

*Infinity, Insomnia, and the (im)possibility of Theology**

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Abstract: Theology is an ineluctable challenge with its compelling yet impossible testimony to *Infinity* in thought and language. Levinas' metaphor *insomnia*, in its *vigilance without intentionality* in which the subject is hostage to thinking *Infinity* without circumscribing this thought, is useful for interpreting this theological challenge. The image of *insomnia* suggests the *other's* (transcendent) claim upon us. If we are wakened and vigilant without being the source of this wakefulness, it is the other who generates this vigilance in the self-same, yet we can never be certain who this *other* is – "God" or *otherwise*. In this *insomnia*, the subject is hostage to a vigilance of risk – questioning and uncertain as to the source of the other's alterity or transcendence. This is the challenge of faith and ethical responsibility to an other as a visage of this assignation to infinity.

EMMANUEL LEVINAS USES THE METAPHOR "INSOMNIA" to describe the incision of infinity in the human subject, as an awakening to responsibility for the other to whom the subject is apprehended and made a hostage.¹ This article investigates *insomnia* as *vigilance without intentionality*, in which the subject is hostage to thinking the infinite without initiating such thought, and asks whether this theme might be applicable to theology. My thesis is posed as a question: Is it possible to

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1. Levinas' *awakening to the infinite* and *vigilance without intentionality* (*insomnia*, "wakefulness", and "trauma" as an incision of the infinite in subjectivity), has significant definition in "God and Philosophy" ["GaP"], and other essays in *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Levinas' *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1981/1997), is also central in this discussion. In "God and Philosophy", Levinas responds to Jacques Derrida's essay, "Metaphysics and Violence: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas", in which Derrida argued that Levinas sought to elude philosophical discourse in testimony to *infinity*, while being enmeshed in philosophical language and concepts. Compare "GaP", 55, 77, and Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas", trans. Alan Bass, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 152. See introductory comments for "God and Philosophy", *The Levinas Reader*, ed. Seán Hand (Oxford and Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989) 166-7.

articulate a theology that interrupts itself, *unsaying* what it *says*, in order to bear witness to the Infinite, “the other”,² which we cannot determine is “God” or not?³ While the discourse of theology does not think infinity without certifying the word “God”, *insomniac theology* would be a thinking of infinity only as *the impossible thought* of God. Infinity might be thought *otherwise*.⁴ While Levinas writes with a religious (biblical) vocabulary using words such as “God”, “glory”, “prophecy”, “witnessing”, “election”, and “holiness”, he is not referring to theology but to ethics as *first philosophy*.⁵

In terms of method, and in two registers, Levinasian and theological, this article delineates conditions of possibility and impossibility for theological discourse, as witness to the Infinite and ethics, through the rubric of *theology as insomnia*, and before any intellectual or experiential negotiation of religious commitment. Levinas’ metaphor “insomnia” is an exposition on awakening, thinking, and the intelligibility of “saying” that articulates otherness (*alterity*) as *infinity* without recourse to philosophical synthesis or theological thematization.⁶ Where Levinas

2. An ambiguity in the phrase, “the other”, is retained, signifying as it does in Levinas’ work, the possibility of being *autrui* – the other person(s) (“indefinite pronoun”) and *l’autre* – the infinite other. See translator’s notes, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969/2000) 24-26; *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 186 n. 7. The issue is not raised in *Otherwise than Being. Saying unsaying* every *said* constitutes a primary philosophical method of “intersubjective movement” and interlocution for Levinas: *Otherwise than Being*, 20.

3. “Transcendence: this term is used without any theological presupposition” (88) (“Philosophy and Awakening” [“PaA”], *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 87-88.

4. In *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, Levinas asks, through a variety of approaches, whether it is possible to think and speak about God without diminishing the exteriority and infinity this name signifies (“Foreword”, xii. *Infinity* is outside “intentional” grasp and “thematization”. It is “noncoincidence and dispossession” in the “diachrony of time” [xiv]).

5. “Ethics as First Philosophy” [“EFP”], trans. Seán Hand and Michael Temple, *The Levinas Reader*, 76-87. Levinas seeks to understand how the “word ‘God’” signifies as a non-phenomenological interruption in phenomenological registers, without raising issues of God’s existence (“Foreword”, xi. Levinas considers the question of the “the existence of God” to be “the insidious question”, a “return of ontology” and the quest for “the ultimate measure of meaning”. “From the Carefree Deficiency to the New Meaning” [“CDNM”], *Of God who Comes to Mind*, 51. Levinas is not seeking to reconstruct the possibility of a hidden God “behind the scenes”, but speaks only of a “trace” of the infinite in ethical responsibility for the other; *Otherwise than Being*, 185; “Truth of Disclosure and Truth of Testimony”, trans. Iain MacDonald [“TDTT”], *Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. Adrian T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996) 101. Levinas does not speak about God, except by first addressing “human relations” (“Transcendence and Height”, trans. Tina Chanter et al [“TaH”], *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 29.

6. “Foreword”, xi-xv. “Saying” (“dire”) that “signifies otherwise” than the “Said” (“dit”) articulating *the essence of being*, is a significant self-attested thesis of *Otherwise than Being*, see 46.

uses the metaphor *insomnia* for philosophical purposes,⁷ this article investigates the possibility of its theological use.⁸ Levinas suggests that insomnia has the possibility of religious interpretation.⁹

Levinas' metaphor, insomnia, may be applicable to a theology that is compulsively thought without being thinkable – a theology that eludes complicity with rational circumscription of meaning within the immanence of being. In this study I will therefore evaluate Levinas' quest, first, to think *otherwise* than the totality of *being* and the circumscription of thought by intentionality and reason; and, secondly, to locate the ethical in the insomniac trauma of the infinite within. This study suggests two ways in which theology as insomnia might be thought paradoxically as resistance to thematization in the trace of its after-effects: one, theology as prophetic witness to the Infinite and ineluctable response to the other (the prophetic "Here I am"); and two, language as *saying* and the skeptical as an *ensuing premise* for the recurrence of every *said* in theology. Levinas' prophetic witness to the Infinite as an upsurge of *saying* in response to the proximate other (for Levinas, a philosophical issue¹⁰), forms a basis for questioning every *said* in theology as a condition of its possibility – the *said* becoming *unsaid* in the event of new *saying*,¹¹ a possibility of theological language that is torn even as it is articulated.

LEVINAS' PROJECT

To think Levinas' insomnia and infinity theologically, it is necessary to note that Levinas seeks, first, to think *otherwise than being or beyond*

7. "From Consciousness to Wakefulness: Starting from Husserl" ["CWSH"], 24-26; "Hermeneutics and Beyond" ["HaB"], 108; and "The Thinking of Being and the Question of the Other" ["TBQO"], 120-121; *Of God Who Comes to Mind*; "GaP", 58-60; "In Praise of Insomnia" ["IPI"], 207-212; and "Outside of Experience: The Cartesian Idea of the Infinite" ["OoE"], 215-218; *God, Death, and Time*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); *Otherwise than Being*, 63-64, 68, 87, 163-164; *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978) 58-67; *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne University Press, 1987) 48-51. Insomnia is a "meta-category" without "form" or "content" ("GaP", 58-59; "IPI", 209).

