace made possible by the forgetting of presencing. Derrida's closure of metaphysics is not its end, because the text is "still legible; and to be read" (Derrida 1982:24). The metaphysical text is marked in its interior by the multiple furrow of its margin, thus producing at the same time the monument and the mirage of the trace, the trace simultaneously traced and erased, simultaneously living and dead (Derrida 1982:24). Heidegger connects the trace to the essence of Being and the oblivion of Being and this unilateral connection Derrida challenges.

Where Derrida does critique Heidegger, is with regard to the unilateralism of Heidegger's claim that there is a "sending of Being from the Greeks through epochs of increasing oblivion, which is gathered into the destiny or destination of Being at the end of philosophy" (Critchley 1999:84). The inherent eschatology and teleology Derrida challenges and compares it to a postal idea, whilst wondering if this sending of Being is not threatened by dissention or dissemination, which would divert the destining and gathering of Being and thus deconstruct Heidegger's text.

“To the original ‘Envoi’ of Being, Derrida opposes a plurality of ‘envois’, inassemblable singularities, postcards, which cannot be gathered into a unity history (Geschichte) of the destining (Geschick) of Being” (Critchley 1999:85). Thus for Derrida, the eschatology of Being, the closure of metaphysics or the End of Philosophy is not to arrive at its end (teleology), but is continually breached, interrupted by a postal différance. This différance is older (Derrida 1982:22) than the ontological difference and therefore cannot be represented as a unitary history. Derrida is heading towards a thought of multiple sendings that would have the form, neither of presence nor of representation, but rather of a plurality of sendings (postcards, voices, events) that would construct a structure that is incapable of being structured. “Sendings would be an infinite web or general text of singularities, of events that would be pre-ontological and incapable of being gathered into
Being or represented as a unitary epoch possessing a sender, an address, and a destination” (Critchley 1999:86). Later on in Derrida’s work he seldom uses the word closure and seems to replace it with other words, such as *limite* or even wholly other (Critchley 1999:87). “The problem of closure does not enclose the space of a unitary history and foreclose the possibility of transgression but rather traces the double necessity and double impossibility of both belonging to a history whose closure can be delimited and not belonging to a history whose closure we are unable to leave. There is no exit within a repetition of the tradition, and there is no exist without that repetition. It is only through a ceaseless and massive repetition of Heidegger’s thought that an ellipsis arises from which the other to Heidegger’s thinking may be approached” (Critchley 1999:88). Derrida challenges the unitary history of metaphysics from the Greeks to today, yet this challenge can only be possible from within such a tradition. The possibility of numerous sendings can only be thought from the expectation of a unitary sending. What is outside the text? Or how to conceive what is outside a text? “That which is more or less than a text’s own, proper margin” (Derrida 1982:25). The trace is both sheltered (monument) and dissimulated in the various names of Western metaphysics.

Yet différance remains a metaphysical name if it names the difference between present and presencing, Being and beings (Derrida 1982:26), but what Derrida has been arguing in this essay is that différance is “older” than Being itself. Does this “older” than being have a name in the Western metaphysical language? It has no name, because a name has not yet been found in the hope that one day a name will be found, but it has no name, because to find a name one would have to move outside the text and there is no outside text with which to give a name to différance which is “older” than Being. This unnameable is not some kind of ineffable Being! The unnameableness of différance does not bring it into proximity with the unnameable God for example. The unnameable of différance is the play that makes names possible, thus God would be a nominal effect of différance, but that would be blasphemy, maybe the kind of blasphemy that would get one crucified.

Thus what one can conclude is that there never was and never will be a unique word or a master name as even the non-word or non-concept or non-name, différance, is itself caught in the nominal effects it affects and determines. This is the critique of metaphysical God-talk where God cannot be a master name or master word. Différance does not refer to an origin nor to an end, but it refers, if it refers to anything, to the play in and of the text in which one always and already is. Derrida says: “There is nothing kerygmatic about this “word”, provided that one perceives its decapita(liza)tion. And that one puts into question the name of the name” (Derrida 1982:27).
This loss of origin or eschaton is not something that one should mourn, but it is something that one can affirm – both the play and the openness of an indefinable open eschatology offering hospitality to the other that is always still to come. This affirmation is an openness toward the Other, and thus hope. A Heideggerian hope (Derrida 1982:27). Heidegger says that one would have to search for the single unique word in order to name the essential nature of Being. Thus any thoughtful attempt at addressing Being is daring, but such daring is not impossible “since Being speaks always and everywhere throughout language” (Heidegger 1975:52). This same hope is inspired by the inscription in the “simulated affirmation of différance. It bears (on) each member of this sentence: “Being/speaks/always and everywhere /throughout/ language” (Derrida 1982:27).

4.2 Derrida’s interpretation of Levinas

In the previous chapter the study has already reflected on Derrida’s Violence and Metaphysics, but the focus of that discussion was with regards to Levinas’ interpretation of Heidegger. In this chapter the study will shortly reflect on Derrida’s reading of Levinas with regards to “the way” in which Derrida’s work works, if it works at all, needs to be added (if it has a determinable way of working as in a specific truth of working). In any reading of Derrida on Levinas one needs to keep in mind the way Derrida himself describes this relationship: “… faced with a thinking like that of Levinas, I never have an objection. I am ready to subscribe to everything that he says. That does not mean that I think the same thing in the same way, but in this respect the differences are very difficult to determine; in this case, what do differences of idiom, language or writing mean? I tried to pose a certain number of questions to Levinas whilst reading him, where it may have been a question of his relation to the Greek logos, of his strategy, or of his thinking with respect to femininity for example, but what happens there is not of the order of disagreement or distance” (Derrida 1986b:74).

In this chapter there will be a reflection on this reading of Levinas by Derrida, but will confine the discussion to the concepts and thoughts mentioned in the above quote: of his strategy – the impossible or the impossible, relation to the Greek logos – tout autre, of his thinking with respect to femininity and what I will call the advent within language. These thoughts or concepts cannot be seen as separate as they flow into each other, affecting each other.
4.2.1 The impossible or the impossible

Caputo argues that the problem of the impossible goes to the heart of Derrida's relationship with Levinas (Caputo 1997a:20). There are certain similarities between Derrida's reading of Levinas and his reading of negative theology as both these seek to address or be addressed by the absolutely other, l'infini, which is utterly exterior and thus shatters all horizons. The "idea" of the absolute other, the infinite other, is an aporia\textsuperscript{155} and thus it is impossible to define and get a grasp on it (comprehend).

Levinas argues that both Husserl and Heidegger submitted the other to the same of expectation or anticipatory horizon, which was discussed in the previous section, and Derrida questioned this expectation or anticipatory horizon in Heidegger's thinking of Being. Can one think what Levinas calls positive infinity of the infinitely other without reducing such thinking to some form or other of finite reasoning or even finite reasoning strategy? This is what Derrida questions, and argues that it is not possible, because the moment you have a positive interpretation of the Infinite or the absolutely Other it is no longer Infinite or Other, but has been reduced to the same, or the positive interpretation is only possible within finite thought. Can one think of the other as absolutely other and thereby expel negativity and Hegel's labour of negativity from transcendence (Derrida 1978b:114)? To do this one would have to expel from the thought of the Other negativity, the labour of negativity\textsuperscript{156} and any idea of transcendence, but then it would be meaningless or unthought. The idea of the infinite cannot be truly understood and interpreted as Other except in the form of the in-finite. It can only be thought in finite thought. Thus the only way to possibly think the Infinite Other is not to think it at all, because it is "unthinkable, impossible, unutterable beyond (tradition's) Being and Logos" (Derrida 1978b:114).

This thinking the impossible brings Levinas' thought very close to negative theology and the thinking of the unutterable. Yet Levinas' thinking of the Other is different from negative theology, because he does not renounce language as a foreign medium. Levinas, Derrida argues: "does not give himself the right to speak as they [negative theology and Bergsonism] did, in a language resigned to its own failure" (Derrida 1978b:116). This would have made things a lot easier for Levinas, yet for Levinas language cannot be discarded as it is the very point of encounter with infinity. Derrida and Levinas are equally

\textsuperscript{155} It is for this reason that "idea" was written in inverted commas as it is impossible to have an idea of the absolutely Other. In a previous section, Derrida's thoughts on Hegel were discussed, where Hegel was interpreted as saying that one can have an idea of everything (nothing, infinite, etcetera), but the problem is that the moment that you have an idea of something, like nothing, it is no longer nothing, or as soon as one has an idea of the Infinite it is no longer infinite.

\textsuperscript{156} Derrida is referring to the Hegelian idea of the labour of negativity as discussed in a previous section.
in advance, committed to the trace, and any attempt to efface the trace is for both a mistake and impossible (Derrida 1978b:147-148). The trace is a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present and a faint glimmer of hope of a future always still to come. It is the idea of the trace that makes thought possible, not without the violence of some or other reduction to a transcendental signified, but maybe the least violent (reductionist) way of speaking about the other.

Thus, bringing negative theology and Levinas' thought together, one has “two parallel but instructively different impossibilities and aporias. (1) Absolute Heterology: As long as Levinas affirms language and commits himself to the trace, he cannot affirm a positive, infinite alterity, for that would wipe language out without a trace, without remainder. (2) Hyperousiologia: as long as negative theology affirms intuitive unity with a positive, infinite alterity, it cannot avail itself of language, for language would compromise its intuition; but it is already too late, and negative theology does not know how not to speak” (Caputo 1997a:21). One is dealing with the impossible, but it is exactly the impossible that deconstruction is all about, which leads one to the second thought.

4.2.2 Tout autre
Derrida defends Husserl and Heidegger (thus he defends Greek thought) with regards to thinking the Other, as the Other can only be thought within a certain ‘framework of anticipation and expectation’, otherwise the other would not be other. To think the Other requires a lot of preparation. “…a long and difficult advent is needed to prepare for this invention – and deconstruction is the preparation for the tout autre (Caputo 1997a:21). Thus one could perhaps say that it is the impossible that makes the tout autre possible. Husserl’s apperception is an elaborate gesture of respect for the other, without which Levinas’ ethical response would be impossible. The alter ego that Levinas so criticised is necessary for the other to be other. ”[a] necessity due to the finitude of meaning: the other is absolutely other only if he is an ego, that is, in a certain way, if he is the same as I. Inversely, the other as res is simultaneously less other (not absolute other) and less ‘the same’ than I simultaneously more and less other, which means, once more, that the absolute alterity is the same (Derrida 1978b:127). The tout autre is tout autre only up to a point, as there are limits – or the Other is Other only in relation to the Same. In other words, it is the tout autre that disrupts the same, but it can only disrupt the same if it can be received (expected, anticipated) in the same, otherwise it would be a nonsensical other that passes by without having the slightest impact on the same. To think the Other without the idea of the trace would be impossible, even if it is a trace of a past that was never present, or anticipation with regards to the future still to come, but the trace links both to
the past that was never present, and the future that is always still to come, and without this trace the Other would not make a difference, but would go by unnoticed.

“That notion is what Derrida will later on adopt under the name of the impossible, of the incoming of the tout autre, the excess or breach that exceeds and shocks our expectation, which thereby depends upon anticipatory expectations and pregiven horizons that had been set too low or within too narrow a tolerance” (Caputo 1997a:22). There is no such thing as non-violence, as the Other is always reduced to the Same to some degree, for the Other is always inscribed within the trace, but that is exactly the idea of the impossible possibility of the Other.

The trace makes both the other possible and impossible. It is allowing the same (possible) to be shocked, interrupted by the difference it did not expect of the wholly other – tout autre (the impossible). Levinas has the dream of a pure thought of pure difference uncontaminated by the same, a thought that negates itself, that effaces itself so as to let the other be in the other’s pure difference. Such a dream, Derrida argues at the end of Violence and Metaphysics, would go under the name of pure ‘empiricism’ or the pure ‘experience-of-the-other (Derrida 1978b:151). This would be a dream of a non-philosophy and yet it will remain a philosophical dream of what is before or beyond philosophy. This ‘experience-of-the-other’ returns this pure empiricism back to metaphysics, as Derrida argues: “But can one speak of an experience of the other of difference? Has not the concept of experience always been determined by the metaphysics of presence? Is not experience always an encountering of an irreducible presence, the perception of a phenomenality” (Derrida 1978b:152)? Levinas is ‘resigned’ to this, not to denying the experience of alterity or rendering it incoherent, but to betraying it by saying it, as in negative theology, with the difference that he cannot opt for silent commerce with the other but has to find a solution to his aporia within language (Caputo 1997a: 24).

4.2.3 The advent within language of that which is beyond language
What Levinas shows us, according to Derrida, is that nothing solicits the Greek logos or philosophy than this interruption of the tout autre (Derrida 1978b:152). The tout autre is not something [being-in-itself] on the other side of language. It is not some absolute exteriority, something absolutely other in an other-land of absolute alterity. No, it is an event within language. “the tout autre is a shock to the system in place, an inside/outside transgressive alteration that modifies the same, that alters it instead of confirming it in its complacency. But if that event is to take place, then the horizons to be shocked, the limits to be trespassed, the frontiers to be crossed, the same to be jarred loose, the enclosure to be opened, along with a readiness to be surprised – all of that must be in-place, must
antedate, must anticipate and prepare for the coming arrival” (Caputo 1997a:24). It is for this reason that the study would like to speak of this event [inside/outside, impossible/possible transgression], as advent, as it is an event that needs to be prepared for, that is anticipated although always beyond expectations and determinations, the prepared for the expectation of the arrival of that which breaks the boundaries of what was expected within the confines of the Same.

4.2.4 The relationship to the feminine other
The study will not focus on this feminine other as it does not directly bear on the theme of the study, but it is important to mention. This violence against the feminine other in the work of Levinas is mainly read by Derrida in *En ce moment meme dans cet ouvrage me voic* (Derrida 1980) and the use of the masculine pronoun for the Other at the exclusion of the feminine or the violent reduction of the feminine to the masculine same.

5 THE LIMITS AND IMPOSSIBILITIES OF DERRIDA’S GOD-TALK: DERRIDA’S YES AND NO TO NEGATIVE THEOLOGY

Do Derrida’s thoughts allow for any possibility of God-talk? Are Derrida’s thoughts useful for theology or do they essentially make theology, both positive and negative, impossible? Or are Derrida’s thoughts “perhaps”157 theological or maybe even Christian158?
From the above attempt to do the impossible, and that is to summarily introduce Derrida’s thoughts, it seems as if Derrida’s thoughts are the final nail in the coffin of any positive notion of God as well as the classic negative theological alternative, as there is nothing outside the text: there is no outside text. Derrida’s questioning of a positive or negative transcendental certainly indicates the final nail in the coffin of any notion of positive (identifiable or determinable) transcendence. There are many who would like to interpret Derrida as the final victory over any form of theism and who are in reaction to the religious turn of continental philosophy and who would like to interpret Derrida without any religious connection whatsoever, for example Hägglund (2008). Yet one cannot ignore Derrida’s God-talk as he mentioned the word God numerous times in various articles. Derrida’s thoughts lead to the closure of metaphysics and thus to the limits of philosophical

157 Perhaps is in inverted comas, because at the end of this section the importance or the “friendship” with perhaps will be explained.
158 With this question I am in no way saying or even insinuating that Derrida was Christian and he did not even know it. What the question is moving towards, is that maybe something in Derrida’s thoughts might find some correlates in aspects of Christian theology.
language. Yet Derrida is not finished with transcendence as he proposes a quasi-transcendence.

What Derrida tried to “show is that language itself always assumes its ‘other’, that which cannot properly be named or thought” (Rayment-Pickard 2003:3). He did not deny that there is something that transcends language, but what he denied is that one can account for that “something” beyond language. What or who is this something that is other to language? This question can be answered in numerous different ways, for example: reality, Being, history, God and all these so-called references are names (language). Is there a way to address that which is beyond language in anything but language – is there an outside text? This is the question Derrida pondered, but without ever denying that there “is” a beyond language. On the contrary, Derrida is very interested in this other. One could say that he is haunted by this other and how this other marks, scars, haunts and wounds language, but does this interest make Derrida’s thought theological? That depends on how one interprets theology.

If one takes language to its limits, or put differently, if one takes philosophy to its limits and tries to “see” what is beyond the closure of metaphysics, is one still busy with philosophy or has one ventured into the field of theology? Is the site beyond the limits of language and thus of philosophy a sacred site, as Heidegger would call it, or a holy site where one is confronted with the infinite ethical demand of the other in which the name of God comes to mind? The study finds itself in this holy or sacred site. Is any further deliberation necessary on or in or about this site within the field of philosophy or has one ventured beyond philosophy into theology? Does God-talk (theology) begin where philosophy has reached its limits? What would such God-talk look like, if one takes into consideration that Derrida, like Heidegger, never intended to destroy philosophy or metaphysics, but to think through whilst remaining within its horizon(s). The God-talk that comes to mind here at the limits cannot throw everything away (philosophical horizon) that revealed the site, but needs to take into consideration that which makes God-talk both possible and impossible, and thus remain within the horizon that gave birth to (revealed) the sacred or holy site. Rayment-Pickard asks if this does not mean that one ventures into a site that is pre-philosophical and pre-theological (Rayment-Pickard 2003:3)? What he is referring to is to the site that is prior to philosophy or theology, but prior in the sense of “older”, more primary, more archi-, and yet it is a site that is revealed through the horizon of philosophy and therefore, maybe, it might be more correct to speak of a post-philosophical or post-theological site in the sense of thinking through philosophy, but still within the horizon of
philosophy. Because one finds oneself both in a site "older" than philosophy and "after" philosophy, Derrida suggested the idea of closure. To be enclosed both older (before) and after (pre- and post-) philosophy.

To understand what Rayment-Pickard is referring to one needs to take into account his notion of two possible interpretations of theology. First, theology can be understood as God-talk in the sense of discourses about God. This, Rayment-Pickard refers to as restricted theology (Rayment-Pickard 2003:5). Second, theology refers to the conditions of possibility of all the metaphysical determinations of truth and this he calls general-theology (2003:5). Rayment-Pickard's general-theology refers to anything that presents itself as a first principle (transcendent) and which thus forms the basis of whatever is to follow. Heidegger's general theology would be the ontological difference, where Levinas' general-theology would be the infinitely ethical substitutive relationship to the Other. Rayment-Pickard seems to be saying that Derrida's general-theology is différance. In other words, différance is the first principle, but Derrida's différance is not a first principle and thus cannot function as a transcendental signified. If anything, it "is" a quasi-transcendental.

Rayment-Pickard's interpretation of différance as a general-theology is an interesting way of interpreting différance as a kind of first principle. Yet the question remains: can différance be interpreted as a transcendental signified as the causa sui? "Is" it not rather a deconstructive (non)foundational foundation of all that is: quasi-transcendental? Yet différance "is", if it is anything at all, a non.foundation, which questions and remains radically undecidable between possible foundations. Can such a non-foundational questioning of the limits, and thereby exposing the possibilities of all that is, still be described in the terms of a general-theology? Rayment-Pickard develops these thoughts through his reading of various of Derrida's articles, for example: How to Avoid Speaking: Denials (Derrida 2008), which will be discussed later, Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of "Religion" at the Limits of Reason Alone (2002a:40-101) as well as in The Politics of Friendship (1997b:18ff). It is true that Derrida reflects, together with Heidegger, about the difference between Offenbarkeit and Offenbarung and that the one makes the other possible (Derrida 2008:188-191), but can Offenbarkeit be understood as theology, even a general-theology? In The Politics of Friendship (Derrida 1997b:18-19) Derrida reflects about two orders and asks if one needs to choose between them (Derrida 1997b:18)? The two orders that Derrida is speaking of is: Offenbarung and Offenbarkeit, manifestation and manifestability, of theology and theiology, of the science of God and the science of the divine, of the divinity of God (Derrida 1997b:19). Derrida argues that one cannot decide between these two. Does not revelation (Offenbarung) open the possibility
of Offenbarkeit or the other way around (see Derrida 2002a:55)? Thus the idea of a restricted theology versus a general theology with the one being prior to the other would be contra the thinking of Derrida. Rayment-Pickard argues that Derrida deconstructs the general theology of Western metaphysics, which has characterised all of Western thought, including atheism, by questioning the priority of presence, speech, logos or the book (divine book or book of nature) and he deconstructs this tradition by inscribing writing or différence (Rayment-Pickard 2003:6-8). Thus différence, according to Rayment-Pickard, is reinscribed as a first-order general theology and thus according to him deconstruction becomes theological despite itself (Rayment-Pickard 2003:7, 9).

This is one of the greatest challenges when interpreting Derrida: to deal with his undecidability, the non-finality and thus the openness of his thoughts. His thoughts cannot be used to sit in judgement between general or restricted theology, or between God and non-God (theism and atheism). This undecidability has brought about various interpretations of Derrida as there are those who interpret him in the direction of the one possibility, for example Rorty (1989) and Habermas (1987) who interpret and criticize (Habermas) Derrida for opening the door to absolute relativism and the complete absence of truth or reference and for that matter of God, and then on the other hand Gasché (1987) who interprets Derrida within the Enlightenment tradition. One would not disagree completely with this reading of Derrida and placing him within the horizon of the Enlightenment tradition, but that does not mean that Derrida proposes some or other transcendental signified, but by radically engaging with the tradition and thinking through the tradition he discovers both its possibility and impossibility and that one is always already enclosed within it, and therefore Derrida discovers the closure of that tradition. In this sense, différence is not the death of metaphysics nor the death of God, or the death of the Enlightenment, but différence “is” neither a new metaphysical ground, or a new God – it is, if anything, the possibility and impossibility of both, and therefore it remains undecidable.

It is for this reason that Mark Taylor’s wonderful book Erring: Postmodern a/theology (1984), fails, because in the end he does not remain undecidable, but he makes a finite decision on God, namely that God does not exist, besides existing in sacred texts. Derrida’s thought cannot be used to proclaim anything so final and conclusive, because thought, as such, remains open to receive what is still to come – yet even such a statement has the ring of finality and of being foundational to it and thus in that kind of non-religious religion or non-foundational foundational sense, maybe différence “is” a kind
of general-theology. For this reason Derrida uses the symbol of the cross, an X or chiasmus, the image of a self-erasing sign (trace), to indicate the self-cancelling nature of all claims to finality or final absolute truth (Rayment-Pickard 2003:3). This is a beautiful correlation that Derrida uses: the chiasmus as the “final” sign, which reminds one of one of the central non-foundational foundations of the Reformation (Sola Christus) and Saint Paul’s famous words in his first letter to the Corinthians chapter 2 verse 2, where he argues that he claims to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Thus in a sense knowledge is question-marked – placed under the “authority” of Jesus Christ, but him crucified, that is: erased and crossed out.

“Essentially,” or maybe characteristically, Derrida remained undecided on the big questions such as truth and God. It is because he remained undecided that there will be those who would too easily find in Derrida an ally in their claims for relativism – relativism is closely linked to undecidability in the sense of everything goes. Yet he argues himself against such an interpretation in the strongest words (Derrida 1988a:137,146). What he argues for is not the absence of truth, but that there is no final truth, as all truth is embedded in the language that conveys the truth, and thus truth is relative to the language used to convey the truth, which is not the same as absolute relativism, but this was discussed previously. Thus what is necessary is to have faith in perhaps or as Derrida puts it, in The Politics of Friendship, to be friends of perhaps and friends of perhaps are friends of truth (Derrida 1997b:43). Could one add: friends of perhaps are friends of God?

159 There are theologians, specifically within the Lutheran tradition of the Kreuzes Theologie (for example Jürgen Moltmann (1974), The Crucified God) who would argue that the Cross is a kind of non-foundational foundation.

160 So many words after Derrida need to be written in quotation marks or need to be written under erasure, which is exactly what Derrida “revealed”, both the possibility and impossibility of words – words or signs as pharmakon, both poison and remedy. It is in this sense that I am using the word “essentially” fully aware of its poisonous limitations, but likewise fully appreciative of its curing possibilities.

161 “Since the deconstructionist is supposed not to believe in truth, stability, or the unity of meaning, in intention or ‘meaning-to-say’, how can he demand of us that we read him with pertinence, precision, rigour? How can he demand that his own text be interpreted correctly? How can he accuse any one else of having misunderstood, simplified, deformed it, etc?...The answer is simple enough: this definition of the deconstructionist is false (that’s right: false, not true) and feeble; it supposes a bad (that’s right: bad, not good) and feeble reading of texts, first of all mine, which therefore must finally be read or reread. Then perhaps it will be understood that the value of truth (and all those values associated with it) is never contested or destroyed in my writings, but only reinscribed in more powerful, larger, more stratified contexts (Derrida 1968a:146).

162 God, not understood as a metaphysical Being out there, but God as a postmetaphysical possibility, hope and expectation of perhaps.
5.1 The limits of Derrida's différance for postmetaphysical God-talk

What différance “is” has been explained in the above sections. In this section, the limits of différance for postmetaphysical God-talk will be unpacked. Différance limits God-talk in numerous ways and the most obvious limitation is that différance is not God and therefore différance could most certainly be part of the God is dead tradition, thus a form of radical atheism. As discussed above, there are many who interpret différance within such a radical atheist tradition. However, it will be argued that such an interpretation would be a limitation – not on God-talk, but a limitation placed on Derrida's thoughts. This first section will focus on the limitations that différance places on any God-talk (theism or negative theology) and in the following section the focus will be on the possibilities of différance for postmetaphysical God-talk.

5.1.1 Différance “is” not a transcendental signified nor a positive idea of a god or God

The temptation is to transform différance into some kind of first principle or some kind of transcendental signified, as was discussed above, or even into the notion of God as the transcendental signified, but even if one would attempt to do that with différance there would remain “something like” différance (as one cannot get beyond différance: there is nothing outside of différance as there is an arch-trace inscribed), which would deconstruct any such notions and thus différance cannot be transformed into any of these metaphysical concepts as it is what makes these concepts both possible and impossible, but without being the ground or Urgrund of the possibility and impossibility of metaphysics. Any attempt to transform différance into a transcendental signified or into a general-theology would discover that the moment différance is capitalised as the Transcendental Signified, there is still différance that decapitates (de-capitalises) the capitalised Différance. Decapitation is probably the wrong word, as to be able to decapitate something or someone one needs to have the authority to do that, and différance does not have any authority, as authority is always based on law and différance questions law on the basis of justice (see Derrida 2002d).

It could be claimed, for example, that différance is the truth of language (the transcendental truth of language), but if that was “true” then the signifier “différance” or (“trace”), if it were a signifier, would refer one to a signified to which in the last analysis, all the other signifiers of language would refer one to (cf. Bennington 1993:77-78). If différance was the truth of language, that would mean that every concept would have to
refer to the concept of “différance”. That is, if différance was a concept, it would then be the final guarantee of each concept as its foundation. This interpretation of différance would transform différance into the alpha and omega – the first and the last word in language (Bennington 1993:78). Or one could argue that différance was or is what allows the play of differences and deferment among themselves, while at the same time withdrawing itself from the play (Derrida 1978a:278-280). Différance does not withdraw from the play that it starts as the transcendental foundation, but it itself remains inscribed in the play. If différance could withdraw from the play then différance would be the last and final word of a long history of philosophy and thus would be the “true” end of philosophy. Différance would then be the final Word and the last and absolute foundation of all that is. “From the height of its splendid transcendence, “différance” would control the whole affair which it would, moreover, have produced, or as we should have to say if we were to be logical, created ex nihilo. Différance would thus be a name of God” (Bennington 1993:78). Yet this would not be possible as explained above – every signifier refers to another signifier ad infinitum without it ever reaching a signified referring only to itself; not even the signified “différance” if it were a signified. It is exactly the absence of a transcendental signified that allows the deconstruction of the distinction signifier and signified, and permits one to follow the movement of the signifier to the point of dissolution.

Différance thus cannot function as, nor be the transcendental signified, the ultimate and final essence (foundation) upon which everything else rests. Derrida argues, in Margins of Philosophy, that différance has no essence, but that it remains a “metaphysical name” (Derrida 1982:26). This is exactly the confusion that is caused. Différance is not the first principle of metaphysics and yet one cannot separate différance from metaphysical thought, because it is located within the horizon of that thought – makes metaphysical thought possible, but not as its ultimate foundation, but as its margin (closure) of possibility and limitation. Although it is an enclosure, as it is both the limitation and possibility of metaphysics, it is not a name or another master name for Being or God, as it “has no name in our language” (Derrida 1997a:71). Différance cannot be another name for God, as the positive idea of God is precisely inseparable from the traditional idea of the sign as the final signified, putting the movement of différance to rest in a stable presence (Derrida 1997a:71) – a final cause. One could conclude from this that Derrida's différance is the “final” word in the death of God tradition, but as has just been explained, différance cannot be the final word of anything. So, indeed, différance cannot be God, but as much as it cannot be God it can also not be not God. It "is" not about God or not-God, but about
the possibility and the impossibility of the question of God and thus the possibility and impossibility of God-talk.

Thus it would be an equally wrong reading of Derrida to side him with God-talk or with God-is-dead-talk (cf. Derrida 1997a:68; Derrida 1978a:235), as différence remains undecided and rather is the possibility and limitation of both God-talk and God-is-dead-talk. What Derrida's thought reveals is that God-talk is produced by and in différence. God would be the name of that which would put an end to différence, but what différence does is to inscribe the name God in what God is supposed to go beyond, but there is no beyond that can be expressed in words or names: there is no outside text. This reinscription of God or any of the other Names, including Différance, is done by différence. It is for this reason that différence can never be pure or absolute. It is always in between or in the process-of, it is never itself and never present. Différance, “this almost nothing of the unpresentable” (Derrida 1995d:83), is not an entity, nothing present or manifest, it makes no appearance, it is no phenomenon and it has no truth. Différance cannot be God because it is not a entity nor a supreme entity – it is nothing! At least, it is nothing outside difference and différends (Bennington 1993:84). There “is” no Différance, only differences and defférends in the plural, and the pluralisation of differences and defférends, and if this has to be given a name to what cannot be named, it would be différence. It is the unnameable as it is that which makes possible nominal effects. The idea of "being" an unnameable, immediately conjures up the idea of negative theology. Yet différence is not unnameable in the sense of negative theology as it is not an ineffable Being which "no name can approach: God, for example" (Derrida 1982:26). Différance is the unnameable, different from the unnameable of negative theology, as it "is" the unnameable, as the play which makes possible nominal effects – also the nominal effect called negative theology and the nominal effect called différence. As was discussed above, différence is not a name, and yet it has become a name, and a very famous name at that – but that does not deny that différence is both the possibility and the limitation (deconstruction) of différence as name. The nominal effect "différence" is itself enmeshed in différence (Derrida 1982:27).

There is a fundamental difference between différence and negative theology. Negative theology is about a hyper-being that is beyond words, beyond language, beyond being, as it is just too hyper to be named, whilst différence is not a mystical reflection about the unnameable that is too much to name, but purely the grammatological non-nameable, and not because of super essence or super abundance, but because of a grammatological limitation within language itself. Yet negative theology haunts différence or différence
haunts negative theology and therefore a large portion of this chapter will be devoted to the relationship and the difference between negative theology and différance.

5.1.2 Différance “is” not negative theology

Although one cannot deny that Derrida was fascinated by the syntactical strategies and discursive resources of negative theology it is important to establish the difference between negative theology and différance, but just as with the relationship between Derrida and Heidegger and Derrida and Levinas, Derrida’s relationship with negative theology is about differences, yet also a very close proximity. One can say that negative theology haunts différance, or said differently negative theology follows Derrida around, and there is very good reason for this haunting and following which is probably best expressed in a question that John Dominic Crossan once asked concerning the similarity in syntax between negative theology and différance. To this Kevin Hart responds:

[W]e may answer Crossan’s question by distinguishing between ineffability as a consequence of the subject being transcendent and because of the subject being transcendental. If God is understood as transcending the phenomenal world, one cannot hope to describe Him, because language is restricted in its scope to the realm of the phenomenal. Similarly, if différance enables concepts to emerge it cannot be described adequately by concepts (Hart 1989:186).

Derrida himself is not innocent of this haunting, as he once responded to a question or comment soon after the appearance of the famous paper Différance, saying, if “it [différance] is the source of everything and one cannot know it: it is the God of negative theology” (Wood 1985:130). Derrida responded: “It is and it is not” (Caputo 1997a:2).

This section will attempt to explain this “is” and “is not” of Derrida’s response and thereby try and describe the importance of Crossan’s semantic difference between negative theology and différance as well as the syntactic proximity between the two.

Maybe it is best to start by stating very clearly, to avoid confusion, that différance is not negative theology, just as différance cannot be any positive theology. On the contrary, différance cannot be reduced to any ontological or theological (and thus any ontotheological) reappropriation, but if it is anything, it is the grammatological opening of the space in which ontotheology, philosophy, negative theology, metaphysics produces its thought systems and its history (Derrida 1982:6). Différance, as just mentioned, is not

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163 John Dominic Crossan asks: “Why, then, are the syntactics so similar if the semantics are so different?” (Crossan 1982).
negative theology, but is the impossible possibility of negative theology, as well as the impossible possibility of any other names that are in need of being saved.

