

# TOWARDS A POLITICS OF LOVE:

The question of transcendence as transimmanence in the thought of

Jean-Luc Nancy

by

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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology in the Faculty  
of Theology at the University of Pretoria*



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APRIL – 2016

## Declaration

By submitting this thesis, *Towards a politics of love: The question of transcendence as transimmanence in the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy*, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.



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April 2016

## Abstract

Is a notion of transcendence still possible, after (a certain) metaphysics, which enables a sense of politics that does not reduce difference? This study seeks to address the question by first suggesting that in Edmund Husserl's redefinition of the distinction between immanence (the subject's cognition) and transcendence (the world/ the other) one finds a 'starting point' for the endeavor.

Additionally, three criteria for guiding the set-out task of thinking after metaphysics are proposed. The first criterion concerns the *modus operandi* for thinking after metaphysics that I call a *thinking the same different* taken from Martin Heidegger's way of engaging with the history of thought. The second criterion is also provided by Heidegger in his critique of ontotheology and accordingly concerns avoiding ontotheology, which is synonymous with thinking after (a certain) metaphysics, i.e. the metaphysics of ontotheology. Furthermore, in appropriating Heidegger, account is also taken of his involvement with the Nazi regime, as demythologizing Heidegger with the help of John Caputo. The third and final criterion concerns thinking the other (not the Other) sprouting from Emmanuel Levinas' critique of Heidegger sublating alterity.

In turn, these criteria are argued to be met in the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy, who also redefines the distinction between immanence (subject) and transcendence (the world/ the other), allowing me to make a case for Nancy providing an alternative sense of politics that allows for difference. This alternative sense of politics is found in Nancy's re-appropriation of Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*, as thinking the *with* of being-*with*, which concerns the plurality of singularities. Moreover, it is argued that Nancy's notion of transcendence as transimmanence enables his alternative sense of politics.

Furthermore, Nancy's thought is brought into a debate with that of Levinas, who might also be considered to provide a way to answer the question above. The debate hinges on Levinas' rejection, and Nancy re-appropriation of Heidegger and includes Critchley's Levinasian critique of Nancy, as well as a Nancian reply and critique of Levinas in a discussion on love. Following the debate, the concluding remarks propose why Nancy is preferred above Levinas in answering the question, and the implications of Nancy's thought for the South African context.

**Keywords:** being-*with*, Heidegger, Levinas, metaphysics, Nancy, ontotheology, politics, transcendence, transimmanence, love

## Acknowledgements

A special word of thanks needs to be given to the following people, who have all contributed to the creation and completion of this work:

My supervisor Johann Meylahn: Thank you for all the guidance, suggestions and most of all patience in the process of formulating the final argument of the thesis.

To my mentor abroad, Willie van der Merwe, and his wife Lettie: Thank you for your hospitality while receiving me in Utrecht. Willie, thank you for introducing me to amongst others Laurens ten Kate and Joeri Schrijvers, both gifted thinkers, from whom I have learned a lot.

To my parents, family and Bianka: Thank you for all the love and support with special thanks to Bianka for all the late night coffees and daily encouragement.

To my friend, Hercules: Thank you for being a constant Socratic conversation partner in our shared love of, and search for wisdom.

Also, thank you to the *Stichting Studiefonds voor Zuid-Afrikaanse studenten* and the University of Pretoria for financially making it possible for me to visit the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* in 2015.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my father, Hennie, for teaching me the self-discipline to finish what you start.

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## Introduction

In fact, it might be that what is happening to us is just another sort of “Copernican revolution,” not of the cosmological system, or of the relation of subject and object, but rather of “social Being” revolving (*tournant*) around itself or turning on itself, and no longer revolving around something else (Subject, Other, or Same)

Nancy (2000: 57)

The well-known claim by Friedrich Nietzsche that God is dead (and we killed him), Martin Heidegger’s call for the end of metaphysics, and Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy’s diagnoses of the retreat of the political are all synonymous descriptions of a certain way of thinking; that is a certain tradition seeking absolute truth, which may serve as a means of controlling society, has reached its limits, its end, and therefore, its completion. The reason, however, for the ‘end’ of this tradition of thought is outlined differently by the various thinkers. For Nietzsche, man as subject has taken the place of God as the ultimate reference point for meaning. For Heidegger, the history of philosophy is nothing else than the oblivion of Being. And for Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, the resulting politics that has emerged from this tradition of thinking has led to totalitarianism in the twentieth century. Put differently, the tradition of thought, which has been noted to have reached its limits by diverging thinkers, also gave birth to a conception of the political. A politics that, in turn, has led to the exclusion of whoever does not share its community’s identity or common being, which is constituted and intertwined with a narrative, myth, a god or any other notion of transcendence that serves to ground and make its identity or culture the highest principle. The most notable examples of this phenomenon include the regime of National Socialism in Germany with its Arian myth, or the various communist totalitarian states across Europe with their utopian ideals. And, in the South African context, the apartheid regime with its myth of separate development.

Moreover, these diagnoses of the ‘end’ of transcendence (God), metaphysics, and politics do not mean that such forms of thinking cannot return. Nor that they do not still exist today, playing out in everyday life. In short, a politics of exclusion functioning according to the

traits of this tradition of thought can again make its claim on the way societies must order themselves and what they claim as normative. For example, the constant clashes of identities across the world that are continuously trying to affirm that their identity and notion of transcendence should serve as the ultimate reference point according to which society should be ordered. More specifically, the immigrant crisis in Europe, ISIS in the middle east, or the racial tensions in the question concerning identity and culture in post-apartheid South Africa to name a but few. These diagnoses, thus, lead one to ask the following working question: *If a conception of transcendence, intertwined with a politics of exclusion, has reached its limits, then is a notion of transcendence still possible that may enable a sense of politics that allows difference?*

One can also provisionally look at the problem regarding the title - *Towards a politics of love*, which seems at the first glance to consist of two contrasting terms. One commonly associates politics with violence, clashing identities or groups, hate speech and so forth. Is it, then, possible to think a politics of love? A clue lies in the subtitle, which reads *The question of transcendence as transimmanence in the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy*. In short, the subtitle suggests that a conception of a politics of love may be explicated as it accompanies the question of transcendence in Nancy's thought.

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Who is Jean-Luc Nancy? Nancy was born 26 July 1940 and is considered one of the most read and prominent of contemporary French philosophers (Gratton & Morin, 2012: 2). From 1968 until his retirement in 2002, Nancy taught at the Philosophy Institute of the University of Strasbourg. Nancy additionally held a number of secondary posts and visiting professorships during this time, most notably at the Ecole Normale Superieure in Paris, and in Germany and America (James, 2006: 5). Nancy is a prolific writer and has not only 'published more than twenty-five books, along with numerous contributions to journals, art catalogues, and other volumes', but has also 'written on major thinkers in the history of European philosophy' (Gratton & Morin, 2012: 2); thinkers that include Descartes, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, and Heidegger. In his work, Nancy also engages with contemporary French thinkers such as Lacan, Bataille, Blanchot, and Derrida (Gratton & Morin, 2012: 2). Furthermore, Nancy's writings 'touches on issues as diverse as psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, globalization, community, Nazism, resurrection, Christian



painting, German Romanticism, modern dance, and film and has been influential in reconfiguring numerous debates in Continental philosophy' (Gratton & Morin, 2012: 2).

As with most thinkers, a few significant biographical facts influenced Nancy's preoccupation with the themes mentioned above, specifically two examples are of import. The first regards Nancy's involvement in the Christian Socialist movement in the 1960's, including the CFDT union and the Catholic review *Esprit*, in which he began to publish during that period. As James (2006: 5) notes, 'although Nancy's official commitment to and involvement with Christianity ended by the early 1970s, it nevertheless left its mark on the development of his later work, for instance in his philosophical meditation on the Eucharist in *Corpus* (and in his thinking of embodiment more generally)'. The influence of his participation in the Christian Socialist movement also played a role 'in some of his more recent publications on Christian painting, and more generally speaking in what during the 1990s and early 2000s he has come to call the "deconstruction of Christianity"' (James, 2006: 5).

The second and perhaps most significant biographical fact that occurred in the last decade and a half of Nancy's life is the heart transplant he received at the beginning of the 1990s; an event that has an intrinsically bodily dimension to it (James, 2006: 5). 'It is an extraordinary fact that many of Nancy's most important works, including *Corpus*, *Le Sens du monde*, and *Etre singulier pluriel*, are written after this transplant and during the period of extended physical suffering and illness (including cancer) caused by the antirejection drug cyclosporine' (James, 2006: 5). Although the extent of the influence that this experience had on Nancy's thinking would be impossible to determine precisely, it, nonetheless, directly informs the short work entitled *L'Intrus* (woo) (James, 2006: 5). 'This work is both a moving account of physical suffering and a meditation on the experience of organ transplant that engages some of the key philosophical concerns that dominate Nancy's thinking throughout his career: the propriety and identity of the human subject and body, their intersection with technology, and the originary exposure of each to that which is foreign or heterogeneous to them' (James, 2006: 5).

Finally, what makes Nancy's work particularly provocative, according to Gratton & Morin (2012: 2), is the care he always takes to write in such a fashion as to respond to the contemporary situation, meaning that his texts are rarely just abstract discussions of age-old philosophical problems. For example, 'Nancy addresses questions of the sense of the world in

light of a certain view of the world as resource that is part of economic globalization’ (Gratton & Morin, 2012: 2). Another example may be considered regarding Nancy’s writings on Christianity; ‘which not only come at a time of supposed secularism in western Europe, but also at a time of rising fundamentalisms, from the Christian and other religious traditions’ (Gratton & Morin, 2012: 2). Moreover, on an academic level, Nancy addresses contemporary themes, for instance in his work on the deconstruction of Christianity, which comes after the so-called “theological turn” in phenomenology and post-phenomenology, outlined and elaborated by thinkers like John Caputo, Jacques Derrida, Dominique Janicaud, and Gianni Vattimo (Gratton & Morin, 2012: 3). It should furthermore be added that Nancy’s work on the subject of the political, which will play an important role in this study, ‘continues to reverberate in contemporary discussions of communities and communitarianism’ (Gratton & Morin, 2012: 3).

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Hence, as Nancy forms and informs the approach to the question in this study, the problem can once more be rephrased in terms of Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe’s notion of the retreat of the political at the end of philosophy, i.e. the closure of metaphysics mentioned above. The starting point for this notion is the thought of Derrida, or rather as Critchley (1992: 201) citing Fynsk, points out, a silence or withdrawal with respect to politics (*la politique*) in Derrida’s work. Accordingly, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy takes over the distinction between *la politique* and *le politique* for a discussion of the political, the latter of which can be rethought on the basis of deconstruction. Here ‘*le politique* refers to the essence of the political – what, before Heidegger, one might have referred to as the philosophical interrogation of politics – whereas *la politique* refers to the facticity, or empirical event, of politics’ (Critchley, 1992: 201). Thus, in line with this distinction of the essential political task in Derrida, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy ask in the paper given as the ‘Ouverture’ for the Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris (1980): ‘How can one today interrogate the essence of the political?’ (*RJ* 9) (Lacoue-Labarthe’s and Nancy cited in Critchley, 1992: 202). The answer, of course, by a diagnosis of the present state of the political, which entails a deconstruction thereof. But, such a diagnosis by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy is deeply in debt to a Heideggerian analysis of the contemporary world and states, in brief, that the present is marked by the installation of the philosophical as the political and the absolute domination of politics (Critchley, 1992: 202).

Again, there are two things that can be said about the truth of the present, firstly that ‘everything is political’, i.e. ‘the political condition of contemporary societies is one in which all areas of social life are politicized’, which means, ‘that the political form of contemporary societies is *totalitarian*’ (Critchley, 1992: 202). The second expresses ‘that this understanding of the present political situation finds its condition of possibility in philosophy itself’; meaning that ‘within the metaphysical tradition, the political is not exterior to the philosophical, but rather there is an essential co-appartenance of the philosophical and the political; the political is founded philosophically’ (Critchley, 1992: 203).

Accordingly, echoing Heidegger’s analysis of the completion (*Vollendung*) of metaphysics as technology expressed in the notes of 1936-46 and forming the work published as *Überwindung der Metaphysik*, for Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy ‘the present is marked by both a completion of philosophy (*la philosophie est finie*, both finished and finite) (*FP 18/HAP 4*) and a closure of the political (*la clôture du politique*) (*RJ 15*)’ (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy cited by Critchley, 1992: 203). In short, ‘the thesis of the absolute domination of politics is assimilable to Heidegger’s analysis of the contemporary world in terms of the total domination of technology, while the distinction between *le politique* and *la politique* is assimilable to Heidegger’s distinction between the essence of technology (‘which is nothing technological’) and technology itself’ (Critchley, 1992: 204). This denotes ‘that any move back into politics is necessarily prohibited as a collapse into metaphysics’ (Critchley, 1992: 205). Metaphysics, as described here, however, requires elaboration.

When Heidegger analyzes the completion of metaphysics, one has to specify ‘a certain kind’ of metaphysics, namely that of ontotheology. This may be understood as a way of thinking that is always looking for a substance (God, political myth or identity) which grounds and serves as highest principle and reference point for everything else. And by virtue of synthesizing everything to the grounding principle, into a system governed by this principle, becomes totalizing. Hence, to rephrase the statement above; the moving back to ‘a certain kind’ of politics, i.e. a politics of exclusion with totalitarianism *par excellence*, falls back into ‘a certain kind’ of metaphysics, that of ontotheology. The opposite also holds where the move back into ‘a certain kind’ of metaphysics opens the door for ‘a certain kind’ of politics. Hence, the completion of philosophy, i.e. the metaphysics of ontotheology entails the political form of totalitarianism ‘as the figure for the closure of *le politique* and the absolute domination of *la politique*’ (Critchley, 1992: 206).

Importantly, totalitarianism for Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, following Claude Lefort's analysis, and here is where transcendence enters the dialogue of metaphysics and politics, 'is that political form of society governed by a logic of identification whereby all areas of social life represent incarnate power' (Critchley, 1992: 206). Expressing that 'it is the representation - or rather, fantasy – of a homogeneous and transparent society, a unified people among whom social division or difference is denied (as is difference of opinion, of faith, and so forth)' (Critchley, 1992: 206). In other words, 'totalitarianism is a modern despotism in which the social is represented as something without anything beyond it – that is to say, without any transcendence' (Critchley, 1992: 206). Or again, 'where power has no outside, which means the total immanence of the social in the political. Totalitarianism, is politics without transcendence, i.e. without remainder or interruption and what Nancy accordingly calls "immanentism"' (CD 16) (Nancy cited in Critchley, 1992: 206). Restated, totalitarianism is politics where the immanent has been endowed with transcendent significance.

To recapitulate; the end of (a certain) metaphysics is synonymous with the closure or retreat of the political (*le politique*) by the domination of (a certain) politics (*la politique*). Hence, the metaphysics of ontotheology gives rise to a politics of exclusion. These two notions are intertwined. Moreover, a third notion can be understood as synonymous to the first two, and that is the end of transcendence or death of God, which occurs with the above. The end does not mean that these ways of thinking and acting, ordering of society and normative claims sprouting from them are simply dead and left behind. It rather means that the need for thinking differently has arisen: either through metaphysics becoming redundant as explaining how things are, i.e. having reached its limits; with the politics that sprout from such a metaphysics is seen as dangerous and suppressing or excluding exactly that which makes it the political, i.e. difference; or that the notion of transcendence grounding such a metaphysics and politics, as pure and single origin, either from inside or outside the world, has therefore reached its limits. At the same time, because it has brought the experience of transcendence itself to an end, the question of, be it metaphysics, politics or then the question of transcendence itself, is to be retreated in a fashion that avoids exactly these critiques. This also suggests that these critiques may serve as criteria for thinking after (a certain) metaphysics, politics and God.

In short, this study aims to address the problem of the relation between a conception of transcendence, and the politics and metaphysics that is interwoven with that conception of transcendence. Therefore, the overarching question of the study reads as follow: *Is a notion of transcendence still possible, after (a certain) metaphysics, which might enable a sense of the political that does not reduce difference?*

I am, however, not the first to endeavor such a task. Simon Critchley also addresses the problem by asking the following two questions, firstly, *is a politics that does not reduce transcendence still possible?* (Critchley, 1992: 190) and secondly, *what meaning can community take on in Difference without reducing Difference?* (AE 197/OB 154). (Levinas quoted in Critchley, 1992: 190) I will, nonetheless, argue against Critchley, who claims that Nancy falls short in his attempt to formulate an answer to the problem, and that in Levinas' passage from the ethical (as first philosophy) to the political, rejecting Heidegger, one finds a suitable way forward. Instead, I will suggest that such a way has been thought by Nancy, re-appropriating not only Heidegger but also Levinas (something overlooked by Critchley), in his notion of transcendence as transimmanence. Furthermore, the aim will be to discuss Nancy's notion of transimmanence as the movement of love; that may be understood as a politics of love, never fixed, but always becoming, to come. Moreover, I also will attempt to outline an answer to the question: *What may such an alternative sense of the transcendence, and the politics it enables, mean for the South African challenge of rethinking identity, or culture, after an era where identities were not allowed to mix, but rather kept apart?*

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Having introduced the problem to be addressed in this study, we can add a methodological note. The methodology may be described as literary, interpretive and constructive. Additionally, as Nancy's work is written in a fragmentary style, I have attempted to discuss, especially in Chapter 2 and 3, the relevant fragments under the themes or criteria identified in Chapter 1. Although I have aimed to bring about some coherency in making my argument, it should not be considered as a reconstruction of Nancy's thought to overcome its fragmented nature. As James points out:

The diversity and heterogeneous nature of Nancy's corpus is not the product of any lack of discipline or methodological rigor on the part of the philosopher, nor does it result from a rejection of the category of philosophy per se, such that we might take this corpus to be a vast work of antiphilosophy. Rather, and this will be the key [...] the manner in which Nancy writes philosophy, his multiple and fragmented corpus, itself

arises from a thinking of, or an exposure to, multiplicity and fragmentation (James, 2006: 2).

Hence, I have attempted to discuss the fragments of Nancy's thought individually as such, but at the same time relating his thinking, which arises from this writing style, to the broader argument of this study. An attempt that hopes to do justice to Nancy because his fragmentary writing style concerns his philosophy directly in that his 'fragmented texts enact the very fragments of singularity that compose pluralities' (Hutchenss, 2005: 10). Thus, any engagement with Nancy would not aim to overcome this fragmentary style, but instead to elicit the meaning created in them. Meaning that is never fixed, but rather circulates through the various fragments.

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The thesis consists of four chapters, each making up a 'fragment' in the Nancian sense, of the search for an alternative sense of transcendence, which may enable a sense of politics that allows difference:

Chapter 1 suggests Husserl's redefinition of the distinction between immanence and transcendence as a 'starting point' for the endeavor. The discussion on Husserl concerns the redefinition of the realm of immanence to include transcendence in terms of the subject and its relation to the world, setting the tone for the rest of the chapters. Next, three criteria for guiding the set-out task and thinking after metaphysics are outlined. The first criterion concerns the *modus operandi* for thinking after metaphysics, which I call a *thinking the same different*, taken over from Heidegger's way of engaging with the history of thought. The second criterion is also provided by Heidegger in his critique of ontotheology and entails avoiding ontotheology, which is synonymous with thinking after (a certain) metaphysics, i.e. the metaphysics of ontotheology. In order to appropriate Heidegger, an account of his involvement with the Nazi regime is given, with the help of John Caputo, in demythologizing Heidegger. The third and final criterion demands thinking the other (not the Other); sprouting from Levinas' critique of Heidegger sublating alterity.

Having suggested a 'starting point' and three criteria for thinking after metaphysics *en route* to searching for a possible answer to the overarching question, Chapter 2 sets out to make a case for Nancy's thought. The case is made by discussing how Nancy 'meets' all three criteria for thinking after metaphysics thereby outlining an alternative sense of politics, which

allows for difference. This alternative sense of politics is found in Nancy's re-appropriation of Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*, as thinking the *with* of being-*with*, which concerns the plurality of singularities. Moreover, I argue that it is Nancy's notion of transcendence as transimmanence that enables his alternative sense of politics.

