eCOMMONS

Loyola University Chicago
Loyola eCommons

Theology: Faculty Publications and Other Works

Faculty Publications

The Logic of the 'As If' and the Existence of God: An Inquiry into the Nature of Belief in the Work of Jacques Derrida

Colby Dickinson
Loyola University Chicago, cdickinson1@luc.edu

Author Manuscript
This is a pre-publication author manuscript of the final, published article.

Recommended Citation

The logic of the 'as if' and the (non)existence of God: An inquiry into the nature of belief in the work of Jacques Derrida

Colby Dickinson, KU Leuven

Abstract

The religious thematics at play in the work of Jacques Derrida have often provided an ongoing platform from which to struggle with the entire scope of his work, thus moving the seemingly peripheral discourses on religion within his oeuvre to the center stage. Despite repeated attempts to come to terms both theologically and philosophically with the conditional nature of representations, the problematics of representation are perhaps nowhere more forcefully demonstrated than in the work of Derrida. Indeed, for Derrida, the 'as if', as a regulative principle directly appropriated and modified from its Kantian context, becomes the central lynchpin for understanding, not only Derrida's philosophical system as a whole, but also his numerous seemingly enigmatic references to his 'jewishness', as I intend to demonstrate in what follows. Through an analysis of the function of the 'as if' within the history of thought, from Greek tragedy to the poetry of Wallace Stevens, I hope to show how Derrida can only appropriate his Judaic roots as an act of mourning that seeks to render the lost object as present, 'as if' it were incorporated by the subject for whom this act nevertheless remains an impossibility. As Derrida discerns within the poetry of Paul Celan, bringing a sense of presence/presentness to our experiences, and as a confirmation of the subject which the human being struggles to assert, is the poetic task par excellence. It is seemingly also, if Derrida is to be understood on this point, the only option left to a humanity wherein poetry comes to express what religious formulations can no longer justify.

Keywords: 'as if', representation, poetry, Judaism, mourning

Introduction: Representing images in Greek thought

> *As if, as if, as if the disparate halves*
> *Of things were waiting in a betrothal known*
> *To none…*
> *   …the burning*
> *And breeding and bearing birth of harmony,*
> *The final relation, the marriage of the rest*. (Stevens 1997, 396)

Dwelling on the image, the very essence and form of representation, the American poet Wallace Stevens here contemplates the harmony long sought after as a completion of images. They are images which cannot fade because they are all we have to work with, as he states earlier in the poem; they indeed 'can be no more faded than ourselves'. Yet they can of course be false, a 'stale' desire that strives toward a harmony seemingly forever suspended by the thrice repeated conditional nature of the 'as if' which accompanies it in this poem. Following the stories of

1

Greek mythology, as Stevens here does, it is the marriage of Mars and Venus that brings about the birth of *Harmonia* (in Greek) or *Concord* (in Latin), a marital unity which he invokes directly in his two part poem 'Study of Images'. And this is a title which alone seems to convey the significance of the subject that Stevens is attempting to circumscribe. In this fashion, the perpetual oppositions between war and love, sun and moon, male and female, as between Mars and Venus, are brought to a harmonious *concord*, we might say, one that in fact indicates, for Stevens, the tensions present within the realm of representations or images as a whole. If understood this way, we live always poised to realize a unity that never seems to come, that is truly, as Stevens suggests, 'known to none'. It is always 'as if, as if, as if' it were about to happen, though it never does. And, as Stevens' poem seeks to demonstrate, this is perhaps the great truth which undergirds humanity's quest for constructing images, something deeply sought after in the poetic endeavor to present things as they are ('as such'), though it is more likely to be achievable, we might say, in the conditional nature of the 'as if'. The relationship between these two seemingly conflicting poles (the 'as such' and the 'as if') will in fact come to generate the entirety of what we might call the 'hermeneutical field of representations'.

For its part, Greek mythology, as is typically the case, manages to give symbolic, narrative form to the underlying truths of our need for constructing images or representations. If we follow this genealogy further, of course, we are led to the fact that Harmonia, the daughter of Mars and Venus, later married Cadmus, the legendary founder of Thebes and the figure whom Herodotus credited as having brought the alphabet to Greece. Their union in turn produced a child, Semele, the eventual mother (along with Zeus) of the young god Dionysus. This, at least, is the version of events which Euripides relates in his play *The Bacchae*, a drama centered on the arrival of this new god into the Greek pantheon of deities.

In the course of time, however, the play also comes to center upon King Pentheus, grandson of Cadmus by another daughter. He is, in his essential role within the play, a king who emphatically denies the existence of the young god and forbids any worship of him, considering him to be 'outside' the laws of the city of Thebes. It is, in fact, this series of events, the presentation of a new deity alongside his denial by the ruling sovereign, that is not far removed from the suspended (conditional) nature of harmony which Stevens invokes above. Rather, the 'as if', we might say, comes to dominate Euripides' all-too-brief meditations on the nature of belief as well, something which comes to a head in a scene that highlights the aporias of representation (of dwelling 'within its laws') as they are present within the very nature of belief.

In this particular scene, Cadmus, the father of Semele and the husband of Harmonia, speaks to Pentheus, and attempts to convince him of the apparent necessity for believing

2

Dionysus to be a god. Indeed, the inclusion of a deity into the familial clan would bring great honor to the family and could perhaps even serve to eradicate the social shame they have already incurred. What is of great interest here is the manner in which belief, in a very literal sense, is linked by Cadmus to a state of dwelling within the laws, or *nomoi*, of communal life, whether they be societal or familial. This is so despite the fact that the worship of Dionysus is currently considered outside the laws or prescribed norms of the city. As Euripides renders the lines:

> My son, Tiresias exhorted you well;
> dwell with us, not outside [or 'in the wilderness beyond'] the accustomed ways [*nomoi*, laws].
> For at present your mind has taken wing, and your thought is no thought.
> Even if this is no god, as you assert,
> let him be called one by you—tell a lie in good cause [or 'declare well and falsely'],
> that he is Semele's child, so that it may seem that she bore a god
> and we gain honour for all our family. (Euripides 1979, 53–4)[1]

Semele was the mother of Dionysus by Zeus, as I have already stated, a fact which no one believed and was the source of her dishonor shortly before her sudden death brought on by viewing the radiant fullness of her lover's being. Pentheus, however, is here advised by Cadmus, her father, to accept the god *as if* he were real, false though this act may be, something which even Cadmus acknowledges to be the case. This is yet an act, we are told, that would render him capable of dwelling with, and *within*, the laws of the family. It would be a disingenuous act, to be sure, but all semblance of belief would be maintained and the social standing of the family may in fact increase. Real belief, Cadmus seems to be saying, comes second (if at all) to its cultural representation.