Yet, Derrida (1995b) writes in *Sauf le nom* about the friendship and affiliation between deconstruction and thus by implication différence and negative theology. He begins by saying that the inclination of negative theology is very similar to the inclination of deconstruction in that negative theology inclines towards *Gottlosigkeit*, in reference to Heidegger’s interpretation of Silesius’ poems (Derrida 1995b:35-36). Negative theology inclines towards atheism just as différence, as mentioned above, inclines towards atheism, but it is “only” an inclination. “Inclining, but not going beyond incline or inclination, not even or almost” (Derrida 1995b:36). This boldness has no specific theological meaning, as it is the boldness of language itself (Derrida 1995b:36). What Derrida is adamant about is that it is about language and not about the question of God. Différence has no desire to find the final answer regarding the question of God, but différence is about the grammatical syntactical possibilities and limits of language. In this syntactical sense, différence reveals the same as negative theology: the limitation of language.

In *Sauf le nom*, negative theology is compared to language and the boldness of language – to speak of what it cannot speak and what has been discussed earlier: language (signification or writing) as pharmakon. It is a remedy that saves what “is”, yet in that it saves it also poisons. It allows what is to be named and thus named to come into presence, but in naming it absents what the name *represents* as the name can always only be a *representation* and never presence itself. Derrida, in *Sauf le nom*, argues that what brings negative theology into close proximity with différence is that negative theology reveals something of the essence of language. In that sense, negative theology is a discourse on language (Derrida 1995b:54). Thus negative theology’s attempt to speak about the unnameable God, who is beyond language, and the impossible possibility thereof, is in essence the “truth” of language, namely the impossible possibility of language itself to speak of anything not specifically God, but any other. Language is always a pharmakon or a supplement; it is never the *Ding an sich*. The similarity between negative theology and différence is not its subject matter (God’s existence or nonexistence, as différence has absolutely nothing to say about that conclusively), but its logic – grammatical or syntactic similarity.

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164 The need for names to be saved will become apparent in the following sections, but it refers to Derrida’s (1995b) article *Sauf le nom*. 
Negative theology is about going beyond, in that it attempts to go beyond what is reasonably permitted in a passion or desire of God. It will become apparent later why of is written in cursive as it is human desire for God, but it is also God's desire to remain safe. Negative theology is passionate about protecting God, saving God, saving the name of God by saving God from the idolatry of reducing God to finite words or ideas or names. What negative theology reveals concerning God is what différance reveals concerning language and naming in general. Différance is about saving what “is”, never mind trying to save something transcendent to the point of absence, but simply saving names, the world, the possibility of naming from the abyss of the impossibility thereof. Yet, it is also about revealing the limitations of naming and thus of saving and therefore it saves and loses at the same time. Therein lies the proximity between negative theology and différance, as negative theology reveals the limitation of language with regards to God-talk, and différance reveals the limitation of language as well as its possibility with regards to language and it’s other as such. Negative theology is, firstly, a language and maybe only a language, and yet at the same time it is also what exceeds language (Derrida 1995b:48).

A few pages further he writes: “...this sweet rage against language, this jealous anger of language within itself and against itself, it is this passion that leaves the mark of a scar in that place where the impossible takes place, isn't it?” (Derrida 1995b:59-60). Negative theology is about the impossible and the “experience of the impossible”, it is about the heterogeneity that the hyper introduces to the order of the same. This heterogeneity is no different from the heterogeneity of difference and deferment, and therein lies the proximity between différance and negative theology. The difference is with regards to the hyper, and for that reason deconstruction (différance) is not negative theology! The analogy can be found between the difficulty of naming God and différance and consequently that all writing is under erasure. Différance is not negative theology, for although there are syntactical similarities there remains a deep semantic divide. Negative theology helps in understanding the syntactic of différance, yet the semantic content is very different, as negative theology is always in search of a hyperessentiality, or one could say something that is hyper-present, hyper-real or sur-real in that it is so real that it is beyond the ability of language to express it. Différance, on the other hand, is not about some or other hyper-real as it is not about a being or entity at all, but about difference and deferment, and thus it never gets to being anything, but can at best be described with quasi-beings like phantoms, ashes, pharmakon, hymens as it is not about existence or non-existence, but that “place” that makes existence and non-existence possible. It is for this reason that
Derrida will rather reflect on the notion of khōra than the platonic sun when it comes to différance, as différance, if anything, is but a quasi-transcendental anteriority and not a supereminent transcendent ulteriority (Caputo 1997a:3).

Semantically, différance “is” not negative theology, but maybe or perhaps too much weight is given to the copula “is” in such a sentence. Such a weight, authority or finality is beyond the power of différance. One could say différance is too weak to utter such final statements and judgements, as différance remains in the realm of perhaps and thus open to an affirmative “yes” for what is maybe still to come. Yes, even God. It is for this reason impossible to remain with an absolute final negative statement such as: différance is not negative theology or différance is not the God of negative theology. One could make such final statements if the God of negative theology is seen not as a discourse (the discourse of negative theology), but as a static onto-theological entity, but God like any other word (name) remains open because of différance and as such remains open for the impossible – is the impossible another name for God after différance?

Différance is about affirmation, but it is an affirmation that is not motivated by nostalgia for something lost, nor the opposite of nostalgia – a Heideggerian hope (Derrida 1982:27), but an affirmation of this unnameableness and undecidability. Deconstruction must say ‘yes’ to the unnameableness of différance. This affirmation is, as Critchley argues, the ethical moment of deconstruction (Critchley 1999:41). This affirmation of the yes to the unnameable of différance that motivates deconstruction is the unconditional categorical imperative.165

If one follows the affirmative of Angelus Silesius, who makes this multi-lingual link between German and Hebrew by linking the German yes (Ja) to the name of God Yahweh, then a new proximity opens up between différance and negative theology. As mentioned above, deconstruction is about affirmation of the unnameableness of différance – or the affirmation of the interruption of the tout autre of which it is impossible to know

165 Différance works in the sense of an unconditioned injunction that comes to interrupt the conditioned context or text – this claim, Derrida translates into Kantian ethics, particularly the relationship between the hypothetical and categorical imperatives (cf. Critchley 1999:40). “For Kant, all imperatives command the will of a rational being either hypothetically or categorically. A hypothetical imperative is good only in so far as it is a means to an end; in this way, the will produces prudential maxims, namely that my desire for happiness is conditional upon the pursuit of some ‘good’ – for example, riches, knowledge, long life, or health. Hypothetical imperatives are conditioned, that is, a person counts this or that maxims as belonging to his or her happiness. By contrast, categorical imperatives command actions that are entirely good in themselves and are not performed for some ulterior end. Thus a categorical imperative is limited by no condition; it is simply and wholly the law that must be obeyed unconditionally and which possesses universal objective necessity. Ethics, properly speaking, is restricted to imperatives that are categorical; and for Derrida, the ethical moment is the interruption of the general context of conditioned hypothetical imperatives by an unconditional categorical imperative. Ethics arises in and as the undecidable yet determinate articulation of these two orders (Critchley 1999:40).

166 “Jahwe spricht nur immer Ja” (Silesius (1960) quoted in Caputo 1997a:26).
how to speak. The *tout autre* in negative theology is called ‘God’ as the one who calls forth speech, and what was discovered in the previous paragraphs is that this is true not only of the God of negative theology, but of language as such, and it’s other, and therefore every other is wholly other (*tout autre est tout autre*) (Derrida 1995b:76). Therefore Derrida argues that the name of God is not a bad name, one can save and love this name (Derrida 1997a:42). Deconstruction is affirmative, but before it is affirmative it is neutral and undecided. So although différance is not the God of negative theology, the God of negative theology is a good name and Derrida wants to save and love this name. Thus différance has no intention to deny the possibility of negative theology, but rather opens the *perhaps* of negative theology’s God. It is not the task of différance to rise as judge about the existence or nonexistence of the God of negative theology. Such a judgement would be beyond the scope and possibility of différance. Différence is not about final judgments, either positive (existence of God) or negative (nonexistence of God), but if it is about something it is about the undecidability between the two. Différence is not the final transcendent or transcendental signifier that puts to rest all past transcendentals and all possible future transcendentals and thus replacing old transcendental names with Différence as the final name of all names to which every knee shall bow167. And yet every knee does bow because of différance – the auto-deconstruction that takes place in every name as each name’s limitation is revealed and its possibility is revealed. It is, if anything, a quasi-transcendental, and the quasi-transcendental work of différance is to establish the conditions which make possible and simultaneously impossible names, even and especially names of transcendental signifieds. Différance, as a quasi-transcendental, makes possible and simultaneously impossible all human beliefs, practices, traditions and institutions. As it makes these possible it also reveals their limitation and thus deconstructs these beliefs, traditions, institutions by preventing them from closure (reduction to the same), and by keeping them open for the *tout autre*.

Différance works in deconstruction and the work of deconstruction is not a method that can be employed, but it is something that happens in language because of the very nature of language, being both remedy and poison: it is a remedy as it allows the other of language to appear, but in that it allows the other to appear it destroys the other as other and reduces it to the same. Différance reveals this “truth” of language and thus keeps language open for the other that is always still to come and can never come, at least not in language. This openness of différance is the work of deconstruction, opening what is for what is still to come and what is called (prayed) for.

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167 This is in reference to Philippians 2:10.
That is the work of deconstruction, which is not a method, but what happens (auto-deconstruction) in texts, contexts, beliefs, traditions and institutions as an effect of différance. Deconstruction is not in the business of destroying good names, but in opening up these names for that which is tout autre: the other of the name. It is clear from the discussion so far that there is an important difference between a transcendental condition and a quasi-transcendental condition. A transcendental condition is a sufficient and enabling condition. A quasi-transcendental condition is “insufficient and equi-disabling, seeing that the effect that it makes possible is also made unstable” (Caputo 1997a:12). Différance is the quasi-transcendental condition. It is a groundless ground that founds and unfounds language, vocabularies, systems, theories, laws, artworks, theologies, religions, institutions, practices by revealing how they are always both possible and impossible. Thus différance cannot be called to be the judge on questions about the existence or non-existence of God and therefore, although différance is nothing like the God of negative theology, far from it, it does not have a problem with the God of negative theology in the sense that it does not stand in judgement of that God. On the contrary, if questioned about the God of negative theology it would respond with: “perhaps”, as différance is the non-conditional condition, non-foundational foundation of the possibility and impossibility of negative theology.

Différance cannot be called to be the judge on the question of God or the question of any other proper name. It cannot be brought to the “final judgement” as a method for proving or disproving the existence of God or any other being, as différance is not a new (thereby replacing other) transcendental theory. Nor can différance be transformed into its own system (method) of proving itself or anything else. It is not another new general-theology, but it is a quasi-transcendental condition for general-theologies. Deconstruction, if it has a business, its business would be a quasi-analysis, and more importantly the affirmation of différance, the trace, “of claims and exclamations that take shape in that place, there (là), where things are happening, language and everything else, il y a du langue” (Caputo 1997a:5). Différance cannot be transformed, deformed into a system or a logic of some or other method to prove or disprove things, as it is the impossible possibility of logic and systems without itself ever becoming such a system.

Yet, deconstruction (the work of différance) is inextricably bound to logic, systems, proper names and thus to metaphysics, presence and thus also theology. It is bound to them because it is their possibility, but not absolute possibility as in a secure foundation or condition for these systems. In the same breath it is their impossibility as it is about the trace (the faint hint of an immemorial past that was never present and a future that is
always still to come) and thus wounding exactly what it makes possible. It inscribes theology and metaphysics in différance and thus exceeding it without return (Derrida 1982:6). It is about the wounded, scarred and marked language, about anything that tries to speak about das Ding an sich (things themselves) – the way things are in “reality”. In this sense it reveals the faith [the impossible possible leap of faith across the abyss] that is bound to language. Différance is about revealing the conditions under which words, language, concepts, text and contexts are formed. In this sense, différance “as the ‘word’ for that, is a kind of non-word, anterior to words, the general, de-formed condition for the formation for words, a bit of a forgery for indicating how words are forged. Hence différance is a certain nomen inmominabile, it is not a mystical but a grammatological one” (Caputo 1997a:8). This relation between forgery or magic and writing was discussed earlier in a footnote. This forgery or magic is not mystical, but it is the conjuring abilities of language itself. It is not so much about mystical poetry or about myths, but about the grammar of poetry, the grammar of metaphor – the metaphor of metaphor and that one is always inscribed in metaphor, always inscribed in the trace: the différance (see Derrida 1974). “For Derrida, negative theology is an event within language, something happening to language, a certain trembling or fluctuation of language” (Caputo 1997a:11). To maybe say it in very simple terms, what negative theology reveals about the impossibility of language to speak sufficiently of God, différance reveals about language: the insufficiency of language as pharmakon. Negative theology needs to be held to the fire of its word, that which is elusive, amorphous, undeterminable, its “subject matter” or the wholly other beyond re-presentation, that of which one is not sure, as Levinas argued, if it is God or il y a. What is this wholly other? What is this trace of the infinite, this persistent difference as Heidegger wrote it? What is it or what is (present/hyper-present) the ground or ground of ground or Abgrund or cause of this event, this otherness that calls forth language, speech or a response and simultaneously questions that response? Is it God, il y a, difference or maybe différance? Is this the locus of postmetaphysical or wounded metaphysical God-talk? This leads this chapter right into its theme: the limits and possibilities of différance for postmetaphysical God-talk, in other words the yes and the no of Derrida’s response to the question asked about his essay Différance.
The time has come to take stock of where one is in this journey. Heidegger's site of the sacred was discovered to be still inscribed within différance, Levinas' *other otherwise* was also discovered to be inscribed in différance and therefore it can be said that différance is "older" than Heidegger's dif-ference, older than Heidegger's erasure of Being and older than Levinas' *other otherwise*. In the last section, negative theology was discovered to be very helpful with regard to discovering the limits of language, but it is still driven by the desire and passion for a hyper-being, at least in the dominant readings of negative theology. Where does this leave one on the journey towards post metaphysical God-talk? Should one not abandon the idea of God-talk altogether? This "questioning"\(^{168}\) could certainly be interpreted as radical atheism (Hägglund 2008) as it questions the site of the scared (Heidegger), questions the site of the holy or saintly (Levinas), and it questions the site of negative theology. So the conclusion could easily be radical atheism and materialism with no beyond. Maybe it is time to find peace in radical atheism or radical materialism which is without a beyond. Such peace would certainly be a wonderful, blissful final resting-place – not only final in the debate with regards to God-talk, but final as what is would be the end and in the true sense a resting place – final resting place. Différence would thus be the final word in a long history of conflict and différence would be the final resting place; but it is not, and not because there is still another final word, but because différence is a non-final final word, as it opens up final words because of difference and deferment for what is still to come. Différence is prior, and the condition of the possibility of final words, and as its condition it is also the opening up of these final words for the other that is still to come and thereby limits their finality. In this sense différence is not a transcendental signified, but a quasi-transcendental. Différence has to be thought together with the other. The other of writing (difference), the other of which the trace is a trace [that is, what is different, and there is always something different (there are always differences)], and the other of deferment (expectation or memory or between memory and expectation). One could say that what impassions différence is the other: the impossible. Impossible, because the other can never be thought because the moment it is thought it is no longer other, but the same. Yet it is the other that keeps différence alive and drives auto-deconstruction without end.

\(^{168}\) I place questioning in inverted commas because as explained in each chapter Derrida does not question in the classic sense, as he finds himself in very close proximity to all three schools of thought.
Thus one has not arrived at a radical atheist peace, because there is always something that disrupts such possible peace of some or other "final" answer. The same is true for Derrida's thoughts, his thoughts do not offer peace, but deconstruction – not only the deconstruction of past capitalized names, but deconstruction as a continuous event within language because of the other of language; even deconstruction of différance once it starts to become a name, God forbid, a capitalised name. In this sense, deconstruction is impassioned by the impossible – the other. Différance is characterised by this openness towards the other (different and deferred) and therefore différance does not and cannot stand in judgement about the possibility or impossibility of proper names and hyper-beings, because then it would need to be a proper name and a hyperbeing itself. Even the concept "other" is inscribed in différance and thus différance cannot be said to be product of some or other mystical other beyond language, but within language. The idea of the other is inscribed within language because of language or writing with its referential chains of signifiers there is difference and deferment opened by the impossible possibility of language to “reach” it’s other. Derrida does not deny that there is reference and he does not argue that there is nothing outside of language, what he denies is that one can have access to that outside of language, outside of language. In an interview, Derrida says the following, which Kearney captures in his book:

“It is totally false to suggest that deconstruction is a suspension of reference. Deconstruction is always deeply concerned with the ‘other’ of language. I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language; it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the ‘other’ and the ‘other of language’. Every week I receive critical commentaries and studies on deconstruction which operate on the assumption that what they call ‘post-structuralism’ amounts to saying that there is nothing beyond language, that we are submerged in words – and other stupidities of that sort. Certainly, deconstruction tries to show that the question of reference is much more complex and problematic than traditional theories supposed. It even asks whether our term ‘reference’ is entirely adequate for designating the ‘other’. The other, which is beyond language and which summons language, is perhaps not a ‘referent’ in the normal sense which linguist have attached to this term. But to distance oneself thus from the habitual structure, to challenge or complicate our common assumptions about it, does not amount to saying that there is nothing beyond language” (Kearney 1984:123-124).
Derrida argues that such allegations about his thoughts are ‘primitive misunderstandings’ that are motivated by political and ideological reasons (Caputo 1997a:17).

After having discovered what différance is or is not, if it is anything at all, the question still remains open, where does that leave God-talk (theology) after Derrida? Is there a way to think and reflect about God, and thus talk about God without ignoring the horizon of Derrida’s thought? Derrida’s thought does not really open a horizon, but it reveals the possibility of a horizon and in the same breath shows the limitations of such a horizon and that all that is, experience, religious experience, mystical experience etcetera is inscribed in différance. Yet Derrida in no way denies that there is something beyond language. He does not deny the existence of a “real world” or the possibility of God. All he says is that différance cannot sit in judgement on the “truth” of these matters. All the classical transcendental good names, such as Infinite, good beyond being, God, etcetera, Derrida reinscribes within writing (différance), yet différance itself is an infinite difference (infinite chain of differential traces) and deferment. As was discussed in the Levinas chapter, it is in the thinking of the Infinite that divinity comes to mind, yet Derrida’s infinite is very different from Levinas’ infinite.

How does the infinite signify in Derrida and does this leave any possibility for postmetaphysical God-talk? Derrida views Infinity differently to Levinas. For Levinas the Infinite had something expressly metaphysical and even theological in the sense of being something ethic-theo-logical (Caputo 1993a:200). The infinite was the new “foundation” of Levinas’ ethico-logical system and in this system God comes to mind. God comes to mind in the ethical relation toward the other, or is deflected in the ethical relation towards the Other. Levinas, like Heidegger, sought to give some kind of actuality (presence) to what it valorises in the sense that they claim that this infinity is presence. Derrida does not think the infinite in these terms of being real, actual or presence, but thinks of the infinite as a grammatological (structural) element of language and more specifically writing (archi-trace) – the infinite recession of signifiers and the infinite deferment. Thus the infinite is not something beyond, "out there", but it is what happens in language. Maybe to avoid confusion one should rather speak of quasi-infinity. For example, Derrida’s quasi-infinity comes to mind in thinking justice which is un-deconstructable (Justice understood as an infinite openness towards that which has no place – in other words, which still has to come and receive place or presence) – it can never be real/present because of différance and thus it remains open for what is to come. This infinite is neither a being nor

\[169\] For further exploration of this theme see Derrida’s *Force of Law: The “Mystical Foundation of Authority”* (Derrida 2002d).
otherwise than Being as its excess is not the excess of Being but an excess of linguistic performance. An excess within the operations made possible and impossible by différance in response to the singularity lying on the edge of différance. Infinity for Derrida means a hyperbolic responsiveness and responsibility, a hyperbolic sensitivity (Caputo 1993a:200). The infinity in Derrida’s thinking does not refer to any actuality or reality or presence, but it refers to the operation of language because of différance in responding to the singular (impossible) other of language. What lies on the edge of différance? Well, whatever différance responds to. This brings one back to the circular motion of alterity as absolute alterity is not possible, which was discussed under Derrida’s conversation with Levinas and the taut autre. Derrida is also interested in that which is beyond language, he is impassioned by that which is beyond language – that which is other to language. Derrida argues, as discussed above in Of Grammatology than there is no outside text, that there is nothing beyond text or context, but that does not mean that Derrida believes the absurd idea that everything can be absorbed into language (Bennington 1993:98). That is not Derrida’s claim. What can be claimed is that there ‘is’ no thought without language, no experience without language, no perception without language and no desire without language. But in order to be able to say this one must accept that language has an outside, however one cannot cross to this outside as one is always in language: there is no outside text. Thus all one has is indeed the text as there ‘is’ no outside text that is ‘accessible’ without (outside of) language. So what Derrida is alerting one to is the constructedness of what is called ‘reality’, of what is ‘extra-linguistic’, and Derrida is suspicious of any ruling discourse that puts in place systems of exclusion by being the ruling or dominant discourse. This happens when one language (theory) claims to be the language of reality itself. A language that claims to be what being is. It claims that it is the language that being would speak if it could speak (Caputo 1997a:17). When Derrida says that there is no outside text or no outside context, he is arguing that there are no things themselves outside textual and contextual limits as there is no naked contact with being (there is no language that speaks the language of being itself). But by saying this, he is not arguing that one is locked up in a linguistic prison, but it is out of respect and hypersensitivity toward the other of language. “This ‘other’ is not reducible to language nor is it something which can shake loose from language as if it fell full blown and wholly constituted from the sky” (Caputo 1997a:17). What impassions Derrida’s work, deconstruction, is the other of language that cannot be shaken loose from language – différance.

170 There is no outside text (Derrida 1997a:158)
171 “il n’y a pas de hors context” (Derrida 1988:136) There is no outside context.
In this sense, negative theology is a good name, as it helps reflect on the limitations of language and how not to speak, but yet refer. Negative theology refers (speaks) by not speaking of (naming) the god beyond being. It refers without speaking (naming) to that which is beyond grammar, beyond language, by being exterior to language. In this sense negative theology is a good example for all language as was discussed above.

5.2.1 Différance is grammatological and not mystical and the return or the haunting of negative theology

The mystical or intuitive experience of God (negative theology) is too deep and overwhelming for the frailty of language, of the ‘faculties,’ that is of representation, and thus the chain of differential marks. This is the classic understanding of negative theology and in this classic understanding. God is conceived (intuited or mystically perceived) as a transcendental signified beyond the limits of language (names). This intuited experience of God is believed to be a being without différance, of being outside the text, outside the general text, outside the play of traces (Caputo 1997a:11). This is where negative theology and différance do not get along. Negative theology does not speak (name) God. It does not move beyond language, yet God’s existence is not denied as God is believed to be there (present), but beyond the possibilities of language, and in that sense beyond being, but not beyond presence. In this sense negative theology can be interpreted as the crown of metaphysics of presence as it is just one more triumph of presence over representation. According to Derrida, this is the trap that Heidegger also fell into, as he did not completely move beyond the power of presence that triumphs over representation. In the first section of this chapter it was discussed that writing is always inscribed and there is no prior to the inscription of writing, thus any thought that seeks to prioritize presence over representation would necessarily fail as it would already be inscribed in writing.

Deconstruction questions any prioritization of presence even the presence that is beyond representation and thus liberates negative theology (mystical theology) from the Greek metaphysics of presence, thereby forcing it to reflect on God beyond hyperousiology of Greek metaphysics and maybe turn from Neoplatonism and a little more toward some biblical narratives. Although one can argue that negative theology’s subject matter is about God “out there somewhere”, whatever happens in negative theology happens in language and thus it is the same as with différance: an event in language.

For this reason, Derrida, as discussed in the previous section on negative theology, cannot separate himself completely from negative theology, because of the grammatical similarities even if the semantics differ absolutely. Différance is not God. It is neither the
God of positive theology nor the God of negative theology and such a strong statement should end the relationship between différance and theology. Yet this relationship does not end – they follow each other around. The reason for this following each other around is that there is a close proximity between the language of faith and promise that is intertwined with negative theology and that is also intertwined with différance. Language of faith, for example the language of prayer, becomes exemplary of language as such. Prayer is what différance is all about. Derrida’s thoughts on différance evolves the language of faith (promise) and prayer, or put differently: promise, faith and prayer are exemplary in that they help understand différance and thus help understand language. Prayer is addressed to the other in the hope, expectation and promise of the presence of the other. In the previous section it became clear that the other of language cannot be ignored in Derrida’s thought. Prayer and the necessary faith involved in prayer is an exemplary way in which the other of language comes to language, but it is also exemplary of language itself [language understood within the horizon of différance: difference and deferment that is filled with promise, the archi-promise of presence]. Prayer is also what holds onto that promise in faith without any certainties of it ever having been fulfilled (a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present) or of it ever going to be fulfilled (a glimmer of hope of that which is always still to come). It is faith, and thus prayer as the language of faith, that bridges this immemorial past to the future that is always still to come. The temporalisation of space and the spacialisation of time which is différance is held in faith (good faith), and prayer is the exemplary language of that faith. Différance is about promise, faith and prayer, as it is about that which is to come which is promised, which is hoped for, which is addressed in supplication (prayer), but which never arrives. Thus one could say that différance is all about faith, promise and prayer. Therefore Derrida does not leave the ‘province’ of faith. Deconstruction is not ultimately neutral, although it cannot rise to be judge, is because it is too non-existent, too “weak” to settle such powerful discourses on proper names or the existence of God one way or the other, as the whole point of différance is to unsettle these discourses, languages, systems, theories, theologies, ideologies, etcetera.

Derrida does not leave the province of faith, as différance affirms the language of faith and prayer, but it does this in relation to language alone and not in relation to some other-worldly being. Thus, although it is in the province of faith, it unsettles the traditional faiths by deconstructing the proper names that these traditional faiths pray to. Yet it unsettles

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172 These languages of faith and prayer “prove to be not just particular examples of language, but exemplary uses that exceed linguistic categorization and tend to coincide with language itself, to become the very yes or amen, of language to what is happening” (Caputo 1997a:13).
the proper names and dogmatism on both sides of the divide: theism – atheism. Mark Taylor adapted Derrida’s thoughts in *Erring*, as has been discussed already above, but in this adaption he too closely relates Derrida’s thoughts with a death-of-God theology, not that he opposes atheism to theism, but he goes down a path where the death of God is announced. “[I]n the final scene, God has become écriture with nothing left over. The sacred Scripture has become all there is of the sacred itself: God as glyph, hier-glyph” (Caputo 1997a:14). Derrida responds to Mark Taylor amongst others in *Sauf le nom*. This deconstruction of Taylor is undone by deconstruction itself – in other words, the closure that Mark Taylor arrives at is re-opened by deconstruction [différance]. This absolute reduction to the text, Scripture is in a sense exactly what ‘is’, but that is the problem: it is a final statement, a closure, a finite system. So, although Derrida would probably argue that nothing escapes the constraints of textuality, it is also no less true that Derrida’s work is impassioned and directed toward the other of language: the alterity by which language is claimed, and the alterity by which language is claimed (held in faith) through différance, is not the God beyond being, but every other, and that relationship is a relationship that can best be described with the language of faith (prayer, promise, hope).

In this sense, différance is armed neutrality as it “is even-handedly antagonistic to all claims of existence or nonexistence, that it views them all with a certain alarm and suspicion” (Caputo 1997a:14). Différance would even be alarmed at a final total claim such as “all is language and thus materialism without religion (without faith)”. What deconstruction does claim is that there is no reference without différance, that is no reference outside of a textual chain of differences and deferment. This is the ‘basis’ for différance’s neutrality: it does not matter if the reference is God or a perceptual object, they are effects of a certain faith and they differ from each other as different forms (systems) of faith. Religion and science for example are different systems of faith that have different protocols, discursive resources, and motivations. Différance opens a certain undecidability with regards to faith (systems), but that does not mean that it is the last word, the last final truth, but if anything it is the first word.

In a world of so many strong truths173, various forms of religious or atheist fundamentalism, one could probably argue that negative theology offers a very helpful alternative as it responds to the other without naming and finally defining the other, and thus it speaks in response without naming and thereby it returns faith to theological language beyond capitalised proper names and eternal dogmas. This invites one to have

173 “It is a truth, which is definable, which can be possessed and can be named. It is a truth that can be formulated into dogmas” (Meylahn 2007:536).
another look at negative theology, not ignoring what was said above, but re-reading negative theology in the "light" of the above. It is for this reason that one is urged to take another reading of negative theology and therefore the return or maybe the haunting of negative theology in the further discussions of the limits and possibilities of différance for postmetaphysical God-talk.

5.2.1.1 The promise of negative theology

Negative theology sounds negative because of its name and yet it is all about affirming. It is about affirming that which is beyond names (language). It is about affirming God to such an extent that God is kept safe from the idolatry of finite names. It is the yes of God and the yes to God in response or in obedience. It is exactly the yes, the affirmative, which unites negative theology to différance (Caputo 1997a:26). Différence does not affirm God to keep God safe, but différance does affirm and is affirmed by the other of language, the instituted trace: archi-trace. Caputo does not argue that all negative theology is affirmative, but one of the many voices of negative theology is resoundingly affirmative and with this affirmative voice there are some similarities with différance and its affirmation of the tout autre. What is of interest in this return to negative theology is what takes place in negative theology over and beyond the hyperousiology; what takes place in negative theology and not what negative theology refers to.

It is the affirming promise of negative theology that haunts différance, so much so that Derrida made a promise to speak one day on negative theology. He made a promise, in good faith, to speak on negative theology and this promise will be kept in the land of the promise (Jerusalem). The promise of negative theology (the ‘yes’) is what Derrida shall speak on in the Promised Land (Jerusalem) in 1986. This keeping the promise within the promise is the essay How to Avoid Speaking: Denials (Derrida 2008). Derrida made a promise to speak on negative theology without the safety of the hyperousiology. To speak on the promise of negative theology in exile in a desert land, without the security of a hyperousiological presence. To speak about a promise that leads into the desert and the desert-wandering for years with only a promise¹⁷⁴.

He says: “Thus I will speak of a promise, but also within the promise”(Derrida 2008:153). The essay is about negative theology – the promise of negative theology in the double sense of the word of. It is both the promise and thus the faith that is negative theology and

¹⁷⁴ This can either be interpreted as a reference to Abraham (the father of faith) and his many years of wandering in those desert countries with only a promise to guide him, or in reference to the 40 years of wandering in the desert of the Israelites before entering the Promised Land. Although one could argue that they did have more than a promise: the presence of a pillar of fire and a cloud. It would be beyond the scope of this section to try and attempt an argument that cloud and fire-smoke-ashes are metaphors of traces (effects) rather than presence.
that is what makes negative theology *promising*. He will speak of the promise of negative theology, but in the promise because one always speaks within the promise as language is in the promise, language is in good faith of the institute trace. He continues and says: “Why can’t I avoid speaking, unless it is because a promise has committed me even before I begin the briefest speech?... discourse on the promise is already a promise in advance: within the promise” (Derrida 2008:153). The faith of language mentioned above is made possible by a promise, a promise in which all is inscribed. He says:

“...I will thus not speak of this or that promise, but of that which, is necessary as it is impossible, inscribes us by its trace in language – before language. From the moment I open my mouth, I have already promised; or rather, and sooner, the promise has seized the I which promises to speak to the other, to say something, to affirm or not confirm by speech at least this, at the extreme limit: that it is necessary to be silent and to be silent about what one cannot speak of. One might have known this in advance. This promise is older than I am” (Derrida 2008:15).

In the first section of this chapter the focus was that one is always and already in language (writing), but writing or language or signs are constituted by différance and with différance comes the promise (good faith) of the instituted trace that promises to be not completely arbitrary, but a trace: a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present and a glimmer of hope for a future that is always still to come. The supplement or the sign or the symbol that is writing, is inscribed in good faith to present what is absent. Yet even that which is “present” can only be present, exist (standout) through the good faith invested in the sign, supplement, symbol that represents and thus allows the other of the sign, symbol, supplement to stand out, to be revealed. What Heidegger discussed about the calling of dif-ference into dif-ference, where beings constitute world and world constitutes beings, is the event of language – the double stilling of the peal of stillness of language.

This event of language happens in good faith, happens in the promise. If language (writing) is “primary” then one is always already committed, pro-mitted as Caputo says (1997a:30), sent forth in advance into language and thus into the trace and therefore into différance. One is committed by an archi-promise of différance that is prior to any conscious promise or speech act.

Derrida says:
"The promise of which I shall speak will have always escaped this demand of presence. It is older than I am or than we are. On the contrary, it renders possible every present discourse on presence. Even if I decide to be silent, even if I decide to promise nothing, not to commit myself to saying anything that would confirm once again the destination of speech, and the destination to speech, this silence still remains a modality of speech: a memory of promise and a promise of memory" (Derrida 2008:153)

This sounds a lot like Heidegger, who argued that language speaks us, *die Sprache spricht*. Derrida refers to Paul de Man, who changed this slightly when he argued that *die Sprache verspricht* (Derrida 1986a:94-98). It is a play on the double meaning of *Versprechen*. The first meaning is that language *Verspricht* in that language promises and this means that one is promised over to language in advance by language to language. One is promised to différence by différence: there is no outside text. As soon as one is (subject), one is already in language (différance), but différence promises in good faith that the difference (differential chain of signifiers – traces) is not completely arbitrary (as discussed in the first section of this chapter), but there is an instituted trace linked to deferment (a faint memory of a immemorial past that was never present and a glimmer of a future that is always still to come) and thus filled with memory of a past never present and the glimmer of hope for a future still always to come, and this is the memory of promise and the promise of memory. In this sense language promises us; we are promised over in advance by language to language (Derrida 1986a:94-98).