8. Levinas states – "ultimately my point of departure is absolutely nontheological. I insist upon this. It is not theology that I am doing, but philosophy" ("TaH", 29-30).

9. "GaP", 59. This is "spirituality of the soul which is ceaselessly awakened...." It is "a wakefulness without intentionality, dis-inter-ested...." – an excess that signifies "Infinity" (59) ("Transcendence and Intelligibility", trans. Tina Chanter et al ["TaI"], *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 159).

10. Levinas speaks of a philosophy that might be "a language that ceaselessly unsays itself...." ("TBQO", 121).

11. The "*saying*" is anterior to every "*said*", and returns to rupture every thematization of the *said* through new *saying*. *Saying* is "primordial", unable to be said in the *said*, except as a rupture of the *said* in the "temporization" of *saying*. The *said* is dissimulated in *saying*, disguising its saying-ness in the *said*, therefore, the *said* is always ambiguous. *The said* is "unsaid" through iterability ("reiteration"): *Otherwise than Being*, 5-7, 9-10, 34-38, 152-153. *Saying* marks a failure of intentionality in language, signifying *beyond being* ("HaB", 106).

essence, and secondly, to think subjectivity beyond Husserl's understanding of intentionality. The first challenge is to think *otherwise than being*, which remains inscribed by definition in theology, in terms of its concern for the *supreme or most excellent being, source of being*, which is nevertheless still continuous with being.¹² Levinas' primary aim is to think "*otherwise than being*" within being.¹³ He distinguishes between *rational intelligence* and *meaning* – a confusion even pervading theology.¹⁴ *Meaning* is not restricted to the intelligibility of ontology, yet a dichotomy of transcendence and intelligibility is not necessary in discourse that speaks of an *otherwise than being*.¹⁵ Secondly and this is continuous with the first challenge, Levinas questions the sovereignty of the Husserlian *transcendental ego* in which consciousness is intentionality (consciousness of and therefore intentional), filling the intuited *given* with meaning and (apodictic) significance – methodologically ascertained by *bracketing* empirical and metaphysical presuppositions or axioms, in a phenomenological reduction of *natural* appearances to consciousness in which *reality* is constituted intentionally as *given*.¹⁶

12. *Otherwise than Being*, 3-7. Levinas asks, "Can we not think, or speak, of a rationality or a meaning that would not be a reference to being and to ontology?" ("IPI", 207); – "[a] different – or deeper – rationality" not to be understood from a place of rational coincidence and *the given* ("HaB", 107-109). "The philosophical discourse of the West asserts the amplitude of an all-inclusiveness (*englobement*) or an ultimate comprehension. It compels every other discourse to justify itself before philosophy." ("GaP", 55). "Conceptual synthesis and synopsis" sustain the primacy of reason "over every alterity" ("Dialogue: Self-Consciousness and Proximity of the Neighbour" ["DSPN"]: *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 139).

13. *Otherwise than Being*, 3-4, 6-7, 15-16. Levinas recognises that an "*otherwise than being*" cannot be located outside time, while having an impact within time (to "command the temporal series"), *apropos* Kant's Fourth Antimony: *Otherwise than Being*, 9, 17. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) A452/B480-A461/B489. This *otherwise* is described as a "rupture" of excess in the Same (of ontology) ("CWSH", 29-30). A similar contrast is made between *adequation* and *beyond intentionality* ("NM", 154-163), and truth, being, and meaning beyond being ("TDTT", 98-101).

14. "GaP", 55-57. In the fear and avoidance of "unhappy consciousness" (thinking other than the rational adequation of coincidence), the word "God" is inscribed within the register of positive metaphysics, which admits no exteriority that might suggest chaos. Diachrony, however, admits ineluctable insomnia into the human consciousness, a transcendence that can be named "God", yet without certainty that transcendence signifies God. Theology that opens to the truly other, is non-representable, an insomniac "question" that apprehends without being intentionally apprehended. Such a question can only be intersected with faith that remains wholly faith, as an opening to the other ("HaB", 107-109).

15. "GaP", 55-57. "Our question is whether, beyond being, a meaning might not show itself whose priority, translated into ontological language, will be called prior to being." (57). A tradition of *awakening* with the same being questioned by its other, has been present in philosophy as a reduction of "naïveté" in its *haunted* engagement with infinity. Levinas resists a dichotomy of thought and exteriority by seeking an incision of exteriority in thought ("PaA", 89).

16. Edmund Husserl, "Author's Preface to the English Edition of *Ideas*", trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson, *Husserl: Shorter Works*, eds. Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston (Brighton, Sussex and Notre Dame, Indiana: Harvester Press and University of Notre Dame Press, 1981) 43-53; Husserl, "Phenomenology and Anthropology", trans. Richard G.

Husserl's intentionality founds *manifestation* of all that is "an *other* of consciousness", constituting exteriority in a reduction of otherness to the intentional consciousness of the sovereign I.¹⁷ In order to challenge both, Levinas argues for an exteriority to being that is not assimilable in consciousness – intentionality that is already disrupted. This is a quest to think a kind of thinking other than rational thought – that which from Kant onwards is deemed unable to penetrate beyond the phenomena of being – "beyond the given", metaphysically to the source of *the given*.¹⁸ Levinas endorses this critique, but seeks to go beyond the apotheosis of reason with its circumscribing propensities in this critique.¹⁹ He seeks to think thought that is post the Kantian critique of thinking metaphysics with the resources of reason, Kant having scuttled the metaphysical quest for such knowledge in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.²⁰ Levinas is also post-phenomenological (therefore post Husserl and Heidegger) in contesting the circumscription of thought within the

Schmitt, *Husserl: Shorter Works*, 315-323; *Ideas I* – "consciousness of" (§§ 34, 36, 87, 88, 90); "intentionality" and "givenness" (§§ 36, 50, 55, 87-88, 90, 94); parenthesis or "bracketing out" ("epoché") (§§ 31-33); "transcendental Ego" (§ 33); *Cartesian Meditations* – "transcendental constitution" of the world of "I alone" (§§ 44-47); Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, First Book, trans. Fred Kersten, and *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns, *The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology*, ed. Donn Welton (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

17. "EFP", 78-79, 81; "PaA", 80-84; *Otherwise than Being*, 65-66, 96; "CWSH", 21-22. For readings of Husserl's phenomenological method, see Levinas' *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. André Orianne, 2nd ed (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973/1995), and *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, trans. Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

18. Not only is a reality "behind our world" dispelled, the theatre of being itself can never circumscribe its own reality ("TBQO", 116-17; "PaA", 77-80; "TaI", 153-154). *Givenness*, for Levinas, connotes "il y a – the "anonymous", pervasive monotony of the "there is" of existence extended to infinity (*Otherwise than Being*, 163-164, 176), without designating who or what gives – the possibility of "the non-sense of an indecipherable trace, the *tohu vavohu*": *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 190 n. 30. Levinas' earlier use of *insomnia* refers to *il y a* as the "horror of the night – endless anonymity of existence (*Existence and Existents*), which is later translated into the insomnia of ethical intrigue awakening to infinity incised in the subject ("In Praise of Insomnia"), for which the word "God" is an alibi (*Existence without Existents*, 52-64; *Time and the Other*, 46-51; "IPI", 207-211). Yet "God" remains non-theological, only traced in the face of the other and Levinas' "the-one-for-the-other", which is "the preoriginal signifyingness that gives sense, because it gives" ("The I and the Totality", *Entre Nous*, 32; *Otherwise than Being*, 78). Levinas' "il y a" structures insomniac perforation of the subject through infinite vigilance without intentionality (*Otherwise than Being*, 163-164; *God, Death, and Time*, 280 n. 11).