In Chapter 3 the larger debate regarding the overarching question is introduced, more specifically, as a debate between Levinas' thought and that of Nancy; a debate that hinges around the diverging interpretations of Heidegger. Critchley's case for Levinas and his Levinasian critique of Nancy are outlined first. In turn, I attempt to formulate a Nancian reply and critique of Levinas, pointing out along the way that Critchley does not take into account Nancy's appropriation of Levinas in his critique. Moreover, Nancy's philosophy of being-*with* is unpacked this time as a discussion on love, which introduces the notion of the promise of love accounting for diverse experiences in the mutual exposure of one to an other.

Finally, in the conclusion, a few reasons are proposed why Nancy, and not Levinas, is to be followed in addressing the overarching question of the study. Accordingly, a few implications of Nancy's thought, as a politics of love, for the South African context with its challenge of thinking a cultural identity post-apartheid, are suggested.

# Chapter 1: Thinking after metaphysics

## Three criteria

*Allein das Selbe ist nicht das Gleiche. Im Gleichen verschwindet die  
Verschiedenheit. Im Selben erscheint die Verschiedenheit.*

Heidegger (2006a: 54)

### 1.1. Introduction

If the task is to seek an alternative sense of transcendence, which may enable a politics that allows for difference after a particular way of thinking has reached its limits, its possibilities exhausted and even shown to lead to a sense of politics that excludes, where does one possibly start? How does one go about thinking after (a certain) metaphysics, the retreat of the political or the death of God? And are there any criteria one may follow? In turning to the history of philosophy, I have found to be drawn to four thinkers that each contributes to the conversation on answering the above questions. They are Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy. It is expressly Jean-Luc Nancy that I will argue in Chapter 2 formulates a way that seeks to conceive of an alternative sense of transcendence that enables a politics that allows difference. The other three thinkers I hold, prepare the way for Nancy in that I identify certain aspects of their thought that may serve as criteria for thinking after (a certain) metaphysics. They prepare the way in that these criteria, which I will discuss in Chapter 1, play out in Nancy's thought, to be exemplified in Chapter 2, even though not by direct appropriation. One might call it a re-appropriation of the criteria. The criteria I will identify, after thinking through each philosopher's thought, taking serious the limits or critique against them, and re-appropriating that which may still serve for other purposes.

Hence in Chapter 1, I will aim to outline a way (not *the* way, or the *only* way) to engage with the task of thinking after metaphysics. Accordingly, the goal of this chapter is threefold. Firstly, to introduce Husserl and his important redefinition of the realm of immanence to



include transcendence as a discussion on the subject and its relation to the world. Thus, our discussion on Husserl will bring into play the theme immanence-transcendence in the vocabulary of the subject with its relation to the world and thereby set the tone for the whole thesis, i.e. forming my ‘starting point’.

The second goal of this chapter is to introduce Heidegger as a dialogue partner to Nancy. In the explication of Heidegger’s philosophy, I will also make the case why his thought may be re-appropriated after taking serious his participation in the Nazi regime. The case will be made with the help of Caputo (1993) as demythologizing Heidegger, which allows us to borrow two criteria from Heidegger in order to think after metaphysics. The first concerns the way to engage with the history of thought, what I will call a *thinking the same different*, which is comparable to what Critchley (1992) calls the double reading of Derrida’s deconstruction. Moreover, having demythologized Heidegger, it will be argued that his critique of ontotheology may serve as the second criterion for thinking after metaphysics, i.e. that which plays out in Nancy’s thought.

The final goal of this chapter will be to introduce Levinas as a second conversation partner to Nancy, allowing for a dialogue between Heidegger, Levinas, and Nancy that will play itself out through chapters 2 and 3. In Levinas’ thought, a critique against not only Heidegger, but the whole philosophical tradition will be identified, which claims that the question of alterity, or thinking the other, becomes sublated under what Levinas calls - the return to the Same. This critique will be argued to form the third criterion for thinking after metaphysics. In short, the chapter will seek to trace a way prepared by Husserl, Heidegger, and Levinas to approach the question of thinking an alternative sense of transcendence, and therefore, the politics it enables, and will be undertaken in the form of a ‘starting point’ and three criteria for thinking along this path.

## **1.2. Husserl’s phenomenology: A rethinking of the immanent and transcendent**

What, then, does one find in Husserl that may aid our search for an alternative sense of transcendence, which may enable a politics that allows difference? The answer, I claim, is found in Husserl’s redefinition of the distinction between immanence and transcendence. This redefinition is in reaction to the problematic distinction between the realms of immanence (set in the cognition of the subject) and transcendence (the outside world) held by

modernity. Thus, in his project of phenomenology, Husserl redefines this distinction and therefore the access the subject can have to the realm of transcendence. This significant redefinition also set the tone for continental philosophy to come and has been taken up and thought differently by many thinkers after him, including the other three mentioned above. It is especially the relation of Husserl that I will draw to the thought of Nancy that will feature more prominently in Chapter 2. To understand the significance of Husserl's redefinition and why it may be considered as the 'starting point', let us, then, now turn to a brief review of this redefinition of the realms of immanence and transcendence that sprouts from a critique of the modern account of cognition.

Husserl developed his critique during the period from 1900 to 1913. As Cobb-Stevens (1994: 5) shows, Husserl spelled out his new position in a series of five lectures which introduce the theme of transcendental phenomenology for the first time. Especially the lectures that were given in Göttingen in 1907 and later published as *The Idea of Phenomenology* are devoted to a clarification of the notions of immanence and transcendence. The problematic distinction between immanence and transcendence found in modern philosophy, according to Husserl, is summarized by Cobb-Stevens as (1994: 5) follows:

Modern descriptions of the relationship between immanence and transcendence tend to invoke two complementary themes: inside versus outside and accessibility versus inaccessibility. When immanence is described as an enclosure containing mental processes and impressions, transcendence is correspondingly defined as whatever remains outside of that enclosure. When immanence is described as a region of indubitable givenness, transcendence is defined as a region populated by unknowable things-in-themselves. Most epistemologies combine these two senses of the relationship between immanence and transcendence. They first conflate mental acts and their contents by describing both as 'contained' within the mind's psychic processes. They then construe the enigma of cognition as a problem of how to establish a connection between intra-mental representations and extra-mental things. The 'unspoken assumption' of these theories is that our cognitive processes are devoid of intentional import. This, according to Husserl, is the 'fatal mistake' of modern philosophy.

Husserl's conclusion in these lectures is that whenever philosophers ask about the possibility of cognition in a way that implies that 'cognition is a thing apart from its object', or that 'cognition is given, but the object of cognition is not given' (Husserl 1970: 27-30), they introduce an inappropriate notion of transcendence. And in turn, entails an inappropriate interpretation of immanence (Cobb-Stevens 1994: 5). Consequently, Husserl suggests that philosophy needs to adopt a new way of thinking, and a new critique of reason: 'philosophy

lies in a wholly new dimension. It needs an entirely new point of departure and an entirely new method distinguishing it in principle from any “natural” science’ (Husserl, 1970: 19).

Having identified the problematic distinction between immanence and transcendence, Husserl suggests a new way of thinking found in his method of the phenomenological reduction, which allows for a redefinition of immanence and transcendence. Although I advocate that thinking after metaphysics does not follow Husserl’s new method, we can still briefly turn to a description of this new method as it allows for the redefinition mentioned above. The phenomenological reduction, then, according to Fink (1995: 41), consists of two internal basic moments. These two moments are namely *epoché* and the action of the reduction proper and are mutually required and mutually conditioned.<sup>1</sup> Moments here are not to be understood as steps, the one following or preparing the other in a sequential fashion in time, but rather as elements of the phenomenological reduction, which occur together and at the same time.

The first moment, or *epoché*, then, is a bracketing or suspension of our natural convictions or what Husserl also terms a “captivation-in-a-acceptedness” (*Befangenheit*): ‘At the outset of the critique of cognition the entire world of nature, physical and psychological, as well as one’s own human self together with all the sciences which have to do with these objective matters, are put into question’ (Husserl, 1970: 19). The second moment, namely that of the proper reduction, where the *epoché* at the same time constitutes a self-consciousness of the natural convictions or acceptedness you possess in relation to the world. This perspective, at a distance from your natural convictions, is made by the transcendental subject, or stated differently from a transcendental point of view by the subject of self-consciousness. This new transcendental point of view is thus the purpose of the new method. Husserl, however, emphasizes constantly that the purpose of this procedure is not to call natural convictions into doubt, but rather to achieve a distance that will enable us to reflect upon them, and can also be understood in terms of a shift from the ‘natural attitude’ to the ‘phenomenological attitude’:

For example, we step back from our participation in the positing of things as real, but continue to maintain that positing as something upon which we reflect. We also

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<sup>1</sup> Fink (1995: 41) uses the notion of two moments in order to make the distinction between when to speak of the reduction as the reduction proper, which is one of the two moments, or when speaking of the phenomenological reduction as a whole.

maintain our contact with things. The same things in the world are still there for our consideration, but the change in focus initiated by the reduction now permits us to appreciate them precisely as intended objects. We now notice them as perceived, as judged, as posited, as doubted, as imagined. Husserl calls any object so considered a noema, and he calls the correlative intention a noesis (Cobb-Stevens, 1994: 16).

Put differently, regarding the old distinction of immanence and transcendence, ‘the purpose of the new method is to free us from this incoherent interpretation of transcendence, and consequently to enable us to redefine both transcendence and immanence’ (Cobb-Stevens, 1994: 16). Hence, we also have to bracket the modern distinction of immanence and transcendence as inside versus outside and accessibility versus inaccessibility. One finds here, in my view, the significant result of Husserl’s new method.

What happens then when one brackets, or suspends, everything previously categorized within the realm of transcendence, i.e. understood in the modern understanding of the term? The answer, as Cobb-Stevens (1994: 16) expresses, is that one, in fact, excludes nothing more than the incoherent interpretation of transcendent being as a region situated beyond the range of our knowledge. The same goes for the modern understanding of the mind’s ‘inside’ interpreted as having the same sort of ontological status, which also thus requires bracketing. The result, ultimately of the phenomenological reduction of Husserl, framed by Cobb-Stevens (1994: 16), is that:

This approach permits us to redefine immanence, in a broader sense, as the zone of all manifestation, wherein both immanent objects (considered now, in a narrower sense, as reflectively intuited experiences) and their intentional correlates (transcendent things) appear to us. Immanent and transcendent objects are now distinguished in terms of their different styles of appearing, rather than by appeal to the difference between intra-mental appearance and extra-mental being.

Once more, we find, here I claim, the path opened by Husserl for rethinking transcendence serving as a ‘start point’ for this study.

There is an additional element to Husserl’s redefined broader field of immanence, also called a realm of transcendental consciousness, that is of importance. This element arises as Cobb-Stevens (1994: 17) elaborates, in the so-called incorrect interpretations of Husserl’s phenomenological reduction as a turn of consciousness away from things and facts towards concepts and propositions and contend that the purpose of the reduction is to orient philosophical analysis towards semantic issues. As Robert Sokolowski points out in order to rectify this misunderstanding, Husserl distinguishes, in *Formal and Transcendental Logic*

(1929), between the kind of reflection that yields access to propositions and the properly philosophical reflection made possible by the reduction. In short, Husserl makes it clear in this work that there is nothing specifically philosophical (in his new sense of the word) about propositional reflection, i.e., the reflective turn away from the ‘ontological’ realm of things and facts towards the ‘apophantic’ realm of concepts and propositions. Propositions and concepts, rather from serving as mediating entities, (in the mind, i.e. immanent) that somehow link speech act to their intentional referents (outside the mind, i.e. transcendent) are reconsidered in terms of an apophantic realm as a way of reflecting. From the apophantic realm, a shift is made to the ontological realm as a way of reflecting, thereby answering the modern epistemological problem. To state it simply; what is relevant to our discussion is that Husserl argues that there is no such need for mediation. The reason being, and here our path with Husserl will split slightly again, is because our consciousness is intentional by its very nature (Sokolowski, 1987: 521–8).

In sum, Husserl prepares the way for a thinking after metaphysics by redefining the problematic modern distinction of immanence and transcendence. Thus, there is no outside world for Husserl where transcendence may dwell, which may need some form of mediation to access. Transcendence is rather found in the broader realm of immanence, which can be accessed via intentionality. Husserl has, however, subsequently been critiqued on the notion of intentionality, because the concept implies that the world is entirely comprehensible by the transcendental ego. Levinas acts for a good example here, claiming that there is still a sense of incommensurability to be found especially in the relation to the other. Nonetheless, I argue, be it in the minimal sense of what Husserl meant, that a redefining of the realm of immanence and transcendence that rethinks the access or relation of the subject to the world is important in thinking an alternative sense of transcendence. Moreover, Husserl relates the discussion of immanence-transcendence to that of the subject-world (or other) which sets the path for the conversation to follow. Accordingly, as we shall see below, Levinas keeps something of the old distinction of immanence and transcendence in his redefinition of transcendence as the interruption of immanence by the trace of the Other, i.e. ethical transcendence. The notion of transcendence in Heidegger’s later thought will also be unpacked as keeping something of the old distinction, more in terms of Being as a mythopoetic god that addresses man, which is in line with what Nancy terms immanentism. More importantly, I will argue that Nancy takes over the basic impulse of redefining the realms of immanence and transcendence and the rejection of a mediator between the two

realms (language or anything else) to be discussed in Chapter 2. Nancy, nonetheless, goes about differently in his redefinition of transcendence in the realm of immanence, i.e. that there is nothing outside the world. Additionally, we may also preliminary refer to Nancy's alternative redefinition and therefore rejection of the conception of intentionality by introducing the notion of transimmanence. Briefly, this notion describes a movement across the subject and the other exposing one to an other, outside of both, but co-extensive with the world, thereby differing from intentionality as being fixed and under the mastery of the subject. In order to eventually understand the notion of transimmanence in relation to a new sense of politics it aims to enable, it is first needed to turn to the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics.

### **1.3. The first criterion or *modus operandi* for thinking after metaphysics: Thinking the same different**

So far I have suggested a possible starting point for an endeavor of seeking to formulate an alternative sense of transcendence and a politics it may enable that allows for difference. Next, the aim will be to outline a way to go about the *modus operandi* for thinking after metaphysics to be found in Heidegger's work, more specifically in the first of two texts quite appropriately, for our purposes, published under the title *Identität und Differenz* (1957). The first aspect that I borrow from Heidegger is a way to engage with the history of thought that will be termed a *thinking the same different*, as the *modus operandi* to think after metaphysics. It is this way to go about the engagement with the history of thought that, in turn, will be proposed as the first criterion for thinking after metaphysics. One might ask here: Is it possible to speak of any criteria for thinking after a certain kind of metaphysics? Hereby, I do not mean to advocate a method for thinking after a certain kind of metaphysics. Rather, it is in the thinking through of metaphysics to its limits that allow for the critique against it to be formulated. In turn, this critique should be taken serious, in the sense that it may serve as criteria for thinking after metaphysics. That is a certain kind of metaphysics, to be precise that of ontotheology, as we shall see below.

#### **1.3.1. Thinking through metaphysics: Heidegger and Hegel**

Our point of departure is the conversation between Heidegger and Hegel, from the text *Die onto-theo-logische Verfassung der Metaphysik* (1956), with the aim to see what Heidegger takes from Hegel and in turn what we can learn from Heidegger to aid our thinking after

metaphysics. Accordingly, we begin with the following statement that for Hegel the *Sache des Denkens* is the absolute concept, which he also terms *Sein*<sup>2</sup>:

Sein ist hier gesehen aus dem bestimmenden Vermitteln, d.h. vom absoluten Begriff her und deshalb auf diesen hin (Heidegger, 2006a: 55).

Because *Sein* is considered in terms of the *absoluter Begriff*, it is metaphysical and therefore speculative. We can add that Hegel's engagement or relation to the history of thought then is the speculative concern with *the movement* of *Sein*. The character of this movement is an occurrence in the sense of the dialectical process that sets free thinking into the pure element of thinking as *das sich selbst denkende Denken*, i.e. *Sein*, or restated in Heidegger's words:

Sie möchten andeuten, daß die Sache des Denkens für Hegel in sich geschichtlich ist, dies jedoch im Sinne des Geschehens. Dessen Prozeßcharakter wird durch die Dialektik des Seins bestimmt. Die Sache des Denkens ist für Hegel das Sein als das sich selbst denkende Denken, welches Denken erst im Prozeß seiner spekulativen Entwicklung zu sich selbst kommt und somit Stufen der je verschieden entwickelten und daher zuvor notwendig unentwickelten Gestalten durchläuft (Heidegger, 2006a: 55).

But this movement of the dialectic, as hinted above, is also found in *Die Geschichte der Philosophie*, which becomes incorporated into the task of philosophy set by Hegel through the freeing of its external (historical) character:

Dieselbe Entwicklung des Denkens, welche in der Geschichte der Philosophie dargestellt wird, wird in der Philosophie selbst dargestellt, aber befreit von jener geschichtlichen Äußerlichkeit, rein im Element des Denkens (Hegel, 1970: 14)

What is important here is that Heidegger notes that Hegel's philosophy is not only skeptical but also historical. It is this historical engagement that Heidegger takes from Hegel that is significant for us. The significance, however, lies in how Heidegger differs from Hegel in the way he engages with the history of thought. In short he learns from Hegel how to be historical, but in this conversation with Hegel, Heidegger turns this historical engagement on Hegel himself as we shall shortly see. Heidegger's conversation with Hegel, and by extension the history of thought, can be unpacked with three questions Heidegger formulated and

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<sup>2</sup> Important to note from the start is that *Sein* is understood differently in the metaphysical tradition from how Heidegger means to use it. Here *Sein* will first be discussed in its metaphysical understanding.

answered himself. We will briefly look at them treating question one and two together under the theme *thinking the same different*, and question three as stepping back from *Aufhebung*.

### 1.3.2. Thinking the same different

Before we turn to the questions themselves, we need to answer the following: How to think historical, or, what exactly does Heidegger learn from Hegel that I will claim as the first criterion for thinking after metaphysics? Thus, the answer to our question not only informs the manner in which Heidegger engages with Hegel but also informs the way in which thought after metaphysics goes about opening up new meanings. Heidegger writes:

Wenn wir also ein denkendes Gespräch mit Hegel versuchen, dann müssen wir mit ihm nicht nur von derselben Sache, sondern von derselben Sache in derselben Weise sprechen. *Allein das Selbe ist nicht das Gleiche. Im Gleichen verschwindet die Verschiedenheit. Im Selben erscheint die Verschiedenheit*<sup>3</sup> (Heidegger, 2006a: 54).

Thus, our engagement concerns retreating the same (idea, text, author, theme, etc.), which enables that which is different to reveal itself. I call this *thinking the same different*. Thinking the same different is therefore not only the way to engage with Hegel, and the history of thought but as mentioned will serve as the first criterion for thinking after metaphysics. Having set up the manner of engagement with Hegel we can now turn to the questions themselves as an illustration of how Heidegger thinks Hegel the same different. This engagement will lead us to the second aspect I borrow from Heidegger for thinking after metaphysics, namely to avoid ontotheology as the second criterion.

The first question Heidegger asks is what the matter of thinking for Hegel is and what it is for us (thinking after metaphysics). For Hegel, as already shown, '*ist die Sache des Denkens das Sein hinsichtlich der Gedachtheit des Seienden im absoluten Denken und als dieses*'. And for us '*ist die Sache des Denkens das Selbe, somit das Sein, aber das Sein hinsichtlich seiner Differenz zum Seienden*' (Heidegger, 2006a: 54).

It is in light of the *Differenz*<sup>4</sup> that *Sein* has to be thought and which is developed further in question two (and later three), which asks what the criterion (*Maßgabe*) for the conversation

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis added by the author.