The second meaning of *Versprechen* is, if translated literally, to mis-speak, to have said something incorrectly in the sense of "Ich habe mich versprochen." I have said something incorrectly. Thus the promise is truly only a promise and not a guarantee. If there was a guarantee it would not be a promise, but presence. Thus the promise of language is only a promise. There is no guarantee. On the contrary, language always mis-speaks, because it is always both remedy and poison: pharmakon. It cannot deliver what it promises, it can only promise it. Language (writing) is the supplement that is desperately needed as remedy for absence, yet the moment of supplementation (the moment of the remedy where what “is” is supplanted (poisoned)), there is unavoidable difference and deferment. Yet it is exactly this failure or default of language that is also an opening that opens the errant space of history, of destinerrance.

One way to interpret this is to interpret this as a closed circle of being caught in the vicious cycle of language, but that would not explain the movement of history. The *Versprechen*
of language, or the Versprechen of différance, is what opens the world (calls world and being into bearing each other), and yet it is also the Versprechen, in the second sense, that opens history for the future. The promise is an excess as it promises more than it can keep and thus opens to the future, différance is structurally open to the future. It is the very structure of openness as it is a word given in advance to the other, to the future, to what is deferred and thus still to come.

The Heideggerian gathering or bearing each other, of world and things (beings) in the presence here takes on a messianic openness to the future, by prying the present open for what is still to come (Caputo 1997a:30). The promise involves an act, in a sense an archi-act, that one might also call an act of faith (Derrida 1986a:150). Humans respond by saying yes to this promise therefore saying yes to this yes: yes yes. This yes of the promise is an archi- and quasi-transcendental yes and is thus older than any determinate yes or no (Derrida 1988b:125-26). It thus resembles the absolute performative in that it is the performative that performs and pre-forms us before we perform it. It sets all determinate performatives in action, the archi-originary yes is an archi-enagement in language, a certain alliance (Derrida 1986a:19). This yes is older than any ontological or transcendental inquiry and thus it is not an object or entity studied in ontology or a condition of the possibility of objects studied in transcendental inquiry (Derrida 1988b:130-131).

Negative theology belongs to the promise (Versprechen) in that it knows that whatever it would say about God would miss God\textsuperscript{175} and in that sense a Ver-sprechen. Thus negative theology argues that it cannot say a thing about God. Yet negative theology is not silent, on the contrary there is a lot of negative theology and thus it is also the Versprechen in the first sense as it is filled with faith and promise – so much so that Meister Eckhard was one of the greatest preachers of his time who had a great following and not because he said nothing, but because of his eloquence in saying something about saying nothing about God. "That is apophaticism's particular twist, its most particular trait (trait), its special way of being drawn into the trace – by retreating and withdrawing (retrait) what it has to say" (Caputo 1997a:31). Negative theology has this very structure of language discussed above of Versprechen and Ver-sprechen in its dual meaning.

Negative theology responds to the archi-yes of language by keeping silent and giving its word not to say a word. By making this promise of effacing the trace, negative theology

\textsuperscript{175} It is like arrows aimed at their mark (God), but all miss the mark. Not one of them is dead on centre. If words were ever dead on centre it would be death – the end, as all would be said and history would come to an end.
traces out its place within the archi-promise, thus within the trace (différence) (Derrida 1986a:119). Derrida argues that what happens in negative theology happens in all language and thus negative theology becomes exemplary for language as such. Negative theology’s inability or refusal to speak about God becomes an example of language’s Versprechen with regards to the other of language. This becomes all the more important with regards to the tout autre, about which we do not know how not to speak. The very promise (Versprechen) of différance reveals the weakness of différance to make any strong statements and yet the present time is characterized by various strong statements about the tout autre in the rise of various forms of fundamentalism, thereby denying différance and the Versprechen of language. Therefore Derrida argues that we all need to learn the humility of negative theology or at least a generalised apophatics.

Apophatic theology gives the name God to that which makes it necessary to speak and also impossible to speak, necessary to speak and then to efface that speech. That name is not a bad name as it is a name filled with promise (Versprechen). Derrida goes further and he says that this is not only what the name God names in negative theology, but what the name God always names.

“This is what God’s name always names, before or beyond other names: the trace of the singular event that will have rendered speech possible even before it turns itself back towards – in order to respond to – this first or last reference” (Derrida 2008:165).

It is for this reason that one can say that negative theology is both from and for God. Negative theology is called into existence by God (the other of language that calls language forth) and thus it is from God and it is for God as it seeks to keep God safe from the idolatry of final words. This from and for is a certain circularity, yet structurally open or eschatologically open for what is still to come, and thus discourse, tradition and history is created.

Derrida argues that this is “why apophatic discourse must also open with a prayer that recognizes, assigns, or ensures its destination: the Other as Referent of a legein that is none other than its Cause” (Derrida 2008:165). It opens with prayer. Prayer is the address to the other as Referent, but one can only pray to someone in the faith that the promise of presence will be fulfilled and in that sense prayer (the address to the other) is a response to the call of the other to make present what is other. “This call of the other, having always already preceded the speech to which it has never been present a first time, announces itself as a recall. Such a reference to the other will always have taken place” (Derrida
This is the structure of language. The other of language "calls" out to language to make it present to which it has never been present and can never be present (instituted trace or supplement or pharmakon) and then, in language, it is made "present" in absence, but as a recall.

Negative theology helps in revealing this structure of language, but yet negative theology is about something else. What is negative theology about? What is it that negative theology does not give by keeping silent? By what experience of otherness and alterity is negative theology solicited to speak and not to speak at the same time – to give an oblique offering\(^{176}\)? It is what negative theology calls by and with the name God. This name (God) is enfolded within a 'secret' where it is guarded and kept safe. Yet, as with any secret, the moment you have a secret you no longer have it, for the moment you announce that you have a secret it is no longer technically a secret. That is the strange character of the secret: that it is constituted in the same moment that it is negated. A pure secret is not possible, because it would be so secret that nobody would know of it and then it would not be a secret (Caputo 1997a:33). Negative theology is about this secret that a few are initiated into. Derrida argues that: "There is no secret as such; I deny it" (Derrida 2008:162). There is nothing beyond the text, at least nothing that anyone has access to without language. Yet the other of language, that event that happens on the edge of language, on the edge of différance, that calls language forth and in calling language forth erases itself in language, leaves it’s instituted traces in language – leaves its ashes in language as différance.

A secret has both political and institutional importance and therefore the secret must be kept alive because it has the power to divide and create insiders and outsiders – those who are in on the secret and those who would love to be in on the secret but are not. This is the power to create a politics of place or scene. A politics of space is about power and assigning places, assigning hierarchies, which is the consequence of knowledge of secrets. As soon as knowledge of a secret is known and acknowledged there is power and authority and consequently debts to be paid. For negative theology the secret is the inwardly possessed intuitive vision, union, knowledge, or experience which all clearly converges with its hyperousiology – this hyperousiological deep secret that deconstruction deconstructs, not from the outside as if it has a better 'truth' or 'secret' to offer, but from within the structure of negative theology’s language itself.

\(^{176}\) In reference to the first chapter, the book, *On the name*, Passions: An Oblique Offering (Derrida 1995a:3-31).
For deconstruction, différance, and thus one could say for Derrida, the secret is that there is no secret and thus also the breaking down of institutional hierarchies constituted by secrets and secret knowledge. Negative theology or mythical religions create their institutional hierarchies by these secrets, and this Derrida challenges by arguing that there is no hidden semantic content, there is no access to a transcendental signified, no hyperessential intuition, there is no Ding an sich to which one or a few initiated would have extra-textual access, as there is only the text, and in the text, traces: différance. There is nothing beneath the surface of the text. There is nothing beneath the surface of the text of Scripture or the text of tradition. There is nothing beneath the surface of the trace that is left in the text. That is all there is: a trace left in the text (a faint memory of an immemorial past never present and a glimmer of hope for a future always still to come). Yet this trace is tormented (haunted) by the desire to efface itself before the tout autre. This is the secretless secret and as secretless secret it is a matter of permanent provocation and thus it is necessary to talk about it. How can it be avoided, because the moment you try, it torments and disrupts either the silence or the words. This secretless secret drives one mad and fills with passion (Caputo 1997a:34).

Différance, the instituted traces (ashes) of a singular event on the edge of différance (language), which is only a faint immemorial memory of a past that was never present and a future that is always still to come and thus impassions and opens history. How can one avoid speaking of it – it permanently haunts what is said, even what is passed over in silence.

5.3 Negative Theology: How to avoid speaking

So far, this journey of this study has been a discovery of various attempts to address that which is beyond language and in some way or other to allow it to be reduced to language: to come to mind and thus to come to language. In the previous section the usefulness of negative theology was discovered with regard to speaking and yet avoiding to speak

177 “...when there is no longer even any sense in making decisions about some secret behind the surface of a textual manifestation (and it is this situation which I would call text or trace), when it is the call [appel] of this secret, however, which points back to the other or to something else, when it is this itself which keeps our passion aroused, and holds us to the other, then the secret impassions us. Even if there is none, even if it does not exist, hidden behind anything whatever. Even if the secret is no secret, even if there has never been a secret, a single secret. Not one” (Derrida 1995a:29-30).
about that which one cannot speak about, which is beyond being and thus language. Derrida promises to further explore the possibilities of negative theology with regard to différance, which has already been touched on, but before he further explores the possibilities, he traces the history of the beyond language and he locates negative theology along a line of three stages or paradigms of trying not to speak, of self-effacing traces: Greek (Plato), the Christian (Pseudo Dionysius and Meister Eckhart), and the Heideggerian (neither Greek nor Christian, or both). Other religions’ mystical traditions are absent and it would be interesting to bring them into this discussion, but it would be the theme of another study. Derrida focuses on what is taking place in the self-effacing trace. What is the place such a trace takes? (Caputo 1997a:34). These three paradigms will be followed and unpacked in the following sections.

5.3.1 Plato
In the Platonic paradigm, Derrida argues that there are two movements or two tropics of negativity (Derrida 2008:168). These two have already been alluded to in the chapter on Levinas. The first is the classical, namely, towards the most reputable, most honourable place in philosophy: the idea of the Good (idea tou agathou).

5.3.1.1 The Good beyond being
This agathou (Good), Plato argues has its place beyond being or essence and therefore it can only be described in negative forms as the Good is not, nor is its place as it has no-place; it is beyond being or otherwise than being (Derrida 2008:168). It is epekeina tēs ousias, beyond being (otherwise than being). It is beyond the beingness of Being. Yet, although it does not have being or place it has a direct impact and connection with what has being and what has place or presence. It is the cause (first cause) of all that is. It is the transcendental cause of all that is. One can thus say that it is the transcendental signified that cannot be signified because it is truly transcendent, yet not transcendent to the point of absence as it effects (causes) all that is. This Good beyond being is the “place”, which is no place, but that gives birth to all that is: all that has place and presence. It gives birth to being and essence (einaí and tēn ousian), but without itself ever being present or having an identifiable essence. Thus there is the homology between the Good beyond being and the sun – the intelligible and the sensible sun. Later in the Christian theological tradition the Good was easily equated with God and this connection still determines much theological reflection about the possibility of God-talk. The intelligible sun gives to beings their visibility, their genesis (growth and nourishment), whilst the intelligible sun itself is not becoming, is not visible, and does not belong to the order that proceeds from it, either according to knowledge or according to being (Derrida
2008:168), and yet it is that which makes meaning and understanding possible. This is the classic metaphysical idea that comes to mind when reflecting on that which cannot be said, that which is beyond (otherwise) being, yet the cause of all being. The idea of the Good runs like a red thread through Western philosophic tradition as God or Good, the Logos, and as the divine book, and has resurfaced powerfully in certain postmodern theologies. Levinas, for example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, took up this idea of the Good beyond being (otherwise than being) in his book Otherwise than Being, as well as Jean-Luc Marion in his book God without Being (Marion 1991). This classical platonic view runs through negative theology from Pseudo-Dionysius to Marion and that is to think the biblical God in such Greek (Platonic) terms. This implies that the biblical God left [His] trace in Greek philosophy. Derrida argues that this Good maintains an analogical community and continuity with Being and knowledge—Being and knowledge are believed to be the offspring of the Good (Derrida 2008:168). The Good itself is unnameable, but it is the cause of all knowledge and being. If the Good is neither Being nor knowledge, yet it is their progenitor and the medium of their commerce, then it must be a “third thing”. The negative in this sense is not negative, but a form of hyperbolization of that beyond which the Good gives one to think.

Therefore, although it is also a form of negativity, this negativity (that the Good is not nor does it have place) serves the hyper movement. It is not because it is hyper, too much for words or conceptualisation and in that sense beyond language. This beyond can only be expressed negatively, but this negativity serves to proclaim a hyper-positive. The good is not, in the sense that it is no being or Being, and thus every ontological grammar must take on a negative form with regards to it (Derrida 2008:168-169). Yet the ontological negative grammar is not neutral as it does not oscillate between neither this – nor that, but it obeys the logic of the super and the hyper. This has been the dominant logic of the supperessentialisms of Christian apophasis (Derrida 2008:169). In this Christian apophasis (the God beyond being) there remains a continuity between Being and what is beyond Being. Derrida says: this way of speaking (negativity) maintains a sufficiently homogeneous, homologous, or analogous relation between Being and (what is) beyond Being, so that what exceeds the limit can be compared to Being, albeit through the figure of hyperbole; but most of all, so that what is or is known owes its being and its being-known to this Good (Derrida 2008:169). This analogical continuity makes translation possible and therefore one has these different metaphors or images: the sensible sun, the intelligible sun and God. The excess of the Good (God) that makes it impossible to express in words, as it is beyond conceptualisation and therefore transcendent, yet it
remains the origin of being and knowledge. This transcendence that remains the origin of what is, allows one to give an account of this Good beyond being in the sense that one has an idea of what is and therefore of what the Good is (Derrida 2008:169).

Derrida continues and argues that the negative discourse, regarding what stands beyond Being, and apparently cannot tolerate ontological predicates, does not interrupt or disturb this analogical continuity. “In truth, it presupposes it; it even lets itself be guided by it. Ontology remains possible and necessary” (Derrida 2008:169). Yet it is also impossible as logos necessarily speaks of something; it cannot avoid speaking of something as it cannot refer to nothing.

This is only the first platonic “way” of “being” without being, but there is another, namely one that “eludes all anthropo-theological schemes, all history, all revelation, all truth” (Derrida 1995c:124). This second way of speaking about that which is beyond Being is crucial in Derrida’s thought as it is this second way that interests him more and secondly it is important for this study as it speaks perhaps of the site of this study. This section on the khōra is a subjection of a subjection as it interrupts these subjections by being a section on its own before the study can continue with the second movement of how to avoid speaking about the self-erasing trace. Such a disruption of the flow of the argument is justified within the context of Derrida’s thoughts which are all about disruptions and thus this section is a section on its own and will be written in a different font and in cursive thereby indicating something of an inscription within the overall text of this study. If anything, maybe khōra is exactly that: an inscription or the inscription of writing.

5.3.1.2 Khōra

The word or name or idea khōra is a Greek word that refers to the place or space (countryside) surrounding the polis (city). It is the space, site in which the human constructed city is revealed or, it is better to say, comes to presence (see Meylahn 2011). Yet it is not a name, like différance, as it names nothing, nor is it an idea as it is not an idea of anything, nor is it a word as it refers to nothing – it is a non-place place where words, ideas and names receive their place. It is a non-site site where words, names, ideas are received, but without the place being a receptacle because a receptacle itself is a word, a name, that cannot precede khōra, as khōra is that place where names are received or where names are inscribed. From these introducing words that introduce “nothing”, as khōra cannot be introduced, it is clear that the “nature” of khōra or what khōra is, is cryptic and even abysmal because it names what is prior to names, but which allows names to be and thus it is prior to

178 Although that is a word that Plato used to describe khōra.
language or beyond language in an abysmal way otherwise than the Good beyond being. The Good is beyond language in that it creates and is the progenitor of what is. Khōra is prior to language, beyond language, but without giving or creating anything. Khōra is beyond logic and it is beyond myth. It is even beyond mytho-logic and yet it is the site where myth, logic and mytho-logic are received – the space in which they become both possible and impossible, because although khōra can be described as nurse and as mother, khōra is not the mother nor the nurse. As the mother of images, words, metaphors, or as nurse of these, it is also not a mother or nurse, because mother and nurse are images and metaphors to describe metaphors and thus they are metaphors of metaphors without ever getting beyond metaphors. Plato speaks of the khōra in the Timaeus as the ‘other’ way that forces one to unsay what one says. It forces one to unsay what one says and thus one says “mother” and in that very moment it is also unsaid. Plato’s text is an attempt to avoid speaking about khōra and thus he uses various tricks to say what cannot be said. The idea of khōra is inscribed into the text (Timaeus) in the middle and thereby unsaying all that has been said, but also continuing afterwards, wounded. Thus khōra is both the possibility and impossibility of all that is said, without, like the Good beyond being, being the cause of all that is and that is said. It seems as if the whole Timaeus tries to avoid speaking by speaking about that which one cannot speak about, and in that sense the Timaeus becomes exemplary of this speaking. Plato uses different “tools” to speak about that which one cannot speak about – he inscribes the idea (word) khōra in the middle of Timeaus (Derrida 1995c:104) so that one could argue that in the centre of the argument khōra is inscribed, disturbing and disrupting the heart (centre) of the argument, yet also making that very argument possible. Besides the place or site of this inscription, which describes something of the site or place of khōra, he also uses two other tricks for approaching the enigma khōra (Derrida 1995c:113). Firstly, what Socrates says about himself and secondly, the story within the story within the story …., namely the story of what an Egyptian priest tells Solon about Solon’s city, Athens. Solon has forgotten the history of Athens because they (the Greeks) do not have writing and thus they remain children of myth. Derrida says that khōra can only be glimpsed in dreams and described as bastard reasoning (Derrida 1995c:90). Perhaps these stories or these approaches are exactly that: forms of bastard reasoning as they are not the legitimate children of either logos or myth. Plato tells these stories to perhaps say something about khōra, but without khōra becoming the object of any tale, whether true or fabled (Derrida 1995c:117).

179 For further exploration of this idea of metaphor of metaphor, not necessarily in connection with khōra, see Derrida’s (1974) White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy.
The first story is in the beginning of the Timaeus where Socrates speaks about a previous conversation that they had about the state (Plato 2008:282ff). He alludes to a previous conversation (a memory of a past that was never present, at least not in this story). His strategy here operates from a non-place, a non-place like khōra (Derrida 1995c:107), because he tells his counterparts that he is a little like the poets, the imitators and the sophists who are incapable of describing the philosopher-politician’s place (Derrida 1995c:107). So Socrates pretends to rank himself amongst the poets, imitators and sophists. He pretends to belong to those who pretend, who simulate their belonging to a place and to a community. He pretends to belong to a genos of those who pretend to “have” place. He denounces this genos because of their pretending and yet he argues that he resembles them and he says that he speaks the truth of this genos, that they truly have no place, they only pretend, and he resembles them because he truly has no place. He resembles them who pretend to have place, but truly have no place.

“...as for me I am similar to them, I do not take place, but if I am similar to them or if I resemble them, that does not mean that I am their fellow. But this truth, namely that they and I, if we seem to belong to the same genos, are without a place of our own, is enunciated by me, since it is a truth, from your place, you who are on the side of the true logos, of philosophy and politics. I address you from your place in order to say to you that I have no place, since I am like those who make their trade out of resemblance – the poets, the imitators, and the sophists, the genus of those who have no place. You alone have place and can say both the place and the nonplace in truth, and that is why I am going to give you back the floor. In truth, give it to you or leave it to you. To give back, to leave, or to give the floor to the other amounts to saying: you have (a) place, have (a) place, come” (Derrida 1995c:108).

Is Socrates’ “story about himself” within the story of the Timaeus a trick to approach the enigma of khōra? This little story within Timaeus can be interpreted in so many different ways. It can be interpreted as a story about place, the non-place khōra that gives place and by giving place receiving place. This non-place gives place to those who have proper place, namely the philosophers, those who know the truth about place and non-place: logos. Yet this place that is given to those who have place namely the philosophers, those of the logos, is given by the one who is like the pretenders, who has no place. The place of logos (politics of logos) is given by the non-place of pretense, metaphor. But the pretender is not a fellow of the poets, he just pretends to be like them, thus he is a metaphor of the experts of metaphor (metaphoric). Is Socrates maybe the metaphor of metaphor? Thus one could say that what gives place to logos, logic, philosophy, metaphysics and the whole Platonic tradition is a
metaphor of metaphor ad infinitum which is a theme that Derrida discusses in *White Mythology: Metaphor in the text of Philosophy* (1974). Those that do not have proper place exclude themselves, they are not thrown from the city like the pharmakoi, but they exclude themselves by giving back the word to those who have proper place, but those who have proper place have place given to them by one of non-place – like a self-effacing trace that never had place. It is clear from this story that khōra cannot be approached via logos or via metaphor, but a third genus is needed. Yet in the tradition of Timeaus this has not always been the case as there is a very strong tradition that interprets the Timeaus as if this play can be reappropriated.

Derrida argues that there are two concurrent languages in the Timaeus that seek to interpret khōra (Derrida 2008:171). One of these two languages seeks to re-appropriate khōra into the same, that is re-appropriate khōra for ontology and the Platonic dialectic. This language does this via a detour of negations, detours and tropes. This has been discussed in the first section of this chapter: how that which is beyond language relates to language either via the sensible or the intelligible and the link between language and what is beyond is that the beyond participates in either the sensible or the intelligible. Thus khōra in this language is interpreted not that differently from the Good beyond being. If khōra, itself, the place, spacing, recipient as has been shown is neither sensible nor intelligible, but according to this language it is argued that it participates in the intelligible in an enigmatic way, then as neither sensible nor intelligible it is a mixed participant in both (Derrida 2008:171), but a participant, and therefore connected not in the hyper sense as the Good, but as the recipient. The neither-nor of negativity is overcome by both-this-and-that. Khōra in this reading is read with the metaphors of mother, wet nurse, sieve, recipient, moulding stuff and so on. Derrida argues that it is not wrong to read khōra like that as such readings can be deduced and justified from the text of the Timeaus and thus are justifiable (Derrida 2008:172) although there remains an anachronism in such reading. This anachronism is not taken into account in this first language of khōra. This reading is “out of time” as how can something be a recipient (mother, nurse, etcetera) when these very terms are already terms (images, signs, words, metaphors) that are “received”. Thus one uses words to explain the spacing (inscription) of words, although that which one is seeking to describe should be prior to those very words used to describe it. Derrida thus argues that “khōra is the very anachrony of spacing; it anachronizes, it calls forth anachrony, provokes it without fail from the pretemporal already that gives rise to every inscription” (Derrida 2008:172).

This was the first language (interpretation) of khōra but there is another. This other language is of greater importance to Derrida although it does not cease to be anachronistic, but takes
the anachronism seriously. This other language of speaking of khōra is not only of greater interest to Derrida, but also for interpreting and understanding postmetaphysical God-talk. The other language is truly other, because it does not participate in either philosophy (logos) or mythology. It is outside of place just like Socrates without a place to lay its head—it does not have place as it is outside of place. This non-place gives place, but how can a non-place give place? This makes little sense and yet makes sense as Socrates’ story about himself being and not being like the genos of the poets as he is without place and yet he gives the place that he does not have to those who have place so as to receive from them place. It does not make sense as it is not logos (logic) and yet it is not myth either. Yet it does make sense in a non-sensical way—not logical, but (as already been said) not mythical either. It makes sense in a non-logical, non-mythical way.

It is this kind of reading that will be the focus of the rest of this section. This reading takes notice of this giving of place by one who claims to have no-place so as to receive from those who have place. This circularity in Socrates’ story of himself reminds one of Derrida’s discussion on prayer. Prayer is addressed to the other, but only in the promise of the other’s presence and thus prayer is a response to the “call or promise” and thus it is a call to the other, but as recall. It is an archi-promise that calls forth the recall of prayer. This promise or call to which prayer is the appropriate response, negative theology calls God. God might be a good name worth saving, yet this name is still too related to hyper-essence and hyper-being. Khōra is different as there is no connection to hyper-essence or hyper-presence and therefore it does not lend itself to any theomorphic or anthropomorphic names, but if anything it is rather atheological and nonhuman. Khōra cannot even be called a receptacle to receive as the word "receptacle" is itself inscribed within it. Yet different to negative theology’s God or the Good beyond being khōra does not participate: khōra does not call and thus there can be no recall in response to khōra. Yet khōra is the space for the call and re-call. It is for this reason that the discourse on khōra cannot be metaphoric because all sensible likeness that could form the basis of a metaphor is also already inscribed in khōra—it is already inscribed in writing and différence. Thus khōra belongs neither to the sensible nor the intellige and it belongs not to becoming nor to being nor to nothingness. None of these categories are possible for khōra as it is the non-place-place of the possibility of such names or such categories and in that sense also their impossibility for naming or describing khōra. There is [il y a], is not a being nor a nothingness, but what is: khōra. In the previous

180 This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.
181 “All the aporias, which Plato does not dissimulate, would signify that there is there, something that is neither a being nor a nothingness; something that no dialectic, participationist schema, or analogy would allow one to rearticulate with
section that which calls forth a recall was given the name God in negative theology. An alternative to negative theology’s God is khôra. The only difference is that khôra in no way participates in the promise or in the re-call. Khôra does not have the hyper-being baggage. But the question remains how to speak of this khôra? Thus khôra is a way of “naming” that there is something that remains outside (without place) within philosophy, but it cannot be translated into any logic and nor is it mythological. The neither-nor (not philosophy - logos nor mythology) cannot be transformed into both-and. Thus all the wonderful metaphors used to describe khôra are inadequate. How does one describe with metaphor, or with logos or myth-logos something that gives place, without being place and then receives metaphor and logos in the place? How to think of this khôra that is both beyond logos and beyond myth? Derrida asks the question: The classical differentiation between logos and myth is that if one wants to venture beyond logos one enters the place of myth, as if such a simple differentiation is possible (cf. Derrida 1974), but what if one wants to venture towards that place that gives place to this opposition and many other oppositions? How to think that site that gives rise to oppositions, but which cannot be thought within the paradigm, law of the very thing it situates? In the story of Socrates who is without place like the poets, he gives the place that he does not have to those who have place, the philosophers (the people of the logos), so as to receive from them. This non-place gives place so as to receive place. It is clear that this place is beyond names. It is unnameable and yet it has some impossible relation to the possibility of naming, but without participating in naming. Khôra gives to thought something that has to be thought, but is impossible to think (Derrida 1995c:90-91).

This anachronism and tropology of khôra are inevitable and this is what fascinates Derrida. It gives to think that which is necessary, but impossible to think within the structures and laws of that which it gives birth to. Thus logos nor mythos can be used as both logos and mythos are inscribed in khôra. Khôra is the “space” where both logos and mythos can be thought as well as their differences between them, but yet this space cannot be thought within the paradigms of either logos and mythos. The “whole history of interpretations” of the Timaeus, if it were possible to totalise it by bringing it to some form of unity or homogeneity of a whole, is an effect of the anachronism of khôra.

The second story within the story of Timaeus (Plato 2008:290-304) is the story of Solon and the Egyptian priest. The Egyptian priest tells Solon that the reason why the Greeks remain children is because they do not have writing and thus their only resource is childish myths (Derrida 1995c:114). They are caught in their childishness because of their myths and

any philosopheme whatsoever: neither “in” Plato’s works nor in the history that Platonism inaugurates and dominates” (Derrida 2008:172).
because they do not have writing. Only in Egypt is the true history recorded, inscribed in writing. The writing is inscribed in a foreign place and of this foreign place a story is told and retold and retold and thus received and received about original inscription, but because the Greeks do not have access to this inscription they remain children lost in myths. This inscribed origin and history comes back via the receiving (in a receptacle of the memory of a child) of a story of a story of a story told and retold by various generations. The story of the story received and received tells the story of an inscription in a foreign place, the story of the beginning. Is this another story to tell what cannot be told about khōra (another way to avoid speaking) as that place that receives, and any attempt to tell of that receiving is just another receiving within khōra ad infinitum – like the traces of différence? Derrida reads the Timaeus very closely: as it is mentioned how stories are kept in memory it becomes clear that each tale is thus the receptacle of another. In this story that is told there is nothing but receptacles of narrative receptacles, or narrative receptacles of receptacles as the Timaeus tells the story of how this story told to Solon is remembered (received in the receptacle of a young boy whose memory is still better than the memory of an adult). It is no coincidence that the receptacle, the place of reception or harboring or lodging, is the most insistent determination of khōra. But if khōra is a “receptacle”, if it/she gives “place to all the stories, ontologic or mythic, that can be recounted on the subject of what she receives and even of what she resembles but which in fact takes place in her, khōra herself, so to speak, does not become the object of any tale, whether true or fabled” (Derrida 1995c:117).

The discourse on khōra certainly reminds one of myth as these two stories illustrate, yet if anything the discourse on khōra is a kind of myth within a myth or even an open abyss in the general myth (Derrida 1995c:113). Khōra has no meaning or essence and therefore it has absolutely no identity to fall back upon (Caputo 1997a:36). Thus it is not like the God of negative theology, but if anything khōra is truly the taut autre. That which is beyond names and does not even participate in naming and yet is necessary for naming as it “is” the space in which names are inscribed, but without determining those names like the Good beyond being would determine the names as it would be their cause. Khōra is without cause and has no telos (Derrida 1995c:113).

Caputo says of khōra that it sounds like an apophatic name, a surname, for différence (Caputo 1997a:40). These two stories and Caputo’s idea of khōra being a surname for différence will help in trying to unpack the meaning and importance of khōra. In the previous section the relationship between negative theology and différence was discussed. In this section khōra is the name given to this site that is beyond language, the site of différence that is haunted by negative theology. Is it possible to join khōra and différence or would it not
be a great disrespect to history as différence belongs to a post-linguistic tradition at the
closure of metaphysics whilst khôra belongs to the opening of that metaphysical tradition
long before any linguistic turn? Différence belongs to post-metaphysics, in other words to the
deconstruction of the Platonic tradition, and it comes from a time after the linguistic turn
whilst khôra is about the inscriptions (receptions) of forms and ideal forms and opinions. Yet
the two can be thought together exactly because of deconstruction that takes the tradition
seriously and seeks to read what is in the margins of the text. Derrida, in his reflection on
khôra, says that khôra is the very spacing of deconstruction (Derrida 1995c:125). Khôra is
about the difference between forms and intelligibility and opinions and sensibility and what
makes that difference possible and impossible. It is about the stories that are received in
recepticles (deferred stories) and the inscription of writing in a foreign place so as to liberate
from myth and thus opening the space for the repetition of stories.

Just because Derrida argues that Plato does not use metaphor or sensible figures to
designate the place, that does not mean that he speaks properly of the literal and properly
intelligible meaning of khôra (Derrida 2008:172). He argues that khôra falls short of the
polarity of metaphorical sense versus proper sense and that the thought of the khôra
exceeds such a polarity (cf. Derrida 1995c:92). Khôra introduces dissociation or difference in
the literal meaning that it makes possible, “thus forcing one to take tropic detours that are no
longer rhetorical figures” (Derrida 2008:173). Therefore Plato says in the Timaeus that “it is
necessary to avoid speaking of khôra as “something” that is or is not, that would be present
or absent, intelligible, sensible, or both at once, active or passive, Good (epekeina tês
ousias) or Evil, God or man, living or nonliving. Every theomorphic or anthropomorphic
schema should thus be avoided” (Derrida 2008:173). Therefore Plato told these stories of
Socrates and the story told to Solon, not as a metaphor of khôra, but as a way of avoiding to
speak.

Yet one idea comes up again and again in the reflections on khôra and that is the idea of
receptacle. If receptacle is the most common designation for khôra it might be good to think
through what it means to receive, the receiving of the receptacle and it is perhaps from the
khôra that one can begin to learn it – to receive it, to receive from it what the name khôra
calls to mind (Derrida 1995c:96)

Khôra receives everything, but it does not do this in the manner of a medium or a container,
or even a receptacle, because a receptacle is still a figure inscribed in it. It is radically un-
human and atheological, it cannot even be said that it gives place or that there is [il y a]
khôra. The receptaclesness of khôra cannot even be compared to the es gibt as it still
announces or recalls too much the dispensation of God or man, or even that of Being of which certain of Heidegger's texts speak (es gibt Sein). This was discussed previously, that différance and thus khôra is “older” than Being and thus older than Es Gibt. It is not the not the ça, the es of the giving [le donner] before all subjectivity (Derrida 2008:173). Khôra remains absolutely indifferent to all the things she or it receives. Khôra is impassive, but like différance one cannot say that it is either active or passive as it is not active in the sense of being the cause of something yet without khôra nothing would be and therefore it or she is necessary, but without being active nor being completely inactive (passive).