It is intriguing then that law (*nomoi*) should figure so prominently in Euripides' play, at least insofar as Dionysus is deemed to be 'outside' the laws of the polis, just as his female worshippers leapt and danced themselves into a divine frenzy upon the outskirts of the city. In this light, Cadmus' exhortation made to Pentheus to return within the laws (of the clan or family) takes on a new meaning, as the laws of belief in this deity are outside the 'laws' of the polis yet they do adhere to an apparent 'rule' or 'norm' of another community. As Charles Segal (1982, 286) has hinted, perhaps the conflict of laws here is rather indicative of another tension, one of symbolic meaning in general. Seen this way, the conflict of symbols that Euripides confronts, in fact, cannot be entirely held together and causes him to seek new forms of language that attempt to go beyond the familiar structures of language's everyday usage. The play thus confronts the warring poles of the rational (*logos*) and the irrational (*mythos*) for which there was no apparent mediation (272–3). In this sense, Euripides' tragedy, like all tragic art, holds these irresolvable

tensions between, what Segal calls, the 'centrifugal' and 'centripetal' forces it contains, those forces that tend toward chaos and those that tend toward order (340). Hence, tragedy, as the work of art which brings order to our chaotic world, is capable of shaping nature into an intelligible form, but also, it would seem, of shaping our belief in these systems of order that circulate as so many laws in our world.

In short, what Euripides confronts us with in the course of this highly revealing scene is the essential dilemma of faith now given representation, one which has not become less problematic with time. The sought-after images in which we seek to identify ourselves and, in turn, by which we are identified, whatever their social nature, must seemingly be upheld as the very basis for cultural intelligibility, no matter the falsity of their nature. Or so Cadmus' position would have us believe. Some, therefore, like Cadmus who had joined himself to Harmonia, are given over to belief in what may indeed be false so that appearances (equated by Euripides with law, *nomoi*) which give order (*harmony*, *concord*) to society might be maintained. That is, he attempts to make an effort to dwell in semblances 'as if' they were genuine so that the traditional structures of representation might hold. The conditions of intelligibility, it might be said, depend upon such an accord being struck. Some, like Pentheus, however, refuse to cooperate with this patently falsified scheme, becoming in fact the 'unbelievers' who threaten to thwart the workings of the system and are seemingly destroyed by their unwillingness to engage in these fabricated images. In many ways, this is perhaps an expression of the preference to live under another law (the polis' law) and the clash of representations and cultures that we so often encounter in our world. (Pentheus, in fact at play's end, is torn limb from limb by the frenzied female worshippers of Dionysus. A tragic ending for one who was not able to 'see' the necessity of believing in a deity he could not be certain of.) And yet others, like Cadmus' daughter Semele, yearn to glimpse what lies beyond representation entirely, or that which cannot be fully absorbed by a finite creature, to view the absolute overwhelming pureness of an exposed divinity and so perish in full view of what cannot ever be expressed by human beings.

There is genuinely little that has been subsequently added to this lengthiest tale of how history has attempted to grapple with representation. It is only a struggle perhaps best expressed through the conditionality of the 'as if' which both Stevens and Euripides place right before our eyes. In this fashion, it can be seen as a regulative principle that seems to hold a fundamental place in describing the (often unexpressed, or unknown) hopes pinned upon our construction and use of images. It is also, as the history of thought has already witnessed, the lynchpin of belief itself, perhaps best embodied in the problematic surrounding the origin and lineage of a conjecture on belief like Pascal's wager. For Pascal, we would do well to recall, the wager to be

made upon God's existence was, in essence, a bid to create belief simply by weighing the merits of believing in the divine, and then pronouncing this belief as a quasi-certitude grounded upon the conditional 'as if': as if simply believing 'as if' there were a god were enough to guarantee some sort of validity to the claim (Pascal 2008, 152–8). What Pascal repeats, of course without saying so much, is Cadmus' attempt to stay within the *nomoi* of traditional representational limitations. In this light, then, Pascal's wager might perhaps be more convincingly portrayed as itself simply providing verification that there is a crack within the representational logics at work in our world. These are logics, likewise, which even Cadmus would admit are futile in their certain pronouncement that a god (*must* or *should*) exist, though they are logics which have traditionally been filled with the presumed existence of the divine.

Here, we thus enter into the varied historical musings of an otherwise over-labored onto-theology. Traditional proofs for God's existence, from this viewpoint, could thus be seen as little more than attempts to resolve the unresolvable aporias present in human experience. In other words, what Pascal seems to be doing is little more than to suggest the absolute necessity for 'as if' statements themselves, truly in fact saying nothing about the existence or non-existence of an actual divine being. What this analysis points to, instead of guaranteeing the existence of God, is that a fundamental (mis)reading of the nature of the 'as if' has dominated over the history of onto-theological speculation, from the earliest Greek mythologies to the present day. The essential nature of the 'as if', I would assert, rather remains a major unresolved problematic with which neither philosophy nor theology has adequately dealt. In what follows, I hope to demonstrate, however, that a particular Kantian appropriation of the 'as if' (*als ob*)*,* as developed in the work of Jacques Derrida, may in fact hold a key to a contemporary understanding of the necessity of the conditional, formulated in his work most directly as the desire for the poetic 'as such' over and beyond, though in some sense dependent upon, the religious 'as if'.