<sup>4</sup> *Differenz*, here does not refer to thinking the same different as in the title of this section. *Differenz* rather guides our thinking to what has not been thought, namely *Sein*, in a way which is different from Hegel and the metaphysical tradition.



with the history of thinking is for Hegel, and for Heidegger (and us). In other words, what is Hegel looking for in the thought of the thinkers who he engages with in conversation? The answer, ‘Für Hegel lautet die Maßgabe für das Gespräch mit der Geschichte der Philosophie: Eingehen in die Kraft und den Umkreis des von den früheren Denkern Gedachten’ (Heidegger, 2006a: 54). The *Kraft* (power) of course for Hegel lies in what a thinker has thought concerning how it can be incorporated into absolute thinking as one of its stages, into the unity with the *absolute Begriff*, which in turn is only absolute because of the moving within its dialectical-speculative process, and thus requiring stages.

For Heidegger, the *Maßgabe* is also the *Kraft*, thus in one sense the same. But, what makes it different, is that the *Kraft* is not sought for in what is already thought (*schon Gedachten*), but what has not been thought (*Ungedachten*), from where ‘*das Gedachte seinen Wesensraum empfängt*’ (Heidegger 2006a: 54). The *schon Gedachte* also prepares the *Ungedachte*, ‘*das immer neu in einen Überfluß einkehrt*’ (Heidegger 2006a: 54). Furthermore, in contrast to Hegel, *die Maßgabe des Ungedachten* does not lead into inclusion of what has previously been thought into *eine immer noch höhere und es überholende Entwicklung und Systematik*, i.e. metaphysics. The new *Maßgabe*, for Heidegger, rather demands the setting free of traditional thinking into *sein noch aufgespartes Gewesenes*. This ‘blocked off’ past prevails through tradition as originary (*anfänglich*), and is always in its nature (*Wesen*) ahead<sup>5</sup> of it, but has not been thought of as *das Anfangend* (the Originary) nor in its own right making it the *Ungedachte*. We also find here at play in Heidegger’s new *Maßgabe* what Caputo (1993) identified as the mythologizing of *Sein* as presented in its Greek origins to be discussed below. This myth of Being will also be elaborated to reveal the political relation it constitutes. But for what I claim a thinking after metaphysics entails does not include following Heidegger’s path all the way to the mythologizing of Being. Thus, I will argue below that Heidegger needs to be demythologized.

### 1.3.3. A stepping back from *Aufhebung*

If we are looking for the *Kraft* of previous thinkers, not to be included into a higher unity, i.e. *absolute Begriff*, but to serve as a way revealing what has not been thought in light of the *Differenz* of *Sein* and *Seiende*. How then do we go about this task without following Hegel

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<sup>5</sup> Heidegger here, provides a precursor of the unthought belonging together of *Sein* and man, where man answers to *Sein*, which will be developed later in this chapter. In this sense *Sein* is ahead of man.

and the metaphysical tradition? For Heidegger, the first step is a step back (*Schritt zurück*) and can be found in his answering the third question that asks what the character of the conversation with the tradition for Hegel, and for us respectively is.

For Hegel, the answer is ‘*der Charakter der Aufhebung, d. h. des vermittelnden Begreifens im Sinne der absoluten Begründung*’ (Heidegger, 2006a: 58).<sup>6</sup> With the *Aufhebung* (elevation) leading to the heightening and gathering area of Truth (*Wahrheit*), *Wahrheit* meaning here the *vollständig entfalteten Gewißheit des sich wissenden Wissens*. Self-knowing knowledge is referring of course to *Sein* or *absolute Begriff*.

In turn, for Heidegger, and here we still follow him, the character of the conversation with the history of thinking is no longer *Aufhebung* (elevation), but the *Schritt zurück* (step back). Where does this *Schritt zurück* lead? ‘*Der Schritt zurück weist in den bisher übersprungenen Bereich, aus dem her das Wesen der Wahrheit allererst denkwürdig wird*’ (Heidegger, 2006a: 58). The *Schritt zurück*, then, which should not be misinterpreted as an isolated step of thought but rather as the manner in which thinking moves and a long path, leads to the ‘skipped over’ or taken for granted. Or again, away from that which has been thought up until this point in philosophy:

Das Denken tritt vor seiner Sache, dem Sein, zurück und bringt so das Gedachte in ein Gegenüber, darin wir das Ganze dieser Geschichte erblicken und zwar hinsichtlich dessen, was die Quelle dieses ganzen Denkens ausmacht, indem sie ihm überhaupt den Bezirk seines Aufenthaltes bereitstellt (Heidegger, 2006a: 59)

So we take a step back from the metaphysical way of thinking *Sein* in order to see what constitutes the source (*die Quelle*), in light of the *Differenz zwischen dem Sein und dem Seienden*. This constitution of metaphysics, as we already mentioned and that will be developed shortly, is ontotheology, which not only serves as the limit of metaphysical thinking but may also be formulated as its critique. Thus, we need to behold metaphysics regarding its ontotheological constitution that prepares and enables the space for metaphysical thinking. This step back, I claim, is Heidegger’s thinking the same. Or put differently, this *Schritt zurück*, echoes, of course Husserl’s phenomenological reduction presented above. We can say that the phenomenological reduction here concerns the natural

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<sup>6</sup> One may already note a two-way movement of the character of Hegel’s metaphysical thought that is upwards to the highest and at the same time downward to a grounding. This double movement will be discussed in more detail in the section on ontotheology.

attitude of metaphysics as ontotheology, which with the step back or reduction, can now be seen for what it is.

Furthermore, the step back, for Heidegger, takes us, in light of the *Differenz*, into what has to be thought (*zu Denkende*), which is the *Vergessenheit der Differenz*. This *zu Denkende*, I will claim is Heidegger's thinking different to be unpacked below. The *Vergessenheit*, for Heidegger is to be understood in terms of concealment (*Verbergung*), a veiling that has withdrawn itself from the beginning of Western thought. Or put differently, '*Die Vergessenheit gehört zur Differenz, weil diese jener zugehört*' (Heidegger, 2006a: 60), the one does not come after the other, they were both there from the start. Here again, with reference to the myth of Being and pure Greek origin, we find another example of where Heidegger's mythologizing takes place. In anticipation of what will be developed in Heidegger's thought below, the *Vergessenheit*, as that which is to be thought, can be named as the *Zusammengehörigkeit*<sup>7</sup> of man<sup>8</sup> and *Sein* (the belonging together of man and Being).

To recapitulate, the step back for Heidegger reveals what is taken for granted (ontotheology), and has to be thought the same in light of or against the *Differenz von Seiendem und Sein*, which in turn also reveals what is to be thought as thinking different, which for Heidegger is the *Vergessenheit der Differenz*. Or again, for Heidegger to think through the *Vergessenheit* (the limit of metaphysics) is, in fact, to firstly turn to the constitution of metaphysics, i.e. ontotheology (to later think beyond it or differently). Or in Heidegger's words:

Differenz von Seiendem und Sein ist der Bezirk, innerhalb dessen die Metaphysik, das abendländische Denken im Ganzen seines Wesens, das sein kann, was sie ist. Der Schritt zurück bewegt sich daher aus der Metaphysik in das Wesen der Metaphysik (Heidegger, 2006a: 60).

The *modus operandi* of thinking the same different might also be compared to what Critchley (1992) identifies in Derrida's notion of deconstruction, as a double reading that hinges upon the closure of metaphysics. Critchley shows, that in the text *Violence and Metaphysics*, with a direct reference to Levinasian ethics, Derrida defines his concept of closure as '*the problem*

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<sup>7</sup> *Zusammen*, here, is purposefully not formatted in italics.

<sup>8</sup> The choice of using the word 'man' comes directly from the German, where Heidegger uses the word 'man' to refer to a human being in general, as a model that holds for all human beings. An alternative might be 'one', for example, *one belongs to Being*. But the use of 'one' instead of 'man' does not suit all the translations. The choice, therefore, does not intend to exclude women, but rather exposes the inherent problematic of language in the use of 'man' to describe all human beings, illustrating a possible implied sense of exclusion regarding gender.

of the relations between belonging and the breakthrough, the problem of closure' (*le problème des rapports entre l'appartenance et la percée, le problème de la clôture*) (ED 163/WD 110) (Derrida cited in Critchley, 1992: 20). 'Broadly stated, the problem of metaphysical closure describes the duplicitous historical moment - *now* - when 'our' language, concepts, institutions, and philosophy itself show themselves both to belong to a metaphysical or logocentric tradition which is theoretically exhausted, while at the same time searching for the breakthrough from that tradition' (Critchley, 1992: 20). A deconstructive reading then is a double reading in the sense that the first reading shows how a text is dependent upon the presuppositions of metaphysics of presence or logocentrism. For Derrida, this means 'any text which identifies truth with presence or *logos*, occurring in the voice and entailing the debasement of writing and all forms of exteriority (*G* 11–12/*OG* 3), which that text might attempt to dissimulate' (Derrida cited in Critchley, 1992: 20). In Heideggerian terms, a reading revealing the ontotheological constitution of the text it may try to conceal. The second reading, then, shows 'how the text radically questions the metaphysics it presupposes, thereby entering into contradiction with itself and pointing the way towards a thinking that would be other to logocentrism' (Critchley, 1992: 21), or we may add here other than ontotheology. Finally, the 'closure is the hinge that articulates the double movement between logocentrism, or metaphysics, and its other' (Critchley, 1992: 21). Where ethics, Critchley (1992: 21) adds, 'signifies in the articulation of this hinge'.

Having laid out the *modus operandi* for thinking after metaphysics as a thinking the same different, it seems appropriate to now take the step back into the *Wesen der Metaphysik*, i.e. ontotheology, a step I appropriate from Heidegger, but ultimately with a different end in mind.

#### **1.4. The second criterion for thinking after metaphysics: Avoiding ontotheology**

I have already mentioned that the second criterion I borrow from Heidegger for thinking after metaphysics will entail a thinking that avoids ontotheology. Hence, one can ask: What is ontotheology? And how does one avoid thinking according to ontotheology? In what follows, I will argue for the appropriation of ontotheology as the second criterion, to be avoided. First by considering what ontotheology is, according to Heidegger. From there, with the help of Heidegger once more, it will be illustrated how ontotheology functions in terms of the metaphysical identity of the subject and its relation to the world (the other), to return to the vocabulary of the subject introduced in the discussion on Husserl. Accordingly, what I call

the critique against the metaphysical identity of the subject as a mastering of the world, will be highlighted. In turn, I will argue that one can use this critique, as a criterion for thinking after metaphysics, as the metaphysics of ontotheology. How to avoid ontotheology also forms part of the second criterion, again borrowed from Heidegger in what I will call the decentering of the subject found in Heidegger's *Sprung* (leap) out of metaphysics into the realm of *Ereignis*.

Thus, to return to the step back (*Schritt zurück*) that takes us to the realm of the *Differenz* between *Sein und Seiende*, two aspects are revealed. Firstly, as we shall now undertake, the step back reveals how this *Differenz* has been forgotten and rather been incorporated into the ontotheological constitution of metaphysics. Later we will treat the second as that which should be thought (after decentering the subject), i.e. *Zusammengehörigkeit* of man and *Sein*. The step back, then, leads us first to ask with Heidegger (2006a: 64), as he did in the lecture *Die ontotheologische Verfassung der Metaphysik*:

Woher stammt die onto-theologische Wesensverfassung der Metaphysik?

In order to come to the *Wesensverfassung* of metaphysics we first need to define in a metaphysical fashion what metaphysics is. According to Heidegger in his lecture *Was ist Metaphysik* of 1929, metaphysics is defined as the question about beings as such and as a whole. Or broken up in a two-fold characterisation:

1) Metaphysik denkt das Seiende als solches, d. h. im Allgemeinsten.

And:

2) Die Metaphysik denkt das Seiende als solches, d.h. im Ganzen (Heidegger 2006a: 64).

In other words, metaphysics is the conceiving of a system of thought asking what beings are and how beings fit into a greater whole. Next, we turn to the step back, which asks what is said concerning *das Sein des Seienden*.

Thus, what is meant then by onto-theo-logy is better understood by taking the step back and asking what metaphysics says about *das Sein des Seienden* with regards to each of the two metaphysical characterizations of *Seienden* as stated above. Heidegger (2006a: 66) writes:

1) Die Metaphysik denkt das Sein des Seienden sowohl in der ergründenden Einheit des Allgemeinsten, d. h. des überall Gleich-Gültigen,

2) als auch in der begründenden Einheit der Allheit, d. h. des Höchsten über allem.

It is this double thinking of the *Sein des Seienden*, that (double) grounds (*ergründenden* and *begründenden*) the ground of metaphysics. Or in Heidegger's words *der gründende Grund*. Thus, taken all together on the level of beings and the *Sein des Seienden* one can say that:

alle Metaphysik (ist) im Grunde vom Grund aus das Gründen, das vom Grund die Rechenschaft gibt, ihm Rede steht und ihn schließlich zur Rede stellt (Heidegger, 2006a: 66)

Now that we have outlined at what level Heidegger is engaging with metaphysics, namely that which grounds the ground of metaphysics revealed by the step back (*Schritt zurück*), we can turn to look at the word onto-theo-logy itself and how Heidegger (2006a: 55) explains the different parts in terms its relation to thinking the *Sein des Seienden*. Starting with the focus on the last syllable -logy, theology and ontology look similar to other terms like psychology, biology, cosmology, archeology, where the -logy means broadly and usually that we are dealing with the science of the soul, of living things, of the cosmos, of ancient things. In general -logy represents the logical in the sense of what is consistent and generally in the nature of a statement, what structures, moves, secures, and communicates all scientific knowledge. But it also presents the totality of a nexus of grounds accounted for (*das Ganze eines Begründungszusammenhanges*), within which the objects of the sciences are represented and conceived of in respect of their ground (*im Hinblick auf ihren Grund*), but the ground is not accounted as such.

What makes ontology and theology different is that they are considered as “Logies” in as much as they (also) provide the ground of beings as such and account for them within the whole. They account for *Sein* as the ground of beings. (*Sie geben vom Sein als dem Grund des Seienden Rechenschaft.*) Put differently; they account for the Logos; they are essentially Logos-like or better yet the logic of the Logos. Thus for Heidegger (2006a: 66) they are better described as *Onto-Logik und Theo-Logik*, making metaphysics thought out more rigorously and clearer as *Onto-Theo-Logik*.

Next, we look at the onto- and theo- of ontotheology in relation to the two-fold metaphysical thinking presented above of *Sein des Seienden*. The onto- can simply be understood regarding *die Sache des Denkens*, which is *das Sein* as *Ontos* that all share in unity. Or again, *Sein* as the *ergründende* of the *Einheit des Allgemeinen*, that is the general aspect that all beings share and unites them in a general unity.

How then do we account for the theo- in onto-theo-logik? Or as Heidegger asks *Wie kommt der Gott in die Philosophie?* (Heidegger 2006a: 64). We have seen how the -logy of both theology and ontology accounts for the ground or *Sein des Seienden*. Yet *Sein*, and here comes the answer, can only have thought to be the ground of beings when the ground is at the same time thought of as the first ground (*der Grund als der erste Grund*). Or as the *begründende* of the *Einheit der Allheit*. In other words, the original matter of thinking presents itself as the first cause (*Ur-Sache*), the *causa prima* that corresponds to the reason-giving path back to the *ultima ratio*, the final accounting. Thus the *Sein des Seienden* is represented fundamentally, in the sense of the ground, only as *causa sui*, which is the metaphysical concept of God.<sup>9</sup> Heidegger (2006a: 72) concludes, '*Die Metaphysik muß auf den Gott hinaus denken (theo), weil die Sache des Denkens das Sein ist...*', the reason, of course, being the nature of the logos that both share. Put together the double thinking of *Sein* as *onto-theo-logik* functions as follows:

Beings as such in the universal and primal (Allgemeinen und Ersten) at one with (in Einem mit) beings as such in the highest and ultimate (Höchsten und Letzten)<sup>10</sup>. The unity of this One is of such a kind that the ultimate in its own way accounts for the primal, and the primal in its own way accounts for the ultimate (Heidegger 1969: 32).

Thus, metaphysics always functions according to ontotheology, which means neither theology or ontology on its own, but rather the entwined double thinking of *Sein des Seienden*. Returning to what is unthought or forgotten, i.e. the *Differenz von Seiendem und Sein*, the reason for the forgetting becomes clear as metaphysics focussed on the unification of *Sein* and *Seienden* into a system rather than considering the difference between the two as a theme in its own right. In order then to take up the task of thinking *Sein*, in light of its difference with *Seienden*, we need to leave the onto-theo-logic of metaphysics behind as avoiding such a thinking. Or, what I term, to *think after metaphysics*.

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<sup>9</sup> It should also be added that the matter of thinking *Sein*, here, is in different ways conceived as the ground in Metaphysics: as Logos, as substance, as subject, etc. Cf. Heidegger (2006: 72). The subject as ground is of special interest here.

<sup>10</sup> Brackets added by the author of this study.

### 1.4.1. The critique of ontotheology as a criterion for thinking after metaphysics

Next, we turn to a discussion of Heidegger's ontotheology in terms of the metaphysical identity of the subject. This elaboration will allow me to translate the critique against the politics that ensues from metaphysics into the vocabulary of the subject and its relation to the world (the other). Consequently, this critique may be formulated as a criterion for thinking after metaphysics as avoiding ontotheology. A way to avoid ontotheology is also outlined by Heidegger as an overcoming of metaphysics through a 'post-metaphysical' identity or what I will call the decentering of the subject. For Heidegger, as hinted above, this is a way beyond ontotheology returning to the pure Greek way of thinking Being, which I will argue constitutes an ontotheology itself, using Heidegger against himself. Thus, what will be borrowed from Heidegger, here, is the decentering of the subject and its metaphysical identity that opens the way to think identity post-metaphysically as returning to think as a response to how we exist, to our Being. But we do not follow Heidegger in endowing the Greek way of thinking our Being with a mythical status.

#### 1.4.1.1. Metaphysical identity

Let us first consider the ontotheological functioning of metaphysical identity<sup>11</sup> and the consequent meaning of the 'same' in its definition. According to Heidegger, the formulation for the metaphysical identity, reads  $A=A$ <sup>12</sup> and is considered the highest principle of thought. Heidegger unpacks the wording as follows. Firstly:

*Die Formel nennt die Gleichheit von A und A* (Heidegger, 2006a: 33).

Regarding the equality named in the equation there are two (A's) and the principle is read as equating one A with another. A is (equal to) A. And, if constantly repeated this equation becomes a tautology as with the example the *plant is a plant*. However, for something to be

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Stambaugh's introduction to *Identity and Difference*, where he notes the following: 'With Leibniz and Kant preparing the way, the German Idealists Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling place identity in the center of their thought on the foundation of transcendental reflection. These thinkers are concerned not with the simple unity of a thing with itself, but with the mediated syntheses of subject and object, of subjectivity and objectivity as such' (Heidegger, 1969: 9).

<sup>12</sup> Stambaugh also provides us with the following example: 'The principle of identity  $A=A$  becomes reformulated by Fichte as  $I=I$ , and by Schelling's Philosophy of Identity as the identity, more precisely as the indifference of subject and object' (Heidegger, 1969: 10)



the same, one is always enough, where two are not needed as they are in the case of equality. Thus, for Heidegger, the common definition of identity conceals exactly what it wants to say. That is every A is itself the same. Reminded of a phrase from Plato<sup>13</sup> Heidegger elaborates the meaning of the phrase by adding the implicit - *with itself*, showing that metaphysical identity stresses the relation, togetherness or *mit* that, moreover, synthesizes into unity:

Die gemäßere Formel für den Satz der Identität A ist A sagt demnach nicht nur: Jedes A ist selber dasselbe, sie sagt vielmehr: Mit ihm selbst ist jedes A selber dasselbe. In der Selbigkeit liegt die Beziehung des 'mit', also eine Vermittlung, eine Verbindung, eine Synthesis: die Einung in eine Einheit (Heidegger, 2006a: 33).