How to respond to khôra? It is impossible to speak of and to give it a proper name, yet far from this reducing one to silence it still dictates an obligation as there is a certain structural necessity to khôra without this translating into any form of essence. Khôra is beyond logic (logos) and beyond myth, yet it obliges one to speak as it is the necessary spacing in which logos and myth are possible and where they are impossible. How does one speak of khôra which refers to a structural necessity that gives place and receives what happens in that place, but without determining the place nor what happens in the place? One needs to respect the absolute singularity of khôra as there is only one khôra, even if khôra is the pure multiplicity of place and thus one always needs to refer to khôra in the same way (Derrida 2008:173). Khôra, like the Good beyond being, needs to be addressed in the same way although it is absolutely not like the Good beyond being. Rather just like différance one needs to refer to it in the same way which has been done constantly in this study with regards to différance (difference and deferment). This creates the impression that khôra and différance are names, even proper names. This is not what is meant, as it is not about proper names, but to call it, to address oneself to it, in the same way (Derrida 2008:173-174).

The way to respect the uniqueness of the khôra, like one would respect the Good beyond being is by always calling it in the same way. This is not limited to the noun or the name, a sentence is necessary or a story like in the Timaeus. This is the way to obey the injunction that is without promise or order, an injunction that has always already taken place. One has to think that which – standing beyond all philosophemes – will have left a trace in language. The Good beyond being, God, leaves much more than a trace in language as it determines language, being and Being as its final cause. Khôra does not determine language, but leaves a trace (a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present and a future that is always still to come). This trace is not only discovered with regards to khôra and différance, but it is also to be found in other negativities (Derrida 2008:174).
It is clear that khōra is very different from the Good beyond being (God), yet there is a trace also to be discovered in negative theology. Negative theology speaks of a trace, rather than a determination, as the first and final cause. Thus Derrida turns and returns to negative theology, which is the second way of the three that Derrida reflects on, with regards to speaking about that which one cannot speak. Khōra is thus close to negative theology and therefore Caputo argues that khōra is a good word, a good atheological word as it is opposed to the “theological name, the name of God, whose singularity comes of being marked by the unheard trace which call us into language” (Caputo 1997a:37).

Levinas, as discussed in the previous chapter, seems to find a Greek echo of a very theological tout autre in the epekeina tes ousias, Derrida by contrast does not follow this route, but seeks out an alternate – the desert site of khōra. Khōra is irreducibly other and in this sense it is the tout autre. What is the difference between this khōra as tout autre and God (of negative theology) as tout autre? Khōra as tout autre is not God. It is not even an event or promise or gift, and thus has nothing to do with negative theology – although like negative theology this very barrenness obliges one to speak in the same way as the God of theology obliges one to speak (Caputo 1997a:37). Khōra is not the God of negative theology. If anything it is “Il y a là, there is there something that is nearly nothing, so void and devoid of content as not even to be a container, something, which is not a thing, that is just there, là, already there, only there, a there, the there, Khōra, capitalized and like a proper name; something, which is not a thing, of which we cannot say a thing, so that the discourse about it must turn itself into a barren desert, into ash” (Caputo 1997a:37). Yet one cannot deny that there is an interesting fluctuation between these two discourses. The question is, what takes place in this desert place – God or khōra?

Both leave only traces within language and neither determine language or being as the first or final cause. Yet the God of negative theology’s trace has more content as its promise refers to past events inscribed in Scripture and refers likewise to the fulfilment of promises, whilst khōra’s trace is without such “content” but purely an immemorial past that was never present and a future that is always still to come without content. Negative theology’s trace is thus inscribed in khōra and thus its inscription turns to ashes, into bare taking place: deserted desert place. Khōra haunts negative theology and negative theology’s ashes haunt khōra. Their mutual haunting and what they learn from each other will be returned to at a later stage of this chapter.
### 5.3.2 Christian

The question that comes to mind again and again in these sections on khôra, negative theology and différance is, what is the difference between them and what is the connection between them, if there is a connection? This question is asked in the site for postmetaphysical God-talk, but what kind of God-talk is possible in this site and how is God-talk limited in this site? This is the question that is being pursued. Derrida attempts to answer the question concerning the connection or disconnection between negative theology and khôra and thus by implication between negative theology and différance in the following section of *How to avoid speaking: Denials*, where he turns his focus on negative theology once more (Derrida 2008:174-186). It is clear that negative theology has to do with the *taut autre* and khôra is the *taut autre* and yet the *taut autre* of negative theology is certainly not, Derrida argues, the *taut autre* of khôra (Derrida 2008:174). There are numerous similarities between the two as both are beyond being, both do not take on form, cannot be named, etcetera. Yet negative theology is about the *agathon* and not khôra (Caputo 1997a:38). Negative theology is about the good beyond being, that hyperbolic giver of forms beyond forms, and in that hyper-sense beyond form and content, which is different from khôra which has no hyper at all. Khôra is not like negative theology, as with regards to khôra there is no reference to any event (history – biblical or not) or gift, nor is there an order and not even a promise. There is the absolute absence of promise or order, it is completely barren, radically un-human and a-theological and yet it, like the God of negative theology, obliges one to speak and to refer to it in a certain unique way. It “calls” without order or promise in total passivity and thus without agenda or purpose, to address it/her as the *taut autre* that would not even be transcendent, absolute remote nor immanent or close (Derrida 2008:174).

Yet these desert fathers of negative theology moved into the desert to get away from positive theologies and institutional politics associated with such positive theology. In the barren desert they searched for a God stripped of all positive attributes and there they found the generosity and love of *agathon* beyond names, forms and content. What “protected” them from the desert within the desert: khôra? What passes between khôra and the God of negative theology (Derrida 2008:174)? Is there a path or is it an aporia?

Both the God of negative theology and khôra being *taut autre* “call” for a response, “need” to be addressed. The only way to speak of that which is both beyond absence and presence is by way of address. Prayer as was already discovered in a previous section is the way of such an address or is exemplary of such an address and yet one does not pray to khôra. Indeed it was prayer that guided the desert fathers through the desert towards
their God and thus away from the abyss of khōra. Yet the only way to speak of khōra is in a kind-of-prayer, but it does not speak to You (Derrida 2008:175). The God of negative theology is addressed, is spoken of in prayer, thus all negative theology begins with prayer so as to guide it through the desert, it is contained in prayer and thus protected from the desert in the desert (khōra) even if this prayer is later directed towards the disciple or the initiate. But what about khōra?

The path through the desert in search of God protecting against the desert within the desert (khōra) is prayer and praise. That is the aporetic path between khōra and the God of negative theology is: prayer and praise. Derrida makes the important distinction between prayer and praise and although they are intimately related as many prayers are also praises they are not the same. Derrida distinguishes two traits of the numerous experiences and determinations of prayer that are important in this context, namely:

i. In prayer there must be an address to the other as other, “and I will say, at the risk of shocking you, God, for example” (Derrida 2008:176). In this address to the other as other pure prayer asks only that the other be present to the prayer, to be the other as such, as the very cause of prayer. “This first trait characterizes a discourse (an act of language even if the prayer is silent) that, as such, is not predicative, theoretical (theological), or constative” (Derrida 2008:176).

ii. The second is praise and celebration. For Dionysius the association of these two is essential, but that does not signify that these two traits are identical nor even in general indissociable from one another. What is important is that neither prayer nor praise are acts of constative predication and both have a performative dimension.

Derrida does not develop this any further and restricts himself to one distinction. As for him prayer is an address simply asking the other beyond request or gift to be present. Prayer is the address in the promise of the presence of the other. Praise on the other hand, although not simple attributive speech, nevertheless preserves an irreducible relation to attribution (Derrida 2008:177). In a certain sense one can argue that praise qualifies God and thus determines prayer as it determines the other to whom it addresses itself. Yet this subtle distinction needs to be kept (Derrida 2008:177). There is certain circularity in prayer. Prayer addresses God (who promises to be present) and this promise calls prayer forth and thus prayer is to and from God and thus it is in God. God is the Cause who provokes or orders speech, who gives the gift of speech, even as God is also what is promised to this speech, the “gift of the gift” (Caputo 1997a:39).
This is very different from what happened in the “experience” of the place called khōra. In khōra as the surname of différance there is no promise, no gift or seal that guides across the abyss or the desert within the desert. Khōra is about faith in faith alone without any hyperousiological guarantees. The taut autre, which is every other, does not promise, does not give itself as gift, it calls without calling in total passivity. It gives to language but a trace of “itself”, a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present and a faint glimpse of a future that is always still to come. Thus there might be certain structural similarities between the address to and from khōra and the prayer of negative theology, but the crucial difference is that in khōra there is the absolute lack of promise and seal, yet both are about faith. The one places faith in the promise, revealed in experience, captured in Scripture, and the other places faith in a trace, which is nothing but a trace, a phantom that vaporises as there is nothing present, but an immemorial past never present and future still always to come. Negative theology and khōra are about the event and the content of the event. In negative theology the event is filled with content, either a past event recorded (inscribed) in Scripture or a promise of a future event clearly defined and outlined. For example, the promised future event is one of complete union with the divine thus there is a clear teleological expectation or one can even say a messianic expectation, where what or who the Messiah is, is clearly defined. Thus the event in negative theology opens the divine-human history and relation. With khōra the event is a non-event in the sense that the only access to the event is an instituted trace of a faint immemorial memory of a past that was never present and a glimmer of a future that is always still to come. The event in negative theology is filled with content whilst the event in khōra is empty, deserted, only traces, phantoms that vaporise the moment you try and get a hold of them: only ashes.

It is prayer, inspired by the memory of a past event (presence) and the promise for a future event, that guides and holds the desert fathers of negative theology through the desert and steers away from the abyss of khōra. Even if the prayer seems lost or abandoned by any positive content or names of God it is still abandoned by God and remains to God – it is prayer, still faith in God. In prayer the apophasis puts itself in motion, one could say initiates itself from the event of a revelation that is also a promise. The revelations of Scripture inspire prayer and guides prayer as a promise and as a seal – the promise of God’s presence to prayer in that God will respond to prayer. This promise opens a history and an anthro-theological dimension. This place is only by virtue of what will have taken place – according to the time and history of this future perfect. “This place is an event” (Derrida 2008:183).
Prayer is the guide that leads one through this desert (suffering of God) toward God. Yet does prayer truly keep negative theology safe from khôra in which negative theology and all theology or any discourse is inscribed? No, prayer, promise, Scriptures, gift take place in différance, made possible by différance.

“What else is the desert khôra for Derrida than a nameless name for the desert of différance, of the trace, which is the constant companion of apophaticism?” (Caputo 1997a:40). Thus khôra, as the surname for différance, will always haunt any negative theology and thereby disturb it and disrupt it, it will never be safe from the desertification of language and thus it will never be safe from the name God, if “God” “is” the name of this “bottomless collapse, of this endless desertification of language” (Derrida 1995b:55-56). This leads to the third way of how to avoid speaking, namely Heidegger.

5.3.3 Heidegger

Heidegger has been in conversation throughout the journey of this study. In this section, that is reflecting on Derrida’s promise to speak on negative theology where he traces the development of negative theology from Plato via negative theology, he ends with Heidegger. There are different moments in which Heidegger’s thoughts are important for the reflection on negative theology. The first, that Derrida brings to our attention, is from Heidegger’s Was ist Metaphysik? (1960), as this can be read, Derrida argues, as a treatise on negativity (Derrida 2008:187). It is a discourse on negativity as it is grounded in the experience of the nothing that itself nihilates. The experience of anxiety puts one in relation with nothing, which is neither an annihilation nor a negation or a denial, but on the contrary reveals to us the strangeness of what "is" (beings: das Seiende) as what is wholly other. This treatise on negativity opens up the possibility of the Being of Dasein. Dasein’s structure at this stage in Heidegger’s thought is characterised by transcendence which is expressed by the Platonic expression epekeina tês ousias (otherwise than being). But Heidegger, according to Derrida, argues that Plato did not realise that epekeina tês ousias was the transcendent structure of Dasein, but rather tried to understand the otherwise than being as both other than being as well as other in place. Thus the negative expression, it has neither being nor place.

The second is Heidegger’s challenge against Plato’s interpretation of khôra in his Einführung in die Metaphysik (1983). Plato according to Heidegger fell short of thinking the place (Ort) of khôra (Derrida 2008:187). Derrida follows Heidegger’s thoughts and how Heidegger later in his life returned again to khôra, where he interprets Plato as arguing that Being and beings are differently located. Therefore, when Plato thinks of the different
location of beings and Being he is searching for a wholly other place of Being which is completely different to the place of beings (Derrida 2008:187). Thus since Plato and even before Plato and beyond Plato in the Neo-platonic Christian tradition there has been the search for the wholly other place for Being or the place of the wholly other (Derrida 2008:188) often believed to be in another "world". This tradition influenced the idea that God is to be found in another world separated from the world of beings. Heidegger, as was discussed in the chapter on Heidegger, places Being and beings in the place of difference where Being and beings mutually bear each other and thus they are not in differently places, but in the same non-place place of dif-ference – which is the place of language and the double stilling of language.

Thirdly, for Heidegger it was important to distinguish between ontotheology, or theiology and theology. The former, theiology, concerns the Supreme Being or the being par excellence who is the ultimate foundation or causa sui. Theology on the other hand, is a science of faith or of divine speech, and as such it manifests itself as revelation (Offenbarung) (Derrida 2008:188). Heidegger once again distinguishes between the possibility of Being’s revealing itself (Offenbarkeit), and revelation (Offenbarung) of the God of theology. Derrida argues that enormous problems lie behind these distinctions (Derrida 2008:188). Although one might not go along with this distinction of theology and theiology and Offenbarkeit and Offenbarung it is possible to identify a certain thread of thought, namely the thought thread that “moves” from revelation, promise or gift. It was discussed in the previous sections that the seal or promise is founded on revelation, but the seal is thought within the context of a need for a promise to be expected to be fulfilled. The difference between khōra and negative theology was discovered in the previous section as the difference with regard to the event and with regard to prayer. The prayer of negative theology is sealed by a past and future event that is filled with content. The "prayer" to and from khōra does not have that seal. It is a faith without content. It is a faith that respon-ds to the archi-promise, but without content or expectation of fulfillment. Faith is an event that is only a trace. Is that maybe what Offenbarkeit means – the place (Ort) where revelation (specific historic Offenbarung) are expected and hoped for and even maybe take place? Thus khōra is the space (Ort) of Offenbarkeit where specific Offenbarung can or could have or will have taken place?

What concerns one in this chapter is how to avoid speaking about that which one cannot speak about. Heidegger in his later stage tried to avoid speaking about Being. There are specifically two attempts to avoid speaking of Being. The first is in Zur Seinsfrage (1956), where it is a matter of thinking the essence of modern nihilism. It is clear that one is
dealing with a specific place, maybe a place of Offenbarkeit, but how to speak (write) of this place that is no identifiable place? Heidegger therefore distinguishes this topology from a simple topography and therefore he proposes to write Being under erasure (Kreuzweise Durchstreicherung) (Derrida 2008:189). This is a clever way to avoid speaking as the word Being is written under erasure, yet it remains legible, but it is not spoken or pronounced. This Durchstreicherung should not simply be interpreted negatively. “Being is no being, and it can be reduced to its turns, turnings, historical tropes (Zuwendungen); one must therefore avoid representing it (vorzustellen) as something, an object that stands face-to-face (gegenüber) with man and then comes toward him. To avoid this objectifying representation (Vorstellung), the word “Being” will thus be written under erasure” (Derrida 2008:189). This Durchstreicherung is not a sign, or not merely a negative sign because it does not erase “Being” under conventional and abstract marks, but makes it point (zeigen) to the fourfold (Geviert). Derrida argues that Heidegger offers three reasons why the Durchstreicherung does not have negative meaning at all.

i. By withdrawing Being from the subject/object relation, it allows Being to be read, both the word and the meaning of Being.

ii. It also “shows” the Geviert.

iii. But above all it gathers (Derrida 2008:190).

This gathering takes place and is the place of the crossing (Versammlung im Ort der Durchkreuzung) and thus gives itself to be read and written in an indivisible topos, in the simplicity (die Einfalt) of this point, of this Ort whose name appears too difficult to translate. This has already been discussed previously – that this Being under erasure, although not a being or an object, is the place, differ-ence, where world and things are gathered into the fourfold. Différance has been shown to be “older” than this erased Being.

The second context in which Heidegger reflects about how to avoid speaking of Being, but this time without crossing it out, is a text that is a transcription of a lecture he gave in Zurich in 1951. In this lecture he argues: “If I were yet to write a theology – to which I sometimes feel inclined – the word ‘Being’ would not occur in it” (quoted in Derrida 2008:191). In this lecture Derrida interprets Heidegger as making clear that Being is not God – on the contrary, Being is the dimension in which the experience of revelation can take place. In other words Being is the dimension of Offenbarkeit in which Offenbarung can take place. This dimension measures out the measure (it gives the place). The anxiety of the nothing would open to Being, the necessity for Being
(that which gives beings their place and which is born by the gathering of beings in their place) and this dimension of Being opens to the experience of God (*Offenbarkeit*) who would not be an essence or ground, but opens a space for *Offenbarung* of a divinity who would then have essence and ground as in the specific historic revelations. Heidegger’s Being, according to différance, still has too much presence and is thus itself inscribed in différance.

“Did Heidegger not write what he says he would have liked to write, a theology *without* the word “Being”? But did he not also write what he says should not be written, what should not have been written, namely a theology that is opened, governed, taken over by the word “Being”? He wrote, with and without the word “Being,” a theology with and without God. He did what he said one must avoid doing. He said, wrote and allowed to be written exactly what he said he wanted to avoid” (Derrida 2008:192-193).

5.4 Beyond proper names, theology without theology, religion without religion, theology without God, yet saving the name God

Where does this leave theology, God and God-talk? What are the possibilities of God-talk at the closure of philosophy? What possibilities are left in this postmetaphysical *Zeit-Spiel-Raum* for talk of God? Différance has inscribed both positive theology (onto-theology) as well as negative theology – even Heidegger’s non-theology theology – within this *Zeit-Spiel-Raum* of undecidable play. Can theology (God-talk) still be God-talk in this play? Traditional God-talk, in its two specifically Western forms (positive theology that focussed on naming and explaining the presence of presence and negative theology that focussed on the presence that is beyond representation), focusses on presence (positive or negative) and that is its substance, ground and telos. Without this "substance", is it still theology? Is there a beyond such proper names that name presence? Différance or khōra has moved beyond this focus on presence to the non-site (place) that makes presence possible. Différance recommits theology (God-talk) to the grammatological flux that negative theology sought to safely traverse through prayer. The desertification of language is the *tout autre*: khōra. Yet this *tout autre* cannot go under the name of God. *Tout autre*, who is every other, calls forth faith and prayer, but without the event of revelation or the promise of an event filled with presence still to come, and thus it is foreign to God. Yet, as was discovered in a previous section, this barrenness of content obliges one to speak of it as if it were what negative theology calls (names) God (Caputo
God is the name of this bottomless collapse, this endless desertification of language (Derrida 1995b:56). In such a context prayer, the structure or grammar, of negative theology is best suited to speak of this *taut autre* that is every other. Thus negative theology’s prayer becomes the structure of language, the structure of prayer that speaks, in that it addresses every other as if called by every other to address it, and thereby what every other of language is but inscribed in and with différance. The *tout autre* which is every other is thus every one’s business and it is a matter of general interest and not just the interest of a few initiated into the secrets of negative theology. It is for this reason that Derrida argues that the God of negative theology is worth saving and secondly the prayer of negative theology needs to be translated for everyone (Derrida 1995b:46-48). If the *taut autre* is every other then this is about life and language in general and not just about negative theology, and therefore this structure of prayer (which negative theology reveals) needs to be translated for everyone as it is the structure of language as such and its relation to the wholly other of language, which is every other. Prayer (the language of address as recall) which localizes negative theology (gives it its proper place) is exactly what also dislocates it from its specific particular place and engages it in a universalizing translation (Derrida 1995b:63). This is the task of *Sauf le nom*: to save the name of God for everyone. This could be an interesting interpretation of Matthew 28 and the command to go and make disciples, but will not be explored here. Saving the name of God for everyone, and not just for the baptised (initiated) few, runs two risks. The risk of still using the name God, the endless desertification of language, to keep God safe and only a select few are initiated into this secret, or the risk that it can become another universal metalanguage – a general theology maybe like the theology that Heidegger would have written or did write. This kind of God-talk runs the risk of either particularity (selected few who are in on the secret) or a universal metalanguage.

Derrida’s discussion on negative theology is not about opening negative theology’s God for something more primal and thus more foundational, namely *Offenbarkeit*, but rather opening or wounding the place of *Offenbarung* or wounding the prayer for *Offenbarung* by opening that prayer for other voices and other possibilities – a multiplicity of voices. In this way the name of God is saved – it is kept in circulation. “Saving (*sauver*) the name of God by keeping it safe (*saufl*); sacrificing the name of God precisely in order to save it. Sacrifice everything, save or except (*saufl*) the name of God, lest it become an idol that blocks our way. The thing itself slips away leaving nothing behind, save the name. Save the name of God for everybody, not just the faithful in the determinate faiths” (Caputo 1997a:43).
Derrida (1995b:60) continues and says that the wound of language, in language, within language, the wound of language is there, over there and is there anything ever that may be legible beyond the trace of this wound? What is there is a trace of a faint memory of an immemorial past and a faint glimmer of a future that is allays still to come. Or is there more? This trace of the wound in language is différance. This is for Derrida a description of an event (Derrida 1995b:60). The trace of a wound, the wound of différance, is spacing and the trace of deferment is the site of the event of language, the inscription of writing (text), and as there is nothing outside text it is the site of event as such. All that is legible is the wound of and in language: différance. Yet Derida continues and says that nothing is more illegible than a wound, as well (Derri da 1995b:60). This wounding, scarring, violence of language, within language, on the ‘edge of language’ (Derrida 1995b:60) is the auto-deconstructing of writing, of différance (whose surname is khôra), yet all this has an affirmative end. All this ‘violenc e’ to and by language in negative theology which is exemplary is to save the name of God. The archi-promise of which there is only a trace is called God by negative theology: save the name God.

“As if it was necessary both to save (sa Ver) the name and to save everything except (fors) the name, save the name (saut le nom), as if it was necessary to lose the name in order to save what bears the name or that towards which one is borne across the name” (Derrida 1995b:58). This is an economy of sacrifice – it dies in order to live. The name of God has to be sacrificed in order to save it, because by naming God one binds, enslaves, prescribes an assigned passion (Derrida 1995b:84) to God and this is idolatry (death of God) and therefore God slips away from the very name one gives to God, just like the “thing itself” (Derrida 1973:104) always slips away the moment it is named – this is the grammar of the name or supplement or pharmakon. Negative theology does not name God so as to save God from this idolatry, from this poison. To keep within the Husserlian analogy of *Speech and Phenomena*, the name of God, in negative theology, is like an arrow pointed toward God, but the arrow never hits its mark and thus the target remains safe. Negative theology is like these arrows destined by prayer to point in the same direction. But, Derrida argues, an arrow is only an arrow. It can never be an end in itself as it is everything save what it aims at, save what it strikes “even, indeed, save what it wounds; this is what makes the arrow miss even that which it touches, which thereby remains safe…” (Derrida 1995b:61-62). This is the only way to keep God, as the *tout autre*, safe from being reduced to some positive entity within the same. Thus God is kept safe beyond reference. Only a God can save us, but only a God whom negative theology
keeps safe. “Outside the saving gestures of negative theology there is no salvation” (Caputo 1997a:44).

This is the God and the possibility as well as limitation of postmetaphysical God-talk that is described in Derrida's *Sauf le nom*. What is saved (left)? What is the possibility of God-talk after Derrida? It is only the name: God. What is saved is only the name, God, and nothing else. An empty name that names nothing, not even divinity (*Gottheit*). All it names is the endless desertification of language – the endless différance as God leaves the world in negative theology to remain safe. There is not much that is left for theology, actually there is nothing that is left for theology and this is an absolute limitation, but are there possibilities besides saving the name? Saving the name, theology or God-talk, for what? What are the possibilities if what the name is saved for is nothing, as it names nothing (see Derrida 1995b:55-56)? What is left, what survives? Derrida says that what survives is the survivance of an "internal onto-logical-semantic auto-deconstruction" (Derrida 1995b:55) – the desert will have taken place, nothing will have taken place but this place, this event of which nothing can be said. The name of God is a trace of this internal onto-logico-semantic auto-deconstruction, that is the desertification of language.

Negative theology cannot name what it most desires and thus it cannot win, but in the same breath it cannot lose, as its failure is its success. The double bind is a double save (Caputo 1997a:45). The above is one reading of negative theology where negative theology saves only the name: God. It would be incorrect to argue that this is true for negative theology per se, as in negative theology, like in any discourse, there are various voices and in negative theology there are at least two that can be identified. The one is hypercritical in which nothing seems assured, neither philosophy nor theology, nor science or common sense. This is a voice of nothing, but of empty and desert-like intentions. Yet there is also the most assured authority that speaks from out of the element of the secret (secret manifestation, secret gift) and the paradox, from out of the heart of truth. These two voices one of desertification and the other of truth, or as Marion would say, plenitude of intentional fulfilment which saturates intention with intuition (Marion 1992), are the two voices of negative theology. The one ruins all philosophemes and theologemes, engaging in a certain patricide that reduces everything to ruin and in that it reveals the nature of language and is in very close proximity to différance (khôra). Yet negative theology does this in its faithfulness to God to keep God safe, in other words it does this in response to the originally onto-theological injunction – in honour of God. This is the most faithful response to God: to keep God safe from any form of idolatry. The *post-scriptum* remains a *counter-signature*, even if it denies this. The writing of this
negative theology remains a counter-signature (a response – recall) to and from God. And, as in every human or divine signature, a name is necessary. If negative theology as a post-scriptum is a counter-signature, a name is necessary as all signatures require a name, unless, as was suggested above, the name names what effaces itself in front of what it names.

"Then ‘the name is necessary' would mean that the name is lacking [fait défaut]: it must be lacking, a name is necessary [il faut un nom] that is lacking [fasse défaut]" (Derrida 1995b:68). This necessary name (God) effaces itself and in doing this, it saves itself.

In the most apophatic moment, when one says: “God is not," “God is neither this nor that, neither that nor its contrary” or “being is not," etc., even then it is still a matter of saying the entity [étant] such as it is, in its truth, even were it meta-metaphysical, meta-ontological. It is a matter of holding the promise of saving the truth at any price, of testifying, of rendering oneself to the truth of the name, to the thing itself such as it must be named by the name, that is, beyond the name" (Derrida 1995b:68).

Negative theology is not mad. It does not contradict itself. Its self-emptying kenosis is a witness which gives itself to referential transcendence, to die Sache Selbst, to the truth at any price even if it means to sacrifice God, the name of God, to save God (Derrida 1995b:68). This is the dangerous part of negative theology: that it is too closely tied to the determinable faiths. What Derrida attempts is to return negative theology to the trace, the event without the commitment to saving the name God, which is to the fold of language and history and thus of deconstruction, thereby returning it to faith away from dogma. Derrida makes this distinction between determinable faiths, which are always dangerous in their triumphalism “from faith 'itself,' the indeterminate faith and open-ended hope in what is coming in the incoming of the tout autre, the passion for which is what deconstruction is all about, what deconstruction ‘is’” (Caputo 1997a:48).

Différance provides the condition for determinable faiths, but also for art, architecture, law or whatever else. It provides the condition, but as a quasi-transcendental condition and not as a new transcendental condition. Yet it is always only a quasi-condition because the condition it provides is shifting and instead of steadying faith (or anything else), deconstruction exposes it to indefinite recontextualization, substitution, and translation.

The desertification of language called “God" and this name is indeed saved by not naming it, but not as a stable foundation (meta-metaphysical) for a determinate truth, but by
keeping it safe, keeping faith alive and hope for what is still to come. It is the task of faith to save the name of God. It does not provide a stable foundation, as that would be the task of determinate faiths. Its task is to bring it back to the desertification of language and thus to indeterminate faith – the faith of the trace of an event. Deconstruction thus wounds the closed ‘community’ of those initiated into the secret truth by opening it for the tout autre and thereby offering a certain fragile universalism without any imperialistic tendencies. This is what interests deconstruction and thus what interests Jacques Derrida: that the name of God is the name of the tout autre. The tout autre is nobody’s proper name and thus cannot be exclusively saved for Christianity, neoplatonism or for Judaism or for any other determinable faiths. Rather what interests Derrida is that it needs to be saved from these determinable faiths. The name, tout autre, does not belong to any particular community, and in this sense it is public property. How is this possible? It is possible because “every other is wholly other (tout autre est tout autre)” (Derrida 1995b:74). What negative theology says of God can indeed be said with a certain Gelassenheit (indifference) about anything or anybody whatsoever.

This Gelassenheit cannot be thought without love, if Gelassenheit means a certain surrender to the impossible. “To surrender to the other, and this is the impossible, would amount to giving oneself over in going toward the other, to coming toward the other but without crossing the threshold, and to respecting, to loving even the invisibility that keeps the other inaccessible” (Derrida 1995b:74). Love would be to keep the other safe in his/her/its otherness. Thus Gelassenheit, the passion for the impossible, would be “true” love.

Love is a way of keeping the other safe, which means keeping the other other as truly tout autre and thereby saving the name. Yet is this love possible? Is it possible to truly love the other without any desire of return to the same? It is possible to surrender to the impossible as Derrida writes: “But why not recognize there love itself, that is, the infinite renunciation which in a certain way surrenders to the impossible?” (Derrida 1995b:74). This reminds one of Augustine’s famous lines, love and do what you will, dilige et quod vis fac (Caputo 182)

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182 Once more, one should say of no matter what or no matter whom what one says of God or some other thing: the thought of whomever concerning whomever or whatever, it doesn't matter [n'importe]. One would respond thus in the same way to the question “Who am I?” “Who are you?” “What is the other?” “What is anybody or anything as other?” all the examples are good ones, even if they all show that they are singularly though unequally good. The “no matter” of the “no matter whom” or of the “no matter what” would open the way to a sort of serene impassibility, to a very shrill insensibility. If I can put it this way, capable of being stirred by everything, precisely because of this element of indifference that opens onto no matter what difference. This is how I sometimes understand the tradition of Gelassenheit, this serenity that allows for being without indifference, lets go without abandoning, unless it abandons without forgetting, or forgets without forgetting – a serenity whose insistence one can trace from Meister Eckhardt to Heidegger” (Derrida 1995b:73-74).
One is urged towards the impossible of love. Angelus Silesius says “Go, where you cannot go”. To love: that is the impossible (Derrida 1995b:75).

“Go (Rends-toi) there where you cannot go, to the impossible, that is at the bottom the only way of going or coming. To go where one can is not really movement because it remains in the same (the possible), but to go to the impossible – that is true movement. To go to the possible is to surrender to the possible and that is a non-event (Derrida 1995b:75). In Sau le nom, Derrida quotes and refers to Silesius: “Geh hin, wo du nicht kanst: sih, wo du sihest nicht: Hör wo nichts schallt und klingt, so bestu wo Gott spricht” (Derrida 1995b:75). To Go where it is impossible to go, is to go where God speaks. Silesius continues and plays with the German adverb of place “wo” and the “wort” (word). Thus the place of the impossible is the word, the word of God. The true event which is not a non-event is to go where it is impossible to go, and the place (wo) which is impossible to go to, is the Word of God.

For negative theology it is to go to the (impossible) place of the name of God that names nothing, so as to keep God safe. Yet for negative theology this place still seems to be a meta-metaphysical place created by God as part of God’s play, or it is the impossible place Godself? In negative theology this impossible place is a place opened by God, by the name of God, by the impossibility of naming God to and from God. Yet différence would argue, if it could argue that is, that this place (wo), impossible place, is older than the time of creation, than time itself, than history: this place called khōra. Can one know that which is beyond knowing?

If the tout autre is every other it could also be the God of negative theology. It is beyond différence to sit in judgement on this. This place that is impossible to go could be the created by the God of negative theology or it could not. It could be opened by appeal, by an event (revelation) that calls for a response and that promises a future fulfilment, or it could be opened by that which remains impassively foreign, like khōra, to everything that takes its place and replaces itself and plays within this place, including what is named God (Derrida 1995b:76). This Derrida calls the test of khōra (Derrida 1995b:76). Is it possible to choose between these two? Is it possible to decide between negative theology’s God and khōra? Does one have to choose between the two? Is it important to decide between the two?

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183 Gott spielt mit dem Geschöpf.
Diß alles ist ein Spiel, das Jhr die Gottheit macht:
Sie hat die Creatur umb Jhret willn erdacht (2:198) (Derrida 1995b:75).
It seems that way, as these two places are absolutely heterogeneous. Khōra excludes the God of negative theology, it (sur)passes the God of negative theology. As it is "older" than the God of negative theology, it completely and absolutely does without the God of negative theology and as it has no need for God, therefore it is undecided about the God of negative theology. Yet Derrida argues that they remain related to each other and therefore they haunt each other, move around with each other because of this strange preposition, with-without or without-without, without (Derrida 1995b:76).