The philosophical nature of the 'as if'

It would be quite problematic to distinguish the conjectural claims for a divine existence made by both Euripides and Pascal from Kant's positing of the existence of God as based upon a similar 'as if' model of thought. In what has become the historical centerpiece of philosophical reflections upon the nature of the 'as if', Kant's claim that God's existence must be assumed as 'morally necessary' has come to dominate subsequent thoughts upon the nature of belief itself. In his second Critique, God's existence is something we must 'assume', Kant tells us, as it can only

be based on the 'possibility' of the highest good being transformed into a reality (Kant 1996, 241). And, as he states elsewhere,

> One cannot provide objective reality for any theoretical idea, or prove it, except for the idea of freedom, because this is the condition of the moral law, whose reality is an axiom. The reality of the idea of God can only be proved by means of this idea, and hence only with a practical purpose, i.e., to act as though (*als ob*, 'as if') there is a God, and hence only for this purpose. (Kant 2004, 590–1)

In terms of the Kantian 'regulative principle' (in relation, he stresses, to 'all cosmological ideas'), which is most fully developed in the first Critique, there is 'no experience of an absolute boundary' in empirical terms when one considers cosmological questions. Hence, there is 'no experience of a condition as one that is absolutely unconditioned empirically' (Kant 1997, 525). The conditional is all that truly remains, a fact to which later interpreters, such as Derrida (as we shall see), cling fast. This logic, in fact, would encompass the existence of God as well, an idea which could never be validated as a concrete, empirical reality according to him. The unconditional is therefore all that can finally be asserted as indicative of an otherwise inevitable 'regress to infinity' that Kant discerns at work in our general schemes of representation.

In his section of the second Critique 'On the final aim of the natural dialectic of human reason', Kant resolutely maneuvers his analysis of the problematic of universals and the nature of representation as a whole under the auspices of the 'as if' (*als ob*). It is the 'as if' indeed which allows reason to comprehend 'the possibility of things in the world of sense' (609). In so many words, everything in Kant's discernment of universals seems to lie within the realm of the 'as if' (*als ob*), which makes Kant's ethics, as well as any positing of the existence of God, sustainable. In the end, some form of deism is all that philosophy could potentially justify, though even this claim is ultimately without any empirical verification (608). Like Pascal, Kant's determination of God's existence seems rather to point toward the fractured nature of representation itself, something which will continue to haunt any 'proofs' to be given for God's existence.

Despite any subsequent neo-Kantian attempts to develop an ethics of the 'as if' upon these most basic principles (Vaihinger 1965), his ethics is ultimately founded upon a conjecture, to act 'as if' there were a God, which is, for some, perhaps to do away with God practically speaking. Such a position is perhaps lurking in what Richard Kearney has lately attempted to provide through his distinguishing between the function of the analogical 'as' and the fictive 'as if'. Narrative wagers, the stuff of religious scripture, according to Kearney, are more about 'imagination and hospitality' than about 'calculation and blind leaps'. Specifically in contrast to Pascal's wager, he tells us, 'they solicit fidelity not fideism' (Kearney 2010, xvii). He goes on indeed to state that the 'as if' can only ever be a fictive proposition, whereas the 'as' itself is an

analogical attempt to state truth (e.g. 'the stranger *as* divine') (15). For him, then, a belief that he calls 'anatheism' is about a forward looking repetition, and, in this gesture, a return to the divine through the analogical 'as'. The stranger, if taken 'as' divine, would allow a concrete presence to unfold before us, whereas the fictive 'as if' suspends our belief entirely, never really to return. It is the alliance between atheism and theism that signals a sort of 'post-theism' for Kearney, a belief in a God who 'may be' (80, 180; Kearney 2001). He faults contemporary post-structuralists such as Derrida (whose own take on the 'as if' will be taken up shortly), in fact, for not returning to any (narrated) sense of divinity (a 'named God') in their writings, leaving faith ultimately suspended and without resolution, without a concrete force appearing before us (Kearney 2010, 65).[2] In essence, lacking the finesse of an anatheistic (hermeneutic) response which he intends to further draw out.

Kearney's critique would seem, in so many words, to be aimed directly at those Kantian reductions of narrative identities which would efface any particularity of the divine in favor of a generalized (vague) deism, or even atheism. Despite his criticisms, however, Kearney's objections seem to struggle to make a definitive distinction between a Pascalian wager in a God who might or might not exist and Kearney's emphasis upon a God 'who may be', perhaps in the end (and for the same reasons that we will see at work in Derrida's thought) because there is a fundamental indeterminacy at play in any determination, one that unlocks our (theo)poetic imaginative, and narrative, landscape. This is to say that despite our ability to treat the stranger as divine, this gesture of hospitality says nothing about the (non)existence of the divine, only the nature of our hospitable act. To develop a representation of God, or of any-thing, the 'as if' will in some sense still have to be utilized, even if we wish to treat one thing potentially *as* another. Indeed, to treat even a stranger *as* divine, we would first have to utilize something like the 'as if' (as a regulative principle) to formulate what our notion of divinity would be in the first place. In this sense, Kant's influence continues to move through the history of philosophical reflection upon the nature of universals and the regulative principles of thought despite Kearney's possible objections. The 'as if' in fact, has not gone away, despite what Kearney and others might hope, but has actually become solidified as the paradoxical (*aporetic*) essence of what constitutes any representational identity, and, in essence, of what constitutes any attempt to formulate *belief*.