Thereafter, as with Hegel, Heidegger takes a step back and shows what the principle of Identity has to say about the Being of beings, making the synthesizing and unifying characteristic of the *mit* universal for every being.

Eigentlich lautet sie: A ist A. Was hören wir? In diesem »ist« sagt der Satz, wie jegliches Seiende ist, nämlich: Es selber mit ihm selbst dasselbe. Der Satz der Identität spricht vom Sein des Seienden. Als ein Gesetz des Denkens gilt der Satz nur, insofern er ein Gesetz des Seins ist, das lautet: Zu jedem Seienden als solchem gehört die Identität, die Einheit mit ihm selbst.

Or:

Was der Satz der Identität, aus seinem Grundton gehört, aussagt, ist genau das, was das gesamte abendländisch-europäische Denken denkt, nämlich dies: Die Einheit der Identität bildet einen Grundzug im Sein des Seienden (Heidegger, 2006a: 33).

This characteristic (Grundzug) of the Being of beings in its unifying the universal is of course none other than the onto-logic of ontotheology as described above. The theo-logic, in turn, enters when the metaphysical identity functions as the reference point from where all other beings derive their meaning from as in the instance of the subject (modernity's cognition as the realm of immanence) and object (the world including other beings, i.e. modernity's realm of transcendence) relation. This identity may refer to either a subject or that of a community, where the identity of a community follows the logic and model of the subject, conceiving their unity as sharing a common identity.

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<sup>13</sup> The phrase is quoted from Plato's Sophist 254 d and translated as 'Nun ist doch von ihnen jedes den beiden (anderen) zwar ein anderes, selber jedoch ihm selbst dasselbe' (Heidegger, 2006: 33). From this phrase Heidegger identifies the implicit *mit* or *with itself*.

Once more, metaphysical identity, I argue may be understood in terms of the subject as first ground functioning in terms of unifying and synthesizing and therefore according to ontotheo-logic. Hence, we continue with the vocabulary, introduced in the discussion on Husserl. Put differently; the reason for the problematic distinction of the immanence (the subject's cognition) and transcendence (the world) is due to its metaphysical identity, i.e. the ontological conception of the subject. The subject viewed in terms of a metaphysical identity, cannot have direct access to the world, because the world is mediated through the synthesizing back through the categories of the self. Thus, to overcome this problematic distinction, and reopen the access to the world, ontotheology that constitutes the metaphysical identity should be avoided. Hence, ontotheology, here, is turned into the service of a different cause, not anymore to overcome metaphysics in order to return to the myth of the Greek origin as with Heidegger, but rather as a criterion to be avoided. To reiterate, what is to be avoided is a thinking that makes either God (transcendence) or the subject, a myth, an identity, etc. (immanent concepts endowed with transcendent significance), the ultimate reference point that provides meaning. The reason being that such a logic leads to exclusion not only on an intellectual (to be shown in Heidegger as an example) but also political level as discussed above. In other words, ontotheology may be used as a criterion in service of a decentering of the subject or then common identity, by avoiding a thinking that hierarchizes and excludes; a criterion that consequently will be turned on Heidegger and his obsession with the myth of Being and the pure Greek origin that advocates a politics of exclusion.

#### **1.4.1.2. Post-metaphysical identity**

The second criterion, however, does not only refer to a gesture to avoid ontotheology, but also a possible way to think after metaphysics, as avoiding ontotheology. Heidegger is also helpful in opening such a way to think after metaphysics in describing what he terms as the *Sprung* out of metaphysics. Hence, we now turn to what is an appropriation of Heidegger's way beyond metaphysics, which for him opens the way back to the myth of the Greek origin, as rather opening up a way to think after metaphysics as a discussion on what I will call here post-metaphysical identity.

Thinking after metaphysics as ontotheology, then, requires a thinking the same theme, identity, differently. For Heidegger, this task of thinking starts with a phrase from Parmenides:

Das Selbe nämlich ist Vernehmen (Denken) sowohl als auch Sein (Heidegger, 2006a: 36).

From this phrase we learn two things. Firstly, in contrast to metaphysics where identity means a thing is thought of as the same with itself, a unity of one, different things, namely *Denken* (Thinking) and *Sein* (Being), are here thought of as the same. At this juncture, the same (as a word) is literally thought differently. Secondly, for Heidegger, the phrase says that *Das Sein gehört in eine Identität* or that Being is a characteristic of Identity, a reverse of the metaphysical doctrine which states that identity belongs to Being as a characteristic of Being.

To recapitulate, Sameness here means a *Zusammengehörigkeit* (belonging together) of *Denken und Sein* (Thinking and Being). But this *Zusammengehörigkeit* needs to be thought of not in the customary (metaphysical) way, with the emphasis on *Zusammen* (together, or what reminds of the *mit* that synthesizes into unity). Here, the *gehören* (belonging), receiving its meaning from *Zusammen*, means:

zugeordnet und eingeordnet in die Ordnung eines Zusammen, eingerichtet in die Einheit eines Mannigfaltigen, zusammengestellt zur Einheit des Systems, vermittelt durch die einigende Mitte einer maßgebenden Synthesis. Die Philosophie stellt dieses Zusammengehören als nexus und connexio vor, als die notwendige Verknüpfung des einen mit dem anderen (Heidegger, 2006a: 37).

In short the *gehören* means to fit into the onto-theo-logik. *Zusammengehörigkeit*, for Heidegger, should rather be thought with the emphasis on *Gehören*, with the *Zusammen* getting its meaning from the *Gehören*, or rather of experiencing this *Zusammen* in terms of *Gehören*.

To understand this shift in emphasis, one has to take a closer look at the terms *Denken* and *Sein*.<sup>14</sup> Heidegger reminds us that *Denken* is contributed to man as his defining feature, making him different from other *Seiendes*, that is *Denken* as the defining feature of *das denkende Wesen* (the thinking being).

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<sup>14</sup> *Sein* and man here is thought not in terms of asking for a definition that provides a Boden (ground) to which man and all other beings can be related, i.e. metaphysically. Heidegger (2006a: 43) writes: ‘Solange wir jedoch auf diese Weise fragen, bleiben wir in den Versuch gebannt, das Zusammen von Mensch und Sein als eine Zuordnung vorzustellen und diese entweder vom Menschen her der vom Sein aus einzurichten und zu erklären’. Thus, leaving the quest for finding a ground behind we finally turn to what *Sein* (in its belonging to man) means to express after metaphysics.

In making this association of thinking as a distinguishing character of man, the question can be reformulated as concerning the *Zusammengehörigkeit* of man and *Sein*. Starting with man, on the one side, as the thinking being is always open to *Sein*. And through this openness to *Sein*, man is face to face with *Sein*, and so man stays referred to *Sein* and answers to it (*auf das Sein bezogen bleibt und ihm so entspricht*). For Heidegger (2006a: 39), then, man as the thinking being who is open to *Sein*, is nothing other than this *Entsprechung* (relationship of responding) to *Sein*, and only this. But this does not mean *ein Beschränkung* (limitation), but *ein Übermaß* (an excess). The belonging of man to *Sein* is also formulated by Heidegger as a belonging that listens to *Sein*, which appropriates (*übereignet*) man and *Sein*:

Im Menschen waltet in Gehören zum Sein, welches Gehören auf das Sein hört, weil es diesem übereignet ist (Heidegger, 2006a: 44).

Restated, man's belonging together with *Sein* is due to the appropriation (*übereignen*) of man with *Sein*. This appropriation entails a thinking of *Sein*, which is at the same time an openness to *Sein*, a listening to *Sein*, and a relationship of responding or answering to *Sein*. But, as we shall shortly see, this does not mean that *Sein* is appropriated to man alone in a one-way direction. That would be all too close to metaphysics with man being the ground, mastering Being. Rather the mastery of the subject is broken. The relationship of belonging is from both sides or to each other, breaking with the metaphysical pattern of grounding the one in, or on the other in a unity.

*Sein*, in turn, is to be understood as *Anwesen* (presence) and is only present to man through the claim it makes on man (*durch seinen Anspruch den Menschen angeht*). *Sein* arrives as *Anwesen* only in so far as man is open to *Sein*. Heidegger writes that *Anwesen braucht das Offene einer Lichtung* (a clearing). It is through this need (*Brauchen*) of a clearing that *Sein* stays appropriated (*übereignet*) to *Menschenwesen* (human beings). In other words, the *Brauchen* constitutes the *Anspruch* of *Sein* on man, which man in turn listens to (*hört zu*).

The *Anspruch* of *Sein* and the *Hören* of man simultaneously appropriates each other; *Sein* with man and man with *Sein*. Or in Heidegger's words: '*Mensch und Sein sind einander übereignet. Sie gehören einander*' (Heidegger, 2006a: 45). Taking the two together, then, the *Zusammengehörigkeit* means the mutual appropriation of man and *Sein*. Thus, neither the *Sein des Seienden* nor man as *das denkende Wesen*, can be thought of as a ground or

foundation anymore.<sup>15</sup> The space that opens, as I will argue in Chapter 2, is where *Sein* that calls man to the mutual relationship to which man answers, is not anymore to be understood according to the myth of Being, the Greek origin. But rather, as Caputo (1993) states it *Being* as *Es gibt*, which is as an appropriation of, and return to the language of fundamental ontology. That is *Sein* as the call of *Mitsein*, with which Nancy would agree. What needs to be thought by man, then, as that which calls him to answer, that which needs to be thought, is his existing or being-*with* others.

To summarize, Heidegger provides an alternative to thinking the subject in terms of a metaphysical identity in, what I called, post-metaphysical identity. What is borrowed from Heidegger, then, is this notion of a post-metaphysical identity that breaks the mastery of the subject. Thereby opening the relation of the subject to the world, i.e. *Sein*, by acknowledging the mutual appropriation of man and *Sein* or Being, in that man is open to Being, listens to its call, and, in turn, Being, addresses man. To think after metaphysics is to avoid ontotheology, that is to conceive of identity (of the subject or community) in a post-metaphysical fashion. Restated, what I take over for the second criterion for thinking after metaphysics is to think Being in being open to Being that addresses you.

#### 1.4.1.3. The leap beyond ontotheology

So far, in terms of the second criterion for thinking after metaphysics with the search for an alternative sense of transcendence and a politics it enables that may allow difference, Heidegger has been helpful by outlining what should be avoided. That is ontotheology by thinking identity in a post-metaphysical fashion that decenters the subject thereby breaking its mastery over the world. Heidegger, also importantly describes the movement from a constituted metaphysics in the metaphor of a leap (*Sprung*). This metaphor is important, firstly, as it attempts to sketch a feature of post-metaphysical against metaphysical thinking. And secondly, it starts to unpack an alternative to the process of synthesizing back to the constituted subject as the event that enables the transition to post-metaphysical thinking that breaks the mastery of the subject. Therefore, I will also borrow from Heidegger this

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<sup>15</sup> Heidegger (2006a: 41) notes that we stubbornly misunderstand this *Zusammengehören von Mensch und Sein*, so long as we keep thinking in a metaphysical way where ‘wir alles nur in Ordnungen und Vermittlungen, sei es mit oder ohne Dialektik, vorstellen. Wir finden dann immer nur Verknüpfungen, die entweder vom Sein oder vom Menschen her geknüpft sind und das Zusammengehören von Mensch und Sein als Verflechtung darstellen’ (Heidegger, 2006a: 41).

description that will, in turn, point the second criterion of avoiding ontotheology in thinking about the identity of the subject post-metaphysically toward what is to be aimed at in thinking. That which was previously prevented by the metaphysical constitution of subjectivity, i.e. our fundamental relation to existence (Being, the world, the other).

How, then, does Heidegger's description of the transition from the ontotheological constitution of metaphysics in order to think *Sein*, take place? And, what can we take from this description? The answer for Heidegger, and to both the questions, lies in a *Sprung* (leap) in contrast to a reasoned argument or logical representation, which would place us right back into metaphysics. Next, where does this movement of the leap point the second criterion's thinking?

As the *Sprung* is a movement we need to ask where it is leaping away from on the one side, and also where it is going to, on the other side. Starting with what one is leaping away from, Heidegger mentions two things. Firstly: '*weg aus der geläufigen Vorstellung vom Menschen als dem animal rationale, das in der Neuzeit zum Subjekt für seine Objekte geworden ist*' (Heidegger, 2006a: 41). In other words, what Heidegger is calling for, here, crudely stated, is the decentering of the subject in the jump away from the subject. Secondly: '*Der Absprung springt zugleich weg vom Sein*' (Heidegger, 2006a: 46). *Sein* here to be understood in an ontotheological fashion as providing the ground for which every being as such is grounded. The leap in other words springs away from the ground, which may be understood as the metaphysical identity of the subject or community.

Accordingly, one might ask: '*Wohin springt der Absprung, wenn er vom Grund abspringt?*' (Heidegger, 2006a: 46). Two answers are given to the question by Heidegger. The first answer holds with regard to metaphysics that the *Sprung* springs into an abyss (*Absprung*). This would, of course, entail nihilism as the grounding point for meaning is left behind, then there is no more way to make sense of the world. But, secondly, when one lets go of the habit of metaphysical thinking, which is ontotheological, one springs into that which you already have access to, namely: *in das Gehören zum Sein*. Thus, the *Sprung* is needed to experience the *Zusammengehören* of *Sein* and man. Or again, the *Sprung*, which is abrupt and unbridged, meaning that no logical argument is needed, grants entry into the realm where man and *Sein* have already reached each other in their *Wesen* (active nature), since both, *aus einer*

*Zureichung*<sup>16</sup>, are mutually appropriated one to the other. In turn, only the entry into this realm of mutual appropriation, i.e. the *Zusammengehören* of *Sein* and man determines and defines (*stimmt und be-stimmt*) the experience of thinking.

In other words, the movement of the leap described by Heidegger, I take over to preliminary point the second criterion toward what should be thought, that which we already have access to, namely our relation to Being, which is, of course, the open relation of man to the address of Being. Moreover, because what should be thought, i.e. Being, is not under the control of the subject, but rather addresses man in being open to Being's call, this mutual appropriation is an experience, or what Heidegger calls an event, the event of appropriation, *Ereignis*. Put differently; it is in this event, in the experience of the mutual appropriation, which determines the experience of thinking, that I claim, the subject is decentered and the mastery over the world broken. Therefore, let us briefly unfold Heidegger's notion of *Ereignis* here.

#### 1.4.1.4. *Ereignis*

Because the *Zusammengehören* of *Sein* and man is experienced and not constituted by a logical argument or speculation, the leap out of metaphysics takes us into an abyss. An abyss which is not nothing or a nihilistic state, but rather a realm where the appropriation of man and *Sein* can be experienced. Heidegger calls this realm where this experience is possible *Ereignis* (the event of appropriation). Heidegger writes:

Das Ereignis ist der in sich schwingende Bereich, durch den Mensch und Sein einander in ihrem Wesen erreichen, ihr Wesendes gewinnen, indem sie jene Bestimmungen verlieren die ihnen die Metaphysik geliehen hat (Heidegger, 2006a: 51).

What is significant about Heidegger's description of the *Ereignis*, especially for my second criterion, is that once this realm, where man and *Sein* reach their active nature (*ihr Wesendes gewinnen*), is entered, both lose their qualities with which the metaphysics of ontotheology has endowed them. Restated, both man, and *Sein* lose their metaphysical identity, i.e. subjectivity is decentered.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. The translation of *Zureichung* by Stambaugh (2002) that reads, 'extended as a gift', in contrast to Figal (2009), who translates it as a 'a handing-over'.

The following can be added to illustrate the difference of this event from metaphysical thinking:

Das Wort Ereignis meint hier nicht mehr das, was wir sonst irgendein Geschehnis, ein Vorkommnis nennen. Das Wort ist jetzt als Singulare tantum gebraucht. Was es nennt, ereignet sich nur in der Einzahl, nein, nicht einmal mehr in einer Zahl, sondern einzig (Heidegger 2006a: 50).

What Heidegger means to stress here is that *Ereignis* (event - something that can be classified, ordered and unified metaphysically) needs to be thought of as *Er-ignis* (the event of appropriation, a unique experience). In doing so we contribute to the self-vibrating realm (*sich schwingende Bereich*), which is the unique experience of that which is already given, namely the *Zusammengerhörigkeit* of man and *Sein*. Hence, the experience decenters the subject by the exposure to the givenness of Being.

In sum, I have in the quest for thinking after metaphysics identified a second criterion that may aid such a thinking. That is a thinking that avoids ontotheology, by thinking the subject post-metaphysically, which entails the experience, in being open, of Being that address you, and exposes you to the givenness of your existence. We may add here to the givenness of the world, in anticipation of the third criterion and what will be argued in Chapter 2, that it also entails the givenness of the relation to the other. A givenness that addresses you directly, and therefore does not require the mediation of the categories of the subject or community.

### **1.5. Demythologizing Heidegger: Taking account of the Nazi years**

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) is on the one side considered as one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century, and on the other side as one of the most controversial figures regarding his political participation in the National Socialism (Nazi) regime. Borrowing from his thought therefore requires taking account of his political participation. This political involvement is intertwined with the myth thinking Being in terms of the pure Greek origin already alluded to above. Thus with the help of Caputo (1993), I not only aim to perform the said task but, in doing so, also use the notion of ontotheology against Heidegger himself. Accordingly, the following guiding questions may be posed: What are the mythologizing tendencies in Heidegger? How does ontotheology relate to demythologizing Heidegger? And why is it necessary to demythologize Heidegger?



To examine the extent to which Heidegger's thought is in accord with the Nazi ideal politics, one has to consider Heidegger's whole philosophical journey. A journey which from beginning to end revolved around the question of Being, the *Seinsfrage*. Caputo (1993: 1) goes further and identifies in this occupation with the *Seinsfrage* an obsession of Heidegger with the early Greeks as a mythic 'significance', which in turn leads to 'mythologizing' tendencies in Heidegger's thought. He puts as follows:

By this I mean the tendency of Heidegger to construct a fantastic portrait of the Greek sources of Western thought and culture - in the most classically German manner - and to represent these Greek sources as a single, surpassing, great "Origin" (*Ursprung*), a primordial incipience or 'Beginning' (*Anfang*) of the West (Caputo (1993: 1).

In short, the Greeks, for Heidegger, do not represent merely the historical start of certain Western traditions. Instead they 'represent an overarching, normative, claiming Origin to which "we"- and who "we" are in reference to which everything later is to be compared, either as its falling away and oblivion or as the scene of its retrieval' (Caputo, 1993: 1). Here we not only find the answer to the first question above, on what Heidegger's mythological tendencies are, but we can also begin to outline the answer to a further question. That is the question concerning the relation of ontotheology, and the mythological tendencies in Heidegger. In short, what we see in the above analysis of Caputo of Heidegger's obsession with the Greek origin, is that Heidegger is molding his own ground and highest principle, i.e. his own ontotheology. This feature will become clearer in a discussion on his thought development. Furthermore, as Caputo (1993: 2) argues, this myth of Being can and should be considered against the backdrop of Heidegger's politics. This remark also suggests the relation between ontotheology and a politics of exclusion or totalitarianism referred to in the introduction. Thus, considering Heidegger's 'mythologizing' and 'ontotheologizing' of the Greek myth means taking serious Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism<sup>17</sup> and the development of the *Seinsfrage* as the myth of Being in his thought.

As Jacques Taminiaux (1997) illustrates, the question of Being or *Seinsfrage* did not preserve the same meaning or ruled the same field of investigation the whole time. It is well known

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<sup>17</sup> For Caputo (1993: 2) the connection of Heidegger's thought and his political involvement was first laid bare in a biographical way in the works of Victor Farias (1987) and, more importantly, Rugo Ott (1988). For Caputo, these revelations cast Heidegger's later writings in a new light, and compels one to see the 'mythologizing' tendencies in Heidegger, considered previously only in a philosophical and on textual grounds, and moreover, in an apolitical sense, 'as shot through with social, political, and ethical import, that has been previously simply ignored' (Caputo, 1993: 2).

that even Heidegger himself claimed that was a turning point (*Kehre*) in his thought. According to Taminiaux (1997: 32), one can divide Heidegger's thought in two phases as follows:

The first covers publications and lecture courses devoted to setting out the project of what Heidegger, at that time, called 'fundamental ontology'. The later phase covers writings which are all characterized by a meditation on the history of Being. Whereas the project of fundamental ontology aimed at completing metaphysics as the science of Being, the later meditation consistently aimed at overcoming metaphysics.