Negative theology's God cannot be named so as to save God's name. The name is sacrificed to keep God safe, yet this is true of language and true of khōra and true of différance. It is true of the supplement, the pharmakon and writing, which is simultaneously remedy and poison, life and death, presence and absence, it is survival and sacrifice. These are closely related: the one (negative theology) sacrifices the name to keep the *tout autre tout autre* (safe), but gives the *taut autre* a name: God; the other (khōra, différance), which is the difference and deferment of differential traces, is the remedy and the poison that keeps the *tout autre tout autre* (safe) and it is every other [*Taut autre est tout autre*] (Derrida 1995b:76). They both have faith: the one (negative theology) has the faith of prayer in a God who is beyond names, but still is; the other has faith in faith and that all there is, is faith, but without specific content.

Thus, the God of negative theology becomes an example of names in general. Derrida argues that "it is necessary [il faut] to choose the best examples (and it is necessarily the absolute good, the *agathon*, which finds itself to be, then, *epekeina tês ousias*), but it is the best as example: for what it is and for what it is not, for what it is and for what it represents, replaces, exemplifies" (Derrida 1995b:76). This exemplarism joins and disjoins the best (the best as example) and the indifferent (it does not matter if it is God or any other) (Derrida 1995b:76). Yet negative theology and différance are not the same. On the side of negative theology an abyssal eternity is opened which is fundamental (God cannot be named), yet it is accessible to messianism in general, to the tele-eschatological narrative, and to a certain experience of God of revelation; or accessible to historical recordings of such experiences and revelations. The other, différé, is an abyss without a bottom, without a foundation and without any memory of experience of revelation past or expected to be fulfilled in the future, as all there is is a faint memory of an immemorial past that was never present and a future that is always still to come. These are two abysses joined and disjoined to each other. The one is exemplary of the other as it is the best example. This singular exemplarism at the same time roots and uproots the idiom. It does not matter which idiom, Greek onto-theology or Christian revelation (Derrida
1995b:77). These two abysses call to each other as Silesius says: *Ein Abgrund ruft dem andern. Der Abgrund meines Geistes ruft mimer mit Geschrey den Abgrund GOttes an: sag welcher tieffer sey?* (Derrida 1995b:77). These two abysses allow for a double reading of any texts, but particularly the texts of Christianity and Greek metaphysics, as it offers simultaneously affirmation and negation, uprooting and expansion. Therefore the return to a certain *Gelassenheit*: the *Gelassenheit* of undecidability as one cannot decide between these two abysses. Gelassenheit in the sense of letting go, letting God go, saving God's name, to let God go so as to arrive there, that is to arrive at its own effacement (Derrida 1995b:79). This abandonment of this *Gelassenheit* or the abandonment to this *Gelassenheit* does not exclude pleasure or enjoyment - on the contrary, it gives rise to them as it opens the play of God (of God and with God, of God with self and with creation) (Derrida 1995b:79). The problem is when this enjoyment of God changes from a play to a formalism and a dogmatism and the construction of universal absolute towers.

The abyss of khora and the abyss of negative theology is an openness and *Gelassenheit* towards and for the other, either specifically the other as God (negative theology) or the other as every other (khora). The best way to describe this *Gelassenheit* is with hospitality: hospitality as a radical openness and welcome of the other as other, without any reduction of the other to the same. A double hospitality can be identified here. The first has the form of Babel (the story of the construction of the Tower of Babel) which is an appeal to universal translation, but a translation where a certain idiom is imposed on the universal translation. For example Christian idiom is seen as the best example of the Kantian or Hegelian reflecting faith (See Derrida 2002a:49-55). The other hospitality is the welcome of the other, which or who remains other, and thus in its/his/her otherness questions any possible constructions (Towers of Babel). One is left between these two abysses and an oscillation between these two abysses – on the one hand a translatable universalism and on the other an untranslatable relativism or particularism of the singular other who is *tout autre*. This is the temptation of many attempts: to translate these thoughts (Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida) into the Jewish and Christian paradigm. This is a very desirable temptation, as all three these thinkers were influenced by these two traditions, although two of them would pass as atheists. Such translations and the possibility or impossibility thereof will be explored in the final chapter. There is a close relationship between the thoughts of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida and the Jewish-Christian traditions and therefore some scriptural passages are the best examples of what
Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida tried to say (for example the story of the Tower of Babel, or the incarnation and passion of Christ).

Such a translation would be done with only the best of intentions, of opening a space for universal, maybe even tolerant, community and still it would be imperialistic: the imperialism of Christian inspired tolerance. The openness opened by the abyss of negative theology would be a universal translateable hospitality, but the abyss of khora would question such universal hospitality and say hospitality pure, true hospitality like the gift, is impossible as it would destroy the very home that offered hospitality and the host would be taken hostage (see Derrida 2000) – the test of khora – the spacing of différance.

"There is where that happens and where there are those "things" called, for example, negative theology and its analogues, deconstruction and its analogues, ...." (Derrida 1995c:80). If one takes for example the Genesis story of the Tower of Babel or if one takes the two stories which Plato used, to say something of khora, what are these stories (a third genos), as they are the metaphor of metaphor, the narrative of narrative, the translation of translation. The Tower of Babel story tells the story of what happens and thus it is almost untranslatable – it is like a proper name (Derrida 2002b:104). The story tells the story of the irreducible multi-plicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness and the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification (Derrida 2002b:104). The Tower of Babel, in a sense tells the story of what this chapter has been trying to say. This story would be the best example, but it is and remains only an example. Yet, this best example, nor the tradition in which it is found (the Biblical faiths), can be translated into a new universal religion, and it cannot because that is exactly what the story is all about – the impossibility thereof. It is exactly the impossible that impassions deconstruction – the other, that is every other – and thus the impossibility of any conclusive statements. Thus, impassioned by the impossible, différance turns to the texts, contexts and divine names with the seriousness of really reading them, but impassioned by the impossibility to read them conclusively and thus to always expect the other still to come. As a theologian reading Derrida, Levinas, Heidegger one often experiences a revelatory moment where these thoughts resonate with theological "truths" and thus one is indeed tempted to write something like Derrida's theology or Heidegger's theology and Levinas' theology, and although that might be possible with Heidegger and Levinas, Derrida's thoughts would resist this because of différance and the possibility and impossibility of translation. Derrida says, something like literature will have begun if we do not know if Jesus is an example of the Moral Law or whether the Moral Law is an example of Jesus (Derrida 1995:140-141n9). Literature will have begun, and it has always begun,
because we cannot know what is an example of what – is Plato’s story an example of khora or is khora an example of Plato’s story?

6 IN-CONCLUSION

It is not possible to write a conclusive word on Derrida, as it would be against everything he has said, and yet this chapter has to conclude not in the sense of a final word, but in the sense of time and space constraints. There is no way in which there can be a conclusive word, as Derrida’s text is about the infinite openness of texts, the infinite translatability of texts. Thus the best that one can say in conclusion on a chapter on Derrida, is what Derrida’s thoughts on différence and their close relationship (yet with difference) to negative theology offers, and opens for possible postmetaphysical God-talk, yet also how these thoughts limit postmetaphysical God-talk.

How do negative theology and différence limit postmetaphysical God-talk? Negative theology teaches on divine names, that all there is is the name (sauf le nom) and there is nothing outside the name, save the name\textsuperscript{184}. Différence teaches that what negative theology says about divine names is true of all names, as every other is wholly other (Tout autre est tout autre) (Derrida 1995b:76). Negative theology and Derrida do not say that one is caught in the prison of language in a kind of science-fiction story, and thus they do not claim that there is no God (negative theology) and that there is no reference (Derrida), but what they both claim is that one does not have access to these “outsides”, but through language and for negative theology, language will always be inadequate with regards to the specific topic of God, and for différence it is not a matter of inadequacy, but a matter of there always being an inscription of writing and with writing there is différence.

Therefore what they both deny is that anything final or conclusive can be said, about God, about texts or about contexts and thus texts, contexts, names and divine names remain open. This inconclusively deconstructs any claims to conclusion and finality and thus deconstructs any form of fundamentalism and imperialism with regard to God-talk (thus religious fundamentalism), or with regard to contexts, or with regard to texts (biblical, literary or scientific). It deconstructs any form of foundationalism where direct access is believed to have been found to the transcendental signified. Différence focuses on the

\textsuperscript{184} This is in reference to the famous sentence from Of Grammatology: “There is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside-text; \textit{il n’y a pas de hors-texte}]” (Derrida 1997a:158).
believed to have found, and inscribes into that belief that often pretends too much self-confidence and certainty, a little less certain faith by questioning that belief in a foundation, by inscribing writing, the supplement, the pharmakon. Yet différance is passively active and thus does not inscribe anything. If anything, it reminds any claims to foundationalism that there is an archi-inscription of writing, maybe an archi-scripture. This place of inscription is a site of the trace of the taut autre as every other and it is a holy site because one cannot enter this site as a veil or hymen or curtain of inscription remains thus différance breaks down the barrier between sacred and profane.

Différance thus tears the curtain around the holy of holies that functions as secure foundations for the initiated, and reveals that around any possible holy of holies (transcendental signified) of religion or of science is inscribed the archi-text (archi-scripture), and thus différance functions, not as a replacement transcendental signified, but as a quasi-transcendental. This Gelassenheit is and is not a passive indifference, but it is impassioned by the other, the tout autre that is every other.

The unnameableness of every other is exemplified in those who within society (contexts) do not have names or place, namely: the refugees, the poor, those marginalised because of their sex or sexual orientation, in biblical language the widows, orphans and foreigners. Différence is impassioned by the impossible, namely a justice still to come where the other is offered hospitality, where the nameless and the placeless (displaced persons) are offered place and voting rights: a democracy still to come. In texts there is always a reading of a text where there are marginal thoughts (like khōra in Plato’s Timaeus) that need to be re-read. In divine names there are always names that have not featured within traditions and theologies.

This gelassene différance opens (deconstructs – auto-deconstructs) what is (texts, context, divine names) and therefore there is history, tradition and discourse on texts, contexts and theology that stretches over centuries. It is because of deconstruction that there is history, otherwise final words could have been spoken long ago. Différence thus challenges one to read and to re-read texts, contexts and divine names ethically (ethically in Levinas’ sense), to be open to the other and to be impassioned, taken hostage by the other.

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185 For further reference on this differentiation between sacred (secular) and profane and the role of Scripture, see Derrida 2002c.
186 If I write as if différance is animated to do all these things it is purely metaphorical and in full consciousness that différance has no agenda and it has no purpose, it is inactive, and if anything it is about impassive Gelassenheit and an auto-deconstruction because of the cracks within texts, contexts and divine names themselves. Différence does not cause these cracks. If anything, différance is or reveals these cracks: the crack of difference and deferment.
What is left after this limitation? What is left is a messianic openness\textsuperscript{187} and a \textit{khōratic} undecidability\textsuperscript{188} (Derrida) that challenges any text, context or divine name with an ethical attitude of openness towards the other of the text and thus not reducing any text, context or divine name to anything final. Thus one cannot say anything final (fundamental) about any text, context or divine name, but to be impassioned by the impossible, the other and thus to keep texts open to interpretation and to history. No conclusive statements can be made, only deconstructive statements that open what is for what is still to come, or what is marginal and thus forgotten within texts, contexts, divine names.

What are the possibilities? One can enjoy God, God can enjoy one (Derrida 1995b:79) as God is not reduced to a static idol – God becomes a true God of history, God of hope, God of expectancy, God of the marginal, orphan and widow. One can enjoy the Scriptures (sacred texts) for what they are: open texts, inviting on journeys of interpretation; enjoy contexts and their undecidable openness to the future.

From Heidegger one learnt to reflect on the poetic site of the sacred, Levinas taught one the seriousness of the infinite ethical responsibility toward the other in which God comes to mind, and Derrida taught one to play in this sacred and holy site not in disrespect, but in order to keep God (non-God), atheism and theism in the play of undecidability and to enjoy the playfullness of the name of God, texts and contexts.

In the last chapter, this sacred site where the holiness of the Other (who is every other) is welcomed will be further explored (where the marginal, excluded others of contexts are exemplary of every other and thus of the \textit{Taut Autre}), together with poetic and messianic playfulness and the folly of undecidability. The limits and possibilities that Heidegger's, Levinas' and Derrida's thoughts offer to post metaphysical God-talk will be in-concluded with a reflection on theopoetics and holy folly.

\textsuperscript{187} For further reading on the messianic possibilities, but a messianism without messiah, see Derrida 2002a:56.

\textsuperscript{188} For further reading and re-reading of the possibilities of \textit{khōra} for a non-religion religion, see Derrida 2002a:57-58
Chapter Five  The impossible possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk. A conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida: theopoetics and holy folly

1 INTRODUCTION

How to write a last chapter at the closure of metaphysics about the limits and possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk? One is obliged to speak (write a last chapter), maybe obliged to offer God-talk at the closure of metaphysics and yet all that can be offered are oblique offerings. Three oblique offerings will be offered in the context of the conversation between Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida. The first oblique offering will be an image, the second theopoetics with an exemplary narrative, and the third holy folly. Holy folly can be another voice, but before one can hear that voice the context of holy folly needs to be offered. Thus before the other voice of holy folly can be heard general understanding of holy folly will be given. In this interpretation holy folly is placed within the tradition of Negative Theology and thus also in close proximity to theopoetics before another voice will disrupt and deconstruct these offerings. Yet before these three oblique offerings can be offered a short summary of the conversation will be given.

2 IN SUMMARY: A CONVERSATION AT THE CLOSURE OF METAPHYSICS

This section will be a summary of the journey into the site of writing (metaphor/images), poetry and (holy) folly and thus bring Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida into conversation once more about language, metaphysics and the limits and possibilities (impossible possibilities) of postmetaphysical God-talk.

It was already discussed in the previous chapter that this site of the limits of language and metaphysics moves towards what seems to be radical immanence (Stoker 2010) and thus

1 How can one speak directly about that which cannot be spoken of, which is beyond language and thus any attempt to speak will be oblique (See Derrida 1995a).
radical atheism\textsuperscript{190}. Very early in the study in the second chapter, Heidegger’s linguistic turn already argues that one is always in language and thus radically questions any access to that which is beyond language, and Levinas turned towards the concrete Other of experience and thus God comes to mind no longer in some other worldly beyond, but in the face of the neighbour and more specifically in the face of the widow, orphan and poverty-stricken. Derrida’s (1997a:158) famous statement that there is no outside text thus could lead one to the conclusion that transcendence has become impossible, as all there is is language (Heidegger) and text or context (Derrida), and if we want to talk about God one cannot do this beyond the immanent ethical responsibility towards the concrete Other who is my neighbour (Levinas). The \textit{in}finite is \textit{in} the finite and thus is immanent and not in some beyond place.

For Heidegger this turn to language was a turn to poetry as poetry is the speaking of language. This turn to poetry left open the door to speak of God (Theopoetics) within the Geviert (fourfold). As language (dif-ference) calls out of dif-ference into dif-ference and thereby poetically (\textit{poiesis}) creates the world, it creates this world within the fourfold, namely: mortals, divinities, earth and sky. Metaphysics has been \textit{Überwunden} and what is left for God-talk is a postmetaphysical poetic language that creates (\textit{poeisis}) the world by the calling of dif-ference into the dif-ference, where things gestate world and world grants things their place and this happens within the fourfold. In the fourfold there is space for God-talk. Is that it, is divinity part of the Geviert of the world that is poetically created within the language of each epochal sending of Being? It certainly seems that way. Yet Heidegger ventured further and spoke of the last God (not divinities). This last God could be thought as the intrinsic infinitude of \textit{Seyn} where the last God beckons, as discussed at the end of Chapter 2. This last God beckons, signifies or comes to thought, there where language has reached its limits.

Derrida (Derrida 1995c:90-91), as discussed in the previous chapter’s discussion on khōra\textsuperscript{191}, argues that once one has come to the limits of logos, language and speaking, one traditionally ventures into the site of myth. Yet one is always already in myth or metaphor\textsuperscript{192} or literature, as literature (metaphor) will always already have begun\textsuperscript{193} because all there is, is the text.

\textsuperscript{190} See discussion in Chapter 4, section 5. The limits and impossibilities of Derrida’s God-talk: Derrida’s yes and no to Negative Theology

\textsuperscript{191} 4.3.1.2 Khōra

\textsuperscript{192} The question of metaphor, as Derrida shows, is at the heart of those very general questions concerning the relations of language, thought, and reality (Derrida 1974:5). There is no beyond metaphor because any attempt to go beyond metaphor will already be again a metaphor and thus there is no meta-metaphor (Derrida 1974:23).
Yet Derrida did not question the possibility of such beckoning of Heidegger’s last God, but questioned the possibility of actually placing such a beckoning God within a specific context. For example, placing (giving specific place to) this last God within the Greek-German myth of the origin and telos of the epochal sendings of Being (Seinsgeschick). It is exactly this placing, inscribing (writing) of the Last God into the grand Greek-German myth on the truth of Being, that would be deconstructed by différance. In other words, the last God can indeed beckon, from the place of the beyond, but what Derrida argues is that one cannot finally and conclusively name that place of the tout autre: God, as such a naming, would be beyond the possibility of language and thus naming (writing). Différance has no opinion about what all beckons from that site, but it has an opinion that every other is tout autre.

Later Heidegger would speak of writing a theology without the word Being, as discussed in the previous chapter on Derrida\(^1\). In this sense Heidegger comes close to negative theology, to write a theology without God as Being or being, which is in a sense a theology without God, a religion without religion – a theology where the word or name God is a good name worth saving, but for the endless desertification of language\(^2\).

Levinas is a lot clearer on this as for him the name of God comes to mind not in some place beyond, defined or undefined, but in the infinite responsibility towards the concrete other, and thus God is not somewhere in a realm of the beyond, but God comes to mind in the ethical responsibility towards the neighbour.

The linguistic turn of the three thinkers certainly made traditional metaphysical God-talk impossible and thus there are those who would interpret Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida within a radical atheist and immanent tradition\(^3\). Indeed, this turn to language certainly makes the traditional ontological interpretations of transcendence impossible as there is nothing outside of the text. If there is no outside text, this also means that there is no outside grand narrative that can function as the transcendental signified. These ideas

\(^1\) In an endnote, Derrida writes of the exemplary secret of literature: “Something of literature will have begun when it is not possible to decide whether, when I speak of something, I am indeed speaking of something (of the thing itself, this, for itself) or if I am giving an example, an example of something or an example of the fact that I can speak of something of my way of speaking of something, of the possibility of speaking in general of something in general, or again of writing these words, etc.” (Derrida 1995a:142-143 n14).

\(^2\) If one wants to talk of God it could be the name given to such a non-place that constantly erases itself, that gives to thought, but cannot be thought itself. “God ‘is’ the name of that bottomless submerging, of the endless desertification of language” (Derrida 1998:59).

\(^3\) See discussion in Chapter 4, section 5. The limits and impossibilities of Derrida’s God-talk: Derrida’s yes and no to Negative Theology.
would certainly be the end of God-talk, at least God-talk within the onto-theological
tradition with reference to some transcendentonal signified.

Does this leave one with the kind of God-talk that Don Cupitt puts forward, as discussed in
the first chapter, namely to speak of God as one’s personal guiding religious ideal197 or
some or other particular community’s guiding religious ideal, where God (divinity/religious
ideal) is the part of the particular community’s poiesis of the Geviert? Such God-talk would
be relevant only to that particular community where this ideal is constructed and that
particular epochal sending and therefore only relevant for a very specific time and place,
thus making genuine dialogue between religions or places impossible.

Such a non-realist interpretation would be too conclusive and final for Derrida and
différance as he does not deny the existence of a “reality” out there, and Heidegger,
Levinas and Derrida – although they turn to language – would not support the idea that we
are imprisoned in a fiction without any “outside” reference. They are not non-realists. They
do not deny that there is reference. What they argue is the necessity for this reference to
remain other and not to be reduced to the same. This recognition of the other can be
described as Stoker does as transcendence as alterity (Stoker 2010).

These three are arguing that one does not have access to that outside (other) without
language or outside of texts and contexts198 and thus every other is tout autre, as writing
is always inscribed, irrespective of what one is talking about. The other, the moment
she/he/it is thought, is reduced to the same, the same of the said of language (text and
contexts), and so the otherness is destroyed. The otherness is poisoned by the
pharmakon that was intended to be the remedy by presenting (re-presenting) the other as
other, but such representation will always be a reduction of the Other to the Same of the
Said. In the first chapter it was argued that Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida open
possibilities for a new phenomenology of transcendence, as they are impassioned by the
other, the tout autre, to the point of being taken hostage by the other and being called to
substitute for the other.

The idea of a new phenomenology of transcendence can be misleading, as although
these three do not deny that there is a reference (other), that is and remains transcendent
to language and texts, they argue that there is no access to that other besides language

197 “As I see this, metaphysics dies and I am left knowing only my god, my guiding religious ideal and that is the non-
realist philosophy of religion in a nut-shell” (Cupitt 2002:xiv)
198 Specifically in the Derrida chapter this was argued that Derrida does not deny the existence of reference and this
became abundantly clear in an interview with Derrida that is quoted in Kearney (1984:123-124) and discussed in Chapter
4 section 4.2 The Possibilities of Derrida’s différance for postmetaphysical God-talk.
and beyond the inscriptions of writing. Freud’s attempt to speak of the other as the unconscious and thereby give this other a name was seen to still be inscribed in writing\textsuperscript{199} and thus there have been various attempts to give this other a name and in \textit{Writing and Difference} (1978a), Derrida addresses these various “names”, but each time re-inscribing these names in différance. One cannot name what is other, as the moment one names what is other one will have reduced it to the same according to Levinas’ argument, or according to Derrida one will only discover that in naming one has inscribed the other in a text, used a sign, supplement, pharmakon to name and this name only refers to other names and never to the \textit{Ding an sich}.

If it is misleading, why speak of new phenomenologies of transcendence? Because they all three take the other seriously, it is what impassions them and the realisation that the other leaves traces, scars and thus fatally wounds (limits) language, the same (said), texts and contexts\textsuperscript{200}. Thus there is a vulnerability of language, texts and context towards the other. Therefore, although they do not name or define or develop a theory of the other, they are aware of the other’s effect on what is: language, same (said) and texts as well as contexts. The other effects and wounds language by “leaving” traces, but such “effecting” does not translate to the other being a transcendental signified, although that is the dangerous trap that both Heidegger and Levinas ventured into, where the other begins to function like a transcendental signified. The other in Heidegger’s thought is that which gives (\textit{Es gibt}), and he fell into the trap of thinking this other within the context of a grand narrative of a Greek origin and a German \textit{telos}, but Derrida argues that such a grand narrative is but another inscription (context) and thus différance (writing) is older than \textit{Es gibt}, where certain epochs of history and certain languages to which “\textit{Es gibt}” gives, are privileged. Levinas also ventured down that dangerous path of making the other primary to such an extent that the ethical primacy of the other becomes a new foundation for his philosophical system where ethics is seen as the first philosophy, although Levinas was very aware of this danger and certainly tried to circumvent it with his turn to language in \textit{Otherwise than Being}.

Thus, although the other plays an important role within the thought of these three philosophers, the other does not function as a transcendental signified, nor is the other named or defined, as every other is \textit{tout autre}. If anything, the other wounds thought in that it leaves traces (scars) in thought, thereby opening what is for what is always still to

\textsuperscript{199} See Derrida’s (1978:246-291) article on Freud, “Freud and the Scene of Writing”, in \textit{Writing and Difference}.

\textsuperscript{200} In chapter 4 this was the heading of a section 4. Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida at the end of Philosophy or the closure of Metaphysics and a vulnerability toward the \textit{tout autre}. 
come. This wounding, scarring and opening is something that happens within language; it is an event (Ereignis) of language as it is part of the speaking of language according to Heidegger (differ-ence), or the “here I am” of saying in Levinas’ thought, or différanee in Derrida’s thought. Therefore it is not as if the other actively wounds language as if it had an agenda. Rather it is something that happens within language, text and contexts without any purposeful action of the other, but purely by passively being and remaining other, the other opens language for what is other.

The danger and temptation that is created by this talk of the other is to immediately hijack the other for the Other as transcendental signified and thereby use this gap to slip in the name of God as the Other and as the transcendental signified. As already mentioned above, the other is completely passive and without agenda or divine story and purely through its persistent passive otherness it affects language, or language affects itself in the realisation of its own limitation.

Thus the other is not a new transcendental signified as it is a linguistic or grammatological effect rather than being anything mystical or divine. The other is a grammatological or linguistic effect of language, or one can say effect in or within language or writing, as there is différanee, and there is différanee or the trace because of writing. Or as Heidegger would say it, as explained in Chapter 2, dif-ference calls into diff-ference – the speaking of language calls out of dif-ference into dif-ference. Thus the other is a grammatological effect of the event of language or the event of writing.

The confusion enters into this site at the closure of metaphysics because the best language (most exemplary language) to explain this effect within language and the relation between texts, contexts and “reality” (the other), is the language of faith. This event of dif-ference or the event of différanee, the event of the trace of the Other, is possible because of faith in the context of faith and messianic expectation and thus this event is structured like theology, specifically negative theology’s prayer. Différanee, and more specifically the trace (immemorial past that was never present and a future that is always still to come), is “linked” with the other (referent) purely in a context of faith and messianic hope as there is no direct link because there will always be another signifier, another writing inscribed, and thus never reaching the other. Writing, knowledge, philosophy is all possible because of the faith placed in metaphor, in the trace. This event within language is an event of faith.

What this event reveals is that there is no outside text and it does not reveal the other or the Other or God, but it also reveals that the text or context is disturbed (as the text is
“only” a supplement, a pharmakon) and that there is différance: difference (otherness) and deferment, and what bridges this difference and deferment is only a trace, a phantom of an immemorial past that was never present and a future that is always still to come. This trace, which is nothing and turns to ashes the moment you try and get a grip on it, is structured like the prayer of negative theology and is filled with faith and messianic hope. Not faith in a God, nor faith in a messiah, but faith in the trace that “connects” the difference between sign (supplement) and sign (supplement) in an infinite supplementation towards the referent, and faith in the trace that connects to the messianic hope of a fulfilment (presence without absence) always still to come in the time of deferment.

Therefore the language of différance and the language of negative theology have numerous syntactic similarities as discussed in the previous chapter\textsuperscript{201}, although the semantic content is very different. Différance is about faith and messianic expectation without messiah, whilst negative theology is faith in a particular God as revealed in the promises of Christian Scripture. With regard to the God of negative theology différance cannot make any final claims as it cannot make any final claims about any other and thus they haunt each other in undecidability.

Thus all there is for theologians in this site of postmetaphysics, is faith, \textit{sola fide}. All there is for God-talk, once the assurance of metaphysical God-talk has been radically questioned, is the grammar of faith and prayer, but was there ever more?

This passion for the other is the passion for and by the other of différance; a passion that best comes to language in the language of faith, prayer and messianic hope. Levinas speaks of this otherness (heteronomy) in texts and contexts that points to a movement of transcendence and hits one “like a bridgehead ‘of the other shore’” and without which “the simple coexistence of philosophy and religion in souls and even civilizations is but an inadmissible weakness of the mind” (Levinas 1986:348).

Religious language, specifically the religious language of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures\textsuperscript{202}, is probably best suited as it is exemplary to speak about that which cannot be spoken about within the context of promise, faith and the messianic expectation. Thus religious language becomes exemplary of all language, thereby breaking the divide between sacred and profane language – either all language is profane or all language is

\textsuperscript{201} 5. The limits and impossibility of Derrida’s God-talk: Derrida’s yes and no to Negative Theology.

\textsuperscript{202} I do not intend to be exclusive with regards to the sacred writings of the other religions, but I am not acquainted with them and thus I cannot include them in this discussion.
sacred as all language is about the other, *tout autre*, and thus functions on the basis of promise, faith and hope. The three philosophers who have been brought into conversation in this study all have a religious background. Heidegger was Christian and Levinas and Derrida Jewish and thus they were acquainted with the Jewish-Christian Scriptures. These Scriptures were part of the context of their thoughts. Thus one does not know to what an extent they had an influence on their thinking, as Derrida (1995a:142-143 n14) said literature will have begun if one no longer can distinguish what is an example of what. In other words, is différance with its trace exemplary of faith or is faith exemplary of différance with its trace? Does différance help one understand faith and thus interpret Scriptures or do the Scriptures and faith help one understand différance?

The first oblique offering will be offered where scripture and grammatology mirror each other where one no longer can distinguish what is an image (metaphor) of what.

3 THE FIRST OBLIQUE OFFERING: TO BE ALREADY IN THE TEXT IS TO BEGIN WITH AN IMAGE, A SIGN, AN INSCRIPTION. IS THERE ANY OTHER BEGINNING?

The three oblique offerings will begin with an image (a sign), but an image made up of copies of images, copies of paintings, as if there was never anything else but virtual copies of copies or images of images, signs of signs, inscriptions of inscriptions, giving and receiving in infinite repetition.

In the centre of this image is a depiction of two mirrors mirroring each other and thus creating the impression of infinity. This infinite repetition of one mirror mirroring the other depicts (if anything can depict) différance as the infinite repetition of repetition (reflection): a space of infinite receiving and giving what is received, which reminds one of the story of Socrates in the Timeaus where one is no longer sure who receives and who gives. One is no longer sure of what receives and what gives in this giving receiving and receiving giving, and thus there is an infinite recession of giving and receiving and only traces of an immemorial past that was never present and a future always still to come. There is nothing that connects the two mirrors, there is only a vaporous invisible veil that both seperates the mirrors and connects them in their infinite reflection of each other. This vaporous veil (hymen) *maybe* depicts something of the trace that is instituted and thus links (by not linking but only by being a trace) the reflection to its other reflection. This
effect of infinity which is created by mirroring a mirror in a mirror becomes not a metaphor for différance, nor the logic of différance as différance is the possibility and impossibility of both myth and logic, but maybe this *Spiegel Im Spiegel* functions like the two stories that Plato used in the *Timeaus* that say something of khōra without saying anything about khōra and khōra as discovered in the previous chapter is a good surname for différance. The German *Spiegel Im Spiegel* is used because it is the title of a piece of music written by Arvo Pärt (1978), an Estonian composer.

He uses minimalist musical style that he developed called tintinnabulis\(^\text{203}\). This style of music is a repetitive play with two voices (like bells\(^\text{204}\)). The first voice arpeggiages the tonic triad while the second moves diatonically in stepwise motion. These “bells” or voices and the spaces between them create a kind of infinite depth that the infinite reflection in a mirror of a mirror effects, linked by a vaporous and phantom-like trace of an immemorial past that was never present and a future that is always still to come, and thus is but a veil concealing and yet revealing.

This image that reminds one (me) of différance is further constructed and two other images (copies of paintings) are placed in such a way that they are reflected in the infinite reflections in the mirrors and yet they are only present in the margins of the reflection (they exist on the margins of the image of différance and thus on the margins of the impossible possibility of philosophy, metaphysics and thus God-talk). Can these two images of paintings be possible names or maybe surnames of this infinite différance which is an event within language (within texts and contexts)?

On the one side there is the copy of the painting *Der Schrei*, by Edvard Munch (1893).

*Der Schrei* is perhaps a painting that depicts something of khōra and the promise and call (*Schrei*) of language to its other, but without definable content, a prayer without specific addressee, hope in the messianic, but without messiah. A scream, a recall to one of whom one does not know from where or to whom, the one without a face, but in the face of every other.

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\(^{203}\) Wikipedia (n.d.) describes tintinnabuli as follows: “Tintinnabuli (singular: tintinnabulum) (from the Latin tintinnabulum, a bell) is a compositional style created by the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. Pärt first introduced this new style in two works: *Für Alina* (1976) and *Spiegel Im Spiegel* (1978). This simple style was influenced by the composer’s mystical experiences with chant music. Musically, Pärt’s tintinnabular music is characterized by two types of voices, the first of which (dubbed the “tintinnabular voice”) arpeggiates the tonic triad, and the second of which moves diatonically in stepwise motion. The works often have a slow and meditative tempo, and a minimalist approach to both notation and performance. Pärt’s compositional approach has expanded somewhat in the years since 1970, but the overall effect remains largely the same.”

\(^{204}\) Bells and their ringing reminds one of Heidegger and the *Geläut der Stille* which is the speaking of language.
On the other side, on the other margin, is Sieger Köder’s 2001 painting *Elijah am Horeb*. Maybe a painting depicting negative theology’s God who is the name given to the desertification of language. And Elijah who waits for God because he has received a promise that he will receive God. He receives God not in full presence of proper names and tremendous events, but in the faint gentle phantom presence of a silent whisper of a breath or breeze.

This is the space of post-metaphysical God-talk, a space of faith and thus the space of theology with or without theology, a space of undecidability.

An image construction with two impossible possible names in the margin of différance, depicting *perhaps* the impossible possibility of philosophy, metaphysics and thus God-talk, and the absolute undecidability between the khōra and negative theology.

This undecidability reminds one of Donald Barthelme’s short story *On Angels* where he writes: “The death of God left angels in a strange position” (Barthelme 1969:29). The death of God left theologians in a strange position similar to Barthelme’s angels (Miller 2010:6), and as the saying goes only fools would go where angels fear to tread. Yes, indeed only fools, but maybe holy fools enter that site of the impossible possible death of God where angels fear to tread. Holy fools and maybe poets, as Heidegger might argue. Poets who are best suited to speak in that sacred site of God’s death or life, that site where the divine comes to mind.

If God, as a name, enters into this site of undecidability, this site of the absolute desertification of language, then God is a good name, worth saving and more, worth loving and even more: to be loved (impassioned) and called by this name to which one can only answer: “Here I am”!