19. "TaI", 153-154. Levinas undertakes a post-Kantian, post-Husserlian reading of Descartes' *infinite within* as a re-engagement with *metaphysics as phenomenology*. That is, thinking the infinite without intentionality, beyond phenomenology, but signified phenomenologically in proximity to, summons by, and ethical responsibility for the other as neighbour, who is nevertheless not encompassed by Heidegger's *Being* ("TaI", 152-154).

20. Kant's critique of metaphysics is a critique of "the illusion of worlds behind the scenes" [of being] (Levinas cites *Critique of Pure Reason*, B85-88. "TaI", 153-54). On reason "overstepping the boundaries" in determining the reality of *God* beyond a "transcendental idea" or *condition of possibility*, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A578/B606-A580/B608.

given.²¹ Levinas' incorrigible project is to think alterity in such a way that this thought remains other, uncircumscribed by reason, uncertified in *the given*, and unassimilable in consciousness. That is, he tries to think an aperture in being that admits exteriority – a perforation in the *seamless world of being*, as a questioning or “trauma” in “self-sufficiency”, and an excess causing thought to rupture, which is nevertheless intelligibility *par excellence*.²²

Insomnia suggests disturbance and apprehension in being a hostage, helpless and passive in resisting wide-eyed wakefulness through the incision of *Infinity*, of “God” as it were,²³ but suggests much more in being so much less than a word, name, or concept, such as “God”, over which the subject retains conscious control and is able rationally to circumscribe.²⁴ This passivity is alert, wakened, and insomniac in a vigilance not sourced or directed by the subject.²⁵ *Insomnia* suggests an

21. *Otherwise than Being*, 66-68, 80; “TBQO”, 114. In Husserl's understanding of consciousness, “being commands its modes of *being given* ..., being orders the forms of knowledge that apprehend it and...its modes of appearing to consciousness”. Consciousness is therefore an “event” in the “exposition” of being. In its “exhibition”, consciousness is the phenomenology of being, representing being to itself (“apperception”) in a “synchrony” of intention. Consciousness “withdraws” in the things that appear and returns in the phenomenon thematized. This reflex is not consciously thought, even though consciousness is the source of resourcing being in the intentional I. Intentionality schematises and is therefore “doxic” (“HaB”, 100-104). Husserl's diachronic time is synthetically integrated in every present and the immanence of intentional consciousness, admitting no *a priori* exteriority in the manifestation of being to consciousness, sustaining an adequation between thought and being – “being is according to the intention of consciousness” (“Notes on Meaning” [“NM”], *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 154-9). Heidegger's *ontology* is enquiry into the Being of beings, which is both familiar and enigmatic. Only *Dasein* (*human being* as “Being-there”) thinks the phenomenon of Being as it is manifest in “Being-in-the-world”: Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) §§ 1-4, 9, 12, 28. Heidegger, *Basic Concepts*, trans. Gary E. Aylesworth (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993/1998) 42-78.

22. “Revelation in the Jewish Tradition”, trans. Sarah Richmond [“RJT”], *Levinas Reader*, 205. Similarly, “HaB”, 100, 204 n. 11. Levinas cites the necessity of a “fracture” in the seamless weave of human reason and its correlation with being, a fracture that can admit exteriority – the possibility of “fissure”, yet without diminishing the capacity for thought. Such a *fissure* would traumatise and call into question the adequacy of reason and the sovereignty of the intentional I. The structure of Levinas' insomnia is applicable to this task (“NM”, 160-1; “Nonintentional Consciousness”, *Entre Nous*, 131-2; “TDTT”, 102-7).

23. Insomnia is a “rending” of the subject “as if” this might be of the infinite, of God as it were – “[w]e hear in the “as if” the equivocation or the enigma of the nonphenomenon, the nonrepresentable...” (“CWSH”, 26, 190 n. 30). Levinas' frequent use of “hostage” is an apparent reversal of Husserl's repetition of consciousness “seizing upon” its content: Husserl, *Ideas I*, §§ 34-36, 41-46, 88-90.

24. *Otherwise than Being*, 94-97.

25. “IPI”, 208-211; *Existence and Existents*, 65-67; *Time and the Other*, 48-49. Husserl's *insomnia* is a vigilance of intentionality assimilating into the I, the awakening shock of alterity outside the subject (24-25) (citing Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, rev. and ed. Ludwig Landgrebe, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Ameriks [Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1973] § 17; *Phenomenological Psychology: Lectures Summer Semester 1925*, trans. John Scanlon [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977] vol. 9, 479-80). Levinas' *insomnia* by contrast, is an incision of the other in the same, a “scission” of the subject rather than an awakening to conscious sovereignty. This

incision in thought that is more expansive than conceptual formulation, questioning that does not presuppose an answer, desire that exceeds passion, or vigilance that is more alert than wakefulness.²⁶ The compounding effect of these *incisions* is analogous to having a consciousness (*ipseity*) larger than *subjectivity*.²⁷ With an excess of the other within, the subject is described as being “too tight in its skin, in itself already outside of itself”.²⁸

In order to establish the possibility of thinking *transcendence* without intentionality, and therefore *insomniac encounter with the (infinite) other*, Levinas frequently cites Descartes’ *Meditations*, with its reference to the infinite as an incision within the subject.²⁹ Descartes’ recognition of the *in-finite within*, is, for Levinas, significantly overlooked by modern rational thought, which nevertheless cites its foundations in the

incision is sourced by diachrony as an ever novel alterity, unassimilable, punctuating the subject with difference. While Husserl’s consciousness is *wakefulness*, Levinas’ *wakefulness* is incised in consciousness. For Levinas, Husserl’s *wakefulness* is “falling asleep” – “[a]s though consciousness, in its identification of the Same, fell asleep in “being awakened” (“CWSH”, 23-29). Husserl’s *awakening* is intentional willing, giving or “lending meaning”, and therefore the manifestation of “the *this* or the *that*.” (“NM”, 154). Levinas cites Husserl’s “Intersubjective Reduction” as an “awakening”, through trauma or tearing, to an other than the “I” (“PaA”, 86-87, citing *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 9 [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, Collection *Husserliana*, 1962]). Husserl’s “awakening” is conscious movement toward otherness as “similarity” and “likeness” – a somatic “There” (an other) inscribed in “Here” (Ego): *Cartesian Meditations*, §§ 51, 54-55. Likewise, the “waking Ego” is “wakening consciousness” to manifestation of the world “on hand for me”: *Ideas I*, §§ 27, 35.