The influence of Kant upon Derrida's work, for example, has continued to outline such a reading (Rothfield). This should come as little surprise to Derrida's close readers, though it does seem to provide an immediate clash of sorts as the great systematic regulator of thought is aligned with the 'father of deconstructionism'. It is hardly a profound observation, however, that Derrida's writing was dependent upon the strategic usage of conditional ('if' or 'as if')

statements, something which lay at the foundations of all Kant's systematic reflections, as we have just seen. This is so because Derrida's rhetoric was itself dependent upon a state of undecidability that ran as a current throughout his entire oeuvre.[3] Though this is not to suggest that Derrida and Kant overlap entirely on their use of conditional statements. In general, I find Hager Weslaty's analysis of the 'as if' to be quite accurate: Derrida's use of the 'as if' is a force of dissemination and expansion ('an essential component of "différance"'), in contrast to Kant's usage, which, for its part, was an attempt to provide a foundation for metaphyiscs and to bridge the gaps within experience (Weslaty 2002, 43-4). Despite this nuance, however, Derrida's use of the 'as if' does essentially conform to the Kantian notion of its being a 'regulative idea', as a preservation of the necessity for representation itself ('there is nothing outside the text'). This is perhaps also why, in so many words, Derrida's comments on experience are seemingly so often removed from being indebted to particular, concrete traditions, heritages, canons or religions.[4] It is the universal structure of experience, once so important to Kant, that Derrida must engage if representations, themselves posited as intelligible only through the use of the 'as if', are to continue to have any meaning.

In a short article on 'rogue states' (Derrida 2004a) that later became part of his book *Rogues* (Derrida 2004b), for example, Derrida unfolds his indebtedness to the Kantian 'regulative idea' which is mired in the use of the 'as if'. In this fashion, the 'decisive and enigmatic role played by the *als ob* in all of Kant's thought' comes back to Derrida as a central principle within his own work. As he there suggests,

> …if we come back this time to the strict meaning Kant gave to the *regulative* use of ideas (as opposed to their *constitutive* use), we would, in all rigor, and in order to say anything on this subject, and especially in order to appropriate such terms, have to subscribe to the entire Kantian architectonic and critique, something I cannot seriously undertake or even commit myself to doing here. We would have to begin by asking about what Kant calls "the different interest in reason" (*ein verschiedenes Interesse der Vernunft*), the *imaginary* (the *focus imaginarius*, that point toward which all the lines directing the rules of understanding—which is not reason—tend and converge and thus indefinitely *approximate*), the necessary *illusion*, which need not necessarily deceive us, the figure of an approach or approximation (*zu nähern*) that tends indefinitely toward rules of universality, and especially the indispensable use of the *as if* (*als ob*)…. We cannot treat this here, but I thought it necessary at least to note, in principle, how circumspect I would be to appropriate in any rigorous way this idea of a "regulative Idea." (Derrida 2004a, 330)

Here, the problematic nature of the 'as if' within all representational logics is perhaps best understood as essentially bound to the tendencies toward universalization, part and parcel of the 'imaginary', the 'necessary illusion, which need not necessarily deceive us'. Though this is a very limited taking up of the conditional thematic within Kant's work, Derrida is far from

finished with his confrontation with the 'as if'. Indeed, as I will would like now to show, the 'as if' almost becomes *the* principle by which to grasp his reflections upon representation, reason, metaphysics and belief, not to mention the intriguing and often enigmatic suggestions he made over the years concerning his relationship to historical religious traditions, especially his Judaic heritage.

What I hope to demonstrate, in what follows, is that Derrida's dealings with the 'as if' are firmly entrenched within its historical disclosure as a principle indiscociable from all attempts at forming culturally intelligible representations. Hence, a 'necessary illusion' appears as the revealed structure of representation, something Derrida must speak of openly so as not to deceive us, so as not to do violence to us through any hidden, or obscured (ontotheological) illusions. His characterizations of justice and responsibility that run as a single thread throughout much of his later work would seem to dictate nothing less than this willingness. These are 'necessary illusions' that are essential to all acts of representation and that are rendered 'less violent' through their more or less being exposed as the illusions they are, hence as not necessarily deceptive; they are, as Derrida seems to indicate above, only an 'approximation'. Yet, they are also what Cadmus once asked Pentheus to declare his loyalty to, though falsely, so that the laws (*nomoi*) of society might be further upheld. They are, in this manner, completely to be opened to their subsequent deconstruction.

It is this tension of living within a 'necessary illusion' which does 'not necessarily deceive us' that in fact generates a conception of history for Derrida, as well as those religious, philosophical markers of our traditional identities, something he posits as ranging all the way back to Platonism and its subsequent reliance upon the representative image. And if this lineage between 'us moderns' and the Judaic and Greek takes on representation seems somewhat arbitrary, it is nonetheless fundamental for Derrida: 'Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? We live in the difference between the Jew and the Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history' (Derrida 1978, 153).[5] Taking our point of departure in Greek thought, then, is no coincidental or arbitrary starting point, for such is his pronouncement in an essay devoted to underscoring the nature of how violence and metaphysics interact. His concluding reference to the Joycean 'jewgreek' or 'greekjew' that identifies all of us would only seem to further cement the impossibility of ever fully appropriating any particular, historical religious identification, rather always being caught in a suspension between the tensions of representation, much as Euripides had tried to illustrate through his pushing of language to its boundaries.[6] It is not a stretch, then, to see how these formulations, as we will see in a moment, in fact lead him to identify the regulative structure of the 'as if' with the 'relation without relation' that is

characteristic of his universalizations (Derrida 1999b); how indeed a 'religion without religion' could be said to spring from this conditional site.

What remains of Derrida's faith

Derrida's relationship to religious thought has frequently been opened to multiple (mis)readings, from Judaic (Bergo 2007; Ofrat 2001), to Christian (Shakespeare 2009; Hart 1989) to atheistic (Hägglund 2008). To give but one recent example of how problematic this discourse on Derrida's religious (non)affiliations has been, we would do well to note how Leonard Lawlor, in a series of lectures devoted to Derrida's work on animality, struggled with identifying Derrida's religious strands of thought. For Lawlor, it is Derrida's insistence upon a 'weak force' moving through history that is 'one of the voices of Christianity' that influences his work. Yet Derrida also, Lawlor tells us, attempts to point beyond Christianity, through a deconstruction of Christianity, to a space prior to Christianity and, therefore, he is not to be considered a Christian (Lawlor 2007, 112–3). The paradoxical logic of 'belonging without belonging' that Derrida famously appropriated from the work of Levinas and that came to dominate his later thoughts on concrete, historical institutions, is on full display once again in Lawlor's formulations, though this time in relation specifically to Christianity.