The laws (limits) of physics, the laws (limits) of metaphysics, the laws (limits) of language have crucified this God and thus the physical and metaphysical God is dead. Yet the *name* of this crucified God lives and at this crucified name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess….

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205 See 1 Kings 19: 11ff
206 In reference to Philippians 2:10. If God is the name of the endless desertification of language all will bow and confess to this name as there is no outside text: there is only this desertification and everything that is, is inscribed in this desertification and therefore bows to this quasi-transcendental.
At the site of postmetaphysical God-talk where the name God is saved, loved and where this name calls and impasses, one has entered into the province, maybe the fifth province\textsuperscript{207} of Ireland, theopoetics.

\textbf{Dem unbekannten Gott}


Ich will dich kennen, Unbekannter, du tief in meine Seele Greifender, mein Leben wie ein Sturm Durchschweifender, du Unfaßbarer, mir Verwandter! Ich will dich kennen, selbst dir dienen (Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in Janz 1993:124f)

\section{4 THE SECOND OBLIQUE OFFERING: THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITY OF THEOPOETICS AS POSTMETAPHYSICAL GOD-TALK}

In this chapter theopoetics is offered as an oblique offering of postmetaphysical God-talk. Yet, why venture down this path of theopoetics? Maybe it is a good path because poetry

\textsuperscript{207} This is in reference to the fifth province in Ireland, which is a province that does not exist, in other words it is a non-place, a u-topia, but it is the place that exists only in the imagination of poets as the heart of Ireland. It is thus a non-place (u-topia) that gives birth to places in that it erases itself, maybe a bit like khōra (cf. Hederman 1985).
is the purest form of the speaking of language? What is it pure about? Is it pure about God? No, it is pure as it is the language of language.

Simon Critchley argues that “After the death of God, it is in and as literature [text] that the issue of life’s possible redemption is played out” (Critchley 2004:xx). In other words, it is in the text that God and salvation is to be found, not an ontological God beyond the text, but in the name (save alone the name) of God in the text, as Caputo argues that after the death of God we can be nourished anew by the name of God (Kosky 2008:1024). Charles Winquist insists that theology is writing and as such it addresses the knowledge of God by engaging language about God, which in turn demands interpretation (Winquist 1986:49). How does one write about God? How does one do theology after the death of God? Is theopoetics a possibility for postmetaphysical God-talk?

4.1 Theopoetics

Theopoetics is a possibility for postmetaphysical God-talk at the closure of metaphysics. It is God-talk that is fully aware of the limitations of physics, metaphysics, philosophy and language and thus God-talk fully inscribed in the text or context, but without God being reduced to the Sacred Text as in Taylor. Theopoetics speaks of God, because God is a name worth saving, a name worth loving, a name that impassions and thus calls. A name that names the endless desertification of language as an event that takes place in language, but in this name that is the endless desertification of language is harboured faith, promise and hope that guides through the desertification toward the other (who is every other). Thus theopoetics is God-talk after the death of God\textsuperscript{208}; the death of the metaphysical onto-theological God, and it is not a trick to return this God via the back door. The name of God survives or is maybe even resurrected, to which every knee will bow and every tongue confess (Philippians 2:10), but it is the name of the crucified God. As Saint Paul says, I claim to know nothing, but Christ and him Crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

It is a name, a title, “Christ” that is filled with faith and hope in the messiah. A name of an event in language that realises that only a God can save us\textsuperscript{209}. A name, “God”, that

\textsuperscript{208} Miller (2010) defines theopoetics as theological/religious thinkers who in some way or other are in relation to the “death of God”, and I would add the death of God via the linguistic turn of the overcoming of metaphysics.

\textsuperscript{209} In reference to a comment by Heidegger in the Spiegel interview that only a God can save us (Heidegger 1976:193-219).
inspires faith in a trace of an immemorial past that was never present and a future that is always still to come and that guides the erring Feldweg through the desert. This name speaks of faith and promise of a messiah still to come or come again and therefore creates the time that remains. This time that remains or the remaining time-space is created by différance (the desertification of language), it is created by the name “God” and the faith in the trace of an immemorial past never present and a future always still to come. The time that remains is the time-space of life and of salvation because it is a time of grace as judgement and specifically final (conclusive) judgments are postponed, and thus there is an openness for the ever present trace of the other, not a bad name for God who can save us (by grace and faith alone) in the time that remains (the time-space of différance).

This name, this desertification of language, is filled with promise, filled with grace, filled with hope in a messiah (all good characteristics of a God) and yet this same desert is also filled with temptations. Theopoetics is conscious of the dangers of this desert. The desert is the place of great promise and the place where the father of faith (Abraham) was tested and proved to be faithful (Genesis 22:1-19), but it is exactly that: a place of testing and therefore temptation. It is a place that one can enter, liberated from the imperial gods that enslave one to false foundations and final conclusive judgments, but then, in the deserted desertification and the total abandonment of strong imperial foundations (abyss), one can be tempted to long back to those very solid foundations, the meat pots of Egypt (Exodus 16:3), as one can no longer bear the unbearable lightness (no outside text) of being. In this endless desertification of language the temptation is great to return to the solid

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210 In reference to Heidegger’s (1962c) book Der Feldweg.
211 There are different forms of Theopoetics, but according to McCullough there is something that these thoughts have in common. The thinkers may be viewed as “apologists for the vocation of straying towards an infinite nothing, or erring ‘after God,’ or waiting for the Messiah who never comes, or loving one’s neighbour in the void as the only alternative to the bad faith of arbitrarily declared absolutes” (McCullough 2008: 108).
212 In reference to Giorgio Agamben’s The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans (2005)
213 The time-space that is created is created in the time-space of the trace between an immemorial past never present and a hope in a future always still to come.
214 In reference to Goodchild who interprets Paul and thus interprets life and salvation in this space of difference and deferral: “Life itself consists in the delay between deed and judgment. It is the time that remains, between and beyond synchronic universals, that one may be saved. It is time of pure contingency, beyond reason” (Goodchild 2008:24). This is another interpretation of name for God: saving Grace that saves in this desertification of language in the time that remains – in that space-time of difference and deferral.
216 This is in reference to both senses of “of”. The first is the desertification of language in the sense that language is deserted of any final referent. The second meaning of “of” refers to the desertification of language in the sense of there being text upon text without ever getting beyond text like the grains of sand in the desert.
foods or foundations of a time gone by (Egypt) or the great years of metaphysical onto-theological truths\textsuperscript{217}.

In the context of such temptations, David Miller (2010) makes the distinction between theopoetry and theopoetics, to try and understand how one writes and thinks about God: this endless desertification of language. Theopoetics is fully awakened to the desertification of language\textsuperscript{218}. It is poetics conscious of its metaphorical character and thus conscious of its limits. He continues and says it “involves a reflection on poiesis” (Miller 2010:8) – the creation ex-nihilo or bringing forth out of the difference into the difference.

Theopoetry in contrast is a beautiful way of expressing theology's eternal truths and thus theology does not end with the death of God, because there is no death of God in theopoetry, but a creative transformation towards an “artful, imaginative, creative, beautiful, and rhetorically compelling manner of speaking and thinking concerning a theological knowledge that is and always has been in our possession and a part of our faith” (Miller 2010:8). Theopoetics consciously engages the bringing forth out of nothing, while theopoetry fills the opening of the event of language with content – eternal truths – thereby denying the creation ex-nihilo thereby theopoetry fills the desert with artfully constructed temples thereby denying the desertification\textsuperscript{219}.

\subsection*{4.2 Theopoetry and the danger of theopolitics}

This filling of the void with absolute beautifully crafted temples is dangerous and world history has seen some great epochal sendings of theopoetry or onto-theological poetry. There have been so many meanings projected upon one over the years – political, social, religious, and ideological meanings, crafted into powerful and very convincing rhetoric. Amazing empires, worlds, cultures and languages have been created in the summoning of the difference and into the difference, but forgetting the difference. Forgetting the void, the opening of the event of language, forgetting that there is no beyond metaphor. One only needs to think of the great cultures of the world that have given so much to history.

\textsuperscript{217} Today one sees a tremendous rise in various forms of fundamentalism, a longing for strong truths that offer solid foundations.

\textsuperscript{218} Theopoetics for Miller is theology and he thinks that, if “after the death of God” signifies the continuing impact of an understanding of the times as severed from any dependencies on transcendental referents, then theopoetics will have to refer to strategies of human signification in the absence of fixed and ultimate meanings accessible to knowledge or faith” (Miller 2010:8).

\textsuperscript{219} For further reference to the construction of foundational temples, even postfoundational temples, see Meylahn 2006.
Es gibt has given to history great imperial metaphors that encompassed large expanses of thought, land and people. These metaphors continued to expand so as to include large expanses of the unknown within the same. There are powerful metaphors that are not easily challenged because they have given too many things (beings) a fixed and certain place and to disrupt that certainty would be too costly. One only needs to think of the current Gestell of science and technology as Heidegger would call it – the current sending of Es gibt the technological world and its machination that incorporates everything in its positive faith in science, progress, technology and capitalism. How does poetics differ from these grand poems of meaning that so easily become theopolitics?

Mark Hederman, reflecting on the so-called Fifth Province in Ireland (a province that does not exist except in the imagination of poets as the heart of Ireland), says it is a u-topia as it is a no-place, it is a non-existent place and yet it is the place that gives birth to all places as it erases itself. The danger is that such u-topias, such desert places, can easily be filled with content and instead of erasing themselves become holy temples, ideological temples in the political sense and idols in the religious sense (cf. Hederman 1985). Is this not what happened to Heidegger’s poetry as it became filled with too much geographical ideological content? It became filled with capitalised German-Greek poems and thus was no longer a desert-place, but a very specific national place – a place that one is prepared to die for and go to war for. The void was filled with the beautiful Greek-German theopoetry that too easily translated into a theopolitics of Hitler’s German nationalism.

The question is how to keep this u-topia, this desertification, this name “God” safe by keeping it free from idolatry and ideology. That is the challenge of theopoetics. Miller (2010:11-18) describes four marks of theopoetics, of radicalized poetics, that respond to void and nothingness left by the death of God and that prevent theopoetics from becoming theopoetry – a small step from theopolitics – by filling the void with proper capitalised names. Theopoetics will be interpreted as a way of keeping God’s name safe (saut le nom). The next section will shortly reflect on these four marks in the light of the above discussion, but reflect on them in the light of the desert (desertification of language) and the temptations that one is challenged with in this desert.

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220 This sounds very similar to Heidegger’s dif-ference as the site for the sendings of Being, but which is itself not Being, or Derrida’s khôra.
4.3 The temptations in the desert: the temptations in the name of God

The *unbearable lightness of being* is too much to bear and thus this desert is filled with temptations. The first was already alluded to in the previous section, namely to construct temples in the *name* of God, but in the sense of on behalf of God or some or other Transcendental Signified. These temples are constructed in the desert, but ignoring the desert or rather conquering the desert in the *name* of God. Temples of power and dominion are constructed in the *name* of God, deserts are conquered in the *name* of God and the other is colonised in the *name* of God. All this in the *name* of God, so much so that one wonders if this is really a good name to save? But that is exactly it, it is just a name, save (only) a name, and that is what deconstruction does: it auto-deconstructs these temples, constructions and conquests in the *name* “God” (endless desertification of language). Thus the name, only the name, saves the name “God” from these atrocities of history done in the name of God.

These temples and conquests are only possible in the name of a transcendental signified that one has access to, so much so that one has the authority to act in the name of that signified. What Derrida has revealed is that it is impossible to do these things in the name of such a transcendental signified, because one does not have access to the signified (there is no outside text), one only has the name (a signifier, a text). Between the name, which is all one has, and the “signified”, is the endless desertification of language, namely an infinite chain of signifies, and the link between these signifiers is arbitrary as the “signified” is unreachable (impossible), and yet there is a trace (immemorial past never present and a future always still to come).

The idea of a trace is best spoken of in the language (grammar) of faith, promise and hope and therefore prayer. Prayer is the language of language. For Heidegger it was poetry and for Derrida it is prayer. Maybe it is a poetic (*poeisis*) prayer. The language of différance and trace (prayer) is syntactically in very close proximity to the language (grammar) of negative theology. Therefore the name of God returns not to name a transcendental signified, but to name this desertification of language that is filled with faith, promise and messianic hope and that can only be crossed in prayer, faith and hope. Thus the name “God” saves God from all that has been done in the name of God. Only God can save us. This is the first temptation from which the name “God” saves one.

There is another biblical story that is about the temptations of or in the desert: the temptations of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11). In this section the four marks of theopoetics, as
described by Miller, will be brought into conversation with the three temptations that Jesus experienced in the desert.

4.3.1 The first temptation: the all-powerful author

The first temptation was to change stones into bread (Matthew 4:3-4). The tempter argues that if Jesus is the son of God then he should have the power to in the name of God change these stones into bread. To command in the name of God as the Son of God these stones to transform into bread.

This can be interpreted, in the light of this study, as either to command in the name of an all-powerful transcendental signifier to literally transform stones into bread because this transcendental signifier can do anything as he/she/it is omnipotent. Another reading of this text could perhaps be to transform the stones into bread in the name of the endless desertification of language. In this name “God” (not in the name of, but just the name “God”) it would be possible as there is no referent. All there is, is the desert of texts and therefore it does not really matter if one speaks of stones or bread – it is arbitrary. This interpretation, which is the first temptation, would give the author – the user of words – extreme (absolute) power, divine power, to create ex-nihilo or to transform what is created at will. So, in a sense the author becomes the transcendental signified while his/her intentions behind the use of words becomes the ultimate reference: the author decides if it is stones or bread. Theopoetic thought challenges this idea of the author being the last reference and argues that there is no author in that sense. The author does not have that power even if s/he is the son of God or the image of God.

Does the author of these words either have access to an all-powerful transcendental signified who in his/her omnipotence can transform stones into bread or does the author have access to a bottomless collapse of language and thus it does not matter if one speaks of stones or bread as all there is, is text? Jesus responds to this temptation by arguing that one does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). There is more to life than these words, there is more to reality than these words, bread and stones, namely every word that comes from the mouth of God (the mouth of the endless desertification of language). Every word that

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221 Miller argues that four markers prevent theopoetics becoming theopoetry, namely that there is no author, no meaning, no order and no end (Miller 2010).
222 In reference to the Derrida chapter, section 4 where friends of perhaps are friends of truth (Derrida 1997b:43) and thus perhaps friends of God as well.
223 I am aware that any New Testament scholar would regard such interpretation as blatant “misuse” of these texts. Misuse in the exegetical sense that such an interpretation takes the texts out of their historical, textual and cultural context, maybe even ignoring the author’s intentions. If I would have to place myself within an exegetical tradition I would place this interpretation within the narrative reader response tradition, where the focus is on the text and not on what is
comes from this endless desertification of language – all the traces, the endless traces with their promise and faith that they inspired in an immemorial past never present and future always still to come – reminds the author that s/he does not have such power to either act in the name of an all-powerful transcendental signified or to conjure up meaning ex-nihilo. The author himself or herself is inscribed in the text or context and thus is inscribed in the trace. As Heidegger would say, the language one uses (ordinary everyday language) is a used-up poem (Heidegger 1971b:208). The author does not create words at will, but s/he uses second hand words (used-up poems). The words one uses are second hand words (poems) that one has inherited from the context with which to respond (recall) to the speaking of language: différance. It is in this sense that Roland Barthes’ essay, Death of the Author (1968), must be understood: the author cannot function as a transcendental signified (ultimate reference), because s/he is inscribed in text or context.

The author’s intentions cannot become the new transcendental signified to prove the truth or correctness of a text. It is difficult to know with finality the true source of signification in a poem or any text, because the signification itself is finally unknown and unknowable. As Heidegger argued, it is language that speaks and not mortal humanity, as mortal humanity only responds to the speaking of language with used-up poems, second hand words.

The author uses second-hand words, used-up poems, in that s/he uses words, signs, metaphors, supplements, pharmakons that s/he did not create, but inherited from the context (every word that comes from the mouth of God) that s/he comes from and thus the author is inscribed in the text that s/he “creates”.

I. A. Richards argued that “the great writer seldom regards him [or her] self as a personality with something to say; his [or her] mind is simply a place where something happens to words. ... Whatever the author may think that he or she is entitled to do to a poem, the poem has the last word” (Richards 1963). Poetry leads not only to the death of the subject, but more importantly to the death of the ego, believing that s/he has something universal to say. In Levinas’ thought it would be the Other that speaks and our speaking is only a response to the Other. This links up with the next marker of theopoetics.

4.3.2 The second temptation: conclusive meaning and thus certain knowledge

With the second temptation, Jesus is taken to the pinnacle of the temple and challenged to throw himself down and thereby put the word of God to the test concerning the angels behind the text, nor in front of the text, but what is implied by the text and what possibilities the text opens (see Powell 1990).
who will carry him on their wings. Jesus is challenged to test the meaning (truth) of Sacred Scripture, the truth of God’s Word.

Theopoetics argues that meaning cannot be reduced to a single fixed meaning, as it is always multiple and heterogeneous. There is always a différance as meaning is not only different, but also deferred as something still to come. This thought of the multiplicity of meaning is echoed in the thoughts of Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida, and it is this deferment of meaning that opens the text to Offen-barkeit, namely to reveal, manifest and create worlds before it. Poetics, in response to transcendence as alterity, is poetic thinking that is fully awakened to the absolute alterity and in fragile humbleness responds to this alterity, knowing full well that no poetic thought, no metaphor, will ever grasp (Begreifen) the Other in the same of proper names and thus it is a playful dance in the wounded place (Zeit-Spiel-Raum) of the event of language, haunted by différance and the trace of alterity. Jesus responds to this temptation arguing that one should not put the Lord your God to test (Matthew 4:7). God is a good name for this endless desertification of language, yet the moment you put this God to test, the moment you put the trace to test and try and force it to be more than a trace (more than faith in a immemorial past never present and hope in a future always still to come) – that is, to become secure knowledge – it turns to ashes; it deserts in the desertification of language as God retreats into the desert so as to save God’s name in both senses, namely to save God’s name from idolatry and secondly to lose everything, but the name (save/safe the name). Jesus responds to the temptation by saving God’s name.

4.3.3 The third temptation: the power of order

In the third temptation Jesus is taken to a high mountain where he could see all the kingdoms of the world and be tempted to worship the name of the tempter and thereby gain power over all these kingdoms. To this temptation Jesus responds that one should worship and serve God alone (Matthew 4:8-10).

To worship the name of the tempter could mean to worship the name and give to the name more power than it is due. If one gives a name more power than it is due (in other words, allows the name to be the transcendental signified, or just the signified without any trace left) then one indeed has power to rule over kingdoms. Then one indeed has control and can create order by systemising everything according to this accessible transcendental signified without any différance.

Yet theopoetics argues that there is no order, but always complexity as there is always a difference and a deferment and thus, although one can at times identify order, there is
always also that which interrupts and disrupts and destabilizes the order (the coming of the other). Miller (2010:18) compares this with the complexity theory where there is both the order, and even complex order like the constitution of a snowflake, and then that which absolutely defies order, namely chaos, and these need to be thought together in complexity theory. Order, the same, is not absolute as it is always interrupted by alterity; there is always différance as everything is inscribed in text or context. Any order that one might wish to worship is always transcended by alterity and thus opens the order for the event of the other – the immemorial past never present and future always still to come. Poetic thought does not seek to impose order and create imperium, but plays in that liminal space between order and chaos of the event of the other – that which disrupts and questions order. It plays in the Zeit-Spiel-Raum of order in the hope and in the constant prayer to and for the other and thereby offering hospitality and justice to the Other. Therefore Jesus responds and says that one must worship the Lord your God alone. Worship God alone, this absolute desertification of language, this quasi-transcendental, who is a jealous God and does not allow for other gods, nor idolatry (Exodus 20:3-4).

4.3.4 Last temptation: Final judgment
Miller (2010:18) refers to enjambment, which is the breaking of a syntactic unit by the end of the line or between verses, thus creating an expectant openness to each line and leaving the line or the poem open without ending. There is no end – it is open ended and thus it is expecting the coming of the other, what Derrida describes as a messianism without messiah, a messianism without fulfilment. Theologically one could speak of deferred eschatology which creates the time that remains, which is a time of grace where judgment and finality are deferred. It keeps the door open offering a welcome to the Other. An openness, Offen-barkeit, to what is to come without author, meaning, order or finality, thus radically open for that which is to come.

4.4 Theopoetics between Theopoetry and Theopolitics and an exemplary narrative

In the above it seems that one can read the text on différance as an allegory or re-writing of certain biblical texts and the other way around. How is this possible? How is it

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224 John Schad (1993:1) argues that God and speech (one could say God and writing, taking Derrida’ arguments into consideration as set out in the previous chapter) share the same impossible beginning and therefore are always already identical, or coextensive. He argues that this becomes apparent in the Johannine Prologue, which he refers to as the Johannine heresy: that God who is Word becomes flesh (text or context). Michael Edwards reminds one that in Greek the same word is used to describe speech and Christ (Edwards 1990:179). Robert Scharleman (1982:102) argues that
possible to read for example the Prologue of John, or the temptations of Christ as an example of poststructuralism as Schad (1993:2) argues, or as différance? John Schad (1993:2) argues that each discourse can be read as an allegory or a re-writing of the other and it is possible because they are intertexts and one cannot read the one without the other. It is as Derrida argued, mentioned above in a footnote from a footnote in Derrida's text (Derrida 1995a:142-143 n14), when one no longer knows what is an example of what then literature has begun as literature has always already begun. Would that mean that such translatability would both be possible and impossible with any text? That question is beyond the scope of this study, but what makes such mutual interpretation both possible and impossible is that the grammar of différance and the trace is best described in the grammar of faith, promise, hope and thus prayer, and these Biblical texts have as their content narratives concerning faith, promise, hope and prayer and therefore they can function as exemplary texts of différance. These texts’ (Jewish-Christian Scriptures) “truth” is not their metaphysical or onto-theological reference, but the “truth” of language just as the poetic speaking of language was for Heidegger the purest (truest) form of language. For Derrida it is prayer that is the speaking of language. Thus one can say that prayer, faith, promise and hope is the speaking of language. The “truth” of these Scriptural texts therefore does not lie in their reference, but in their narratives concerning faith, promise, hope and prayer which is the grammar of writing and therefore they become exemplary texts of language and exemplary texts of texts and of contexts. As exemplary texts they are necessary for the understanding and interpreting and opening of contexts – the reality of the world.

Thus many biblical texts can function as exemplary texts to understand and interpret différance and différance is found to be very useful with regards to interpreting several biblical texts. Jüngel (1989:32) argued that what makes religious texts exemplary is that they take into account what is other, and by employing metaphor to express what is other

“God is what language means and language is what God means”. Wright argues that for Christianity it is crucial that language does indeed point to a “real” referent (Wright 1988:32). In other words, Christians would want to believe that the words “God” and “Christ” refer to something onto-theologically “real” and that they do not just refer to speech, writing, or archi-writing and that God refers to something “real” rather than the desertification of language. The study respects that belief. Yet it proposes a way of speaking of God and Christ that remains true to the texts (Scripture), but also true to the grammar of writing (différance) and thus seeks a postmetaphysical (post-onto-theological) way of speaking of God.

225 I say possible and impossible because translation is always possible and simultaneously impossible because of difference as there never can be a perfect translation, just as there can never be reference without difference.

226 It is beyond the scope of this particular study to investigate possible conversations with other texts such as other religious texts or literary texts.

227 In the previous chapter 4.3.2 Christian it was discussed that to speak of khôra is a kind-of-prayer (Derrida 2008:175).

228 John Schad (1993) wrote an article, “Hostage of the Word”: Poststructuralism’s Gospel Intertext, in which he argues that the heresy of the Johannine Prologue is that God and speech share the same impossible beginning and therefore are always already identical, or coextensive (1993:1).
these metaphoric texts challenge the way the world is. They challenge the world as it is as the ultimate reference by proposing the (im)possibility of what is other which is only accessible through faith. These texts are about the other, faith in the other, the promise of the other and the hope in the coming of the other. Thus these Biblical stories often use metaphors to express this otherness. Différance and the trace are impassioned by the other and the knowledge that all there is, is metaphor. Ricoeur\(^{229}\) (1978:237) echoes these thoughts of Jüngel and the exemplary character of Sacred Texts (specifically Christian and Jewish texts). It is thus not about the truthfulness of the reference of these Biblical Texts, but about their exemplariness with regards to being texts about faith, promise and hope in the messiah, and as such they express something of the grammar of différance and the trace and in that sense they help reveal “truths” about the grammar of texts and contexts and therefore the grammar of the world which is, but a context\(^{230}\). 

Within New Testament scholarship there was a time that called for the demythologisation\(^{231}\) of biblical texts to discover the historical Jesus. Maybe the time has come to re-mythologise these texts in the sense of appreciating the metaphoricalness of all there is and the exemplariness of these texts in understanding and interpreting the metaphoricalness of all there is, and thus not to discover the historical Jesus, but maybe the historicalness of Jesus the Christ – the history that is opened in the time that remains between the Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection and the expectation of the return. This narrative can be used as an exemplary narrative, not to prove the truth of a historical Jesus, but to understand and interpret, deconstruct the texts of the world (context), by using the Christ narrative to read and re-read the texts of all that is and in that sense discover the “truth” of these narratives, irrespective of their reference to which no one has access, but “truthful” in the sense of useful interpretation (deconstruction) of reality (context), because of their grammar of faith, prayer, promise and messiah to come.

Is the Christ narrative (beautifully captured in the Carmen Christi, Philippians 2, taking up the salient aspects of Christ’s story) maybe exemplary of the story of language and thus the story of the world (context) or text in general as discussed in this study\(^{232}\)? It begins

\(^{229}\) The various genres found in the Bible (wisdom, prophecy, hymn, parable, as well as eschatological sayings) one is encountered by a call. A call that enters into the heart of existence, that is into the imagination of the possible (poeisis of the possible), and this call is revealed through Scripture as the “grace of imagination” of new possibilities, unknown possibilities in the gifts of freedom, hope and redemption through the imagination of the impossible.

\(^{230}\) This was discussed in Chapter 4, under the heading “2.4 Le texte en général and autodeconstruction”. For further reading, see Derrida 1988a:148f.

\(^{231}\) On Demythologization, see Rudolf Bultmann 1958, Jesus Christ and Mythology, Scribner, New York.

\(^{232}\) John Schad (1993), as already discussed above, interprets the Johannine Prologue in this light. Charles Winquist argues something similar when he says that “The death of God…… is the birth of the Word” (Schad 1983:2). Schad
with the incarnation of the God, the Logos, who becomes flesh — in other words, God pitches God’s tent in human history. God the transcendent becomes immanent in the context of human history. The Word (transcendental signified) becomes words, texts, writing, différance as it enters human history and thus it becomes vulnerable. The Word becomes flesh so there is no outside text anymore, only a trace of the Other (Father), of an immemorial past never present and a future always still to come.

This incarnate Word (this inscription of writing) becomes vulnerable like a baby in a crib. It becomes vulnerable to the wounding of différance, the wounding of the other. The incarnate word is opened (wounded, vulnerable) to the tout autre, which is every other. Yet it is particularly vulnerable to the big other (the powers that be), the imperial forces that seek to be or represent the Transcendent as the transcendental signified. However, the big other is conscious of the fact that it does not have perfect access to the transcendent and that it is not the ultimate presentation or representation of the transcendent and therefore knows that its power is only as temporary as the myth survives.

These forces of the various big others hear of the Word made flesh and they are threatened. Threatened in a dual sense, as firstly they are threatened by the idea of a possible other’s attempt at being the transcendental signified (big other) that might be more powerful than they and thus they need to destroy this potential before it rises to power, or the second possibility is that if it truly is the transcendental signified (the Word) that has become flesh, become context and text as is inscribed, that would mean that all power will be threatened as all power rests on a foundational myth that has forgotten that it is a myth and that there is no “true” legitimization of power on the basis of a transcendental signifier (truth), as there is no transcendental signifier but only a quasi-transcendental that deconstructs.

How right these imperial forces were with regard to this incarnate word that had entered their context (history) and thus had fatally wounded their power and authority. This inscription (archi-inscription – incarnation of the Word) had fatally wounded any claims to

continues and argues that the Johannine incarnation and the postmodern or poststructuralist situation might be described, it seems, in one and the same way (Schad 1993:2).

233 “…that Christ, as the Word, does not so much put himself beyond language but rather that he endures all its frailties. Indeed, this very life and ministry – characterized as they are by discontinuities, displacements, and misinterpretations – parallels closely the fate, or itinerary, of the Derridean sign” (Schad 1993:4).

234 See Derrida’s discussion on Walter Benjamin’s Critique of Violence in Derrida, J 2002e. Force of Law: The “Mystical Foundation of Authority”.

235 Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. follows a similar path in his book Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul, where he argues that what was exposed was the “unfounded foundation of the law and thus renders it deconstructable” (Jennings 2006:61)
power based on metaphysics: a single cause our ground. The incarnate Word began his ministry in the context of Palestine, the context of imperial forces (Roman universal imperialism and Pharisaic particular imperialism). His ministry (activity) challenged and deconstructed these systems of power and control and thus the animosity grew between the powers that be and Jesus (the incarnate Word – the inscribed text)\textsuperscript{236}. The only solution for these powers that be was to destroy this inscription that challenged or deconstructed their power. Jesus (the inscribed/incarnated Word – archi-writing) fundamentally questioned their power as he reinscribed the myths of their power. Thus he fundamentally challenged the metaphysics of their thinking and their system and therefore he was crucified as the greatest criminal\textsuperscript{237} by the imperial forces of that time.\textsuperscript{238}

The ministry of Jesus which fundamentally challenged the context inscribed in the myth of Pharisaic law and Roman law can be summarised with the following key ideas:

i. He revealed love, a radical kind of love that loves the other to the point of dying for the other, which includes dying for the enemy\textsuperscript{239}. This kind of love can be interpreted as a radical form of hospitality, of taking the other as other seriously without reducing the other to the same by offering the other welcome within the same to the point of allowing the other to take the host hostage\textsuperscript{240}

ii. He brought justice, interpreted as creating space and place for the other. Jesus created space specifically for the other: the foreigner (Samaritan women\textsuperscript{241} and centurion\textsuperscript{242}), children (who were perceived as non-persons or property within the Mediterranean world), the outcasts (lepers) crippled and sick. In the parables this idea of opening the space that was previously exclusively for the clean and accepted is spelled out.\textsuperscript{243} The “others” are invited because the same (the acceptable, the normative) had too many other commitments. In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus fully identifies with the other making offering hospitality to the other the entry into the kingdom.

\textsuperscript{236} John Caputo (2007) has written a book with the title: \textit{What would Jesus deconstruct?}, where he brings the ideas of deconstruction and différance into dialogue with the ministry of Jesus and per implication the ministry of the church.

\textsuperscript{237} See Derrida’s discussion on Walter Benjamin’s discussion on the ultimate criminal, in Derrida 2002e.

\textsuperscript{238} See 1 Corinthians 2:8, where Paul makes it clear that the agents of the crucifixion were the rulers of this age.

\textsuperscript{239} “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, to lay downs one's life for his friends” (John 15:12-13). “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you,...” (Matthew 5:44).

\textsuperscript{240} See Derrida’s discussion on hospitality (Derrida 2000).

\textsuperscript{241} John 4:1-42

\textsuperscript{242} Matthew 8:5-11

\textsuperscript{243} For example Luke 14:16-24
iii. He revealed grace that breaks open the vicious cycles of captivity that people find themselves in and thus makes the impossible possible; that which the law defines as impossible, grace makes possible, and thus grace makes justice possible.

iv. He inspired hope in the kingdom to come that has already broken into (inscribed into) the context: a kingdom of faith, grace and justice.

These ideas that describe something of Jesus’ ministry can also all refer to différance and thus one could translate this ministry into a ministry of différance that deconstructed the powers.

What makes this possible – this semi-translation of the story of Christ into the story of différance? It is because différance, and more specifically deconstruction as an effect of différance, is impassioned by the messianic (the other still to come) and thus the messianic story fits, the difference being the Christian belief that the messiah did come and différance holding onto the fact that the messiah is always still to come?

The messiah came and showed the way of différance (John 14:6). Jesus says I am the way, the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father (other), but through me. Nobody comes to the other, but through the inscription of the word/text that is the incarnation of the Word. Nobody comes to the Other but by the way of love, grace, justice, faith, etcetera, which are the ways of différance. And this is the “truth”, not an ontological or onto-theological truth, but a grammatical necessity which is true for all texts and contexts and thus a truth about life.

Schad’s interpretation of Derrida deviates slightly from the interpretation offered here. He argues that there is a difference between deconstruction and the Golgotha event (Schad 1993:10ff). His argument is that deconstruction cannot fully talk of the death of God as the play of the sign is never completely arrested one way or the other, but it remains open to the play and thus there is no ground for absolute non-signification (Schad 1993:10). The Gospels, on the other hand, proclaim the death of Christ and thus there is a ground of

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244 The parables of the lost coin, lost sheep, lost son (Luke 15:1-30) together with the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) all tell the story of the radical impossibility (illogicality) of grace.