Caputo (1993), however, divides Heidegger's thought into three phases, splitting the above-mentioned first phase in two, to firstly, show the development of what he calls the *myth of Being* in relation to Heidegger's politics. This threefold division also allows for illustrating that one can understand the development of the myth of Being in terms of a religious key, i.e. transcendence, which may allow me in turn to further explain why Heidegger does not avoid ontotheology. Additionally, the distinction provides the reason for considering Heidegger's entire thought development, albeit very briefly. In other words, accounting for Heidegger's political participation in the Nazi regime may itself be regarded as thinking through metaphysics and laying bare the mythologizing tendencies in Heidegger's thought. Demythologizing, Heidegger, similarly, may be considered an exercise in thinking the same different presented above. Moreover, laying bare the mythologizing tendency in Heidegger may be shown to illustrate that Heidegger does not entirely escape ontotheological thinking, which he proclaims to avoid or overcome.

Accordingly, Heidegger's *Denkweg* (thought path) will be presented next regarding this thematic shift, the political relation and finally with reference to transcendence. The goal of Caputo's project, to which we subscribe, is, in short, to show these correlations in order to demythologize Heidegger's thought. My goal moreover is not only to demythologize Heidegger's thought, and the role of the myth of Being that is a myth of exclusion, but thereby also to justify any re-appropriation of Heidegger, as in the case of Nancy, to be used for other purposes. Let's now turn to Caputo and his threefold division of Heidegger's *Denkweg* according to the myth of being in terms of Heidegger's politics.

### 1.5.1. Heidegger's early writings: First phase

The first phase concerns Heidegger's time in Freiburg. In this time, the myth of Being was not a feature of Heidegger's thought. As Caputo points out, the first Freiburg lectures (1919-1923) that eventually issued in *Sein und Zeit* 'were, if anything, characterized more by a certain demythologization than by a mythologizing tendency' (Caputo, 1993: 3). This phase is characterized by the Freiburg project with the title a 'hermeneutics of facticity'. In short it considered both Christian and Greek sources as co-original and a possible source of new breath for philosophy. Accordingly, the project aimed at a retrieval. On the one hand, of the factual lifeworld of the New Testament communities that lay sedimented beneath the dogmatic ontotheology of the tradition. And, on the other hand, of the factual lifeworld of Aristotelian ethics, which lay sedimented beneath the metaphysics of *ousia* (Caputo, 1993: 3). In other words, 'both biblical and Greek together, were taken to be a rich preconceptual soil that would nourish the work of philosophy, whose task it was to raise them up, by way of a "formal indication", to the level of ontological concepts' (Caputo, 1993: 3). In this period, Heidegger too treated both sources, the Aristotelian, and the Christian, as 'equipromordial', that could serve as coequal resources to bring new life to philosophy after the above mentioned 'ghostly abstractions of a sedimented and inherited conceptuality' (Caputo, 1993: 4). One might state that in the early phase of thought Heidegger still allowed for difference. In respect to a religious key, Caputo (1993: 179) identifies the first phase with a conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism (1917-19). This is for instance seen in Heidegger's occupation with Luther and Kierkegaard as well as a focus on *Lebenserfahrung* rather than pure dogmatics, which sets the terms for the first Freiburg period and culminating in *Being and Time*. Additionally, because chapter 2 will include a discussion on Nancy's re-appropriation of the analysis of *Mitsein* found in *Sein und Zeit (Being and Time)*, which is written in the first phase of thought, it is significant to note that this analysis has its birth in a time where difference was allowed in Heidegger's thought.

### 1.5.2. National Socialism and the myth of Being: Second phase

It was only, then, according to Caputo (1993: 4) in the 1930's, with Heidegger's rectorial address, and his active political engagement with the Nazi regime, where the question of Being, in *Sein und Zeit*, becoming an outright myth of Being, enters the frame. Thus, the *second phase* is characterized by a change in Heidegger's thought. Where 'the twofold root of the tradition was pruned to a single, simple incipience (*Anfang*), a Great Greek Beginning,

from which everything Jewish and Christian, everything Roman, Latin, and Romance, was to be excluded as fallen, derivative, distortive and inauthentic' (Caputo, 1993: 4). Here, difference is suppressed and excluded under the one pure Greek origin that grounds as highest principle, hence thinking ontotheological takes over. The first appearance, then, of the myth of Being takes the form of a political myth entwined in a horrific ideology. A myth that was 'fully equipped with robust and quite bellicose Greek gods and their German heirs, in which Heidegger undertook to produce a thought of Being that was *Judenrein*, thereby reproducing on the level of thinking what the Nazis were doing in the streets' (Caputo, 1993: 4). Or, translated into a religious key:

The second phase, concerns the turn toward an extreme heroic and Nietzschean voluntarism (ca. 1928-29), which culminated in the Nationalistic Socialist engagement; this is, from the standpoint of a biblical faith, atheistic, but it is more accurately represented as a turn toward a heroic, Promethean neomythological religion of struggle and bombast (Caputo, 1993: 179).

What we have here is a form of immanentism in Nancy's vocabulary, where something immanent, an identity is taken as the ultimate reference point from where meaning is determined, i.e. given a transcendent significance.

### **1.5.3. Later writings and reformulation of the myth of Being: Third phase**

The third phase of Heidegger's thought is better known as the *Kehre* (turn). This, according to Caputo (1993: 5), is characterized as 'being captive by a sweeping metanarrative, a myth of monogenesis, a monomaniac preoccupation with a single deep source, with an originary, unitary beginning, which Heidegger thought must be kept pure and uncontaminated, like a pure spring' (Caputo, 1993: 4). The question is, then, for Caputo and us, how deeply this myth cuts into the fabric of Heidegger's thought, and how long and how far this myth persists after the cessation of his political activism and even after the end of the war? Or again, does Heidegger, in his later thought, avoid a continuation of ontotheology?

As Caputo (1993: 5) rightly claims, these are questions of thought and not a biographical matter. And thus, anticipating the answer, he stated that the task of demythologizing Heidegger's thought is an incessant task 'because it regards the inner truth of the spiritual relationship of Greek and German, which in 1933 is Heidegger's attempt both to elevate Nazi mythology to the level of metaphysics and to give a deeper, spiritual mooring to the revolution, is a 'truth' that Heidegger never renounced' (Caputo, 1993: 5). Once more:

The myth of Being shapes the way Heidegger thinks the question of Being after he has stepped down as rector in 1934, late into the war, and long after the war ended. It is defended proudly as late as 1966 (Spiegel, 282). As Pöggeler has written, “Was it not through a definite orientation of his thought that Heidegger fell - and not merely accidentally - into proximity of National Socialism without ever truly from this proximity?” (Caputo, 1993: 5).

Hence, to answer the questions above, the myth of Being endures throughout Heidegger’s thought, meaning Heidegger does not avoid ontotheology. To illustrate this better, we can consider the conception of transcendence that arises in Heidegger’s later writings. As mentioned above and subsequently showed in each of Heidegger’s phases of thought, Heidegger’s thought, from its inception, has been bound up with certain religious and theological concerns (Caputo, 1993: 169). Put differently, the question of the myth of Being, ‘is also deeply interwoven with the question of God and the gods, that is, with the movement in Heidegger’s thought from a biblical God to the gods gathered in the neo-mythology of the Fourfold’ (Caputo, 1993: 169). To reiterate:

The myth of Being first takes shape in the 1930’s, precisely at the point at which Heidegger moves beyond the God of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. It appears first in harsh, heroico-mythic tones, in keeping with its Nazi provenance, and then afterwards in the softer mythopoetic tones of the Fourfold, of the kinder, gentler worlding of the world and thinging of the thing. In the 1920’s Heidegger took the jewgreek world and thinging of biblical Christianity seriously and moved in a demythologizing, ontologizing direction. From the 1930’s on, Jews and Christians were shown the door and replaced by a pantheon of ‘pagan’ ‘gods’, pure Greeks, and celebrated in an openly mythologizing thinking, which culminated in the hope that one day one of them would come along and save us (Caputo, 1993: 169).

Or again, where in the second phase of thought Heidegger took a turn toward an extreme heroic and Nietzschean voluntarism as immanentism, ‘the third and final phase, can be understood as the move beyond voluntarism (1936-38) toward the thought of Being, a new mythopoetic meditation upon the Holy and the gods’ (Caputo, 1993: 179). Accordingly, ‘this later thinking had become radically anti-voluntaristic, anti-Nietzschean, and opened onto a new savoring of the divine, a new mythopoetics of the gods’ (Caputo, 1993: 179).

In other words, the task of thinking is not anymore a ‘willing’, but a ‘letting be’, where, as Caputo shows, Heidegger turns to the vocabulary of *Gelassenheit*, which is one of the oldest and most revered part of the Rhineland mystics’ thinking, in particular, Meister Eckhart. *Sein* is transformed, then, no longer meaning ‘something that human thinking can conceive or ‘grasp’ (*begreifen, con-cipere*), but something which thinking can only be ‘granted’.

Thought come to us; we do not think them up (GA 13,78/PR,6). Thinking is a gift or a grace, an event that overtakes us, an address that is visited upon us' (Heidegger cited in Caputo, 1993: 179). It is of course in this period that Heidegger wrote the two text presented in the discussion of ontotheology and thinking after metaphysics. Hence, in demythologizing Heidegger, and therefore by implication those two texts, thereby also rejecting, I claim, Heidegger's ontotheological conception of a mythopoetic god, the space is opened to re-appropriate certain notions in the text as argued in the discussion above.

How, then, does Heidegger's conception of transcendence or the god who is revealed to us rather than conceived off, developed in his later writings, 'look' like? According to Caputo (1993: 184), Heidegger's god who emerges in his later writings is a 'profoundly poetic god, a woodland god arising from a poetic experience of the earth as something sacred and deserving of reverence'. In comparison to the ethico-religious God of Hebrew and Christian scriptures, who is the God of the suffering, of mercy and justice, 'the God whom Jesus called *abba* or with biblical works of healing and mercy, with the widow, the orphan, or the stranger,' Heidegger's god 'is a cosmo-poetic god, more suggestive of a certain Buddhism, a certain meditative, silent world reverencing' (Caputo, 1993: 184). Or, in Nancy's terms, we again find in Heidegger's thought an example of immanentism, where an immanent element is raised considered in a transcendental fashion, i.e. as the ultimate source and reference point of meaning.

Apart from the transformation *Sein* into a conception of a geophilosophical god, Caputo (1993: 180) also shows how Heidegger takes over notions of the Christian tradition but do not acknowledge this, to build his so-called pure encounter with the Greek origin. It is for this reason, the drawing upon theological sources to start with that so many theologians have shown a remarkable interest in Heidegger's later thought.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the reading Heidegger gave of the early Greeks is hard to believe not coming from a transference of the categories of Christianity to early Greek text (Caputo, 1993: 180- 181).

From another perspective, with reference to Kierkegaard having said a century earlier that the discovery of time and history was a Jewish and Christian one, Caputo (1993: 181) likewise argues, 'was the whole thematics of speaking and answering, claiming and being claimed'. What Heidegger was thus doing, Caputo (1993: 181) illustrates, is building a rival

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Caputo (1993: 179-180) where he shows how, among others, Karl Rahner on the Catholic side and Heinrich Ott on the Protestant side have taken up Heidegger's thought in their theology.

*Heilsgeschichte* to the biblical one, which he discovered in his New Testament studies in the first phase of this thought. The new *Heilsgeschichte*, however, was pure and decontaminated of Jewish and Christian impurities and, moreover, not relating to the Christian myth, but instead to the myth of Hellas and *Germania*.

To reiterate, where Heidegger in the first phase of thought demythologized the Greek and Christian sources and ontologized them in the existential analytic, in the third phase, he did the opposite by mythologizing the Greek origin into a kind of geopolitical god (ontotheology) giving preference to the German nation, with a resulting exclusion of anything else (Caputo, 1993: 181).

But this favoritism of the Greek and German, with the resulting exclusion of the Jewish Christian tradition on an intellectual level, and the Jews (or anyone not German for that matter) on a street level, is also found in the critique by Levinas against Heidegger's thought and the myth of Being. Caputo, arguing for a remythologizing after demythologizing Heidegger that would include the thought of Levinas and Derrida, describes the critique against Heidegger as follows:

The difficulty with Heidegger is that this myth of world and thing, of the Fourfold, his sacrilizing of the earth is tied to a geophilosophical myth of Being's history, of its favorite sons and favored languages and chosen lands. At the same time it omits and even preempts the myth of justice, which is another and equiprimordial myth, not a myth of the sacred earth, not a pagan myth of sacred cosmos, but a Hebraic myth of the Holy, of the call of the Other one, of the other person.

That is the Levinasian critique of Heidegger's gods, which turns on distinguishing the immanent 'sacred' (*sacré*) from a transcendent and apart 'holy' (*saint*). For the divine does not mean only the Fourfold, but it means the suffering of the least of God's children, the well-being of the poorest and of what the world calls *me onta* (I Cor. 20:28). That is of course not a pagan myth but the myth of Emmanuel, of God standing by us, the myth of biblical justice found in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures (Caputo, 1993: 183-184)

Finally returning to the question, why it is necessary to demythologize Heidegger, I have mentioned that such an act is called for to open up the space for re-appropriating particular notions of Heidegger. Or as Caputo (1993: 5), writes: 'If the myth of Being is tied up with National Socialist mythology, then demythologizing Heidegger thought in the service of other, more honorable ends, ends that he himself would like have abhorred, given his own disastrous judgment in political matters'.

To recapitulate; with the help of Caputo an account of Heidegger's political escapades and how they relate to his thought has been taken. The task was undertaken by demythologizing Heidegger's myth of the pure Greek origin for thinking Being. I thereby attempted to point out the ontotheological tendencies found not only in Heidegger's second phase of thought but also in his later thought exemplified in his conception of Being as a mythopoetic god. I therefore claim that according to these ontotheological tendencies in Heidegger's thought, one may understand his affiliation to the Nazi Ideology, also on an intellectual level, at the time of the war. And after the war, these tendencies help one to understand why he formulated, in the same line of thought, a conception of *Sein* as a mythopoetic god. Moreover, by demythologizing and 'de-ontotheologizing' Heidegger, the door is opened for Heidegger's thought to be used for more noble ends, which shall be explored in Chapter 2.

### **1.6. The third criterion for thinking after metaphysics: Thinking the other**

Thus far criteria for how to go about thinking after metaphysics has been outlined, as well as what is to be avoided in such a thinking namely ontotheology. If ontotheology is to be avoided, then is there maybe 'something' that has to be included in thinking after metaphysics? Hence, if ontotheology is avoided by thinking the subject post-metaphysically as being open to the address of Being, which in the event of *Ereignis* decenters the subject and exposes you to what has to be thought, then what may this 'to be thought' be? It is in Levinas' critique of Heidegger and the philosophical tradition that I claim one finds direction in what I will call thinking the other. It is the gesture to think the other, that I take over from Levinas, and not his way of thinking the other in terms of the trace of the Other. Thus, in this section, I will argue that a third criterion for thinking after metaphysics is found in Levinas as thinking the other. Where metaphysics functions, as analyzed above, according to ontotheology, and is intertwined with a politics of exclusion incarnated in totalitarianism. The third criterion will be shown to be born out of a critique of such a metaphysics and formulated most famously by Levinas as the forgetting of the other (difference).

#### **1.6.1. Levinas' critique on Heidegger as the third criterion**

Levinas' critique maybe discussed in a threefold fashion in relation to Levinas' biography, his philosophy and rephrased regarding the myth of the pure Greek origin. Starting, then, with a brief biographical overview; Levinas was born in 1906 in Lithuania and died in Paris in 1995, with the most significant and terrible event in his life occurring under the Nazi



regime, when most members of his family were killed with only his wife and daughter spared a horrible fate by the protection of friends. Critchley (1992: 281) points to a rare autobiographical remark where Levinas says that his life had been dominated by the memory of the Nazi horror. A young Levinas went to study philosophy in Strasbourg in France in 1923, where he discovered the work of Husserl and decided to attend the university in Freiburg in Germany, where Husserl taught, in the academic year 1928-9. It is in this time that Levinas read the work of Husserl's most brilliant student, and eventual successor, none other than Heidegger. Levinas was so philosophically convinced by Heidegger that, between 1930 and 1932, he planned to write a book on him, but in disbelief of Heidegger's support of National Socialism in 1933, as described in the previous section, Levinas abandoned the project. Thus, 'if Levinas' life was dominated by the memory of the Nazi horror, then his philosophical life was animated by the question as to how a philosopher as undeniably brilliant as Heidegger could have become a Nazi, for however short a time' (Critchley, 1992: 281). Hence, the first reason for Levinas' rejection of Heidegger is due to his Nazi affiliation.

Additionally, Levinas' also studied the Talmud with Monsieur Chouchani after the war, resulting in a series of five volumes of Talmudic commentaries. Levinas kept his Jewish writings separate from his philosophical works, a view supported by the use of different French publishers. He, nonetheless, ultimately used the biblical sources to philosophize with as well, in contrast to Heidegger's omission of the Christian and Jewish sources as being impure, mentioned above, to which we will return to below.

Another way of understanding Levinas' rejection of Heidegger is found in his philosophy. The thesis Levinas is best known for is that of the idea that ethics is first philosophy, meaning the attempt to describe the relation with the other person that cannot be reduced to comprehension (Critchley, 1992: 284). Or in terms of metaphysical identity described above, the other that cannot be synthesized into the same. Similar to the claim I made above that Heidegger does not escape that which he criticizes, Levinas also holds that he does not succeed in accounting for alterity, which is irreducible to comprehension. Levinas, therefore, goes about differently in countering the effects of metaphysical identity, i.e. of the Hegelian dialectic. In Chapter 3 we will look at this alternative way in more detail. For now, we can mention that this notion is found in the 'face-to-face' relation, or the epiphany of the face. Critchley, nonetheless, summarizes the different approaches as follows:

The governing intention of Heidegger's thinking is to turn us away from our commonplace preoccupation with things and towards the philosophical conditions in virtue of which such a commonplace relation with things is possible. Heidegger wants to turn our attention from commonplace things to the question 'what does it mean for these things to be at all?' This is the famous question of Being that Heidegger places at the centre of his thinking, and whose ancestry can be traced back to that realm of intellectual inquiry that Aristotle called 'first philosophy' and which was christened 'metaphysics' by a later tradition. However, for Levinas, it is a matter of reversing the direction of metaphysical thinking, from the philosophical to the commonplace, and focusing on another question, not the rather abstruse question of Being, but the more concrete question of the *human* being. For Levinas, the subject matter of first philosophy is the ethical relation to the other human being (Critchley, 1992: 284).

In other words, where Levinas puts ethics first, for Heidegger ethics, as the relation to the other, comes second. The critique, then, against Heidegger, and especially the project of fundamental ontology to which we will return to in more detail in Chapter 2, concerns the relation to the other person. A relation that 'is only a moment in a philosophical investigation whose ambition is the exploration of the basic question of metaphysics' (Critchley, 1992: 284). More simply, the risk here is 'the philosopher losing sight of the other person in his or her quest for metaphysical truth' (Critchley, 1992: 284). Therefore, the claim is that for Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*, 'the other person is just one of many, one of 'them': the crowd, the mass, the herd. On this picture, there is never anything absolutely surprising, challenging or remarkable about the other person' (Critchley, 1992: 285). The last description can be understood as the functioning of ontotheology in terms of the identity of a community, serving as the ground and highest principle to which the different identities of individuals gets sublated into, i.e. as forgetting difference. The incarnation of this thought is of course totalitarianism.