As I have already been suggesting throughout, what we are in truth dealing with in Derrida's conceptualization of religious identity is the nature of representation itself, the manner in which any person could be said to identify with any particular religious heritage. This is, at once, an expansion of the Kantian 'regulative idea' best exemplified in the workings of the 'as if', though it is also a restriction of its operations, a movement away from utilizing the conditional as a 'filler of the (metaphysical) gaps' (thus being utilized to posit God's existence, for example) and toward its being embraced as the 'condition without condition' that grounds every reflective operation. Religion, in this sense, seems only at times to be an emblematic figure within Derrida's work on the historical repetition of identities and their struggle to become fully articulate, something mirrored in other canonical forms (i.e. ideological, national, ethnic-racial, etc), though not as forcefully asserted historically.

The structure of the 'as if' in relation to one's (always personal) experience, central as it was to the Kantian project, opportunely reappears here, however, as essential, or as foundational even, within the context of Derrida's discussion of his relation to Judaism. This fact is not something that can be lightly glossed over; indeed, it figures as the determining factor behind his

religious formulations on the whole. In what may be the lengthiest single, and yet most decisive sentence of his essay on 'Abraham, the Other', he states:

> I introduce myself both as the least Jewish, the most unworthy Jew, the last to deserve the title of authentic Jew, and at the same time, because of all this, by reason of a force of rupture that uproots and universalizes the place, the local, the familial, the communal, the national, and so on, he who plays at playing the role of the most Jewish of all, the last and therefore the only survivor fated to assume the legacy of generations, to save the response or responsibility before the assignation, or before the election, always at risk of taking himself for another, something that belongs to the essence of an experience of election; as if the least could do the most, but also as if (you will have noted, no doubt, that I often have recourse to the "as if," and I do so intentionally, without playing, without being facile, because I believe that a certain *perhaps* of the *as if*, the poetical or the literary, in sum, lies at the heart of what I want to entrust to you) – *as if* the one who disavowed the most, and who appeared to betray the dogmas of belonging, be it a belonging to the community, the religion, even to the people, the nation and the state, and so on – *as if* this individual alone represented the last demand, the hyperbolic request of the very thing he appears to betray by perjuring himself. (Derrida 2007b, 13)

As this passage illuminates quite directly, it is the aporia/antinomy of experience itself, that is, of those laws which structure it which Kant had tried to make peace with by first suggesting the absolutely essential nature of the 'as if', that Derrida finds emblematically demonstrated within the historical 'heritage' of religious experience, even, and especially, his own religious experience as a J/jew (Derrida 1999a). Yet, it seemingly is also an 'as if' which goes beyond the religious representations that litter our world. There is a core beyond it that yet comes from within it, a '…*perhaps* of the *as if*' that opens him up to 'the poetical or the literary, in sum, [what] lies at the heart of what I want to entrust to you'. In many ways, this religious reconsideration in his work is merely an outgrowth of his earlier critique of the metaphysics of presence he discerned to be at work in Husserl's phenomenology, thus bringing into sharp relief any attempt to present the phenomena itself, 'as such', and any poetic/religious attempt to do likewise (Derrida 1973; 1974; Hobson 2004). Derrida thus seems to place himself midway between a phenomenological approach and a Kantian regulative principle, or as a ceaseless oscillation between the two wherein one's heritage(s), even a religious one, appears as relevant to staking one's identity claims.

His own Judaic roots, of course, were not something he hid from public view; indeed, he confesses a certain pride in his 'jewishness'. Yet, there was also a proximate distance which he took with regard to its practices, its public pronouncements, with the manner in which it makes it mark upon those who profess it as a 'living faith' in some sense. Hence, he is able to suggest that it is a

> '…law that comes upon me, a law that, appearing antinomian, dictated to me, in a precocious and obscure fashion, in a kind of light whose rays are unbending, the hyper-

formalized formula of a destiny devoted to the secret – and that is why I play seriously, more and more, with the figure of the marrano: the less you show yourself as jewish, the more and better jew you will be'. (Derrida 2007b, 13)

And perhaps this is to live 'as if' he were not jewish in order to become *more* jewish, though, of course, leaving wide open the question of whether there could even be a jew in the first place, of whether one could be said to exist at all. And this comment might serve to explain why he considered himself to be 'the last to deserve the title of authentic Jew'.

For Derrida, it would seem, simply respecting the demands of the other before us (their 'hyperbolic, excessive' demand), in fact truly being hospitable to all others, is only possible through this renunciation of a 'certain dogmatism of the place or of the bond (communal, national, religious, of the state)' (13). Only thus are we opened up toward a responsibility 'without limits', then, which is itself illuminated against the messianic horizon of justice. This would be an eschatology forever severed from any teleology. In this sense, living 'as if' he were not jewish would certainly seem to be a most faithful approximation to the Abrahamic core of Judaism. It would also, perhaps, bear a certain affinity with those readings of Paul and the nature of the 'as not' which seemed to condition his decisions to live as a Jew to the Jew and as a Gentile to the Gentile, 'as if' he were both, or neither (cf. Agamben 2005, 35ff).

The conditional nature of the 'as if' finds firmer roots here in Derrida's work than it did within the Kantian system, it would seem, firmer because more open to its own conditionality, less likely to fall victim to an onto-theological 'metaphysics of presence' which would otherwise seek to conceal its own violence, or wrongly attempt to posit something like the existence of God, a proposition which Derrida would never have touched as such. This would seemingly be something of the Heideggerian influence within Derrida's work, a movement away from the ontotheological heritage of providing justifications for God's existence in order to 'seal the gaps' within the cracks of all representations. Such a position is what at one point caused him to look for the *renvois* (of traces) between representation and presentation which refused to be gathered (or unified) under either heading. Unity, traditionally was a religious task, and it has been religion which has most effectively dealt with the complex processes of providing intelligible representations by which humanity can identify itself in relation to its animality, sexuality, race and divinity (Derrida 2008; 2009). But this unity, of course, cannot be maintained by in the face of the structural reality of *différance*, which also refuses to be present (Derrida 1982).