245 In Specters of Marx, Derrida argues “Once one has recognized the force and necessity of thinking justice on the basis of the gift” (1994:27). Jennings (2006:78ff) explores the connection between justice and grace in Derrida’s thought, but in the light of Saint Paul’s theology.

246 As Eric Ives argues, deconstruction is not a bad master, but a necessary servant for Christianity (Ives 1972:65), or as Schad argues, deconstruction is the fate of Christianity (Schad 1993:7).
non-signification in the utter forsakenness of Christ on the cross\textsuperscript{247} (absolute loss of all meaning). This is echoed in the Carmen Christi (Philippians 2) where the Word makes himself nothing, obedient to the point of death.

In this sense, according to Schad, the Christ narrative is more radical than deconstruction, as it denies ultimately the possibility of meaning: the cross as the ground for non-signification without the simultaneous possibility thereof. In the previous chapter it was discussed that the supplement (pharmakon) is always both remedy and poison or absence and presence or death and life. In Schad’s interpretation of the cross the cross is not both but only absence without the possibility of presence: Christ (God) is dead!

Christ (the Word) crucified thus becomes the ground of non-signification. Schad argues that although deconstruction would agree with this negative side (loss of meaning) and the impossibility of meaning, it always and already thinks the resurrection and the possibility of meaning, and thus there is always the play between possibility and impossibility. In the Christ narrative the resurrection is three days away from the crucifixion and thus they cannot be thought together. Deconstruction thinks impossibility and possibility at the same time and therein lies the difference for Schad between the Christ narrative and deconstruction. Schad therefore argues that deconstruction is like a resurrection without a crucifixion (Schad 1993:12). He argues that deconstruction has as only certainty the certainty of uncertainty and this uncertainty (play) functions as a quasi-transcendental (différance works on the basis of undecidability and uncertainty and the certainty of uncertainty. He then goes on to argue that the cross (death of God) is not the certainty of uncertainty, but the certainty of certainty, which even in the language of deconstruction always means death because the certainty of certainty is the end of play. Such death would be too final for deconstruction and thus deconstruction (différance) would re-inscribe such finality into the play of differences and deferment. This is why Schad argues that the cross is a certainty, not the certainty of uncertainty, but the certainty of certainty: death. Thus the cross is more radically negative than deconstruction and therefore more radically deconstructive than deconstruction as the absolute loss of meaning is final. This death is the certainty of certainty and thus for Schad there is a single sense that can then be translated into creeds, taking sides, accepting authority, naming my sin (Schad 1993:13). Yet Schad cannot deny that the Christian narrative continues with the resurrection, although only within three days, and thus the rebirth of meaning.

\textsuperscript{247} See Matthew 27:46.
An alternative route to Schad’s will be followed by not linking the grammar of deconstruction to the cross, but to the incarnation: the becoming flesh (writing) of the Word. It is in the incarnation that there develops the certainty of uncertainty of writing (inscription): the becoming flesh of the Word – archi-writing. With regards to the cross a different interpretation will be offered.

Not the sign (the incarnate Word) is crucified, but the messiah. Christ is not crucified because of being the incarnate word (writing/différance), but he is crucified because of the disruption and deconstruction this writing causes in the text or context and thereby challenges the powers that be. The Word incarnate, as argued above, translates into speech, signs, the inscription, archi-writing (flesh) and consequently the undecidability of the play of différance. This play of différance deconstructed the powers that be and it was because of this ultimate criminality (deconstruction) that Jesus was crucified as he challenged the metaphysical foundations of the authority of the powers that be by revealing them to be powerless inscriptions and thus re-inscribing them into the play of undecidability.

The powers that be responded to this deconstruction, seeking to arrest this undecidebility, trying to arrest the certainty of uncertainty that questioned their certainties. It is this grammar that they sought to arrest and destroy so that they could return to their certainties. It is the way, the truth and the life, which is the grammar of all that is with nothing beyond (text and context), that they hoped to destroy by crucifying Christ.

The Messiah (messianic way) was crucified, this way, life and truth was crucified, crossed out, erased. Within the story of the text or in the context, the messiah was crucified by the two powers according to the legal functioning of the Roman and Jewish law, but theologically it is also argued that God (tout autre) crucified him and yet it was God who was crucified (see Moltmann 1974:200-274). Therefore it was the Other (God) who crucified the messiah so as to save the Other (God) and the same. One could argue that the cross is the death of the death of God, which does not translate into the life of God, but maybe the life of God as understood as the endless desertification of language.

Différance, like God, needs saving from becoming the final Word: the certainty of certainty which would indeed be death namely the end of play as Schad argues. If the transcendent

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248 Jennings also argues that the cross is a verdict against the messiah and that the execution of the messiah is exemplary (Jennings 2006:65). He argues this in the context of the law-gospel debate in Paul and that the law has to be deconstructed for justice to be possible. “That the wedge driven between justice and the law is precisely the execution of the messiah is, of course explicitly affirmed in Galatians (2: 21)” (Jennings 2006:64).

249 In reference to John 14:6
(the Word) is incarnate (there is no outside text) and if the Messiah (death of God) rises to power (if différance does indeed become the Messiah, a new transcendental signified) then it would be the end of history, namely death: the certainty of certainty and the absolute reduction of the other to the same of Différance. The world would collapse, as the world that is created (poéisis) in and of diffuse-rence would be without diffuse-rence. Thus the death on the cross of God is not the death of the transcendental signifier as that death already occurred in the incarnation. It is the death of a capitalised Writing or Différance, the death of the Messiah who came: the death of the death of God. Thus the death on the cross is not the certainty of certainty (death) as Schrad argues, but the return of play, and therefore the certainty of uncertainty, the re-inscription of Différance into diffuse-rance so that this play never rises to power. The cross ensures that différance is only ever a weak force250 (weak messiah) who has no power and yet all power comes from him251: a quasi-transcendental and never the Transcendental.

Thus to save both Other and same the Messiah has to be crucified after he has shown (incarnated) the way so that the time-pace (Zeit-Spiel-Raum) in the time that remains can be opened, which is a time of grace in all the senses of that word, “Grace”. It is a time of grace because time has been given: history; secondly it is a time of grace because final judgement (self-present presence) has been postponed, and time of grace (gift) has opened the possible for the impossible (the resurrection of the crucified Christ), the awaiting and expecting of the other who is beyond the norms and laws of the same and who is the death of the final power of the law.

The resurrected Christ, even the ascended Christ to the right hand of the Father, is a wounded Messiah (crucified Messiah) as in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 5:6252). The ascended Christ still bears and will always bear the wounds of the crucifixion. Paul proclaims the crucified Christ, not the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2), and therefore the importance of the Theologia Crucis in Lutheran Theology, where the cross is the only theology253, as an important deconstruction of any attempt at a Theologia Gloriae. Any theology that focuses too much on the glorious resurrection and imperial ascension of Christ runs the risk of being Theologia Gloriae and thus a small step from theopoetry and

251 In reference to Jesus’ response to Pilate: “You have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11).
252 “Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders, a Lamb that seemed to have been slain” (Revelation 4:5 - NKJV)
253 In the Heidelberg Disputation of 1518, Luther describes true theology as Theologia Crucis, and he contrasts this with Theologia Gloriae. He says: „Nicht der heißt mit Recht ein Theologe, der Gottes unsichtbares Wesen ersieht, wenn er es wahrnimmt an seinen Werken. Sondern der, welcher, was von Gott sichtbar ist, seine Rückseite (posterio) durch Leiden und Kreuz ersieht und wahrnimmt“ (Luther 1518:Thesis 19 and 20).
the next step is theopolitics as discussed above. The cross hides God in so far as it is the end of all thinking God (God-talk). It is the end of all Er-Denken Gottes. The cross is also the judgment over all human attempts to attain communion with God. The cross can only be experienced (Er-lebt), or even better, it can only be suffered (Er-Leiden). The cross, according to the rationality (language) of the world, hides God to such an extent that the cross appears as the enemy of the world – the deconstruction of the world. The “no” of the cross is absolute, and only through faith can the “yes” of grace be received in the cross. Theologia Crucis can be interpreted as a kind of theopoetics, but even theopoetics and Theologia Crucis run the risk of becoming theopoetry, and therefore Luther’s plea to always return to the cross, as the cross will crucify and deconstruct any attempt to rise beyond the cross towards a way or the way beyond the utter dependence on grace and faith.

In a sense one can say the Messiah came and did not come, and Christians still await him/her (the second coming) – an important aspect in the story of Christ and différance so that différance does not become a capitalised transcendental signifier, but remains, if anything, a quasi-transcendental. Christ, a quasi-Messiah, who came and is still to come and thus opens the space of history in the time that remains.

How useful is theopoetics with regard to the two challenges set out in the first chapter? The challenge set in Chapter 1 was not to fall into either of the two traps: particularism (and thus relativism) or universalism. Theopoetics, based on différance and the name of God (the endless desertification of language), does indeed help as it is not intended as a localised particular construct (although it is very much a construct of the West), but it speaks the language of a fragile universalism to which every knee will bow and every tongue confess as one would to a quasi-transcendental. As discussed in the previous sections on the temptations it cannot rise to an imperial power (Theologia Gloriae) of world domination as there is always différance and therefore always the trace of the other. Différance crucifies (deconstructs) any attempt to be the final judgment (transcendental signified) and opens the space for the messiah still to come (second coming). The trace of the other who has not been heard, who has no place (Matthew 25:45), and thus any theopoetics that uses the name of God, is haunted by a democracy still to come (hearing the other who has not been heard), by justice still to come (offering the other a place who has no place) and offers hospitality to the unheard, place-less other. In such a context of

254 The idea of a fragile universalism is a combination of thoughts taken from Badiou’s (2003) Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism and Žižek’s (2000) The Fragile Absolute – or why the Christian legacy is worth fighting for?
offering hospitality to the other, of praying for justice and democracy still to come, it is impossible to rise to an imperial power.

The global politics of the last few decades has manifested the danger of theopolitics that arises so easily out of theopoetry. The rise of fundamentalism on all sides, the traditional religious fundamentalism (Islam, Judaism and Christianity), but also empirical-scientific and rationalist fundamentalism, are part of the same sending as Heidegger would probably say, and Žižek (1997) argues that this manifestation of fundamentalism is the logical outworking of global capitalism. Global capitalism is a new universalism or globalism that has forgotten its metaphoricalness – the speaking of language.

In a world faced with so many socio-economic and political challenges there are many who seek to speak a strong word that would offer clear coordinates to steer the world out of the stormy waters. The desire for certain knowledge, the desire for the Other reduced to the same, can falsely be fulfilled and theopoetry becomes absolute knowledge (fundamentalism) and absolute knowledge becomes the imperial politics of an unquestionable language that has forgotten the primary speaking of language – the summons of the other. The natural response to such imperialism is with counter imperialism – to challenge the absolute good (knowledge of the Other) of the one with one’s own good (knowledge of the other) and consequently demonising the other’s good. Is this the answer to the death of God – a battle of the goods [gods]? Is the alternative to the battle of the gods a passive Gelassenheit? Is there an ethical alternative to be found in theopoetics? The ethical alternative is a passive auto-deconstruction combined with an active hope for the unknown/unthought/other still to come. This passive auto-deconstruction as a function of différance brings with it a vulnerable in-conclusivity (continuous auto-deconstruction) and an active expectant openness (Offen-barkeit) which is found in the theopoetics. Theopoetics, which is without author, meaning, order or finality, remains open for the unknown, unthought and impossible other always still to come within the text.

Such a context, the time that remains, is indeed worth saving if such a context is conjured up by the name of God (postmetaphysical God-talk), specifically the Jewish-Christian God-talk. Yet such a tolerant, democratic and just God can rise to certain arrogance, the arrogance of being the correct (best) way, and this arrogance needs to be disturbed, deconstructed by an other, maybe an other that is not so Western and Lutheran: an
Eastern other\textsuperscript{255}, the Byzantine holy fool. Perhaps theopoetics can become a kind of orthodoxy\textsuperscript{256} with regards to postmetaphysical God-talk (the right or the best way to think about God and thus to think about the world) as far as any orthodoxy is possible at the closure of metaphysics, but exactly because it might be a \textit{kind of orthodoxy} it needs to be re-inscribed into différance and opened by the other.

5 THE THIRD OBLIQUE OFFERING: THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITY OF HOLY FOLLY AS A POSSIBLE POSTMETAPHYSICAL GOD-TALK

How does one present holy folly as possible postmetaphysical God-talk, without reducing holy folly to a theme and thereby falling into the trap of reducing otherness to the same that Levinas warned about? The trap is unavoidable as the topic of holy folly is very expansive\textsuperscript{257} and to be able to present it as a possible form of God-talk it has to be captured into a theme that can be presented as a way (method or form) of God-talk. In the attempt to present holy folly as possible God-talk in the light of this study, two paths will be followed.

The first path is to be aware of Levinas' warning and expose how such a theme is constructed by reducing otherness to the same as this reducing would be characteristic of any attempt at identifying the postmetaphysical God-talk. The theme, holy folly, is constructed via reducing otherness by identifying what is common in all these different expressions of holy folly in order to construct a generalised interpretation of holy folly, which can then be presented as an alternative third way to wisdom, knowledge and truth.

\textsuperscript{255} The holy folly that will be focussed on after a general interpretation of holy folly is the early Byzantine holy fools and thus more at "home" in the Eastern Orthodox Christian traditions.

\textsuperscript{256} Orthodoxy taken to mean what the two Greek stems of the word mean, namely orthos which can be translated as "right", "true", "straight" and doxa, which is opinion or belief, but more importantly related to the word dokein which means to think. Thus it could be translated as the right or best way to think. This definition is taken from the Dictionary.com. Online Etymology Dictionary. Douglas Harper, Historian. Dictionary Definition accessed: March 03, 2008, \url{http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/orthodox}

\textsuperscript{257} The paradoxical idea of the wise fool has a long tradition and appears in both religious as well as political realms. Within the religious realm there is the Christian interpretation of fools for Christ sake that comes from Paul (1 Corinthians 1:27-28 and 1 Corinthians 4:10), but also the Holy Fools of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Yet the idea of holy folly is not singular to Christianity as it appears in other religions as well. In the Sufi tradition one finds the majzub and in the Hindu tradition the avadhuta. In Zen Buddhism there is the idea of "holy madness" which is a technique used by the roshi (teacher) as a shock technique to shock the disciple into or induce satori or enlightenment. In the political realm there has been the long tradition of the court jester and in the Western tradition there is much written on the wisdom of folly. The best known is Erasmus' \textit{In Praise of Folly} (Phan 2001:732). Besides religious and political reference to folly and holy folly there is also the role of the fool in literature, particularly in Shakespeare and Dostoevsky. In modernity the foolery stopped as Foucault argues that it was the time of the "great confinement " in which mad people and vagrants were no longer allowed to roam freely, but were confined to asylums or workhouses (Foucault 1965). Phan (2001) believes that Holy Folly can return in the postmodern age.
in contrast to the traditional ways of logos and mythos. This generalised theme can then be presented as the way of God-talk in a postmetaphysical context. Such a third way of interpreting holy folly, Peter Phan (2001) names mōrosophia. He proposes that mōrosophia is the way towards wisdom and knowledge in a postmodern age. Thus mōrosophia is proposed as the way of knowledge and wisdom at the closure of metaphysics. Is Phan’s mōrosophia the way (kind-of-orthodoxy and/or kind-of-orthopraxy) for postmetaphysical God-talk?

This third way will be contrasted by another interpretation of holy folly (the second path) that does not seek to reduce the differences to the same of the third way, but focuses on a very particular interpretation of holy folly, namely the early Byzantine holy fools, known as salos.

The first path, as will be shown, has certain similarities to theopoetics. Mōrosophia and theopoetics seeks a way of thinking through the closure of metaphysics by being poetically logical or logically poetic and this mytho-logic or third way can easily tend towards a kind-of-orthodoxy (or it is at least presented as the best possible thinking about that which one cannot comprehend). If it tends towards a kind-of-orthodoxy it needs to be disturbed as it needs to be re-inscribed into the myth of its (de)construction, thereby robbing it of its assurance and returning it to the folly of uncertainty, perhaps holy uncertainty. It is in uncertainty that the other is saved: save the name of the tout autre and thus safe (at last) is the other without being reduced to a way, a method, or a poetics – if that is possible!

In the previous chapter on Derrida there was also mention of a third genos in the light of the closure of the path of logos and mythos. Khōra was interpreted as a third genos, but not as an alternative to logos and mythos, and thus different from the argument that seeks to present mōrosophia as the third (alternative) way. Derrida, in reading Plato’s Timeaus

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258 Mōrosophia is a neologism that Phan created to describe his third way (Phan 2001:732).
259 The focus of the study is on the early Christian Byzantine holy fools – those who the hagiographers refer to as salos (the Greek term for “fools for Christ sake”). In this choice the study will follow Andrew Thomas (2009) who made certain choices with regard to his focus and these make sense within the light of this study. For example, to choose specifically the early Byzantine holy fools, because they all came from the monastic communities of the desert fathers and mothers (see Thomas 2009:11ff). Thus looking at the early Byzantine holy fools till Symeon the Holy Fool and not including St. Andrew Salos. The reason for St Andrew Salos not being included within Thomas’ study is that he did not come out of a monastery and secondly that the hagiography concerning St. Andrew encourages discipleship, whilst the other hagiographies of the early Byzantine holy fools do not. Their only purpose is to reveal that their subjects are holy fools and not to encourage imitation (Thomas 2009:11). This idea is important as the study will seek to interpret these early Byzantine holy fools as a form of deconstruction of orthopraxis of the desert fathers and mothers and thus if they encouraged discipleship they themselves would be a form of orthopraxis that invites following.
260 I write (de)construction as these ways (mōrosophia and theopoetics) are not only constructions, but they are constructions based on deconstructions and therefore the (de) in brackets.
261 See Chapter 4. Section 4.3.1.2 Khōra
in reference to khōra, sought a third genos for talking about khōra as khōra cannot be described, interpreted or understood within the tradition of logos, nor mythos. The problem was that khōra is both the “mother” and the “receptacle” of both logos and mythos and therefore one cannot use that which is given birth to and received, to describe the “place” in which it is received or that gave birth to it. The third genos that Derrida sought was not a third way between the alternative logos and mythos, but it was the impossibility of a way, because any way to describe khōra would befall the same fate as mythos and logos, as any way would be given birth to by khōra and would be received by khōra, so much so that even the ideas “giving birth” and “receiving” are inadequate to describe khōra, as khōra is passive and does not give or receive anything.

In the past, wisdom has been sought along the path of either logos or mythos, but both these paths have been questioned in postmodernity (Phan 2001:730). In such a postmodern context it is very tempting to present mōrosophia (foolish wisdom) as a possible third way, but that is exactly the problem: that it is presented as a third way (mōrosophia), as a method to get a grip on the other or comprehend the other. Any attempt to seek a possible postmetaphysical God-talk will be confronted with this temptation: to present the possible God-talk as the way of theology or the way of wisdom or truth, etcetera, within a post-metaphysical context.

This last oblique offering will seek to highlight this temptation and that it is a temptation that is impossible to avoid, yet the challenge is to read such presentations of possible themes as this study has taught to read, namely to seek the other within the theme. Thus the challenge is to find within a generalised theme of holy folly, presented as mōrosophia, an other voice whose saying helps circumvent this temptation, but without the saying being grasped into an identifiable said: a way that can be followed.

The moment the possibilities of for example God-talk are defined “upon which” of some characteristics or identifiable theme it becomes the way (kind-of-orthodoxy). Yet such an interpretation of holy folly is only one interpretation, a generalised interpretation that offers a, or even the, way towards wisdom or God-talk. It is an interpretation that thinks holy folly “upon which” (Being) of a third neutral term (a theory or theme of holy folly) and thus reduces the otherness of holy folly to the same by creating a definable nameable entity that makes sense and finds its rightful place within the totality of Western logocentrism.

What this study has revealed is that in any generalised or totalised theory (the reduction of what is other/differences to the same) there is always a trace of an other (another voice: saying) that deconstructs this generalised or totalised theory. Thus within the generalised
theory of holy folly is a voice (saying) that deconstructs the way of holy folly as a theory of wisdom within postmodernity. Yet holy folly is already a marginal voice in the grand narrative of wisdom (logos) and in the grand narrative of myth and thus another marginal voice within the marginal voice of theopoetics or mōrosophia\textsuperscript{262} will be heard with regards to holy folly, which is maybe not a way at all, but if anything a \textit{Feldweg}\textsuperscript{263} or bushtrail of holy folly that is more like khōra and différance, that can never be a name, a method or a way, and God forbid, \textit{the Way}.

There certainly are similarities between mōrosophia, khōra and différance as there are important differences, just as there is a close proximity between différance and negative theology. Therefore the Byzantine holy fools, that can be referred to as salos, will be introduced to make foolish this way of mōrosophia. The Early Byzantine holy fools (salos) will disrupt the kind-of-orthodoxy or kind-of-orthopraxy of theopoetics and mōrosophia.

Mōrosophia as the third way, as \textit{the way}, will be challenged by being re-inscribed into the desert of khōra, the folly of the early Byzantine fools (salos), the deserted desert without the security of \textit{the} third way and the folly of truly being lost in the desertification of language, and thus \textit{perhaps} lost in God and therefore: holy folly.

5.1 Mōrosophia as the third way and alternative to both logos and mythos

Phan’s (2001) interpretation of holy folly is an example of a reduction of difference to the same “upon which” of a neutral term as discussed in the chapter on Levinas. He interprets holy folly, or as he terms it mōrosophia, as a third way that can offer an alternative to logos and mythos that have both been questioned and discarded within postmodernity. Mōrosophia is presented as a particular \textit{way of knowing} (epistemology) that is distinct from logos and mythos (Phan 2001:732) and thus one can speak of a kind-of-orthodoxy, taking the etymological roots of the word “orthodoxy” into consideration (right –thinking).

\textsuperscript{262} Theopoetics and mōrosophia are marginal voices within the dominant discourse of logocentrism.

\textsuperscript{263} Inspired by one of Heidegger’s (1962c) books \textit{Der Feldweg}, but maybe with an African twist and the idea of a bushtrail. A bushtrail is a trail which is not a clearly marked way, but only a trail with traces or tracks of antelope and maybe also tracks (traces) of predators who left their marks on the ground. One follows these traces left in the glimmer of hope of what is (always) to come without certain knowledge: maybe a watering hole, maybe still to find the herd of antelope one was tracking, but never with any certainty. One follows these tracks, this bushtrail, maybe instinctively in the faint immemorial memory of a past that was never present of a hunter who believes it is worth your while to follow traces. Maybe there is intuition and some mysticism in following these trails, but what they can never be is paths and correct paths for that matter. Thus bushtrails (\textit{Feldwege}) are never a way, but only a trace of a way, inspired by hope and an immemorial past.
The only way to propose such a third way is to neutralise what is other (the folly) by reducing/thinking the other “upon which” of a common theme or common features. To establish mōrosophia as the third way it has to be thought “upon which” of identified common features. To get a grip on holy folly, to comprehend holy folly so as to present it as an alternative to logos and mythos, these features need to be identified, just as the unknown creature is scrutinised by the scientist to identify common features (for example 8 legs), and on the basis of these features to name (identify) the creature (for example as spider) and thereby reducing its otherness (unknownness) by including it into a system of thought (epistemology or ontology) where everything has its place. To be able to place holy folly within the grand tradition of Western thought its otherness (folly) has to be reduced to something graspable within this grand tradition. There are two ways in which this otherness can be reduced to the same. Firstly, the otherness is reduced by identifying common features amongst the holy fools so as to establish them as a genos thereby giving them a place in the world of Western ontology. Secondly, to reduce the otherness of folly to some kind of understandable neutral term, for example to reduce its otherness to irony and thereby getting a grip on it and finding a place for it within the greater scheme of Western knowledge systems (epistemology).

In the attempt to present holy folly as the way within postmodernity toward wisdom and knowledge these common “defining” features need to be listed – what do holy fools have in common so as to be presented as a genos (ontology) that show the way of mōrosophia (epistemology). Phan argues that this tradition culminates in Erasmus’ In Praise of Folly and thus quotes from In Praise of Folly will be added to these describing common features.

1. Fools are believed to live a carefree life. This carefree life is possible because of their lack of intelligence. They do not remember the past so as not to be tortured by the memories, failures and faults of the past, nor do they anticipate the future, and thus they do not suffer anxiety concerning the unknown.265

2. Due to their lack of intelligence (or the presumed lack of intelligence as many fools only pretend to be mad) they do not abide by the conventions of society and thus

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264 “No doubt the work that embodies these ideas par excellence is Erasmus’s Encōmion mòrias or Laus stultitiae written in 1509” (Phan 2001:744).

265 Erasmus says it in the following words: “As namely, can there be any one sort of men that enjoy themselves better than those which we call idiots, changelings, fools and naturals? It may perhaps sound harsh, but upon due consideration it will be found abundantly true, that these persons in all circumstances fare best, and live most comfortably; as first they are void of all fear..., they are troubled with no remorse... they are not frightened with any bugbear stories of another world; they startle not at the fancied appearance of ghosts, or apparitions; they are not wracked with the dread of impending mischief....” (Erasmus 2009:116-117).
they have certain licentiousness as they can do as they please\textsuperscript{266}. Yet as they are classified as fools or mad, which makes them position-less within the rational order, their comments and acts are perceived to be “harmless” even if they are spot on and highly critical of the system. Their madness makes them non-threatening as they have no position (status) and therefore they cannot threaten the status quo.

3. This license also functions as a form of ideological iconoclasm as they naturally tend towards social anarchy, but again, as in the above, this anarchy is perceived to be non-threatening to the status quo.

4. Yet they are believed to speak “truth” or “wisdom” and because they do not follow the path of logos or mythos they are believed to receive this truth via revelation, or it is granted to them (Phan 2001:738).

With these common features the holy fools can be identified as a genos. Now the task that remains is to identify in holy folly that which can reduce its otherness to a way of knowing (epistemology) so as to present mōrosophia as a third way to knowledge beyond logos and mythos.

This idea (theme) of holy folly is akin to the traditions of “holy simplicity” of the simple lifestyle (Thomas à Kempis) or “learned ignorance” (Nicholas of Cusa) or “stultitia” (Erasmus of Rotterdam). Taking the above into consideration, mōrosophia is not to be found via logos or mythos, but it is still believed to be a kind of truth, knowledge or wisdom. It is Sophia or sapientia or illumination of the mind which stands in contrast to the dominant view that knowledge is to be found only via the labour of science or the technical expertise of a specialist (Phan 2001:738). And thus it challenges techne and theoria as the ways of knowledge, but without following the traditional path of challenging logos with mythos. Mōrosophia therefore is a marginal voice that deconstructs the dominance of scientific and technical specialist epistemology, but without turning to the narrative truths of mythos.

This marginal voice in its reduction to a theme can be shown to have a long and very reputable history that can be traced from Socrates through to Erasmus. This historical narrative of mōrosophia begins with Socrates who argued that his wisdom is derived from the fact that he is ignorant and he taught by mainly exposing the folly of the wisdom of

\textsuperscript{266} “...truth indeed is seldom palatable to the ears of kings; yet fools have so great a privilege as to have free leave, not only to speak bare truths, but the most bitter ones too; so as the same reproof, which had it come from the mouth of a wise man would have cost him his head being blurted out by a fool, is not only pardoned, but well taken and rewarded” (Erasmus 2009:122).
others. Thus there is a clear link of mōrosophia with ignorance which does not present itself as a grand system (logos or mythos) with all the answers, yet in reducing folly to a theme that can be identified as a red thread running through history one does exactly that which folly seeks to avoid.

From Socrates, the historical narrative of mōrosophia moves to Jesus who was associated with the mad. His own family believed him to be mad and his opponents argued that he was possessed by Beelzebul (Phan 2001:739). The red thread of mōrosophia continues in Saint Paul's writings as he develops the idea of the Cross of Christ being paradigmatic for God's folly, which is foolish wisdom and wise foolishness which is elaborated on by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.

The Pauline idea of Fools for Christ was developed into a spiritual discipline and became an important feature of Christian monasticism (Phan 2001:740). The desert fathers and mothers of the third and fourth century were enthusiastic practitioners of this spiritual discipline and in the next section this will be further explored with regards to the Byzantine holy fools.

Phan's construction of the reputable genealogy of holy folly is amazing and a certain common thread reveals that each of these generations of holy fools had disciples and encouraged discipleship. Socrates did not only have disciples, but there also developed out of his "ignorance" a method (a way) that could be followed by his disciples known as the Socratic method (see Pagen 1987). Jesus called disciples and sent his disciples out into the world as followers of the way later to be known as the church.

Thus mōrosophia is a way that can be pursued as it is presented as a method, a spiritual discipline, or a way that can be followed and therefore a movement with disciples. One of the features of the Byzantine holy fools (salos) is exactly that they did not have followers and rather rejected the idea of discipleship, but that will be explored in more detail later.

5.1.1 Folly as the way to wisdom
What is it that makes mōrosophia, as method, distinct from logos and mythos, and yet it can still be a way that leads to wisdom (Phan 2001:742), and more importantly be a way that can be followed so that others can also be led to wisdom? If it is, as discussed previously, all about illumination or a gift given to a specific person, the question remains: how can the insight gained through the illumination or through the revelation be passed on to others? To answer this, one needs to turn to negative theology (specifically the Cappadocian Fathers, in particular Gregory of Nyssa) and the mystical tradition (specifically Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite) (Phan 2001:742), as they can help in
understanding how a method was developed to attain this union (illumination) with God known as “deification”. This method can then be passed on to others.

Deification is achieved by a process or method of unknowing, by entering into the darkness and being illuminated by the ray of divine darkness (Phan 2001:743). The philosophical and theological foundation of foolish wisdom, mōrosophia, is to be found specifically in two men who were both indebted to the mystical tradition of the “Brothers of the Common Life”, namely Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1380-1471) and Nicholas of Cusa (ca. 1400-1464) (2001:743). Thomas à Kempis is believed to be the author of the influential spiritual book, *Imitatio Christi*, where followers are encouraged to follow (imitate) the fool Christ through holy simplicity. On the way of holy simplicity nothing is more important than self-knowledge and self-contempt. Self-knowledge is to understand human nature and how easily human nature turns knowledge, and particularly knowledge of self, into a form of vainglory, and therefore the importance of self-contempt. Nicholas of Cusa, who wrote *De Docta Ignorantia*, argues for two basic principles, namely: *docta ignorantia* (learned ignorance) and *coincidentia oppositorum* (unification of all oppositions) (Phan 2001:743-744). Mōrosophia is a combination of these ideas of simplicity, ignorance and the unification of all oppositions. If one goes back to the four characteristics highlighted then these characteristics can certainly be explained or interpreted within the context of these three ideas.

This reduction of holy folly to a way (the third way) turns to Erasmus’ great work, *In Praise of Folly*, and argues that it is in this work that these principles are best brought together (2001:744). Erasmus very cleverly created (*poeisis*) this work. It is not a work where the wise (those that know) praise folly as a good way towards knowledge and wisdom, but it is folly itself that praises folly. It is a work on folly (object), but by folly (subject), and thus subject and object are the same. Thus it is folly that praises folly which can be interpreted as foolishness, giving itself a mock praise, and Erasmus argues that such mock praise is better than those who hire poets to write267 lies and shams about their so-called wisdom and greatness.

267 “And yet farther, I may safely urge, that all this is no more than the same with what is done by several seemingly great and wise men, who with a new-fashioned modesty employ some paltry orator or scribbling poet, who they bribe to flatter them with some high-flown character, that shall consist of mere lies and shams; and yet the persons thus extolled shall bristle up, and peacock-like, bespread their plumes, while the impudent parasite magnifies the poor wretch to the skies, and proposes him as a complete pattern of all virtues, from each of which he is yet as far distant as heaven itself from hell: what is all this in the mean while, but the tricking up a daw in stolen feath, and the drawing on a pigmy's frock over the shoulders of a giant” (Erasmus 2009:36).
The mock praise of foolishness by folly is in turn a praise of wisdom and therefore one can conclude that the way to wisdom is foolishness mockingly praising itself (Phan 2001:745). “Thus, folly is necessary to reach wisdom, and to be human is to play the fool, to be wise is to acknowledge this truth” (Phan 2001:745). Foolish wisdom brings about the unification of all oppositions (coincidentia oppositorum) if it is rooted in docta ignorantia and it flourishes only in the context of paradox and irony. The specific use of paradox and irony in In Praise of Folly and in other examples of holy folly make it a way to wisdom in the postmodern world (Phan 2001:746).

Folly is clearly identified as a way that can be followed and it is encouraged to be followed because it is the “correct” or even the only way (orthodoxy) acceptable in postmodernity.

5.1.2 Mōrosophia as the way in postmodernity at the closure of metaphysics
To strengthen his argument that mōrosophia is the best way to wisdom in postmodernity, Phan explores the use of paradox, irony and adds to that the use of fantasy (Phan 2001:747). The reason offered is that specifically irony and fantasy create room for the other and this is an important theme within postmodernity. The heart of irony is the other (Phan 2001:748) and likewise fantasy creates (poeisis) an other world ex-nihilo, thereby deconstructing (questioning) the world that is. By reducing holy folly to these themes, exactly what Levinas criticised happens: the other is reduced to the same by being thought “upon which” of a neutral third term, in this case irony.