26. Levinas speaks of “the irreducible, categorical character of insomnia: the Other in the Same who does not alienate the Same, but precisely wakes him. This awakening is like a demand that no obedience equals, and no obedience puts to sleep: a ‘more’ in the ‘less’.” (“GaP”, 59, 62-68; *Time and the Other*, 48-49).

27. “CDNM”, 50-51; “CWSH”, 29-31; *Otherwise than Being*, 64, 99-102.

28. *Otherwise than Being*, 104, 106, 108, 110, 114-5.

29. Levinas does not cite Descartes’ *idea of the infinite* after Descartes’ strategy for proving the existence of God, but rather for its perforation of the synthesising consciousness. It is a “second movement of consciousness” (*apropos* Descartes’ *Third Meditation*) that is not contained by the first (*apropos* the *Second Meditation*), therefore a “passivity” and “trauma” (“GaP”, 62-65; “TBQO”, 119; “The Idea of the Infinite in Us”, *Entre Nous*, 219-222; “OoE”, 215-217; “TaI”, 155-157). René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy. With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, trans. and ed. John Cottingham, rev. ed. (Cambridge et al: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 16-23, 24-36. “I do not grasp the infinite...for it is in the nature of the infinite not to be grasped by a finite being like myself” (32).

Cartesian legacy.³⁰ Levinas resists interpreting the infinite as a mere negation of finitude, which would only inscribe infinity within finitude, a variation of finitude (a *spurious* infinite – the finite extended infinitely) and being, and therefore he resists its thematization in the thinking of being. Instead, he suggests that the *in-finite* is *otherwise than being*.³¹ The *in* is the *in within* – an incision in the finite, perforating the finite, not negating it, but rather, thinking the finite *otherwise*³² (this is not a “negative theology”³³). The possibility of thinking “God” is opened by this infinity, which does not guarantee or certify that infinity provides a discourse of “God”, but rather, the thinking restlessness invoked by the incision of infinity is itself, “search for God”.³⁴

Levinas offers the possibility of exposure to infinity without the subject initiating such thought, which is the paradoxical challenge of thinking beyond intentional thought.³⁵ Insomnia is another intelligibility that disturbs and “awakens” subjectivity from within, yet without being sourced by rational intentionality.³⁶ This is a rending of subjectivity in apprehension by the other.³⁷ The “*idea of the infinite*” within subjectivity fractures the unity of the *cogito* that commands illumination and truth in thinking being. It is a “trauma” and “insomnia” that is not commanded by the subject, but rather, exceeds the subject’s capacity to assimilate this incision.³⁸ In the thematizing

30. The *synoptic* capacity of the *cogito* to recover, re-present, synthesise, and “fill the field of consciousness” with presence of the Same [*apropos* the *Second Meditation*] (“GaP”, 59-61). “The unity of the *I think* is the ultimate form of spirit as knowledge” (*apropos* Hegel, Kant, Husserl) (“DSPN”, 139-143).

31. *Otherwise than Being*, 9; “TBQO”, 113-114, 119; “QA”, 94-95. *Spurious infinity* is “bad infinity”, which *apropos* Hegel, is only a “negation of the finite”. It has not thought being *otherwise* (“Ideology and Idealism” [“IaI”], *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 8. Likewise, *insomnia* is not “defined as a simple negation of the natural phenomenon of sleep...” (“GaP”, 58).

32. “It is the ‘in’ of the ‘infinite in the finite,’ which is also the *outside* more exterior than any exteriority”, and as such, is “transcendence” or “infinite” (“TBQO”, 119-21; “GaP”, 64-66). The infinite is “an unencompassable idea”, *anarchic*, traced in *diachrony*, and fragmenting “synopsia” (64-65).

33. “TBQO”, 120. The non-phenomenality of *God* is not an “apophatic negation”, and negative theology is an expression of the “bad infinite” (“Foreword”, xi, xiv).

34. “And there is no atheism in this way of not taking God for a term. I think that God has no meaning outside the search for God.” (“QA”, 95).

35. How is one to interpret the “*beyond*” of thought that is wakened in thinking? Levinas argues for thought without intentionality vis-à-vis correlation, consciousness, representation (*apropos* Husserl – questions of ultimate concern are laundered thought, filtered through the intentionality of consciousness, which reflexively instates apprehension). Levinas asks whether the psyche thinks *otherwise than being* or *beyond essence*. Can the psyche be opened to another dimension other than the “re-presentation” of the “passivity of *being*” in the affirmation of the *I* (“HaB”, 100-105).

36. “GaP”, 57-59. A central question in “God and Philosophy” – What is the meaning of awakening to a trauma of the infinite within, an excess that cannot be contained by subjectivity, but which is nevertheless an intelligent relation with the infinite? (66-67).

37. “GaP”, 59-60.

38. “GaP”, 60-65. The ideals of philosophical thought – correlation, coincidence, manifestation, and intentionality – are *torn* from inside out in diachrony, to evoke in the

vocation of the thinking subject, the endeavour to assimilate (philosophically) religious discourse of God, misses a dimension in the word “God”, which is exteriority.³⁹ While theological discourse is reflexively colonised within thematizing philosophical categories [even in biblical studies], a “pure lack”, which “cuts” into the unity of subjectivity, suggests an exteriority that cannot be named as such (that is, by the word “God”).⁴⁰

While contrasting with the sober vigilance of modern reason pitched against the *bewitchment* and *nocturnal irrationality* of myth and superstition, *insomnia* is nevertheless a metaphor of reason, “an *other rationality*...a rationality of transcendence”.⁴¹ Alterity is not antithetical to reason, even if it extends beyond reason and fractures *the same* (“*le même*”) with the claim of *the other*, *the same* being that which is representable, assimilable, immanent within the subject’s thematic, correlative, perception of the world.⁴² *Insomniac reason*, however, is conscious of being divided against itself – torn – vigilant without being the source of its vigilance, conscious but without possessing unified subjectivity, having been awakened to thought that is nevertheless beyond its circumscription.⁴³

Levinas describes the “intrigue” of the *Infinite within* as a subjectivity that is “cored out” even as it is “nourished” by this lack through excess, which is described as “Desire”, an excess that can never be “encompassed” by the subject.⁴⁴ Desire for transcendence is without self-

interval in which the other comes within the same, an insomniac vigilance that is thinking without intentionality, spirituality without repose in the thematics of theology, God without recourse to being (“IPI”, 207-212). Compare Husserl’s “unity of consciousness”, the first given, which is characterised by Descartes’ *cogito* (*Ideas* I, § 34); consciousness is indubitable even if the world is not (§§ 46, 49-50, 55).

39. “GaP”, 57-62; “HaB”, 105. “God” is assimilated into the order of intentionality (105).