This critique is not only towards Heidegger, but for Levinas' ethics it bears a critical relation to the history of philosophy and its tradition as a whole. The philosophical tradition for Levinas is understood according to its obsession with ontology. Meaning, for Levinas, 'the attempt to comprehend the Being of what is, or beings (*das Sein des Seienden*)' (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 5), where the ontological event concerns the reduction of all forms of otherness by a transmutation of their alterity into the Same. Accordingly, Levinas in the paper titled *Transcendence and Height* (1962), holds that 'the Same is *par excellence* the knowing ego (*le Moi connaissant*), what he calls the melting pot (*le creuset*) of Being (*TH* 89). The ego is the site for the transmutation of otherness' (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 5). Or again, concerning the ego's desire for liberty and comprehension:

The latter is achieved through the full adequation or correspondence of the ego's representations with external reality: truth. The ego comprehends and englobes all possible reality; nothing is hidden, no otherness refuses to give itself up. Liberty, therefore, is simply the assurance that no otherness will hinder or prevent the Same and that each *sortie* into alterity will return to self bearing the prize of comprehension. Philosophy is defined by Levinas as the alchemy whereby alterity is transmuted into sameness, by means of the philosopher's stone of the knowing ego (*TH 92*) (Critchley, 1992: 6).

Consequently, Levinas claims that this ontological event defines and dominates the philosophical tradition from Parmenides to Heidegger, with Heidegger's project of fundamental ontology being the most recent example, which all lead to a forgetting of the other.

The point of Levinas' critique is that unless we underpin our social interactions with ethical relations, it may lead to the failure to acknowledge the humanity of the other. 'Such, for Levinas, is what took place in the Holocaust and in the countless other disasters of the twentieth century, where the other person becomes a faceless face in the crowd, someone who the passerby simply passes by, someone whose life or death is for me a matter of indifference' (Critchley, 1992: 285). The problem of the other can also be rephrased in terms of the epistemological problem Husserl was trying to address namely what the mind has access to, and in this instance access to other minds and whether one can know what the other person is feeling or experiencing. In short one cannot know what the other person is truly feeling or experiencing, meaning 'there is something about the other person, a dimension of separateness, interiority, secrecy or whatever, that escapes my comprehension. That which exceeds the bounds of my knowledge demands *acknowledgement*' (Critchley, 1992: 285). In other words, in echoing Husserl's redefinition of immanence to include transcendence with a slight twist, one must learn to 'acknowledge what one cannot know and to respect the separateness or what Levinas calls the *transcendence* of the other person, a transcendence that is very much of this world and not part of some other-worldly mysticism. If the other gets lost in the crowd, then their transcendence vanishes' (Critchley, 1992: 286).

The critique against Heidegger can also be phrased in terms of the myth of Being, as a striving for the pure Greek origin for which the Germans are heirs, that arose in Heidegger's thought in the 1930's, as discussed above. Accordingly, Caputo (1993: 6) argues that the myth of Being proceeds from a massive act of excluding everything that is 'not Greek, not originary Greek, not pure and primordial Greek, and that the exclusion of biblical sources, in

particular, is a fateful, even fatal failure'. This exclusion of what is called the 'jewgreek', an expression Derrida borrowed from James Joyce, means the following: 'the miscegenated state of one who is neither purely Greek nor purely Jewish, who is too philosophical to be a pure Jew and too biblical to be pure Greek, who is attached to both philosophers and prophets' (Caputo, 1993: 6). Caputo highlights that this is the status Derrida thinks befits Levinas himself, 'whose project it was not to supersede philosophy but rather to shock philosophy into place by way of exposing it to something other than philosophy' (Caputo, 1993: 6). Or to put in Critchley's words:

For Levinas, an *ethical* relation is one where I *face* the other person and keep my distance, for distance implies respect. It is this ethical relation to the other person that was lost in both the fact of National Socialist anti-Semitism and in its philosophical apologias. And this is why Levinas wants to leave the climate of both Heidegger's philosophy and an entire Greek tradition, in order to return to another source for thinking, namely the more biblical wisdom of unconditional respect for the other human being (Critchley, 1992: 286-7).

In sum, it is the imperative of the ethical relationship of thinking the other as promoted in the thought of Levinas that becomes the second criterion for thinking after metaphysics (or ontology as Levinas terms it), a metaphysics of ontotheology which is associated with a politics of exclusion. Stated differently, a thinking after metaphysics will adhere to the call of thinking the other. Or again, I claim here that the critique of forgetting the other (human being) formulated by Levinas, and identified not only in Heidegger but also in the history of philosophy as a whole, which functions according to ontotheology, may serve as the third criterion for thinking after metaphysics.

## 1.7. Conclusion

*En route* seeking an alternative sense of transcendence that may enable a politics that allows difference, I have found in the thought of Husserl, Heidegger and Levinas notions that points one towards a way to address the question. Hence, in Husserl, I have found a redefinition of the realm of immanence to include transcendence that may serve as a 'starting point' for the endeavor. The discussion on Husserl's redefinition of the broadened realm of immanence to include transcendence also introduced the vocabulary of the subject and its relation to the world (other), which sets the tone for the study. Subsequently, I have also found three criteria that may guide thinking along this path. The first criterion or *modus operandi* for thinking after metaphysics I termed *a thinking the same different* and is taken from Heidegger as a way to engage with the history of thought. The second criterion for thinking after

metaphysics is also taken from Heidegger in his laying bare the constitution of metaphysics as ontotheology as the limit and critique of such a thinking, also discussed regarding the metaphysical identity of the subject. This critique I claim may be used as a criterion in the sense that it is to be avoided. Heidegger also outlines a way to avoid thinking according to ontotheology, which I discussed as thinking the subject post-metaphysically, meaning the mastery of the subject is broken in the mutual appropriation of man listening to the call of Being. The decentering of the subject, I claim, takes place in what Heidegger calls the *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation. Additionally, Heidegger's involvement with the Nazi regime in relation to his thought was taken account of in the demythologization of Heidegger's thought, thereby justifying a re-appropriation thereof. Finally, the third criterion is taken from the imperative in Levinas' thought to think the ethical relation other, and which I named the criterion that is to be aimed for, i.e. thinking the other (not the Other). Furthermore, this criterion sprouts from Levinas' critique of not only Heidegger but the whole history of philosophy sublating alterity. To state the three criteria together, then, to think after metaphysics is to avoid ontotheology by thinking the subject post-metaphysically as being open to the address of Being, which in the event of *Ereignis* decenters the subject and exposes one, instead, to what has to be thought, namely the other. In sum, this chapter named three criteria for thinking after metaphysics from a 'starting point' that aims to redefine transcendence as inside immanence.

## Chapter 2 - *Dasein* as *Mitdasein*

### A case for Nancy

Philosophy is, in sum, the thinking of being-with; because of this, it is also thinking-with as such.

Nancy (2000: 31)

#### 2.1. Introduction

What would an alternative sense of transcendence, which enables a sense of politics that allows difference, entail? I claimed that the ‘starting point’ and three criteria outlined in Chapter 1 suggests a way of engaging this question. A way that goes about thinking the history of thought the same different, thereby aiming to avoid ontotheology, by decentering the subject or the community which builds its identity on the model of the subject, and also takes the imperative of thinking the ethical relation with the other serious. That is by thinking the other, that allows for difference. As already hinted in Chapter 1, I further propose to find in the thought of Jean-Luc Nancy an answer to the question above which ‘meets’ the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics along a path opened by Husserl’s redefinition of the immanence-transcendence distinction, thereby permitting him to formulate a sense of transcendence that enables a sense of politics that allows difference. In this chapter, I will thus make a case for this suggestion that Nancy provides an answer to the overarching question, to be found most notably in his re-appropriation of Heidegger’s notion of *Mitsein*. The case for Nancy answering the question will be made by seeking to trace moments in his thought where the three criteria are in play. In other words, by unpacking Nancy’s thinking Heidegger the same different, I will seek to trace moments where Nancy decenters the subject, or the identity of a community, to allow for alterity, for a thinking of the other that is exposed in the event of appropriation (*Ereignis*). This search will enable me to discuss Nancy’s alternative sense of politics in his notion of the inoperative community. Finally, I aim to express that it is Nancy’s alternative sense of transcendence as transimmanence that enables the sense of politics that allows for difference.

## 2.2. Meeting the first criterion for thinking after metaphysics: Nancy thinking

### Heidegger the same - different

In order, then, to propose that Nancy formulates an alternative sense of politics that avoids ontotheology and achieves a thinking that allows alterity, the first step is to unpack how Nancy re-appropriates Heidegger as meeting the first criterion for thinking after metaphysics. Hence, one can ask: how does Nancy go about rethinking Heidegger? To start off with Nancy's task of philosophy can be summarized in the following words, also quoted in the epigraph:

Philosophy is, in sum, the thinking of being-with; because of this, it is also thinking-with as such (Nancy, 2000: 31).

Where for Heidegger philosophy is thinking *Sein*, and for Levinas to think the Other, for Nancy the task of philosophy is to think *Mitdasein* or *Mitsein*, a notion found in Heidegger's early thought. Nancy, taking up this task by thinking the same different ultimately develops his own terminology for *Mitdasein* as the fundamental description of existence which he terms being singular plural. An explication of what being singular plural means will be given below. Nancy, nevertheless, not only re-appropriates the existential analytic of Heidegger's early thought but also, as we shall see later, rethinks some of his later insights more specifically that of *Ereignis*. Todd May confirms this when he writes:

Unlike many who have followed Heidegger, however, Nancy's borrowings are from themes that are continuous between the "early" and "late" Heidegger. From the latter, he uses the Derridean theme of presence and absence... But in his view of individuality as exposure, he relies on earlier Heideggerian writings. For instance, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes, "When Dasein directs itself towards something and grasps it, it does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally encapsulated, but its primary kind of Being is such that it is always 'outside' alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered." In Nancy's view, however, Heidegger did not fully understand the implications of his own insight, and kept regressing to a concept of a preconstituted individuality (May, 1997: 27).

For Nancy, thus, the importance of the project Heidegger has started in *Sein und Zeit*, i.e. thinking *Sein* (as *Mitsein*), beyond traditional metaphysics, even though Heidegger himself does not see the significance, cannot be understated. Nancy, nonetheless, does not blindly follow Heidegger but takes what he can from his thought in line with his program of continuing to think *Mitdasein*. Nancy (2000: 93) writes:

The existential analytic of *Being and Time* is the project from which all subsequent thinking follows, whether this is Heidegger's own latter thinking or our various ways of thinking against or beyond Heidegger himself. This affirmation is in no way

an admission of “Heideggerianism”; it completely escapes the impoverished proclamations of “schools.” It does not signify that this analytic is definitive, only that it is responsible for registering the seismic tremor of a more decisive rupture in the constitution or consideration of meaning (analogous, for example, to those of the “cogito” or “Critique”). This is why the existential analytic is not complete, and why we continue to feel its shock waves.

Accordingly, for Nancy, ‘the analytic of *Mitsein* that appears within the existential analytic remains nothing more than a sketch; that is, even though *Mitsein* is coessential with *Dasein*, it remains in a subordinate position’ (Nancy, 2000: 93). This subordination of *Mitdasein* to *Dasein* by Heidegger is Nancy’s primary point of critique against *Sein und Zeit*, to be unfolded in more detail below. In other words, even though Heidegger stated that *Mitsein* is co-original to *Dasein*, the focus of Heidegger’s project eventually falls on *Dasein* and the choice of being authentic or inauthentic. This focus results in the dissimulation of *Mitsein* under the notion of Das Man, which in the first Chapter I discussed entail the singularity of being forgotten in the masses reflected in totalitarian politics. Or in Nancy’s words, ‘as such, the whole existential analytic still harbors some principle by which what it opens up is immediately closed off’ (Nancy, 2000: 93). Because the discussion of *Mitdasein* is closed off, Nancy (2000: 93) claims that it is necessary, then, to forcibly reopen a passage somewhere beyond that obstruction which decided the terms of being-with’s fulfillment. In other words, Nancy argues that a further explication of the importance of *Mitdasein* is thus needed. The reopening of a renewed explication should be understood as follows:

This is not a matter of saying that it is necessary “to complete” the merely sketched-out analysis of *Mitsein*, nor is it a matter of setting up *Mitsein* as a “principle” like it deserves. “In principle,” being-with escapes completion and always evades occupying the place of a principle. What is necessary is that we retrace the outline of its analysis and push it to the point where it becomes apparent that the coessentiality of being-with is nothing less than a matter of the co-originary of meaning—and that the “meaning of Being” is only what it is (either “meaning” or, primarily, its own “precomprehension” as the constitution of existence) when it is *given as with* (Nancy, 2000: 93).

How then does this reopening take shape? Nancy (2000: 26) dictates:

Heidegger clearly states that being-with (*Mitsein*, *Miteinandersein*, and *Mitdasein*) is essential to the constitution of *Dasein* itself. Given this, it needs to be made absolutely clear that *Dasein*, far from being either “man” or “subject,” is not even an isolated and unique “one,” but is instead always the one, each one, with one another (*l’un-avec-l’autre*). If this determination is essential, then it needs to attain to the co-originary dimension and expose it without reservation. But as it has often been said, despite this affirmative assertion of co-originary, he gives up on the step to the consideration of *Dasein* itself. *It is appropriate, then, to examine the possibility of*



*an explicit and endless exposition of co-originary and the possibility of taking account of what is at stake in the togetherness of the ontological enterprise*<sup>19</sup>.

What is at play, here, in Nancy's proclaimed task is none other than a thinking the same different, answering the question of how he goes about rethinking Heidegger. Thinking the same illustrates the affirmative assertion of co-originary in Heidegger and acknowledging its limits. Thinking the same different shows what in Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein* as *Mitsein* might be rethought or extended in this case. Nancy proclaims this task of rethinking the exposition of *Mitsein* as follows: 'The themes of being-with and co-originary need to be renewed and need to "reinitialize" the existential analytic, exactly because these are meant to respond to the question of the meaning of Being, or to Being as meaning' (Nancy, 2000: 27). The meaning of *Sein* (Being) consists in thinking, or, for Nancy, speaking about Being, as being-with, which will be discussed as a rethinking of the sense of the political. Once more in Nancy's words:

But if the meaning of Being indicates itself principally by the putting into play of Being in *Dasein* and as *Dasein*, then, precisely as *meaning*, this putting into play (the "there will be" of Being) can only attest to itself or expose itself in the mode of being-with: because as relates to meaning, it is never for just one, but always for one another, always between one another (Nancy, 2000: 27).

Moreover, Nancy (2000: 27) adds:

The meaning of Being is not in play in *Dasein* in order to be "communicated" to others; its putting into play is *identically being-with*. Or again: *Being is put into play as the "with"* that is absolutely indisputable. From now on, this is the minimal ontological premise. Being is put into play among us; it does not have any other meaning except the dis-position of this "between".

Thus, the reopening of the exposition of *Mitdasein* starts with what Nancy terms the 'first philosophy' or fundamental ontology of *Sein und Zeit* including Heidegger's later thought, which featured in Chapter 1. Stated differently, 'this very point, then, indicates to us that place from which first philosophy must recommence: it is necessary to refigure fundamental ontology (as well as the existential analytic, the history of Being, and the thinking of *Ereignis* that goes along with it) with a thorough resolve that starts from the plural singular of origins, from being-with' (Nancy, 2000: 62). Or put even more simply: 'It is existence reclaiming its due or its condition: coexistence' (Nancy, 2000: 42).

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<sup>19</sup> Emphasis added by the author of this study.

Having set out Nancy's *modus operandi* for retreating Heidegger, I now turn to Nancy's renewed exposition of *Mitdasein* or being-with. The task will proceed by unpacking a few instances of Nancy thinking Heidegger's existential analytic the same different, to unfold subsequently how this allows Nancy to avoid ontotheology by decentering the subject and in turn think the other. In other words, having examined how Nancy meets the first criterion, instances of thinking Heidegger the same different may allow me to, later, point out Nancy meeting the second and third criteria for thinking after metaphysic. Because Nancy writes in a fragmented style, the instances will be unpacked in a juxtaposition fashion. Heidegger's analysis in *Sein und Zeit* will each time be discussed first (thinking the same or first reading), followed by an examination of Nancy's re-appropriation (the different or second reading). The discussion will include three of the analytic descriptions Heidegger provides in his *Dasein* analysis concerning the essence of *Dasein*, *Jemeinigkeit*, and *Durchschnittlichkeit*, as well as three aspects of the *Mitsein* analysis that refer to *Mitsein* as *Seinsart* and *In-der-Weltsein*, in *Sein und Zeit*. To reiterate, I will not attempt, here, to reconstruct a logical, coherent account of Nancy's re-appropriation of Heidegger, but rather relate Nancy's fragments that I identify as re-appropriations of Heidegger's respective aspects in his existential analysis for purpose renewing the task of thinking being-with. Once more, the aim of discussing Nancy's thinking Heidegger the same different as shifting the emphasis back to the importance of thinking being-with, which in turn opens the way for seeking the remaining two criteria that allow for an alternative sense of politics enabled by the alternative sense of transcendence.

The first description, then, under the *Dasein* analysis reads: '*Das "Wesen" dieses Seienden liegt in seinem Zu-sein. Das Was-sein (essentia) dieses Seienden muß, sofern überhaupt davon gesprochen werden kann, aus seinem Sein (existentia) begriffen werden*'<sup>20</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 42). In short, *Dasein* has existence as essence and not a substance as with traditional metaphysics. Heidegger explains the difference as follows:

Dabei ist es gerade die ontologische Aufgabe zu zeigen, daß, wenn wir für das Sein dieses Seienden die Bezeichnung Existenz wählen, dieser Titel nicht die ontologische Bedeutung des überlieferten Terminus existentia hat und haben kann; existentia besagt ontologisch soviel wie *Vorhandensein*, eine Seinsart, die dem

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<sup>20</sup> The "essence" of this being lies in its to be. The whatness (*essentia*) of this being must be understood in terms of its being (*existentia*) insofar as one can speak of it at all (Heidegger 1996: 39).

Seienden vom Charakter des Daseins wesensmäßig nicht zukommt<sup>21</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 42).

Or again:

*Das 'Wesen' des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz.* Die an diesem Seienden herausstellbaren Charaktere sind daher nicht vorhandene "Eigenschaften" eines so und so 'aussehenden' vorhandenen Seienden, sondern je ihm mögliche Weisen zu sein und nur das. Alles Sosein dieses Seienden ist primär Sein. Daher drückt der Titel 'Dasein', mit dem wir dieses Seiende bezeichnen, nicht sein Was aus, wie Tisch, Haus, Baum, sondern das Sein<sup>22</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 42).

Rephrased in the vocabulary of the later Heidegger as presented in Chapter 1, if we think of the essence of *Dasein* in terms of post-metaphysical identity, then we speak of its *Existenz* as the belonging to *Sein*, as thinking or questioning *Sein* that addresses *Dasein*, rather than a substance or attribute that is objectively present.

Nancy, in turn re-appropriates this notion of essence as existence in his own vocabulary of *Mitsein*. Here, of course existence is emphasized as always with others. Thus the essence of *Dasein* can be rephrased as being singular plural. Nancy (2000: 28) explains the term as follows:

Being singular plural: these three apposite words, which do not have any determined syntax ("being" is a verb or noun; "singular" and "plural" are nouns or adjectives; all can be rearranged in different combinations), mark an absolute equivalence, both in an indistinct and distinct way. Being is singularly plural and plurally singular. Yet, this in itself does not constitute a particular predication of Being, as if Being is or has a certain number of attributes, one of which is that of being singular-plural—however double, contradictory, or chiasmatic this may be. *On the contrary, the singular- plural constitutes the essence of Being, a constitution that undoes or dislocates every single, substantial essence of Being itself.* This is not just a way of speaking, because there is no prior substance that would be dissolved. Being does not preexist its singular plural. To be more precise, Being absolutely does not *preexist*; nothing preexists; only what exists exists.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Here the ontological task is precisely to show that when we choose the word existence for the being of this being, this term does not and cannot have the ontological meaning of the traditional expression of *existentia*. Ontologically, *existentia* means *objective presence (Vorhandenheit)*, a kind of being which is essentially inappropriate to characterize the being which has the character of Da-sein (Heidegger 1996: 39).