Historically speaking, however, religious tradition is nearly all we have before us, and is therefore what should most concretely concern Derrida if the claims of representation are to be taken seriously and are not subsequently dismissed. It is only within such 'heritages', as he will

call them, that representation can be seen to work (and 'un-work') itself, that is, wherein *différance* can be said to function. It is, again, between the Jew and the Greek that all of history is negotiated. Here, in the context of his struggles with the conditional and its relation to religious belief, the 'as if' continues to find its stride as '…the oscillation and the undecidability continue, and I would dare say, *must* continue to mark the obscure and uncertain experience of heritage. In any case, I have been unable to put a stop to this experience in me, and it has conditioned the decisions and the responsibilities that have imprinted themselves upon my life' (Derrida 2007b, 33). Hence, the contradictory positions which his work seemingly must endorse: 'the condition that one emancipate oneself from every dogma of revelation and election' or see this emancipation as 'the very content of the revelation or of the election, their very idea', a ceaseless alternation between presentation and representation that cannot ever be unified or resolved (33). Indeed, the continuance of an uncertain experience of heritage has given rise to the 'formalization', or 'most irreducible logic' of the discourses which run throughout his work, from a 'messianicity without messianism' to the subject of writing and the trace, from the focus on a democracy always yet to come to the subject of *khōra*, or that which grounds any 'event of anthropo-theological revelation' (33).

What is really being posited, according to the logic of the 'as if' at work in Derrida's thought, is a tendency toward forming a core universal principle uncovered within the Judaic religious heritage, one that signals something of the deconstructive method already at work therein. The realization of this tension would insist upon, not only the necessary polarization of our world into 'Jew' and 'Greek', it would seem, but also into a messianicity over against an historical messianism, thus also a '*jewishness*' over against a '*judaism*'. It is, in so many words, the recognition of the other 'outside us' as the other 'already within us' as well. Hence, he can word the aporia of how identity is represented as such:

> Either these minimal features are universal and there is no reason to make them into what is proper to the Jew, save to speculate again on the worrying logic of exemplarity; or, as universal as they are, they will have been announced in a unique and precisely exemplary fashion, by election, in a historical revelation; they would then have to do with writing, with memory or with hope in what one calls judaism. (32)

At any rate, a sense of '*jewishness*' is inseparable from a '*judaism*', he will tell us, because the former can always root itself in the latter. Judaism remains then as a 'guardian of jewishness', an aid to its survival, but not necessarily *as necessary*. There is then, perhaps, another way to view the essence of 'jewishness' which is apparently not entirely indebted to its Judaic roots. This would be, in no uncertain terms, to view 'jewishness' as it is in itself, *as such*, and without its Judaic affiliation, that is, to reconsider Judaic exemplarity through a Derrida's reframing of the

universal/particular divide (Hollander 2006). The shift he is making, and it is a most significant one at that, is one that repeats the movement from transcendental idealism's regulative 'as if' to the phenomenological 'as such' without actually settling permanently on one or the other, resting rather precariously between both.

In an interview given in 1995, Derrida commented on the imagined notion of acting 'as if you were dead', an act, he says, which allows us to see objects as they truly are without us, *as such* (Derrida 1996). And perhaps this holds the key to understanding, not only the manner in which to perceive things as they are, but also to allow things to evolve over time into other forms seemingly devoid of their historical rooting; that is, to achieve an approximation of universality without its empirical, historical grounding. Perhaps there is an 'as suchness' beyond the traditional representations of things, an 'as suchness' that allows things to exceed their representations otherwise bound to the structures of the 'as if' though only accessible through another 'as if'—the suspension (bracketing) of the subject, 'as if' it were dead. This viewpoint brings with it the possibility of change and justice within the horizon of a future always yet to come.[7]

There is an 'Abrahamic' core to the three monotheisms of the west, according to Derrida, which 'affects this tradition in an unpredictable way' (Sherwood and Hart 2005, 33). Christianity may be, in his opinion, the most 'plastic, the most open' religion, but it does not have a monopoly on (or 'greater affinity with') the deconstructive project. In effect, it would seem that Derrida's faith ultimately has a movement beyond historical religious projects in mind. What he appears to be suggesting at times is the embracing of an emancipation from religious traditions, one that places more stock in a (Kantian-inspired) conditional, poetic core of human experience than in the heritage bequeathed to him and to so many others. The element to be universalized within religious experience is the poetic core of faith (the 'as such'), a core that exceeds every historical representation (the 'as if') and yet is inseparable from them, because to be glimpsed 'as such' requires that one be bracketed 'as if' they were dead.   Only in this way, Derrida suggests, can the 'poetical' and 'literary' inheritance he intends for us be received.

Conclusion

Derrida's occasional reflections upon the processes of mourning seem to resonate deeply with his remarks on religion in a certain sense. Just as one cannot fully incorporate the lost object being mourned, always rather being suspended between a more or less 'successful' and a more or less 'failed' incorporation of the beloved, so too does Derrida's Judaism seem to be (Derrida

1989, 33ff). It becomes, in this precise sense, that which he cannot fully appropriate, or take up in name, if he is to be responsible to it (160). It is as if Derrida had penned another book, one through which he was able to mourn the death of his many 'Judeities', much as he was able to mourn the loss of so many others throughout his lifetime (cf. Derrida 2003).