40. “GaP”, 60-62. Levinas suggests that “philosophical theism”, along with “philosophical atheism” is a refusal to stake “a claim beyond the world” (“HaB”, 105). The implication of religious discourse in rational philosophical discourse – “[r]ational theology accepts this vassalage”, otherwise it remains “philosophically unverifiable” (“GaP”, 55).

41. “CWSH”, 15-17; “FCP”, 205-206. “[T]he Other” exceeding “the Same”, thought by Hegel to be “incomplete thought”, is subject to a “midday sun” of reason (Husserl’s “encompassing and synthetic activity of transcendental consciousness”) that “scours every horizon in which *the other* would be hidden” (“TBQO”, 114); “The intelligibility of being is always high noon without shadows...” *Otherwise than Being*, 133, 137. Thinking *otherwise* than rational coincidence is regarded as “unhappy consciousness” (“HaB”, 107). The “opinion of faith” is rejected by reason, which is “lucidity” and “keeping watch over being” (“GaP”, 57, 60).

42. See sections, “Adequation” and “Beyond Intentionality”, in “NM”, 154-9, 159-3.

43. “IPI”, 209-210; “CWSH”, 26. “Such is the irreducible character of insomnia: the Other *within* the Same who does not alienate the Same but who awakens” the self-same to what it is not (“IPI”, 209; “*le même*” *Totality and Infinity*, 26).

44. “GaP”, 59, 62-67. Levinas describes this as “passivity, or passion, in which Desire is recognized, in which the ‘more in the less’ awakens...a thought destined to think more than it thinks” (67); “Meaning and Sense”, trans. Alphonso Lingis [“MaS”], *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 52-53, 55.

interest. It is desire for “the good beyond being”.⁴⁵ It is therefore *the ethical, beyond being* and discontinuous with the subject’s interest, unlike the possessiveness of being, after “ownness” in Husserl,⁴⁶ or “mineness” in Heidegger’s *Dasein*.⁴⁷ The ethical requires no *a priori* conditions, ontologically or theologically; it is “dis-interestedness”, anarchic and unable to be presented, *otherwise than being*,⁴⁸ yet nevertheless not discontinuous with the finite. The subject is apprehended, exceeded, and *hollowed out* in its finitude by the *in-finite within*.⁴⁹ In “God and Philosophy”, this incision is described as “divine comedy”, which is a reversal of Desire for the infinitely desirable, becoming undesirable (as “Holy”) in its infinity or transcendence. The excess of the infinite dumbfounds the subject and awakens it to thought that cannot be assimilated – an *ethical* trauma before which the subject is passive.⁵⁰ Accordingly,

the Infinite is in relation with the finite without contradicting itself through this relation, where, on the contrary, it comes to pass only as Infinity and as awakening. The Infinite transcends itself in the finite, it passes the finite in that it orders the neighbour to me...without exposing itself to me.⁵¹

45. “GaP”, 67; “Essence and Disinterestedness”, 124-5, trans. Alphonso Lingis, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, 124-125; (Plato *Republic* 505a, 507a3, 508e, 509b, 577b) 178 n. 4. Levinas equates an *otherwise than being* with Plato’s “Good Beyond Being” – diachronic and anarchic, infinite, enigmatic in its disclosure, because always able to be interpreted otherwise, but interpreted as the ethical because a welcome of the proximate other and “substitution” of being in responsibility for the other: *Otherwise than Being*, 18-19.

46. Husserl, *Ideas I* – this world “for me” (§§ 27-29, 46); *Cartesian Meditations* – otherness “for me” or “thereness-for-me” (§§ 43, 45, 46, 49).

47. Heidegger’s “being-there as *having-to-be*” is possessive (“CDNM”, 45-47; “QA”, 92). Even Heidegger’s “*Miteinandersein*” (“being-with-another-person”) is proximate, even oneness (“Philosophy, Justice, and Love”, *Entre Nous*, 116. On Heidegger’s “mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*)” – Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 67-68, 78 (compare *Dasein*’s “ownmost potentiality-for-Being” 236; “the idea of existence as a potentiality-for-Being...which is in each case *mine*” 275, 323).

48. Levinas’ *dis-inter-estedness* is deferral of grasping being. “Foreword”, xiii. In “*dis-interestedness*” the subject relinquishes its stake in being (*interest*), irrevocably, to become a “hostage” to the other’s interests in “destitution”, to be put “into question” by this assignation to “responsibility-for-the-other” (“substitution for the other”), signifying an otherwise than being without retrieval. This is “disinterestedness” (“IaI”, 10).

49. “GaP”, 66-67. The *intrigue* of Desire signifies “transcendence” inasmuch as the subject is apprehended, passive before such Desire, without intentionality, yet with Desire for this transcendence in its Goodness – “Is not the *disinterestedness* of the Desire for the Infinite an *interestedness*?” (67).

50. “The thematization of God in religious experience has already conjured away or missed the excess of the intrigue that breaks the unity of the ‘I think.’” (“GaP”, 62). The excess of the *infinite within*, not a negation of the finite (*false infinity*), is incomprehensible – a trauma and an awakening insomnia (“GaP”, 65-70).

51. “GaP”, 75. Levinas’ “*inspiration*” is the “intrigue of infinity” constituting the subject through responsibility, and through which the subject is both source and recipient of testimony to the Infinite (75-76).

In this way, Levinas does not seek to posit a *world behind the world*,⁵² or to establish a theological reality *beyond being*, but rather, seeks an *otherwise than being within being*, which is ethical because ontologically *dis-interested* in one's being – passive, vulnerable, and therefore the basis for a relation with the proximate other, which is nevertheless infinite in its source as the unassimilable other.⁵³

The ethical as *the good* beyond being, source of insomnia and ineluctable in its structure of assignation to the other, presents two points of investigation that may have distinctive relevance for theological inquiry: first, prophetic witness to the Infinite after the structure of biblical revelation; and secondly, *saying* as skepticism and the possibility of a theology as ethics in the recurring perforation of the *said* (that is, thematization).

PROPHETIC WITNESS TO THE INFINITE

The metaphor, insomnia, signifies a tear in the seamless weave of human reason and its complicity with totalising being – an admission of exteriority, the other, calling into question the adequacy of reason in circumscribing otherness in the same, yet without diminishing intelligibility. Levinas suggests that such exteriority might come as an imperative from the other, “a command” that would nevertheless exceed the subject's “capacity” adequately to respond. Exteriority, or in biblical terms, *revelation*, is based on the ethical – a summons that cannot be fulfilled, breaking the rational subject's grasp on being, but nevertheless, a trauma appealing to intelligible responsibility.⁵⁴ In this way, the human person becomes a site of revelation – “the one through whom there *is* a Revelation” – not because it comes from a divine source, at least a source that can be ascertained as such, but because the human is a “site of transcendence”⁵⁵ –

the subject of our enquiry is the *very fact of the Revelation*, and the relation it establishes with exteriority. This exteriority – unlike the exteriority which surrounds man [sic] whenever he seeks knowledge [that is, the negation] – cannot be transformed into a

52. “TBQO”, 116.