<sup>22</sup> *The "essence" of Da-sein lies in its existence.* The characteristics to be found in this being are thus not objectively present "attributes" of an objectively present being which has such and such an "outward appearance," but rather possible ways for it to be, and only this. The thatness of this being is primarily being. Thus the term "Da-sein" which we use to designate this being does not express its what, as in the case of table, house, tree, but being (Heidegger 1996: 39).

<sup>23</sup> Emphasis added by the author of this study.

Important to note in this instance is that Nancy indicates that with being singular plural he also wants to continue moving away from ontotheology. He writes that ‘because none of these three terms precedes or grounds the other, each designates the co-essence of the others’ (Nancy, 2000: 37). Moreover, the mark of being singular plural is the *with* or in Latin *cum* or the German *mit*. Therefore, returning to the epigraph on what the task of philosophy is for Nancy, the *with* as being-with is to be thought. Nancy (2000: 37) explicates being singular as the mark in the following way:

Being singular plural: in a single stroke, without punctuation, without a mark of equivalence, implication, or sequence. A single, continuous-discontinuous mark tracing out the entirety of the ontological domain, being-with-itself designated as the “with” of Being, of the singular and plural, and dealing a blow to ontology— not only another signification but also another syntax. The “meaning of Being”: not only as the “meaning of with,” but also, and above all, as the “with” of meaning.

We will return to the importance of the *with*, not situated in either the subject or in the other, but rather in between both, in the discussion on Nancy’s notion of transcendence as transimmanence, which I claim enables his alternative sense of politics.

Moving on now to the second description, which concerns *Jemeinigkeit*, and refers to *Dasein* belonging to me and you, being your own, and mine uniquely. *Jemeinigkeit*, in turn, has two aspects. The first has another post-metaphysical result: ‘*Dasein ist daher nie ontologisch zu fassen als Fall und Exemplar einer Gattung von Seiendem als Vorhandenem*’<sup>24</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 42). There is thus no *Dasein* par excellence, a model to strive for or an absolute hierarchy of *Daseins* to be formed. Therefore, in contrast to a *Seiendem als Vorhandenem*, who ‘is’ in such a way that it can be neither indifferent or different to its own *Sein*, *Dasein*, according to its character of *Jemeinigkeit*, should be spoken of using a personal pronoun with what is said: ‘ich bin’, ‘du bist’ and so forth. In short, *Dasein* is a “who” and not a “what”, meaning every *Dasein* is a person and should not be treated as an object. Moreover, ‘*Dasein ist Seiendes, das je ich selbst bin, das Sein ist je meines. Diese Bestimmung zeigt eine ontologische Verfassung an, aber auch nur das. Sie enthält zugleich die ontische – obzwar*

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<sup>24</sup> The being which this being is concerned about in its being is always my own. Thus, Da-sein is never to be understood ontologically as a case and instance of a genus of beings as objectively present (Heidegger 1996: 40).

*rohe – Angabe, daß je ein Ich dieses Seiende ist und nicht Andere*<sup>25</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 114). This has the implication that such an I, ‘*das je ich selbst bin*’, consequently cannot be used, on the basis of being constant and presently objective, to serve as a reference point or center, i.e. as the subject from where all other objects and beings receive their meaning in an ontotheological fashion. Stated differently, ‘*in jedem Falle impliziert die Unbestimmtheit seines Seins immer diesen Seins - sinn. Vorhandenheit jedoch ist die Seinsart eines nicht-daseins-mäßigen Seienden*’<sup>26</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 114). Once more: ‘*Wenn das “Ich” eine essentielle Bestimmtheit des Daseins ist, dann muß sie existenzial interpretiert werden. Das Wer ist dann nur zu beantworten in der phänomenalen Aufweisung einer bestimmten Seinsart des Daseins*’<sup>27</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 117). We can add, and nothing else.

This point is also made by Heidegger (2006b: 114) under the first aspect of the *Mitdasein* analysis. Here, again, *Mitdasein* is to be understood as a *Seinsart* (kind of being) and should not be treated in an objectifying manner. In other words, because the *Jemeinigkeit* of *Dasein* may not be reduced to a substance, the same goes for other *Daseins*, i.e. *Mitdasein*. This, I hold, has a two-fold implication for thinking after metaphysics. The first concerns intersubjective relations, where the other may not be mastered by the subject, hence leading to a sublation to the same and a forgetting of the other as Levinas argued. The second, concerns the sense of community made clear by Nancy, and will be discussed in more detail below. But for now the second implication may be phrased as follows; because *Mitdasein* or *Mitsein* is not objective, it, therefore, cannot serve as the ground of ontotheology, in terms of a common being or common identity. Such a conception of community also leads to the sublation of the other, i.e. difference that Levinas also pointed out. Nancy (2000: 95) therefore, rephrases the *Jemeinigkeit* (mineness) in the vocabulary of being- *with*: “Each time” is the singular- plural structure of the disposition. Therefore, “each time mine” signifies primarily “each time his or hers,” that is, “each time *with*”: “*mineness*” is itself only a possibility that occurs in the concurrent reality of being-each-time-with’. In other words, by

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<sup>25</sup> Da-sein is a being which I myself am, its being is in each case mine. This determination indicates an *ontological* constitution, but no more than that. At the same time, it contains an *ontic* indication, albeit an undifferentiated one, that an I is always this being, and not others (Heidegger 1996: 108).

<sup>26</sup> In any case, the indeterminacy of its being always implies this meaning of being. However, objective presence is the mode of being of beings unlike Da-sein (Heidegger 1996: 108).

<sup>27</sup> *If the “I” is an essential determination of Da-sein, it must be interpreted existentially.* The question of the who can then be answered only by a phenomenal demonstration of a definite kind of being of Da-sein (Heidegger 1996: 110).

re-appropriating *Jemeinigkeit*, Nancy opens the door to think singularity in plurality, as the plurality of singularities, without the loss of either.

Additionally, the second aspect of *Mitdasein* refers to the world *Dasein* finds itself in related to the *Seinsart* described above. Heidegger (2006b: 118) writes:

Die Welt des Daseins gibt demnach Seiendes frei, das nicht nur von Zeug und Dingen überhaupt verschieden ist, sondern gemäß seiner Seinsart *als Dasein* selbst in der Weise des In-der-Welt-seins "in" der Welt ist, in der es zugleich innerweltlich begegnet. Dieses Seiende ist weder vorhanden noch zuhanden, sondern ist *so, wie* das freigebende Dasein selbst – es *ist auch und mit da*. Wollte man denn schon Welt überhaupt mit dem innerweltlich Seienden identifizieren, dann müßte man sagen, "Welt" ist auch Dasein.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, *Dasein* is always with other *Daseins*, who form part of the world *Dasein* is always already in, i.e. *In-der-Welt-sein*. Therefore, Heidegger equates the world to *Dasein*, which is of course *Mitdasein*. Restated once more, *In-der-Welt-sein*, is to be in the world with others, who themselves form part of the world *Dasein* always finds itself in.

Accordingly, Nancy also relates the aspect of *Jemeinigkeit* to the world as *Mitsein*. This implies that the world is also co-created, to which we return to in more detail below. Nancy makes the relation when he writes:

If the world does not "have" an origin "outside of itself," if the world is its own origin or the origin "itself," then the origin of the world occurs at each moment of the world. It is the *each time* of Being, and its realm is the *being-with* of each time with every (other) time. The origin is for and by way of the singular plural of every possible origin (Nancy, 2000: 20).

Moreover, Nancy, following Heidegger, is describing here the uniqueness of every existence in opposition to a set example regarding a genus, the subject or common identity. In other words, every origin or each time of Being, in its *being-with*, constitutes an origin of the world uniquely, making up the plurality of origins. Put differently; Nancy goes as far as to say that when we encounter the other, we do not merely encounter the other, but the other as an origin. Nancy (2000: 9) writes:

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<sup>28</sup> The world of Da-sein thus frees beings which are not only completely different from tools and things, but which themselves in accordance with their kind of being as Da-sein are themselves "in" the world as being-in-the-world in which they are at the same time encountered. These beings are neither objectively present nor at hand, but they are like the very Da-sein which frees them—they are there, too, and there with it. So, if one wanted to identify the world in general with innerworldly beings, one would have to say the "world" is also Da-sein (Heidegger 1996: 111).

What we receive (rather than what we perceive) with singularities is the discreet passage of *other origins of the world*. What occurs there, what bends, leans, twists, addresses, denies—from the newborn to the corpse—is neither primarily “someone close,” nor an “other,” nor a “stranger,” nor “someone similar.” It is an origin; it is an affirmation of the world, and we know that the world has no other origin than this singular multiplicity of origins.

The renewed explication of *Jemeinigkeit* as meaning every singularity is an origin, from where meaning is co-created, also accounts for Nancy stating in the epigraph that being-*with* means thinking-*with*.

Next up is the second aspect of *Jemeinigkeit*, which concerns *Dasein* as a possibility: ‘Das Seiende, dem es in seinem Sein um dieses selbst geht, verhält sich zu seinem Sein als seiner eigensten Möglichkeit’<sup>29</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 42). Where the first aspect of *Jemeinigkeit* illustrates its post-metaphysicality, namely ‘es “hat” sie nicht nur noch eigenschaftlich als ein Vorhandenes’<sup>30</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 42), referred to above, the second aspect brings forth Heidegger’s move towards eventually focusing more on *Dasein*, than on *Mitsein*. This shift receives its potency from the introduction of the two *Seinsmodi* (modes of existence), namely *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit*. Hence, *Dasein* in thinking its own *Sein*, is addressed as a possibility that may be chosen. If chosen, then it means that *Dasein* is won, and accordingly termed as existing in a mode of *Eigentlichkeit* (authenticity). But *Dasein* can also be lost, or it can never and only “apparently” win itself. In this case, the mode of existence is termed *Uneigentlichkeit* (inauthenticity). Or stated differently, ‘*Verloren haben kann es sich nur und noch nicht sich gewonnen haben kann es nur, sofern es seinem Wesen nach mögliches eigentliches, das heißt sich zueigen ist*’<sup>31</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 42). In other words, *Dasein* understands itself in terms of its *Existenz (Sein)*, which concerns the possibility to be itself or not to be itself. Accordingly, Heidegger (2006b: 12) writes: ‘*Diese Möglichkeiten hat das Dasein entweder selbst gewählt oder es ist in sie hineingeraten oder je schon darin*

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<sup>29</sup> The being which is concerned in its being about its being is related to its being as its truest possibility (Heidegger 1996: 40).

<sup>30</sup> It does not “have” that possibility only as a mere attribute of something objectively present (Heidegger 1996: 40).

<sup>31</sup> It can only have lost itself and it can only have not yet gained itself because it is essentially possible as authentic, that is, it belongs to itself (Heidegger 1996: 40).

*aufgewachsen. Die Existenz wird in der Weise des Ergreifens oder Versäumens nur vom jeweiligen Dasein selbstentschieden*.<sup>32</sup>

Noteworthy in the analysis is that Heidegger, again, refers back to the first aspect of *Jemeinigkeit*, highlighting that there exists no hierarchy of *Daseins*. Or for that matter no hierarchy in terms of the *Seinsmodi* of *Dasein*: ‘*Die Uneigentlichkeit des Daseins bedeutet aber nicht etwa ein ‘weniger’ Sein oder einen ‘niedrigeren’ Seinsgrad. Die Uneigentlichkeit kann vielmehr das Dasein nach seiner vollsten Konkretion bestimmen in seiner Geschäftigkeit, Angeregtheit, Interessiertheit, Genußfähigkeit*’<sup>33</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 43). But, from the subsequent critique on *Sein und Zeit*, which includes Nancy, it seems that Heidegger did not keep to this claim that there are no hierarchies concerning *Dasein*. The argument is that Heidegger emphasized the *Jemeinigkeit* of *Dasein*, over the analysis of *Mitsein*. It is at this point that Levinas’ critique of Heidegger presented in Chapter 1 also comes to mind, with *Dasein* forming the centre toward which everything gets assimilated. We shall return to these critiques later on. To reiterate, then, it is the first aspect of *Jemeinigkeit*, which concerns the denouncement of a hierarchy and objectifying of *Daseins*, in order to highlight the meaning of the co-originary, or equality of *Mitsein*, that I argued Nancy re-appropriates in his renewed exposition of *Mitsein*.

The third description of *Dasein* is that of *Durchschnittlichkeit* (average everydayness), i.e. the mode of existence which *Dasein* exhibits most of the time. Put differently; it is from this indifferent mode of existence towards *Dasein* that the choice of *Eigentlichkeit* und *Uneigentlichkeit*, outlined above, is made. Breaking it down, Heidegger formulates the first notable point concerning *Durchschnittlichkeit* as follows: ‘*Das Dasein soll im Ausgang der Analyse gerade nicht in der Differenz eines bestimmten Existierens interpretiert, sondern in seinem indifferenten Zunächst und Zumeist aufgedeckt werden*’<sup>34</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 43). Additionally, *Durchschnittlichkeit* as everyday indifference is not nothing, but is rather ‘ein

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<sup>32</sup> *Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself. *Dasein* has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each *Dasein* itself in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities (Heidegger 1996: 10).

<sup>33</sup> But the inauthenticity of *Da-sein* does not signify a "lesser" being or a "lower" degree of being. Rather, inauthenticity can determine *Da-sein* even in its fullest concretion, when it is busy, excited, interested, and capable of pleasure (Heidegger 1996: 40).

<sup>34</sup> At the beginning of the analysis, *Da-sein* is precisely not to be interpreted in the differentiation of a particular existence; rather, to be uncovered in the indifferent way in which it is initially and for the most part (Heidegger 1996: 41).



positiver phänomenaler Charakter dieses Seienden. Aus dieser Seinsart heraus und in sie zurück ist alles Existieren, wie es ist'<sup>35</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 43).

Therefore, the *durchschnittliche Alltäglichkeit des Daseins* is not to be taken as a mere aspect. In it rather, as with the mode of *Uneigentlichkeit*, lies in the structure of *Existenzialität* a priori. Moreover, *Durchschnittlichkeit* concerns a mode of existence. Restated in Heidegger's words, 'auch in ihr geht es dem Dasein in bestimmter Weise um sein Sein, zu dem es sich im Modus der durchschnittlichen Alltäglichkeit verhält und sei es auch nur im Modus der Flucht davor und des Vergessens seiner'<sup>36</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 43). As a result, *Dasein* is to be found existing most of the time in this everyday *Durchschnittlichkeit*, in the forgetting of its relation to *Sein*.

Moreover, *Durchschnittlichkeit*, according to Heidegger's analysis, concerns *Dasein's In-der-Welt-sein* (being-in-the-world), with reference to two parts. The first are things to be used by *Dasein*, as *zuhanden* (ready-to-hand) which does not form part of our discussion. The second concerns the mode of being of everyday *Dasein*, the 'who' of everydayness. The who that Heidegger famously terms *Das Man* (the they), but which is also co-original with *Dasein*, i.e. the who of *Mitsein*. 'Die Nachforschung in der Richtung auf das Phänomen, durch das sich die Frage nach dem Wer beantworten läßt, führt auf Strukturen des Daseins, die mit dem In-der-Welt-sein gleich ursprünglich sind: das Mitsein und Mitdasein'<sup>37</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 114). It is the choice of *Eigentlichkeit* und *Uneigentlichkeit*, however, that becomes the prominent meaning of *Sein* that Heidegger develops in *Sein und Zeit*. As a result, the explication of *Durchschnittlichkeit* in terms of the existing with others or *Mitdasein*, which is *gleich ursprünglich*, gets dissimulated under the notion of *Das Man* as the choice of *Uneigentlichkeit*.

Nancy, conversely, thinking Heidegger the same different, formulates a double critique of the path Heidegger chose in focusing on *Durchschnittlichkeit* and *Das man* that allows for

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<sup>35</sup> ... a positive phenomenal characteristic. All existing is how it is out of this kind of being, and back into it. We call this everyday indifference of Da-sein *averageness* (Heidegger 1996: 41).

<sup>36</sup> In it, too, Da-sein is concerned with a particular mode of its being to which it is related in the way of average everydayness, if only in the way of fleeing *from* it and of forgetting *it* (Heidegger 1996: 41).

<sup>37</sup> By investigating in the direction of the phenomenon which allows us to answer the question of the who, we are led to structures of Da-sein which are equiprimordial with being-in-the-world: being-with and *Mitda-sein* (Heidegger 1996: 107).

Nancy's subsequent re-appropriation of *Durchschnittlichkeit* and the co-originary of *Mitsein*. Firstly, according to Nancy, the focus on *Das man* that constitutes the inauthentic dwelling of *Dasein* in the form of mediocrity merely hides away the real concern of what we have in common with the masses, namely *Mitdasein*. Nancy writes:

In his analytic of *Mitsein*, Heidegger does not do this measure justice. On the one hand, he deals with the indifference of an “uncircumspective tarrying alongside” and, on the other, an “authentic understanding of others”—the status of which remains indeterminate as long as what is in question is anything other than the negative understanding of the inappropriability of the death of others or the codestination of a people. Between this indifference and this understanding, the theme of existential “distantiality” immediately reverts back to competition and domination, in order to open onto the indistinct domination of the “one” (“*Das Man*”). The “one” is produced as nothing other than that conversion which levels out the general attempt by everyone to outdistance everyone else, which ends in the domination of mediocrity, of the common and average measure, common as average. It ends with the “common-mediocre” concealing the essential “common-with” (Nancy, 2000: 82).

The *second* point of critique, building on the first point of concealing the *with*, relates, according to Nancy, to Heidegger's *Das Man* (one) as being insufficient as the initial understanding of *existentielle* “everydayness”. This description is insufficient, because, as we showed above, what is concealed is being-*with*. For Nancy, it is rather in being-*with* where the other is encountered as origin and affirmation of the world and meaning, which has no other origin than the singular multiplicity of origins. Therefore, Nancy argues that as with *Das Man* or the people, ‘Heidegger confuses the everyday with the undifferentiated, the anonymous, and the statistical’ (Nancy, 2000: 9).

How, then, does Nancy rethink and re-appropriate *Durchschnittlichkeit*, thereby returning the emphasis and imperative to thinking *Mitsein*? The answer reads as follow: ‘These (*Das man* or the ordinary people) are no less important, but they can only constitute themselves in relation to the differentiated singularity that the *everyday* already is by itself: each day, each time, day to day’ (Nancy, 2000: 20). Put differently, ‘One cannot affirm that the meaning of Being must express itself starting from everydayness and then begin by neglecting the general differentiation of the everyday, its constantly renewed rupture, its intimate discord, its polymorphy and its polyphony, its relief and its variety’ (Nancy, 2000: 20). Once more, it is the everydayness of plurality that ensures the *Jemeinigkeit* of the singularities, each a new origin for the creation of meaning.

As a result, Nancy argues that, according to the re-thought meaning of the everydayness including the uniqueness of each day and the encounter of ‘people’ as origins of the world, the ordinary can also be re-defined: ‘The “ordinary” is always exceptional, however little we understand its character as origin. What we receive most communally as “strange” is that the ordinary itself is originary. With existence laid open in this way and the meaning of the world being what it is, the exception is the rule’ (Nancy, 2000: 20). Thus, the everydayness, understood as being exceptional in being originary, may again serve as that from which *Dasein* can understand itself, namely understanding *Dasein* as *Mitdasein*.