As almost a direct counterfoil to the many deaths which Derrida often found himself mourning, there creeps up in his work another theme, one immersed in life and which seemingly propels humanity forward into its own present. Poetry, for him, captures something of the 'life of language' that is intertwined with the 'work of mourning' that Derrida sees as central to formulating a 'hauntology' as it were (Derrida 2005, 103; cf. Derrida 2006). If the 'endless desertification of language' which signals a 'rage against language' is what Derrida associates with the impossibility of saying God's name, as he suggests elsewhere, then perhaps it is poetry which seems to re-affirm the existence of the self amidst this profane horizon (Derrida 1995a, 55ff). This affinity which runs throughout the poetic enterprise can be glimpsed in the context of his discussion of the poetry of Paul Celan, for example, where Derrida takes the occasion to reflect upon the manner in which poetry itself attempts to confirm the present moment, to provide a sense of contemporaneousness that in fact comes to rearticulate the precarious and strange placement of the human being at the boundary between the human and the animal (Derrida 2005, 120ff). It is a present/presence that poetry discloses that is the impossible 'I', a gesture that says 'this is my body', or 'in memory of me', within each poem (Derrida 2005, 169). Poetry somehow enables us to step outside of our human selves, to see the strange within us and to articulate, in words or through the act of writing, the conditional nature of the beings that we are, to present the 'as suchness' of life, or the 'thing itself' as it were. This is the poetic heritage that Derrida seems to seize upon as the fundamental gesture of constructing the human being through its expression of our experience, and it seems directly to have picked up where religion, with its representations indebted to the 'as if', left off.

Derrida's fidelity is therefore not necessarily to his Judaic roots per se, but to the jewishness that pervades every act of reciting the 'mourner's Kaddish', or the gesture which confronts the impossibility of authentically incorporating the losses we have suffered in this life. This jewishness is the 'as suchness' of the believer beyond the 'as if-ness' of judaism. The fragile sense of self, the 'I' formed in such a way as to be apart from and yet indebted to the conditional representations before us, is what is thereby created in the poetic gesture to affirm the existence of the self despite the apparent 'falsity' of its representations. It is an act that stands along with Cadmus and proclaims fidelity to that which cannot be proven to exist, but rather than this being about God, it is about the self, and how it can be embraced though not certainly

defined, an act of re-presentation (or 'iterability') as it were. Though the human being may not be able to fully, finally articulate its place within the animal kingdom, or in relation to the divine, it can, however, strive to find itself within its own present, 'as such', as a being with experiences that can be expressed and re-presented to itself, for itself, always striving to be more just in their approximation of what it means to be a being 'as such'. It is this universal, poetic core of our 'being-human' that Derrida finds circumscribing ('circumcising') the essences of how we identify ourselves ('as such') over and beyond what has come to identify us ('as if'), and which was, according to him, all he ever really wrote about (Derrida 1999a, 70).

Perhaps, in the end, this would not place him as far from Kearney's work as Kearney himself seems to indicate. Rather, the establishment of a representative narrative 'for itself' would seem to be part of Derrida's project as well, though one that is necessarily interrupted by the presence of an 'other' that cannot ever be brought under this narrative structure. This is to say, it is the invention of the other at work in our identities that exceeds the realm of representations that are otherwise 'for us' or 'for themselves' (Derrida 2007a). It is truly an 'invention of the other' that grounds any 'invention' of the self, a religious statement or a declaration of mourning as much as anything else.

I am given over at the end of these reflections, and perhaps appropriately, to Pamela Gillilan's reflections upon the death of her husband given in a collection of poems on the effects of mourning, and which end with a poem that seemingly invokes an imperative that Derrida would seem to have shared in: 'Write' (Gillilan 1994, 104). As she works it through, writing is an act wherein something powerful is discovered in the process, though it is something 'never rich or full enough.' Like Euripides' attempt to bring chaos within order through the performance of his art, here, the work of mourning is both celebration and sorrow, an interminable mixture of each with no perfect balance ever really being struck. Hence, she is herself given over to embrace the paradox (aporia) of her own work of mourning, the poetic experience which she only took up constructing in response to her husband's death. There are no words, and yet words, along with their implicit limitations, move her along this path of grieving where the extremities of language are so removed from our experience.

I believe that Gillilan's poem here circulates around the richness of Derrida's work, especially in his attempt to unite the conditional nature of all experience (it's essential 'as if' quality) to the poetic gesture toward the present moment that is rooted deep within the Judaic (or Abrahamic) tradition, the 'as suchness' beyond the 'as if' and yet rooted in it in some sense. Even Gillilan, for her part, seems to acknowledge the fundamental positioning of the 'as if' as it relates to the mourned presence of one who is now forever lost, but also forever part of what we

consider as the 'I' of our experiences, present perhaps most emphatically as we strive to do more justice to the memories that refuse to be compromised. As Gillilan describes it, she remembers the intimacy of her husband's flesh, remembers its 'ignition' and its 'comfort'. She remembers it in fact 'as if the loss were new', but how does one 'make that ring true?', she ponders. How indeed, we might add, would one begin to live 'as if' they knew an intimacy forever beyond our ability to represent it (as in cases involving death) and yet found themselves living in a flesh, with its age and its sorrow, that is, at times, simply all too present?

Bibliography

Agamben, Giorgio (2005), *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Agamben, Giorgio (2009), 'What Is a Paradigm?', *The Signature of All Things: On Method*, trans. Luca D'Isanto with Kevin Attell, New York: Zone.

Bergo, Bettina, Joseph Cohen and Raphael Zagury-Orly, eds. (2007), *Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida*, trans. Bettina Bergo and Michael B. Smith, New York: Fordham University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1973), *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1974), *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1978), *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1982), 'Différance', *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1996), 'As if I were Dead: An Interview with Jacques Derrida' in *Applying: To Derrida*, eds. John Brannigan, Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys, London: Macmillan.

Derrida, Jacques (1989), *Memoires: for Paul de Man*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1995a), 'Sauf le nom' in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, trans. David Wood, John P. Leavey, Jr. and Ian McLeod, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1995b), *The Gift of Death*, trans. David Wills, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1997), *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins, London: Verso.

Derrida, Jacques (1998), *Monolinguism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans. Patrick Mensah, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1999a), 'Circumfessions', in *Jacques Derrida*, ed. Geoffrey Bennington, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Derrida, Jacques (1999b), *Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (2002), *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar, trans. Mary Quaintance. London: Routledge.