53. “Tal”, 157-159. Levinas' “the third” modulates potentially infinite demand from the other. *The third* is the other's other, including the subject as an other to another, *a third*. *The third* is the thematization of justice within sociality: *Otherwise than Being*, 158-62.

54. “RJT”, 207. Jewish [biblical] revelation is a transcendence that “fractures” the immanent totality of *the same*, an alterity that awakens the subject to the claims of *the other* in the asymmetrical relationship of justice toward neighbour (205-209).

55. “RJT”, 205. “[I]nfinity” (“of infinity”) is *effected* in the awareness of “disproportion” generated “in the relationship of the same [*le même*] with the other [*l'autre*]”, and this “infinity is produced as revelation...” (*Totality and Infinity*, 26).

content within interiority; it remains “uncontainable”, infinite (*infinie*), and yet the relation is maintained.⁵⁶

Biblical revelation sustains a non-assimilable infinity while making a specific claim on the subject’s responsibility toward the other, a response as responsibility. This correlates with Levinas’ view that prophetic testimony arises within the prophet as the prophet’s own words, and yet it is an incision of the infinite within the responsible and intelligent subject.⁵⁷ It is a wakefulness – vigilance against a desire to be so vigilant. Revelation is an “awakening” to the other.⁵⁸ As such, it is ethical. The significance of biblical revelation is not a claim to a *divine source* (albeit with the caveats of historical-critical engagement) but its inexorable “ethical testimony” that permeates its diverse genres. The biblical tradition is unique for its “prophetic excellence”, which signifies “through the expression of the face of the other”, not by disclosing a certain content as such. Rather, prophetic testimony confirms an ineluctable relation between infinity and the face.⁵⁹

Saying upsurges in the “face to face” encounter with the proximate other, an embodiment (“incarnation”) that signifies more than the given, bearing signification or meaning “beyond the given” to infinity.⁶⁰ The cry of human persons under absolute duress – “the cry of ethical revolt” – suspicious, raw, unsystematised, prophetic, is intelligent witness to responsibility.⁶¹ Prophetic intelligence is anterior to the reasons of reason, unthematizable in the “face to face”⁶² – a phenomenon that is traced to infinity.⁶³ The face also signifies an *otherwise* than the *alêtheia* of being’s manifestation in the given (*apropos* Heidegger), for the face of infinity apprehends one ethically in the proximity of neighbour. For Levinas, ethical witness to exteriority in the infinity of the face is prior to

56. “RJT”, 207 italics mine.

57. “RJT”, 206-207.

58. “RJT”, 209.

59. Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Phillippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985) 114-17.

60. The function of “metaphor” is “reference to absence”, to infinity and incarnation of signification (“MaS”, 34-36, 39-40). A “metaphor” is “‘movement’ beyond” being. Even though stated in words of the “said (*dit*)”, metaphor performs the exteriority of “*saying* (*du dire*) to the other” (“HaB”, 105-106). Levinas’ signifying is not dominated by the signified, therefore signifying continues to “rupture” the signified. *Otherwise than being* is signified in exposure to the other, whose proximity in the *naked face* is a summons to responsibility “for-the-other” that has no correlation in ideology. It is *beyond essence* (the same) and recalls Plato’s good “beyond being” (“IaI”, 12-14).

61. “GaP”, 77.

62. “The I and the Totality”, *Entre Nous*, 34; “IaI”, 4. The cry of the other is the saying that ruptures the *said* (13).

63. *Otherwise than Being*, 93-94, 97. The face however, is not “a sign of a hidden God” (94). The biblical *imago Dei* has its pertinent signification “in the ‘you’ and not in the ‘I’ that this resemblance is announced” (“DSPN”, 148).

[religious] concern for truth in the manifestation of being,⁶⁴ even the supreme being, "God".

The infinite awakens the subject to responsibility and utterance, before this can be thematized. This "assignation" to responsibility for the other is *insomnia*.⁶⁵ From this structure, Levinas is able to invoke the biblical genre of witness and endorse prophetic intelligibility beyond reason. The word "God" too, is intelligible, ethically, without being circumscribed by reason, and the saying of this intelligibility (as meaning) occurs before its thematization in the *said*.⁶⁶ The prophetic marks an incision of infinity in subjectivity – "the other in the same", to which one can only respond in the pure signification of "here I am", and in this "accusative" response, "bear witness to the infinite".⁶⁷ Levinas resists any suggestion that "prophetic" signification or "witnessing" takes his discourse "into the moving sands of religious experience".⁶⁸ The prophetic is older than inspiration of an experiential or kerygmatic disclosure of God to the prophetic figure. Rather, *substitution* in Levinas' assignation in response to the other (the "one-for-the-other"⁶⁹) is prophetic in its anarchic apprehension of *the same* by *the other*, whereby one is wakened, yet without having the capacity to represent what, or to whom one is wakened. Such representation would be a diminution of infinity. Prophetic witness cannot speak of God, even if "God" is invoked as the authority in whose name one speaks.⁷⁰ Therefore, a contradiction occurs in prophetic testimony – having been apprehended by the infinite, the witness speaks by the authority of the infinite, but cannot appeal to any further disclosure or endorsement of this witness beyond the prophet's own words. The prophetic witnesses

64. "TaH", 21, 173 n. 13, 19-21; *Otherwise than Being*, 88-89, 91, 97; "NM", 162-175. Address (*saying*) to the other as asymmetrical "welcome" (which is not based on reciprocity), the "face to face" *saying* or "dialogue" wherein the otherness of the other is sustained as welcome, is prior to an address to *the divine* ("invisible God") who cannot be assimilated to any knowledge of positive theology ("DSPN", 148-51). Compare Levinas' "à-Dieu" ("unto God"), which combines "movement toward" (the Infinite) and "responsibility for the other" – a movement toward the *anarchic* beyond intentionality: *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, 184 n. 3, 4, 5.

65. *Otherwise than Being*, 85-87; "IPI", 208-209. The I becomes secondary in the awakening of the other within ("CWSH", 28).

66. "GaP", 75-78. Biblical signification or saying is not "subject to criteria...to show itself true or false" (56).

67. *Otherwise than Being*, 143, 149; "GaP", 75; "Subjectivity and Responsibility", *God, Death, and Time*, 187-8. The summoned subject is always in "the accusative" and therefore responsible ("GaP", 68).

68. "GaP", 76.

69. *Otherwise than Being*, 135-140, 165-167, 170. "The soul is the other in me. The psyche, the-one-for-the-other..." (191 n. 3). "Assignation" of the unique subject to responsibility for the other, is being "chosen" or *election* (122-8; "GaP", 72-75). From absorption in being to *substitution* in "the-one-for-the-other" of responsibility for the proximate other. This *substitution* is before being, anarchic in its diachrony and recurrence (*Otherwise than Being*, 113-8, 131-40, 148-9).