The idea of mōrosophia does not seem to be that far removed from theopoetics, although mōrosophia, more than theopoetics, spells out a very particular way and proposes itself as a method with a specific goal (wisdom in the postmodern world). Theopoetics does not have such high aspirations, nor does it have a particular telos in sight, nor does theopoetics reduce meaning and knowledge to a single method. Phan’s mōrosophia, although offering itself as a way to speak and think within postmodernity, believes itself to have found the way to speak and think about that which is beyond and thus needs to be re-inscribed into the text. Perhaps the Byzantine holy fools can help with that reinscription.

5.2 Byzantine Holy Fools and Erasmus’ In Praise of Folly
In this section it will be argued that the first Byzantine holy fools questioned the orthos of any orthodoxy or orthopraxy. They mocked the idea that there is a correct way as any correct way would lead to vainglory. Thus they mocked any attempt at a correct way as
being foolish. This crazy, mocking, dissimulating language, which is actually a non-language, of the early Byzantine holy fools is maybe or perhaps the closest one can get to postmetaphysical God-talk that seeks to avoid speaking without keeping silent about that which one cannot speak about. If one is obliged to speak, and at the same time avoid speaking, then the salos’ holy folly (salos are fools for Christ) might be a good oblique offering on speaking and avoiding to speak, but without becoming a method of how to do that, which would entice a following and discipleship.

Holy folly of the Byzantine holy fools will thus be interpreted as a deconstruction, not of logos and mythos by being a third way to wisdom that can be followed as mōrosophia was presented in the previous section, but rather as a deconstruction (mockery) of any possible way that presents itself as either the correct way of living (orthopraxy) or the correct way of thinking (orthodoxy).

Erasmus’ *In Praise of Folly*, although far removed in time and place from the Byzantine holy fools, will be brought into conversation with the Byzantine holy fools, but not as Phan argues as the pinnacle of the way of mōrosophia, but rather sharing certain similarities with the early Byzantine holy fools. Coetzee’s interpretation of *In Praise of Folly* does not agree with Phan’s, as he argues that in *In Praise of Folly* the irony is too complex and therefore to attribute irony to Moria, as Phan does\(^{268}\), would be to betray her\(^{269}\). To reduce moria to irony would be to betray her otherness and it would enclose her into a totality.

The first Byzantine holy fools’ context is very interesting for the theme of this study\(^{270}\). They emerged out of the monastic movements of the desert fathers and mothers of the Egyptian, Syrian and Palestine deserts (the anchorites and coenobites), questioning their way (their kind-of-orthopraxis), which was in turn a questioning of the way (both praxis and theology) of the church of late antiquity and early Middle Ages.\(^{271}\) The desert fathers and mothers could no longer go along with the way of the church in the city. The social order of Christendom in late antiquity was a theological order (Thomas 2009:18). This social order was derived from God-talk (theology) as God-talk takes place within a specific

\(^{268}\) *“The Praise of Folly, as has been noted, is an ironic encomium to folly praising true wisdom, the wisdom of the fool”* (Phan 2001:747).

\(^{269}\) *“To call her o eiron, the dissembler, is to put her back in the position of the subject supposed to know, the position she (foolishly) claims not to occupy. To put the point in another way: to attribute irony to her is to attribute the big phallus to her in the face of her claim to be the god/dess of the little phallus”* (Coetzee 1992:12).

\(^{270}\) It is interesting as the Byzantine holy fools emerged out of the desert fathers and mothers and thus they emerged out of negative theology and this brings the holy fools into close proximity with différance and its haunting of negative theology as discussed in the previous chapter.

\(^{271}\) The early Byzantine holy fools appear against the backdrop of challenging the holiness of ascetic norm-making activity of the desert fathers and mothers. The holy fools continue this program of denying the institutions and practices that support knowledge by questioning the knowledge of both the religious and secular realms” (Thomas 2009:18).
context of established norms, values and meaning. Within this context goodness is attributed to God, and this in turn allows for the ordering of society into hierarchies of goodness and godliness (holiness). The social order that is ordered in accordance with these hierarchies of goodness and godliness is exemplified in the city. The first monastic movements had theological questions concerning a theology that functioned as the foundation of social order and thus by questioning the theology they also questioned the social order and the way of life within the city. They questioned the hierarchies of godliness and holiness. They questioned a theology that attributes goodness to God and thus interprets God as the primary signifier that orders the rest of the world into hierarchies of goodness and godliness (holiness).

The alternative to such a theology was emerging, namely negative theology, which challenged the simple correlation of goodness and God and proposed that one cannot know God, and turned toward mysticism. This turn toward negative theology, mysticism and simplicity no longer had a place within the social order of the city and thus they fled to the desert to seek new ways of putting into practice their negative theology. Mōrosophia as the third way, as argued above, is also connected with negative theology, but it was the desert fathers and mothers who turned to negative theology and more specifically turned to an ascetic way of life that could give expression to negative theology. The desert fathers’ and mothers’ asceticism was a mockery of the holiness (godliness) of the church in the city as they retreated into the desert to live a simple lifestyle. This connection not only to negative theology, but also the simple lifestyle (the “holy simplicity” of Thomas à Kempis), was also mentioned above. Some of the desert fathers and mothers fit the description of holy fools (given above) as they tried to live negative theology. In summary one can say that the flight into the desert of the first Christian anchorites and coenobites was an attempt to transform the experience and theology of holiness in church and society by transgressing and challenging (deconstructing) the rules and thoughts of the city in a practical outworking (orthopraxis) of negative theology (orthodoxy) (Thomas 2009:2).

The early desert fathers and mothers went into the desert (Egypt, Palestine and Syria) to seek a life (a way) of holiness that was different from the life of holiness (godliness) that was possible within the institutional church and within the context of late antiquity and early Middle Ages in the Eastern reaches of the Holy Roman Empire.
The challenge that one is confronted with is that some of the desert fathers and mothers within the broad tradition of negative theology did truly foolish things and would be described as holy fools. The radical obedience and asceticism that was the way of life that developed out of negative theology was already foolish in the eyes of the city and yet it was soon interpreted as holy folly and numerous people came to the desert fathers and mothers to become their disciples. The holy folly of the desert fathers and mothers, like Phan’s mōrosophia, became an alternative way that gathered momentum as more and more disciples came to the desert to follow this way of asceticism.

Out of this monastic tradition emerged individuals that are particularly referred to as salos (Fools for Christ) by their hagiographers. If the desert fathers and mothers already opted for an ascetic way of life that can be described as holy folly, a third way, mōrosophia, what then makes these individuals who emerged out of the monastic tradition fools for Christ (salos) to such an extent that they are “more” foolish than the crazy obedience and asceticism of the desert fathers and mothers, so that they are referred to as Fools for Christ in contrast to the fathers and mothers of the desert monasteries? The desert fathers and mothers already did mad (foolish) things and thus it is difficult to distinguish the holy folly of the salos from the folly of the desert fathers and mothers.

The holy fools claimed and exposed the madness (folly) of the desert fathers and mothers as a form of vainglory (kind-of-orthopraxis) and the only way they could deconstruct that was to pretend madness by deconstructing anything that ever tried to rise up to be the signified, thus often doing things against the law, taking on guilt for things they did not do, physically and verbally abusing people who sought their counsel and all this so that they would not be lifted high as the new answer (wisdom) or new truth or the way. Their spiritual devotion was purely secret and any public activity was designed to keep the secret secret.

From the above it is clear that within this tradition that has emerged as an alternative to the God-talk of the city – a God-talk that denies both mythos and logos as ways to speak of God, but prefers to not speak of God (negative theology) – emerges something other which is neither the city nor the monastery. It is this other that will be the “subject” matter of this section. This other is referred to by the hagiographers as salos.

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272 There are crazy stories of what was expected of disciples within the monasteries so as to learn obedience (Thomas 2009:29), which could certainly be interpreted as holy craziness (folly). Or the story of a Syrian ascetic that lived on the top of a pillar (Thomas 2009:137). Yet this ascetic had a great following as people believed that he had found the way to “true” holiness.

273 I write “subject” in inverted commas as it is beyond definition and thus technically cannot really be a subject matter.
In the previous section four common characteristics of holy folly were identified so as to construct holy folly as a third way, and the first three would probably apply to the salos as well. The only difference would be concerning the last characteristics: the idea that holy fools received divine wisdom or truth and that this truth can be imparted to others. The salos do not propose a wisdom or a truth that can be followed and yet their madness reveals certain unspeakable truths, but only in a very paradoxical and contradictory way. As will be shown later they reveal the “truth” concerning grace and faith, but without making grace and faith the subject matter of their thinking or actions. By the non-sensical babble (foolishness) and deconstruction of various possibilities of God-talk, by mocking and contravening the laws of those systems, they reveal, if anything, the foolishness of all human constructions of truth, godliness, holiness, etcetera and thereby they indirectly reveal an absolute dependence on grace and faith that allows no boasting. In that sense they might reveal a “truth” – the truth of grace and faith.

Thus they, salos, can be identified as holy fools “upon which” of the identified characteristics and yet they need to be distinguished (remain other) from both mōrosophia as well as other holy fools as, for example the yurodive (Holy Fools of the Russian Orthodox Church). What makes their folly different from the folly of the desert fathers and mothers? What makes the holy folly of the Byzantine holy fools different from mōrosophia? If one attempted a final interpretation by identifying the common characteristics of holy folly one would fall into the same trap as described above and construct a theme of holy folly by reducing the otherness to the same. So although the salos probably bear all the marks identified above, there is an important difference. They do not respond to logos or mythos, but they respond to mōrosophia as asceticism by living a radicalised asceticism or an asceticism of asceticism or a desert in the desert, although they often return to the city from which the desert fathers fled. It is interesting that the word khōra refers to the site or countryside surrounding the city. It is as if the salos find themselves in this khōratic site that is neither city nor desert, but maybe one could say the site in which the city and monastery come to be, but which belongs to neither. In other words the salos mock or reveal as foolish both the city and the monastery, thus revealing the impossibility thereof, but also the possibility, but without being or becoming part of either.

Thus one could argue that the holy folly of the salos is a reinscription of mōrosophia, the third way in différance – so much so that like with différance one could say that the holy folly of the salos is more original or prior to mōrosophia. Holy folly of the salos or of Erasmus’ In Praise of Folly cannot be a transcendental signifier of a new way or third way,
but if anything it can only be a quasi-transcendental. Or as Coetzee says at the end of his essay: "Erasmus virtually disarms anyone (like Zweig) who passionately decides to take up the Erasmian cause by elevating him in advance to the status of one who knows. Instead, the power of the text lies in its weakness – its joco-serious abnegation of big-phallus status, its evasive (non)position inside/outside the play – just as its weakness lies in its power to grow, to propagate itself, to beget Erasmians" (Coetzee 1992:16). In a similar way the salos and their hagiographers struggled to prevent discipleship and following.

There are three important characteristics of salos that can be identified

1. They emerge out of the desert fathers
2. They all are called salos
3. They do not have disciples and thus cannot be claimed for a way, method or even a proper name.

These characteristics helped the hagiographers to name certain individuals salos (identify them as salos), but it will be difficult to develop a theme or a way, because what characterised them was that they defied ways, but of course any defining characteristic is an “upon which” something is thought and thus it is a reduction of the Other to the same. Thus one will never completely avoid such a reduction in human desire to get a grip on the other.

The idea of introducing the Byzantine holy fools into this conversation is not to offer a comprehensive analysis of holy folly or to develop a theology of holy folly, but to briefly inscribe holy folly of the salos as a desertion of the desert monasteries and therefore maybe a desert within the desert or a khōratic phenomenon and the absolute desertification of language which has been called God.

The salos leave the monasteries and return to the city, but find a non-place within the city and therefore in the margins (or amongst the marginalised) of the city where they remain in the margins of both (city life as well as monastic life), thereby disturbing both, but without taking position in either or taking any position itself. This reminds one of the story Socrates told in the Timeaus. Socrates argues that he is like the poets, who pretend to have place, but have

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274 Erasmus also did not seek followers nor did he think it possible that one can be a follower of folly as he says toward the end of In Praise of Folly, "I hate a hearer that will carry any thing away with him" (Erasmus 2009:309).

275 In the previous chapter Derrida’s idea of the desertification of language has been named God (Derrida 1995b:55-56).

276 As already mentioned above, Coetzee interprets In Praise of Folly as such a positionless passion or non-position (Coetzee 1992:1).
no place. The salos pretend to be mad (place-less as they have no (rational) position\textsuperscript{277}), to disrupt and thus displace those who have place, with laughter, foolery, mockery and positionless veracity and therefore a non-threatening veracity, but they actually are not mad as it is only a pretence – their foolery is to displace themselves so that they do not become transcendental signifiers to whom disciples flock. Erasmus begins \textit{In Praise of Folly} in a similar way that Plato begins the \textit{Timaeus}, as he lets Folly speak, and like Socrates dissociates himself from the poets by saying he is like them, so also Folly dissociates herself from the Sophists while arguing that she is like them\textsuperscript{278}.

5.2.1 Salos on the margins of the early Christian asceticism of the desert monasteries

As mentioned above the focus is on those individuals who are described as salos by their hagiographers, who emerged out of the context of the monastic orders and who had no followers (no disciples). They were individuals who sought holiness and found that the way of holiness of the desert fathers and mothers is lacking, and yet the desert fathers and mothers turned to the desert because they found the way of holiness that was possible within the context of the city (institutional church within the philosophical context of late antiquity and early Middle Ages) was lacking. The desert fathers and mothers sought an asceticism that was characterised by discipline, disconnection, and self-mastery (Thomas 2009:8). The Byzantine holy fools (salos) felt that the negative theology of the early desert fathers and mothers was an attempt to flee from the institutionalisation of orthodoxy into the desert and to free God from the clutches of the human and hierarchical power structures and the implicit exclusion mechanisms involved in the institutionalisation of orthodoxy. They went into the desert and sought an institutionless life to serve and save God beyond the names (beyond dogma). Yet even negative theology, as practiced in the desert by the desert fathers and mothers, developed within the second and third generations into not so much orthodoxy, but a kind-of-orthopraxis – which was institutionalised within the monastic orders and monastic rules.

\textsuperscript{277} This is the interpretation that J M Coetzee follows in his 1992 article, \textit{Erasmus' Praise of Folly: Rivalry and Madness}, where he argues that Erasmus' \textit{In Praise of Folly} "dramatizes a well-established political position: that of the fool who claims license to criticize all and sundry without reprisal, since his madness defines him as not fully a person and therefore not a political being with political desires and ambitions" (Coetzee 1992:1). Thus he reads \textit{In Praise of Folly} within the context of the rivalry between the Pope and the radical Lutherans where he is often urged to takes sides and by not taking sides was condemned by both. Coetzee acknowledges that \textit{In Praise of Folly} is more than arguing for an uncommitted, mad-but-really-not-mad position over the committed, rivalrous positions" (Coetzee 1992:1) as he argues that it is an "extraordinarily self-ware reflection on the limitations on any project of speaking on behalf of madness" (Coetzee 1992:2).

\textsuperscript{278} "For I am now in a humour to act awhile the sophist, yet not of that sort who undertake the drudgery of tyrannizing over school boys, and teach a more than womanish knack of brawling; but in imitation of those ancient ones, who to avoid the scandalous epithet of wise, preferred this title of sophists; the task of these was to celebrate the worth of gods and heroes" (Erasmus 2009:34-35).
The desert fathers and mothers fled into the desert because the desert was a place of the impossibility of God-talk (Thomas 2009:118). The desert is a place that is different from the city where the social order was grounded on dogmatic God-talk that equates goodness with God and thus creates hierarchies of goodness and godliness. In the desert, where God-talk is impossible, these social orders are impossible, and yet in time this very impossibility becomes a possibility as this practical living of negative theology starts to develop its own norms, values and therefore created a very concrete way of living which in time become standard (normative) for monastic traditions. Thus, as the monastic desert fathers and mothers sought to escape the orthodoxy of the city and tried to live (put into praxis) negative theology, in time their attempt to live negative theology developed into its own form of orthopraxy.

These attempts at another way of life in the desert, as an alternative to the social order of the city, were caught in a dilemma that their “way” to live without having concrete knowledge of God (negative theology) resulted in two possibilities. Either they attribute their way to themselves and thus they fall into the trap of vainglory or they attribute it to God and thus fall into the trap of idolatry, namely defining God according to their way of life and thus naming (defining) God in human terms within human knowledge by reducing the Other to the same. This was a double bind that the desert fathers and mothers could not escape and they tried their best with ever more radical forms of asceticism and denial, for example there is the story of the monk who lived on a pillar in the desert as mentioned above (Thomas 2009:137), thereby denying any form of normativity and yet that denial would become normative. The contradiction was that the more they denied themselves and the more radically ascetic they became the more people believed them to be holy and thus the greater the temptation for vainglory or idolatry.

The holy fools (salos) realised this double bind and thus criticised not only the praxis, but also the philosophy behind this praxis279. They critiqued the possibility of holiness. In _In Praise of Folly_ Erasmus criticizes and exposes the foolishness of every possible way of life that interprets itself as a way of life280 (Erasmus 2009:89-96). The salos questioned

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279 “The holy fools will be portrayed as an internal critique of Christian monasticism understood as philosophical practice” (Thomas 2009:13).
280 “It is Folly – that, in a several dress, governs cities, appoints magistrates, and supports judicatures; and, in short, makes the whole course of man’s life a mere children’s play, and worse than push-pin diversion. The invention of all arts and sciences are likewise owing to the same cause: for what sedentary, thoughtful men would have beat their brains in search of new and unheard-of-mysteries, if not egged on by the bubbling hopes of credit and reputation? They think a little glittering flash of vain-glory is a sufficient reward for all their sweat, and toil, and tedious drudgery” (Erasmus 2009:89). Later on in _In Praise of Folly_, he criticises various ways, for example (and the list is endless):

i. Priests who enslave the Christians to blindness and ignorance (2009:143ff)
ii. Professors of arts and sciences (2009:148f)
this way towards holiness and thus one could argue that the holy folly of the salos questions and deconstructs any practice (way) that is based on a philosophy that seeks to be a or the way. They challenged both the goodness or godliness of the city as well as the holiness of the desert fathers and mothers, as they removed themselves from both city and monastery by mockery, and yet also discipline and obedience, but obedience to a voice from nowhere (Thomas 2009:43). Or as an ascetic move against asceticism (Thomas 2009:40) or a negative theological move against negative theology – in a sense a double negation that does not translate into a Hegelian Aufhebung.

They opted for a non-silent refusal of technologies of knowledge (Thomas 2009:129) – they refused any way (epistemology) towards knowledge, either positive or negative, but tried to embrace the impossibility of knowledge, but without keeping silent. Gilbert Dragon describes the holy fools as radically other because they do not conform to the conditions of language as they cannot be described. They are outside and other which is the realm of madness (Dragon 1990:936). They cannot be described or named, like différance is not a name or as Erasmus says of folly: “Beside, to what purpose is it to lay down a definition for a faint resemblance, and mere shadow of me,...” (Erasmus 2009:38).

The salos questioned and exposed as foolish any practice that is based on what is believed to be right or correct, any orthopraxis that develops from orthodoxy (right thinking). Their argument or their thinking281 (right thinking/orthodoxy) is that as soon as anyone believes to have found the right thinking and thus the right praxis based on that thinking they will be filled with vainglory and thus give themselves the glory rather than God, and this thinking and practice can then be followed by others and become the way. It is for this reason that the salos, according to the hagiographers, did not allow any form of discipleship and even the hagiographic accounts do not encourage discipleship, but are purely intended to reveal the holiness of the subject concerned and do not encourage mimicking the salos at all. What the salos attempted was to keep not only God’s name secret, as in negative theology, but to keep their own thinking, praxis and thus their own “unholy-holiness” secret, and the best way to hide this was to pretend to be mad or to

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281 This reminds one of what Derrida said to Levinas, referred to in the previous chapter, about not being able to escape philosophy as even not to philosophize is still to philosophize. “It was a Greek who said, ‘If one has to philosophize, one has to philosophize; if one does not have to philosophize, one still has to philosophize (to say it and think it). One always has to philosophize” (Derrida 1978b:152).
consciously choose the other, which is the same as to be mad (which is difficult to discern from the pretence of madness), because of the realisation that to truly welcome the other, radical alterity, is madness\(^{282}\) (Levinas 1981:142). To truly offer hospitality to the other, is to be taken hostage by the other (see Derrida 2000) and is therefore the destruction of the norms, laws and boundaries of the same, which is equal to madness. The same can be said concerning the impossible possibility of a gift as it is also such an aporia (Derrida 1992), which will be discussed further down. Such a “way” of pretending or consciously choosing madness, because one is consciously open toward the other and therefore becomes continuously a stranger (one without place, because one has given place to the other), cannot ever be a way because it is the way of aporia – a contradiction.

This holy madness of the salos is not a way because it gives way to the other and thus any construction of the same is transgressed (deconstructed). Therefore the salos transgressed both: the rules, norms and laws of the same of the city as well as the rules, norms and orders of the same of the monastic communities. They exposed these laws and norms of both the city and the alternative monastic community, as foolish, but without presenting an identifiable alternative which they or others could follow as the way. Their unholy-holiness was kept secret and only revealed after their death in the hagiography. Even their bodies did not remain to be transformed into relics and thereby, according to the hagiographers, they remained fools even in death, making foolish the human need and desire for a way that can be followed or mimicked\(^ {283}\). The truth (holiness) of the fool cannot be found in him or herself, but rather in the absence: in what they are not. They do not live, show or reveal a way or a technique of knowledge, most certainly not a third way, but what they show is what they are not. They show that they are not holy by associating with the “unholy” and doing “unholy” things, by transgressing the laws of the city and monastery. In that sense they are holy in their unholiness. There is a similarity with their “unholy-holiness” and the supplement or the pharmakon, but more radically salos are, if anything, traces of what they are not\(^ {284}\). They are lives that refuse to be signs or references of a way, a method, a name, or anything (See Certeau 1979:534). The holy fool is not symbolisable, he or she does not become a referent of something identifiable that

\(^{282}\) As discussed in Chapter 3, section 3. The language of alterity: Transcendence and Infinity towards possibilities of God-talk.

\(^{283}\) Johannes Climacus recounts how saints could be buried as confessors and where the holiest corpses would emit sweet fragrance (Thomas 2009:130 n165). Yet the holy fools like Symeon and Isidora simply disappeared and in Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, the holy fool abba Zosimus’ corpse immediately begins to stink (Thomas 2009:130), thus making any kind of following, worship or the creation of relics impossible.

\(^{284}\) Or as Erasmus says: “Beside, to what purpose is it to lay down a definition for a faint resemblance, and mere shadow of me,...” (Erasmus 2009:38).
can be followed. Therefore De Certeau sees holy folly as practices of the infinite (De Certeau 1979:542).

What motivated them to live this asceticism of asceticism? Their “motivation” can be understood in reference to their “name” salos, which means fools for Christ’s sake. This is in reference to Saint Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:10). The salos radicalised Paul’s theology of seeking to live by faith and grace alone and thereby tried to reduce to nothing any human attempt to contribute to salvation or holiness (thereby not allowing any kind of vainglory or idolatry). Thus the feature that is most common in characterising the holy fools is the reference to St. Paul’s claim to be a fool for Christ’s sake (1 Corinthians 4:10) (Thomas 2009:204). If God chooses what is weak rather than the strong and powerful to confound the world (1 Corinthians 1:27-29) this makes any form of boasting impossible. Boasting is impossible not because of some or other moral or ascetic law (way of life), but it is impossible because of faith (Romans 3:27). The opposite of boasting is humility that refuses to assume that one has achieved something on the basis of some or other law or interpretation of the good and thus believing oneself or others to be closer to godliness or holiness. Humility is the belief that one does not have any godliness or holiness, yet that is impossible because it is an aporia to say: I am humble! If humility is a virtue that should be striven after, the moment one does one is no longer humble, as one can boast about one’s humility. Erasmus also returns to Saint Paul (2009:280ff) and argues from the Pauline perspective for folly, but not as a way to truth and wisdom, but exactly as that which makes foolish any attempt at wisdom. Absolute dependence on faith and grace alone is the only “way” to truly fulfil the first commandments of not making any idol or image or misusing God’s name.

This is the only way to keep God’s name absolutely safe – by abstaining from both orthodoxy and orthopraxy. The salos also kept the name of grace and faith safe. One could argue that they tried to put to practice the idea of living by grace and faith alone and they realised that the only way to do that was to make a mockery of any attempt to do that, because the moment that one thinks one is doing it or once one believes that one has found the way (orthopraxy), one has nullified grace and faith, because now there is something (the way) in place of faith and grace that becomes a crutch or that becomes the way of salvation or the way to holiness. The foolery was intended as a deconstruction of self and of any way that hampered the “pure” working of grace and faith. This is of course impossible, as Derrida has shown that there is no pure gift (Derrida 1992). However, this does not translate into the idea that there is no gift, but only the impossible possibility thereof. The idea of trying to keep the gift pure can only end in madness (cf.
Derrida 1992:47f). Derrida here refers to the economy of the gift – that the moment the gift is recognised as a gift it no longer is a gift, but a form of repayment and thus a transaction. In a similar way one could argue about grace and faith that the moment one responds to grace with appropriate thinking (orthodoxy) or appropriate way of praxis (orthopraxy) one has nullified grace and the way of thinking or praxis replaces grace, as grace becomes a payment (reward) for either orthodoxy or orthopraxy. “This madness has a somewhat monstrous face” (Derrida 1992:47) and it is exactly this monstrous face that is revealed in the salos as they tried to preserve (sauf le nom) or save the name of grace and faith, and in that sense they were identified by their hagiographers as being holy. Their actions and their associations were anything but “holy” in the traditional sense of holiness (for example the asceticism of the desert fathers and mothers or the holiness of the bishops and priests in the city), but rather monstrous. However, it is exactly their monstrosity which made them holy in a paradoxical way, which is not a way.

In this sense they are very different from mōrosophia, as folly itself is not seen as a way to wisdom, to God or to truth, but is used as a way to dissimilate any possible way, which of course is also a way, and their rational behind their “way” is still a form of thinking (not to philosophize is still to philosophize). Yet holy folly of the salos is not a third way between logos and mythos, but is a dissimulation with the only purpose to conceal or hide holiness (God) by deconstructing any human attempt at orthodoxy or orthopraxy, as such knowledge of the right or the good would only lead to vainglory or idolatry. Their folly (madness) is a form of God-talk that is doubly negative as they do not only believe that there is no knowledge of God, they also believe that there is no orthopraxy fitting for negative theology.

In a sense holy foolery is a radicalised negative theology: to save the name, to keep the other other, by mocking or laughing at the same, but mostly mocking oneself and one’s foolish vainglory so that one’s praxis does not become orthopraxis based on orthodoxy. They refused any form of reduction of the other to the same that is the reduction of the other to anything that is identifiable and thus could be the basis for vainglory.

The salos can be described as broken signifiers of God, words, crazy words that dance around the infinite without presuming to understand, contain and define the infinite (Thomas 2009:135). On the contrary, they seek to continually become the stranger, the other who disrupts the same. Salos seek to live différance, to deconstruct what is (the Same) with what is other, by following and obeying the voice of the trace of the always other other. This bushtrail leads nowhere. It only follows a trace of an immemorial past
and a future always still to come, but it deconstructs what is, by challenging the norms, names and identities, and thus it is madness (folly) – the madness of the (w)holy other and therefore maybe perhaps holy folly.

In summary, one can identify four characteristics\textsuperscript{285} of the salos and thereby reduce them to a kind-of-theme as one is obliged to do:

1. A critique of ascetic identities as they refused to be located or identified with any particular practice of the absolute. Thus a denial of any form of absolute knowledge or knowledge of the absolute that can be translated into orthodoxy and subsequently into orthopraxy. There is no ultimate reference as there is always différance; there is always another other who disrupts any claim to finality or absolute knowledge. There is no outside text or transcendental signified that can be translated into either orthodoxy or orthopraxy.

2. Their criticism comes from nowhere, as it cannot come from somewhere as that somewhere would be another form of epistemology. Their criticism is crazy beyond signification or reference, it is not based on some or other transcendental signified, but if anything a quasi-transcendental of the trace. They respond to the voice of the trace which is an immemorial past never present and a future always still to come, disrupting all that is.

3. Secrecy – keeping the secret absolute secret. In the previous chapter it was argued that it is impossible to keep the secret secret. It was also discussed that secrets had the important function of creating hierarchies within institutions as those who are inducted into the secret have more power than those who have no clue of the secret. In their feigned madness the salos deconstructed any construction of holiness by acting unholy and taking upon themselves the blame for unholy actions\textsuperscript{286}. They kept their holiness absolutely secret, because in truth there is no secret, and therefore the impossibility of discipleship as there is no secret to be inducted into. They kept their holiness secret from the community, but they even kept it secret from themselves\textsuperscript{287}, as there is no secret – only writing (différance) and the trace and the madness of being hostage of the other and thus

\textsuperscript{285}In this summary I will be bringing the four characteristics (critique of ascetic identities, critique from nowhere, value of secrecy, opposition to seduction) that Thomas (2009:198-202) identifies into conversation with the rest of the study and the previous chapters, particularly the chapter on Derrida.

\textsuperscript{286} See Thomas 2009:42

\textsuperscript{287} “The secret of the holy fool, however, is absolute. ... The whole point of the fool’s madness is that they cannot tell themselves about their holiness: they embrace “two solitudes, from the interior me and from the town” (Thomas 2009:201).
deconstructing, mocking and laughing at anything that claims that there is no other.

4. They have no followers and there is no way that they can be followed as there is no secret to follow. There is no name or a method just like différence can never be a name or a method. If anything, it is a madness, a folly that autodeconstructs even itself the moment that anyone tries to comprehend it within the same of a name that can be followed.

6 THEOPOETICS (MÖROSOPHIA) AND HOLY FOLLY (SALOS): A DANCE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBILITY

These three oblique offerings are playing with each other, welcoming each other and deconstructing each other, thus forming a dance.

These three offerings enter into a mad poetical dance and maybe a divine dance with and around the infinite other. It is a theopoetical foolish dance (poesis – creative dance) that creates and dissimulates itself as it goes along. A dance between Elijah waiting for God and Der Schrei: a cry of utter forsakenness, mad screaming in the endless desertification of language which is God and thus a Schrei of God to God. Yet this dance, this calling to each other, is not the Ding an sich that can be followed or be a method (the postmetaphysical God-talk) as it is a dance. And like all dances it has an element of eroticism to it, an erotic play (fore-play) in expectation of what is always still to come, and thus is not the thing itself (das Ding an sich). All that is left after this foolish erotic divine dance of and with God is faith (faith in faith alone – sola fide), Christ alone (sola Christus and him crucified – the messiah, but crucified and thus the return of expectation in the always still to come in the time that remains), the text alone as there is no outside text (sola Scriptura), and grace (sola Gratia – the gift of the other, the gift of the trace that

288 In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus calls out: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani” and the people standing at the cross respond “Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, “This Man is calling for Elijah!”” (Matthew 27:46,47, New King James Version).

289 Any outside text, as Luther might say, would lead to the devil and not to God. “Wer einen Gott hat ohne sein Wort, der hat keinen Gott” (Althaus 1983:33). Luther argues that those who seek God not in his concrete revelation (Christ) as testified to in Scripture will not find God, but the devil, in the sense that they will find their own metaphysical and philosophical constructions and seek their salvation in these constructions which would counter the idea of by grace alone. This idea is echoed in the salos and their deconstruction of any construction that could lead to vainglory.
disrupts and opens the laws, norms of the possible (same) for the incoming of the impossible).

7 AT THE CLOSURE OF A STUDY

Three oblique offerings have been offered in this last chapter of a study on a conversation at the closure of metaphysics. Maybe these offerings are of différa and are as such possibilities of postmetaphysical God-talk, but also they are always three offerings within différa and thus the impossibility (limitation) of postmetaphysical God-talk. This last chapter with its copies of copies of paintings and images, its theopoetics as deconstruction of Theologiae Gloriarum and holy folly as a deconstruction of theopoetics was an attempt at (de)constructing something because of différa with différa, but sadly it is and will always be a (de)construction within différa (there is no outside text as one is always within différa) and thus each oblique offering needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. But is salt, that one is called to be, not the healing and salvation?290 Oh, keep silent you fool (in reference to myself who desires the Holy and cannot let go). May God rid me of my desire till only a foolish clown (a mask or pretence or metaphor or writing) is left! But wait, that desire is not mine, it comes from the (W)Holy (Other) who is every other – taut autre.

There is always still an other and thus let an other other speak, or rather let an other pray:

“If it Be Your Will”

If it be your will
That I speak no more
And my voice be still
As it was before
I will speak no more
I shall abide until
I am spoken for
If it be your will

290 In reference to Jesus’ saying in Matthew 5:13.
If it be your will
That a voice be true
From this broken hill
I will sing to you
From this broken hill
All your praise they shall ring
If it be your will
To let me sing
From this broken hill
If it be your will
To let me sing
If it be your will
If there is a choice
Let the rivers fill
Let the hills rejoice
Let your mercy spill
On all these burning hearts in hell
If it be your will
To make us well
And draw us near
And bind us tight
All your children here
In their rags of light
In our rags of light
All dressed to kill
And end this night
If it be your will
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