Derrida, Jacques (2003), *The Work of Mourning*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (2004a), 'The Last of the Rogue States: The "Democracy to Come," Opening in Two Turns', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103: 2/3, pp. 323–341

Derrida, Jacques (2004b), *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (2005), *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, eds. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen, New York: Fordham University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (2006), *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, London, Routledge.

Derrida, Jacques (2007a), 'Envoi', *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, vol. I*, eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (2007b), 'Abraham, the Other', *Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida*, eds. Bergo, Bettina, Joseph Cohen and Raphael Zagury-Orly, trans. Bettina Bergo and Michael B. Smith, New York: Fordham University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (2008), *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills, New York: Fordham University Press.

Derrida, Jacques (2009), *The Beast and the Sovereign, vol. 1*, ed. Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet and Ginette Michaud, trans. Geoffrey Bennington, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Euripides (1979), *The Bacchae*, trans. G. S. Kirk, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Euripides (1996), *Bacchae*, trans. Richard Seaford, Warminster: Aris & Philips.

Gillilan, Pamela (1994), *All-Steel Traveller: New and Selected Poems*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe.

Hägglund, Martin (2008), *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Hart, Kevin (1989), *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hobson, Marian (2004), 'The Logic of Representation (and the Representation of Logic)', *parallax* 10: 3, pp. 53–69.

Hollander, Dana (2006), 'Is Deconstruction a Jewish Science? Reflections on "Jewish Philosophy" in Light of Jacques Derrida's *Judéïtés*', *Philosophy Today* 50: 1/5, pp. 128–38.

Hurst, Andrea (2008), *Derrida Vis-à-vis Lacan: Interweaving Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis*, New York: Fordham University Press.

Kant, Immanuel (1996), *Critique of Practical Reason* in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor, trans. Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel (1997), *Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, Immanuel (2004), *Lectures on Logic*, trans. J. Michael Young, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kearney, Richard (2001), *The God Who May Be: A Hermeneutics of Religion*, Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press.

Kearney, Richard (2010), *Anatheism: Returning to God After God*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Lawlor, Leonard (2007), *This Is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Ofrat, Gideon (2001), *The Jewish Derrida*, trans. Peretz Kidron, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Pascal, Blaise (2008), *Pensées and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony Levi, trans. Honor Levi, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rothfield, Phil, ed. (2002), *Kant After Derrida*, Manchester: Clinamen Press.

Segal, Charles (1982), *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides'* Bacchae, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Shakespeare, Steven (2009), *Derrida and Theology*, London: Continuum.

Sherwood, Yvonne and Kevin Hart, eds. (2005), *Derrida and Religion: Other Testaments*, London: Routledge.

Stevens, Wallace (1997), 'Study of Images II', *Collected Poetry and Prose*, New York: Library of America.

Vaihinger, Hans (1965), *The Philosophy of As If: A System of the Theoretical, Practical, and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, trans. C.K. Ogden, London: Routledge.

Weslaty, Hager (2002), 'Aporias of the *As If*: Derrida's Kant and the question of experience', in *Kant After Derrida*, ed. Phil Rothfield, Manchester: Clinamen Press.

Colby Dickinson is a doctoral researcher of the K.U. Leuven Research Fund and a member of the Research Group 'Theology in a Postmodern Context' within the Faculty of Theology, K.U. Leuven (Belgium) (see: http://www.theo.kuleuven.be/page/rgtpc/). He is the author of several articles as well as the forthcoming monograph, *Agamben and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

---

1. Cf. the Seaford translation (1996, 85). My thanks to Clifton Kreps for his assistance with regard to this passage.
2. As Kearney renders it, 'Unlike Benjamin and Levinas, therefore, Derrida's approach to the messianic hovers in the antechamber of messianism. He explores rather than embraces the anatheist option. His

saving the Name does not entail a return to the Named. At best, it is an "endless waiting in the desert." A waiting for Godot who never comes' (65).

3. Cf. among others, some exemplary uses of the 'as if' in Derrida's work, including 'Before the Law' in Derrida 2002; 'A Silkworm of One's Own', Derrida 2002, 314, 383, 251; Derrida 1995b, 72–3; Derrida 1997, 121, 149, 152.

4. This is not to suggest, however, that the singularities of what claimed him were unimportant, or unessential, rather that Derrida more often chose to focus on the 'impossible property' of any particularity, which is to say, as it approximates the universal concept he was dealing with, as, for example, in his alternation between his indebtedness to the French language and the structure of language itself. Cf. Derrida 1998, 63ff.

5. Cf. his references to the history of representation and its Platonic legacy in Derrida 2007a, 94–128.

6. Cf. the recurring polarity (general/restricted, economic/aneconomic) within which all concepts are formed in Derrida's work. Jacques Derrida, 'From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve' (Derrida 1978, 251–277). See also Hurst 2008, 75.

7. The 'suchness' of things which Derrida points toward is taken up perhaps no where more boldly than in the work of Italian theorist Giorgio Agamben whose entire oeuvre, I would suggest, is directed toward the presentation (*not* representation) of a thing such as it is, or *as such*. Intending to more fully flush out the 'whatever' nature of each thing over and against its limited representations, Agamben rather seeks to allow a thing's exposure to take place, to be in fact the taking place of every thing. There henceforth develops a general overlap between his comments on the presentation of a thing *as such* and the nature of paradigms which, according to him, strive to elevate this principle of respect for the singularity of an example above the dichotomous logic of division into particulars (a thing completely presented in its suchness) and universals (a thing reduced to its representation). A paradigm, rather, moves only from particulars to particulars, and thereby presenting the singularity of each thing instead of fostering its reductionistic representations. Far from being coincidental to the scope of this essay, Agamben concludes his discussion of paradigms with a description of a thing's suchness as exemplified through a poem by Wallace Stevens ('Description Without Place', Stevens 1997, 296). Cf. Agamben 2009, 32.