70. *Otherwise than Being*, 149-52.

can only cite themselves in testimony to the infinite, and without any form of certification that they speak *of* or *for* the infinite.⁷¹ The impossible contradiction remains as long as the prophetic subject bears witness to the infinite *as the infinite*, for any kerygmatic way out of this aporia, is a *betrayal*. Yet the betrayal does occur. Witness to the infinite is betrayed when it is translated into a theme ("the said"). This "said" as the predicating grammar of the word "God", must constantly be *unsaid* in order to bear witness to the infinite.⁷² In any move to apply Levinas' approach to a *theology without affirmation*, *saying* must be re-established in resistance to thematization, and this *unsaying of the said* necessarily occurs through "an abuse of language".⁷³ Awakening to the infinite is articulated by language that can only invoke rather than thematize meaning – "a state of wakefulness" that is "more thoughtful than the thought of being...in a language that ceaselessly unsays itself, a language that insinuates".⁷⁴ Insomnia is a "passivity" that nevertheless induces one to responsibility, having been awakened to the other and for the other – the other who cannot be assimilated, holds the subject hostage.⁷⁵ "God", if this is a name which can be given for this other, cannot be circumscribed and synthesised within an *archê* or a *telos*, and therefore subverts [theological] attempts at representation. The visage of the other in the proximity of neighbour is both prior to representations of alterity (God?) and continually traumatizes or unsettles those representations that assume a synthesis of what always remains a trace of the other.⁷⁶ The other's enigmatic claim upon the subject, whether the other is named God or neighbour, is an ethical claim to an ineluctable responsibility.⁷⁷ It is also a turn to testimony in speaking this relation. Prophetic testimony is a disclosure of transcendence, without disclosing transcendence in its alterity. What is disclosed is an ethical assignation that leaves its trace to infinity. The prophetic is intelligible witness to the other, but beyond intelligence. It is not philosophical, ontological, or theological, but ethical – focused in the demands of transcendence or alterity in the addressed subject, and the

71. Levinas refers to this as "an inversion of order" in which revelation occurs in the response to the infinite, not from the infinite (*Otherwise than Being*, 149, 151, 156).

72. *Otherwise than Being*, 151-2. "Transcendence owes it to itself to interrupt its own demonstration. Its voice has to be silent as soon as one listens for its message" (152).

73. *Otherwise than Being*, 156. *Saying* is a "dissimulation" of the *said* in *unsaying* (152). In contrast to "the *said*", which is language of intentionality, thematization, and communication, Levinas' "*saying*" is a failure of intentionality precisely because it is an interruption in the repose of intentionality in "*re-presentation*" ("HaB", 106).

74. "TBQO", 121.

75. "IPI", 208-10. Ethical "assignation" (as *hostage*) to responsibility for the other is a "welcome" of the Good beyond being (*Otherwise than Being*, 122-3).

76. "GaP", 68-69.

77. "GaP", 57-60. A humanising anxiety inspired by "the Other (*l'Autre*)" elicits the response of "here I am" in "welcoming" the neighbour ("RJT", 207).

subject's response to, and responsibility for the other.⁷⁸ If Levinas' ethics is *first philosophy*,⁷⁹ is it perhaps also *first theology*? This might seem a reasonable extension, but what Levinas appears to give to theology with one hand, he simultaneously takes away with the other.

Levinas' quest for thought beyond intentionality (post-phenomenology), and for an exteriority within being (post-Heidegger) while beginning from the proximate other (phenomenology), frames his approach to *religion*. This approach does not begin from the "abstract idea of God", but what is described as the "religious situation" of responsibility for the other, which the subject cannot evade.⁸⁰ In this way, Levinas begins from a phenomenology of human responsibility before the face of the other, in order to establish a non-phenomenological basis for ethics [therefore the *religious*] in infinity. That is, he begins from the given, in order to secure an opening to exteriority in ethics, within the given. The phenomenon of exteriority in the face of the proximate other who summons the subject to responsibility is ethical, and has its source in the non-phenomenological infinite, which interrupts the seamlessness of being as an openness to exteriority. We can never ascertain whether this exteriority is theological or not, let alone establish the historical and textual grounds for theological claims, much less for theological certitude. The biblical tradition upsurges with saying that is interruptive, an exteriority to being, in a generation of imperatives, testimony, vocative address, rather than indicatives, which are at best, couched in symbolic, mythic, and metaphorical registers. It is a saying erupting in the said, despite the perennial temptation of theology to circumscribe saying by the said. Biblical tradition as prophetic testimony provides Levinas with a site to think beyond being within being; to think alterity in such a way that this thought remains other, uncircumscribed by reason, uncertified in *the given*, and unassimilable in consciousness.

SAYING AND THE PARADOX OF THEOLOGY AS SCEPTICISM

The question sustained in this study is whether it is possible to articulate a theology that interrupts itself, *unsaying* what it *says*, in order to bear witness to the Infinite, "the other", which we can never determine is "God" or not. To think theology as a discourse of infinity

78. "GaP", 75-78.

79. "EFP", 76-87.

80. "TaH", 29. God is only spoken of through the other. "The abstract idea of God is an idea that cannot clarify a human situation. It is the inverse that is true" (29).

without certifying the word "God", would be a thinking of God in skeptical registers. Infinity can be thought *otherwise* than theologically.⁸¹

In Levinas' method, proximity to the other gives rise to signification, but signification does not imply the certitude that might be desired for theologically grounded faith. Proximity generates signification as saying in response to the summons of the face of neighbour, but saying is always being thematized as a said, nevertheless to be undone by new saying. Language as *saying* "undoing" *every said* that attempts to circumscribe saying in a thematic schema, is intrinsically skeptical as the constant rupture of the said in new saying.⁸² The significance of this saying is its punctuation or interval, a condition of possibility for recurrence in any new saying (iterability). Scepticism marks the trace of this condition of language, including theological discourse. This recurrence occurs in the duration of time and is the insomniac possibility of interruption, exteriority (therefore the ethical), and consequently theology without certitude. The punctuations or ruptures of the said, marked by skepticism, establish the trace of intervals, which are necessary for any reiteration of the said in the duration of time.⁸³ Diachrony prevents thematization and therefore opens a space for questioning in every ensemble of truth gathered into an "exposition". Scepticism is a recurrence of the questioning interval in every exposition of the said.⁸⁴

This trace of a necessary interval is anarchic, "immemorial", an incision of the other in the same, and phenomenised in time and the face of an other. As such, it is infinite in the recurrence of iterable time. Insomnia is directly related to time and the fecundity of iterable time. The other within the same, the structure of diachrony, is the structure of insomnia, its recurrence untraceable in its genesis and infinite in its welcome of the other.⁸⁵ *Scepticism* precedes theological discourse as a

81. *Otherwise than Being*, 156. To use the "word 'God'" in theology is not to recognise the exteriority in this word to the degree that to recognise this dimension, may mean *not* speaking theologically ("GaP", 56, 62).

82. Levinas suggests that "[l]anguage is already skepticism", haunting rational thought, contesting the solidification of thought in the "said" (*Otherwise than Being*, 44, 167-168, 170; *Totality and Infinity*, 30).

83. Skepticism signifies a non-recuperated interval that punctuates temporality with "rupture, failure, impotence or impossibility of discourse...". The intervals are the trace of saying, the trace itself signifying diachrony, an anarchic interval always already inscribed in the said (*Otherwise than Being*, 168-70). Exteriority is sustained in the "hollowness" of signification that "affects" being, while not being part of being. Signification is "always to come" and therefore sustains a hollowness that is never filled ("TBQO", 117-118; "PaA", 84-88).

84. *Otherwise than Being*, 19-20. Levinas refers to an "original questioning" that is not due to "a deficiency of answers" ("QA", 85-87). Questioning is ineluctable in relation to the Infinite, because the Infinite is infinite ("TBQO", 119-20).

85. "CWSH", 23-26; "TBQO", 118; *Otherwise than Being*, 104-105. See also *Totality and Infinity*, 282-4. Levinas describes "this agitation of the Same by the Other, as the *diachrony* of time. This is a time that would lend itself (*se donnerait*) to our understanding as a reference to God..." ("IPI", 207). Iterability is the inability to escape infinity. The self as

mark of its possibility in the anarchic *trace* of an *interval* that admits saying, while always ensuing it in the insomniac encounter with theology as a *said*.

An *otherwise than intentional* (and indeed systematic) *thinking* of theology must be thought as an incision or interruption within any system rather than its negation, replicating the difference between insomnia and intentional wakefulness. This incision is a signifying that can never settle for “God” as the focus of theology, but rather, is apprehension by the infinite, without ever knowing if the host is God.⁸⁶ For example, Jacob wrestling all night at Peni’el, does not know whether he wrestles with God or another person, except that only the infinite could bless with a wound.⁸⁷ In Levinasian terms, this is an *incision in subjectivity* – an insomnia through apprehension by the indeterminate other. In this proposal, discourse of “God” could only be presented in *undecidable* hermeneutical registers, in order to sustain an insomnia in the passivity of apprehension that is inscribed in faith, and that can never assume intentional mastery of its focus.⁸⁸ Such undecidable registers are pervasive in biblical tradition and its poetics – in confession, testimony, prophetic utterance, aphorism, or narrative – the necessary hermeneutical criteria for response being, “whoever has ears to hear, hear”.⁸⁹ A theology intentionally conceived as a perforation of smooth theological surfaces and sustained through undecidable registers would correlate with language itself as a site of insomnia, generating its own perforation. Such theology, inscribed in an insomniac laceration of language, would always be in a state of erasing its own conceptual footprints, yet leaving traces of this erasure, having to think *otherwise than intentional* thematic engagement.⁹⁰ Metaphors such as “arrest” or “apprehension”, “hostage”, “trauma”, and “passivity”, compound the insomniac image of relation with the infinite, to effect a silhouette of its trace. Metaphorically, this might be described as a wrung-out sunrise *experience* of enduring the insomniac night, and “trauma” rather than tranquillity is its erased trace of an encounter that is never actually experienced while being incised in all experience – an

apprehended in an archaic trauma of recurrence, cannot escape its other – the other keeps returning, commanding, hostaging to response (*Otherwise than Being*, 28) – structurally, “[t]he diachrony of time as a fear of God” (“TBQO”, 118). Levinas speaks of biblical witness, not as theology but as ethics. The foundation for such ethics is exteriority and diachrony – anarchic intervals that make possible all contingency in being and therefore the coming of, and interruption by the other (“TBQO”, 117-121).

86. For transcendence to be transcendence, to appear as such, it must be ambiguous, *otherwise* in its contestability and non-recognition; language only gives the word “God” as an alibi for transcendence. Levinas, “Jean Lacroix: Philosophy and Religion”, *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1996) 93.

87. Genesis 32:22-32: Peni’el *face of God* (v. 30).

88. Compare Levinas’ strategic use of “hyperbole” (*Otherwise than Being*, 183).

89. Mark 4:9: ἵνα ἅς ἐπειρήσῃ αὐτοὺς ἀκούειν καὶ οὐκ ἀκούουσιν.

90. *apropos Otherwise than Being*, 20.

after-effect rather than tangible effect. Again, we might compare the theo-mythic image of Jacob, who does not see and therefore recognise the face of the other with whom he wrestles, but rather, only bears the wound or trace of this encounter. Theology is a *doxic* attempt to cover over this scandal of insomnia, yet could a certain kind of theology remain uncertain as to the source of vigilance generated by such insomnia?⁹¹

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In concluding, we return to our primary investigation – Levinas' *insomnia as vigilance without intentionality* in which the subject is hostage to thinking the infinite without initiating such thought, and our question as to whether this is applicable to theology. Inasmuch as theology interrupts itself in every "said" to be constantly *unsaid*, it might bear witness to the infinite, "the other". Yet theology is unable to determine whether this other is "God" or not. It can only assert, without certifying that the word "God" can serve as an adequate alibi for infinity. *Insomniac theology* would be a thinking of infinity only as *the impossible thought* of God. Infinity can be thought *otherwise*. In following Levinas' critique of philosophical discourse circumscribed by being, this article suggests that *theology*, if we are to speak of theology, is at first *ethics* – an assignation to responsibility for the proximate other as to the infinite, before naming theological dimensions of this infinity. Yet infinity is thought only as a perforation in such naming, in a constant re-awakening to ethical responsibility that cannot be thematized finally, in a theological *raison d'être* as such. Therefore, *theology* is to be performed, ethically, as responsibility, tearing its own telling as the very impetus of this telling.

This article has investigated two ways in which a hypothesis of *theology as insomnia* might be thought paradoxically, as resistance to thematization – theology as prophetic witness to the Infinite with its ineluctable response to the other (the prophetic "Here I am"); saying and the skeptical as an *ensuing premise* for recurrence of every said in theology. Levinas' *insomniac vigilance without intentionality* may be applicable to such theology, in which the subject is hostage to thinking God without initiating such thought. This apprehension is a source of *saying* as response to *the other*, which cannot sustain theological inscription beyond its revelation as an ethical summons to responsibility.

91. See *Otherwise than Being*, 196 n. 19 – theology is only possible as failure; theology would have to contest its *raison d'être* to signify infinity. The insomniac interruption of consciousness by the other is the basis on which theology only remains a possibility, *unsaid* even as it is *said*, and not an imperative of biblical witness presumed to yield a *doxic* disclosure.

The metaphor, insomnia, is helpful in depicting the *other's* (transcendent) claim upon us. If we are wakened and vigilant without being the source of this wakefulness, it is the other who generates this vigilance in the self-same, and yet we can never be certain who this other is. Is this tolerable for theology? The subject is passive before the claim of this *otherness*, as it is before insomnia, yet the subject is responsible for this claim in all the intentional activity that it connotes. To this insomnia the subject is wakened and held hostage to a vigilance of risk in the face of the other, and uncertainty as to the source of the other's alterity or transcendence. In short, this is *the* challenge of faith that remains faith, and ethical responsibility without theological certification of its expenditure.