In sum, these instances of Nancy re-appropriation of Heidegger in a thinking that is the same different, or as a double reading of deconstruction, effectively re-appropriates the aspects of the *Dasein* and *Mitsein* analyses for the purposes of thinking being-*with*, and, moreover returns the emphasis and imperative to thinking *Mitsein*. In turn, having shown how Nancy thinks Heidegger the same different, i.e. meeting the first criterion, this opens a way for me to discuss Nancy’s renewed explication of *Mitsein* as firstly avoiding ontotheology by decentering the subject or community, thereby meeting the second criterion. And secondly, to discuss Nancy’s renewed explication as thinking the relation with the other, thereby not only meeting the third criterion, but also, I will claim, allowing Nancy to formulate a new sense of politics, enabled by an alternative sense of transcendence.

### **2.3. Meeting the second criterion for thinking after metaphysics: Nancy re-thinking being-*with* as avoiding ontotheology**

The discussion now turns to elucidate how the second criterion is in play in Nancy’s thought. That is the second criterion I have outlined in Chapter 1, for a thinking after metaphysics, which concerns avoiding ontotheology, more specifically the metaphysical constitution of the subject, by thinking the subject post-metaphysically that decenters the subject. In other words, I will seek to point out, here, in Nancy’s thought, attempts at breaking the mastery of the subject. Hence, in thinking the subject’s identity not in terms of a fixed identity from where the self and the world receives meaning via the mediation through the categories of the self, the subject is opened up, understanding itself and the world rather in terms of Being (as being-*with*), which addresses it in the event of appropriation that is *Ereignis*. Nancy, however, does not make an explicit case for avoiding ontotheology in the manner I chose to outline him here, but, again, in fragments I argue he makes the point. Thus, it is again in a

‘*mise en scene*’ manner that I will go about unpacking the decentering of the subject synonymous to avoiding ontotheology in Nancy’s thought.

As with Hegel; reading the history of thought in order to find the various thesis and antithesis, which through *Aufhebung* forms the dialectical force that drives history teleologically, and Heidegger; who, by taking the step back, reads the same history of thought differently to bring forth the forgetting of *Sein*, Nancy also re-reads the history of thought. For Nancy (2000) conversely, taking a step back from Heidegger, what has not been thought so far is the radical thematization of the ‘with’ as the essential trait of Being and as its proper plural singular co-essence. It is in this proclamation of this renewed task of thinking being-*with* that I claim we also find Nancy’s version of the ‘leap beyond the metaphysics of ontotheology’. Or again, Nancy takes up the task of thinking the subject according to being-*with*, with a critical stance toward a thinking that is always seeking to make the subject the ground and ultimate reference point that provides unity, i.e. assimilation into the same. One can see this critical stance that aims to avoid ontotheological constitution of the subject at play when Nancy (2000: 34) states: ‘What is at stake is no longer thinking beginning from the one, or from the other. Neither a thinking beginning from their togetherness understood now as the One, now as the Other. But rather, thinking, absolutely and without reserve, beginning from the ‘with,’ *as the proper essence of one whose Being is nothing other than with-one-another*<sup>38</sup> (l’un-avec-l’autre)’. Here, it also seems that Nancy is entering into debate with the thought of Levinas, for whom philosophy starts from thinking the Other to which we return to in Chapter 3.

This critical stance of Nancy toward traditional metaphysics in aiming to avoid ontotheology is also formulated in an elaboration of Being no longer being an attribute of beings that grounds and unifies their existence in some fashion. Thus, echoing Heidegger’s critique of metaphysical identity outlined in Chapter 1, Nancy’s version reads as follows:

Being cannot be pre-sup-posed (*pré-sup-posé*) if it is only the Being of what exists, and is not itself some other existence that is previous or subjacent to existence by which existence exists. For existence exists in the plural, singularly plural. As a result, the most formal and fundamental requirement (of ontology) is that “Being” cannot even be assumed to be the simple singular that the name seems to indicate. Its being singular is plural in its very Being. It follows, then, that *not only must being-with-one-another not be understood starting from the presupposition of being-*

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<sup>38</sup> Emphasis added by the original author.

*one, but on the contrary, being-one* (Being as such, complete Being or *ens realissimum*) can only be understood by starting from *being-with-one-another*.<sup>39</sup>  
(Nancy, 2000: 39)

It is in this proclamation that ‘being-one’ (the subject) should be thought from ‘being-with-one-another’, that, I claim, is the moment in Nancy’s thought that decenters the subject. In Nancian terms, the decentering of the subject proceeds from a renewed exposition of Heidegger’s *Mitsein* analysis. Thus, I claim that in Nancy thinking Heidegger the same different, a decentering of the subject takes place.

Accordingly, the decentering of the subject may be found most notably in Nancy re-appropriating the third aspect concerning the relation of *Dasein* towards others, which is a relation different from that held by traditional metaphysics, i.e. ontotheology. In other words, it is specifically this aspect of Heidegger’s analysis that, Nancy holds, he did not take far enough, or that Heidegger did not fully understand the implications thereof. To understand this aspect of *Mitdasein* as a decentering of the subject, we first turn to how Heidegger problematizes the encounter of the others in *Sein und Zeit* echoing Husserl’s critique of the modern subject-world distinction: ‘*Die Charakteristik des Begegnens der Anderen orientiert sich so aber doch wieder am je eigenen Dasein. Geht nicht auch sie von einer Auszeichnung und Isolierung des “Ich” aus, so daß dann von diesem isolierten Subjekt ein Übergang zu den Anderen gesucht werden muß?*’<sup>40</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 118). The line of questioning, here, aims to reveal the metaphysical (ontotheological) logic of finding a ground, in this instance the isolated subject, from where everything else, or all others find their meaning.

To avoid this reasoning, and in turn reveal the third aspect of *Mitdasein*, Heidegger makes clear in what sense we should talk about ‘the others’. Hence, in contrast to the isolated subject bridging the gap toward the others we should understand the matter as follows: “‘Die Anderen’ besagt nicht soviel wie: der ganze Rest der Übrigen außer mir, aus dem sich das Ich heraushebt, die Anderen sind vielmehr die, von denen man selbst sich zumeist *nicht*

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<sup>39</sup> Emphasis added by the original author.

<sup>40</sup> But the characteristic of encountering the others is, after all, oriented toward one's own Da-sein. Does not it, too, start with the distinction and isolation of the "I," so that a transition from this isolated subject to the others must then be sought? (Heidegger 1996: 111).

unterscheidet, unter denen man auch ist'<sup>41</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 118). Restated, regarding *In-der-Welt-sein*, our *Auch-da-sein* (being-there-too) should not be understood as having 'den ontologischen Charakter eines "Mit"-Vorhandenseins innerhalb einer Welt. Das "Mit" ist ein Daseinsmäßiges, das 'Auch' meint die Gleichheit des Seins als umsichtig-besorgendes In-der-Welt-sein'<sup>42</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 118). Hence, the decentering I hold, starts to take place, here, in the claim that being-with is co-originary to *Dasein*. In other words, "'Mit' und 'Auch' sind existenzial und nicht kategorial zu verstehen"<sup>43</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 118).<sup>44</sup> That means being-with is not a category of the metaphysically constituted subject, a relation that comes after the subject has become conscious of its own *Dasein* and subsequent identity. To be conscious of your *Dasein* means to be conscious of *Mitdasein* that proceeds the metaphysical identity.

To rephrase what Heidegger argues, here; *Mitdasein* means that the world *Dasein* finds itself in does not belong to it, to the I as center, but to the we because of the *mit*. In Heidegger's words: 'Auf dem Grunde dieses mithaftigen In-der-Welt-seins ist die Welt je schon immer die, die ich mit den Anderen teile. Die Welt des Daseins ist Mit-welt. Das In-Sein ist Mitsein mit Anderen. Das innerweltliche Ansichsein dieser ist Mitdasein' (Heidegger, 2006b: 118).<sup>45</sup> Hence, Heidegger calls for the mastery of the subject to be broken. The world does not belong to the I (the subject), which means the subject does not provide meaning to it. The world 'belongs' to all, as *Mitwelt*. World as *Mitwelt*, for Nancy as seen above, also implies that meaning is to be co-created. Once more in Heidegger's (167: 119) words:

Die Anderen begegnen nicht im vorgängig unterscheidenden Erfassen des zunächst vorhandenen eigenen Subjektes von den übrigen auch vorkommenden Subjekten, nicht in einem primären Hinsehen auf sich selbst, darin erst das Wogegen eines Unterschieds festgelegt wird. Sie begegnen aus der *Welt* her, in der das besorgend-

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<sup>41</sup> "The others" does not mean everybody else but me-those from whom the I distinguishes itself. They are, rather, those from whom one mostly does not distinguish oneself, those among whom one is, too (Heidegger 1996: 111).

<sup>42</sup> ...the ontological character of being objectively present "with" them within a world. The "with" is of the character of Da-sein, the "also" means the sameness of being as circumspect, heedful being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1996: 111).

<sup>43</sup> This being-there-too with them does not have "With" and "also" are to be understood existentially, not categorically (Heidegger 1996: 111).

<sup>44</sup> We will return to this important distinction Heidegger makes in Chapter 3 when discussing the Levinasian critique on Nancy.

<sup>45</sup> On the basis of this like-with being-in-the-world, the world is always already the one that I share with the others. The world of Da-sein is a with-world. Being-in is being-with others. The innerworldly being-in-itself of others is Mitda-sein (Heidegger 1996: 111).

umsichtige Dasein sich wesenhaft aufhält. Gegenüber den sich leicht eindringenden theoretisch erdachten “Erklärungen” des Vorhandenseins Anderer muß an dem aufgezeigten phänomenalen Tatbestand ihres *umweltlichen* Begegnens festgehalten werden.<sup>46</sup>

Nancy (2000: 40), then, re-appropriating this analysis of *Mitdasein*, states that thinking the *with* does not only change the classic modern distinction of subject and object, where the object is defined in relation to the subject as reference point, which Husserl already argued for, but also changes the imperative to rethink its relation and distinction to other subjects:

In the most classical sense of the term, a subject not only assumes its own distinction from the object of its representation or mastery, it also assumes its own distinction from other subjects. It is possible, then, to distinguish the ipseity of these other subjects (which is to say, the aesity) *from* (d'avec) its own source of representation or mastery. Therefore, the with is the supposition of the “self” in general. But this supposition is no longer subjacent to the self, in the sense of an infinite self-presupposition of subjective substance. As its syntactic function indicates, “with” is the pre-position of the position in general; thus, it constitutes its dis-position.

Thus, the self of the subject is not a substance that grounds its existence from where others can be defined others to the self. The self or subject is not to be understood as pre-constituted. Rather in thinking the *with*, the self should be understood from its basic mode of existence, i.e. *Mitdasein* or being singular plural. The self becomes decentered. Or put differently, the relation of the self to others does not start with the objective presence of the self from where others are defined as the opposite pole, but according to co-appearance of others from the outset. Here, Nancy proposes to rethink the subject, I claim, post-metaphysically, as the self according to the *with*.

Nancy’s decentering of the subject can also be found in two instances where he re-appropriates being-with in relation to *Ereignis*. Hence, thinking the subject’s identity post-metaphysically as answering to the call of Being, i.e. being-*with*. Firstly, Nancy shows that the ‘rethought self’, in terms of post-metaphysical identity, presents itself in the world as an event rather than a metaphysical property:

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<sup>46</sup> The others are not encountered by grasping and previously discriminating one's own subject, initially objectively present, from other subjects also present. They are not encountered by first looking at oneself and then ascertaining the opposite pole of a distinction. They are encountered from the world in which Da sein, heedful and circumspect, essentially dwells. As opposed to the theoretically concocted “explanations” of the objective presence of others which easily urge themselves upon us, we must hold fast to the phenomenal fact which we have indicated of their being encountered in the surrounding world (Heidegger 1996: 112).

“Self” defines the element in which “me” and “you,” and “we,” and “they,” can take place. “Self” determines the “as” of Being: if it is, it is *as* (en tant que) it is. It is "in itself" prior to any "ego," prior to any presentable ‘property’. It is the ‘as’ of all that is. This is not a presentable property, since it is presentation itself. Presentation is neither a propriety nor a state, but rather an event, the coming of something: of its coming *into the world* where the ‘world’ itself is the plane (*la géométral*) or the exposing of every coming (Nancy, 2000: 95).

The second instance describes the self understanding itself in the event of appropriation, that is the call of Being as being-with:

In its coming, that which exists appropriates itself; that is, it is not appropriated, neither by nor into a “self” (which could only preexist what exists by removing and neutralizing the coming in itself). What is born has its “self” *before* self: it has it *there* (which is the meaning of Heidegger's “Dasein”). *There* means *over-there*, the distance of space-time (it is the body, the world of bodies, the body-world). Its appropriation is its moving (*transport*) and being-moved through (*transappropriation*) this dispersal of the *there*; such is the appropriating-event (“Ereignis”). But its being determined as such does not signify that there is some event in which the “proper self” would spring forth, like a jack-in-the-box, but that the coming is in itself and by itself appropriative as such. (As a result, differencing (*différant*) is in itself the propriety that it opens.) This is why “self” does not preexist (itself). “Self” equals what exists as such (Nancy, 2000: 95).

In other words, in the event of appropriation, i.e. *Ereignis*, where (*Mit*)*Sein* and man, belongs together, *Dasein* is exposed to itself, not as a substance or ego, but rather as existing *with* others, being plural singular.

There are two more fragments that may be cited here, as moments of the subject (self) becomes decentered and rethought according to being-*with*. The first fragment regards Husserl’s phenomenological intentionality:

The “self,” of the “self” in general, takes place with before taking place as itself and/or as the other. This “aseity” of the self is anterior to the same and to the other and, therefore, anterior to the distinction between a consciousness and its world. Before phenomenological intentionality and the constitution of the ego, but also before thing like consistency as such, there is co-originary according to the with. Properly speaking, then, there is no anteriority: co-originary is the most general structure of all consistency, all constitution, and all consciousness (Nancy, 2000: 40).

The next fragment refers to Hegel’s dialectic and *Aufhebung*:

“Self” is not the relation of a “me” to “itself.” “Self” is more originary than “me” and “you.” “Self” is primarily nothing other than the “as such” of Being in general.



Being is only its own “as Being.” The “as” does not happen to Being; it does not add itself to Being; it does not intensify Being: it is Being, constitutively. Therefore, Being is directly and immediately mediated *by itself*; it is itself mediation; it is mediation without any instrument, and it is nondialectic: dialectic without dialectic. It is negativity without use, the *nothing* of the with and the *nothing* as the with. The with as with is nothing but the exposition of Being-as-such, each time singularly such and, therefore, always plurally such. Prior to “me” and “you,” the “self” is like a “we” that is neither a collective subject nor “intersubjectivity,” but rather the immediate mediation of Being in “(it)self,” the plural fold of the origin (Nancy, 2000: 94).

To recapitulate: Metaphysical identity, on the one hand, concerns the objective presence of the subject in relation to other subjects. More specifically in the comparison and discrimination by the subject of the objective attributes different subjects present, in order to distinguish and classify them according to the categories found in the cognition of the subject. The ‘leap out of metaphysics’, to stick with Heideggerian terms, on the other hand, concerns the belonging together of *Dasein* to *Sein*, which in a Nancian sense means the thinking of its own existence in the world shared with others or the belonging together of *Dasein* and *Mitdasein*. The post-metaphysical way of encountering the world, which is at the same time encountering others, I argued decenters the subject. Hence, *Dasein* ‘turns away’ from perceiving itself as an objectively present subject, in order for *Dasein* to discover itself in the exposure of its existing with others, as *Mitsein*, as being singular plural. In Heidegger’s words, ‘Diese nächste und elementare weltliche Begegnisart von Dasein geht so weit, daß selbst das *eigene* Dasein *zunächst* “vorfindlich” wird von ihm selbst im *Wegsehen* von, bzw. überhaupt noch nicht “Sehen” von “Erlebnissen” und “Aktzentrum”’<sup>47</sup> (Heidegger, 2006b: 119). Once more in Nancian terms, the subject is to be thought according to being-*with*, as being-*with*.

In sum, Nancy meets the second criterion for thinking after metaphysics by decentering the subject, in making being-with first philosophy. Meaning is therefore not to be derived from the subject (metaphysical identity), or a community that functions according to the model of a subject’s identity, but rather from thinking being-with. In turn, this claim allows Nancy to think the other as co-original, through which, as I will discuss below, Nancy meets the third criterion.

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<sup>47</sup> This nearest and elemental way of Da-sein of being encountered in the world goes so far that even one’s own Da-sein initially becomes “discoverable” by looking away from its “experiences” and the “center of its actions” or by not yet “seeing” them all (Heidegger 1996: 112).

## 2.4. Meeting the third criterion for thinking after metaphysics: Nancy re-thinking being-*with* and the other

It is in the decentering of the subject, where the subject is to be thought according to the *with* of being-*with*, that allows Nancy to meet the third criterion for thinking after metaphysics as thinking the other; as thinking the other according to the *with*, and not in reference to the subject. In other words, by breaking the mastery of the subject and declaring the imperative of philosophy to thinking being-*with*, Nancy also meets the third criterion. It is this thinking the other according to the *with* that meets the third criterion, which I will endeavor to discuss below. But, as I will unpack, meeting this criterion that is thinking the other as being-*with* for Nancy is not only a metaphysical exercise. Being-*with* also relates the question of community decentered. Thus, the imperative rather lies in the political significance of thinking being-*with*, which in meeting the three criteria, I will claim, serves to open an alternative sense of politics and a preliminary answer to the overarching question of the study. I will again proceed by explicating the different moments, fragments or instances in Nancy's thought that I deem to serve the purpose of meeting the third criterion.

Thinking the theme of the other the same-different for Nancy, then, may be understood as starting from a thinking of the self, which is the same as the tradition before him. Thought differently, however, from what precedes the preconstituted self as metaphysical identity, i.e. the decentered subject. In other words, the other must not be thought in terms of the other of the subject, i.e. metaphysically, but rather in terms of the other of the *with* of being-*with*, of post-metaphysical identity, the other exposed in the event of appropriation, exposed by the *with* to the other:

The other is presented as the *alter ego* or as the other of the ego, as the other outside of the self or as the other within the self, as “others” or the “Other”; all these ways of looking at it, all these aspects, all these faces, and *all* of “those whom we cannot look in the face” (“ces indévisageables”)—whose necessity is, in every case, incontestable—always bring us back to the very heart of the matter, to an alterity or alteration where the “self” is at stake. The other is thinkable, and must be thought, beginning from that moment when the self appears and appears to itself as a “self” (Nancy, 2000: 77).

An instance of thinking the other according to the *with* may be found in Nancy's critique of Hegel's thought on the subject as subverting the *with* (Nancy, 2000: 77), to which the discussion turns now. For Hegel, Nancy (2000: 77) claims, the subjectivization, or the identification of the self as such only takes place once the subject finds itself or poses itself as

other than itself. This requires an infinite presupposition of the self that constitutes it as a subject. The presupposed self who is older and more originary than itself, ‘a self in itself that is other than the self for itself’. ‘Therefore, the self knows itself principally as other than itself: such is the constitution of “self-consciousness.” And yet, the logic of this constitution is paradoxical, since it involves simultaneously the opening of the self to the other *and* its closure’ (Nancy, 2000: 77). Thus to become self-conscious also enables you to relate to the other. But what happens here according to Nancy is that the alterity of the other is such that to recognize it is to be denied access to it. To gain access to the other, what is needed is a radical alteration, or, more precisely, a radical alienation.

This radical alienation takes form in a dialectic of the same and the other, of the same in the other, of the same as other, which undoes this *aporia*. In other words, the self understands itself as the opposite of the other that provides the meaning of the self and the other in the negative relation of one to the other. But the problem, for Nancy, with the overcoming of the *aporia*, and the subsequent gaining access to the other via the self, is that it comes at a price, the price of the dialectic in general. The problem is stated as follows:

It reveals that the power of the negative which holds the self to the other, the disalienating and reappropriative power of alienation itself as the alienation of the same, will always be presupposed as the power of the self, or the Self as this very power. The Self remains alone in itself even as it emerges out of itself (Nancy, 2000: 78).

Put differently, because the dialectic is overcome by a return to the viewpoint of the self, where the self acts as the grounding point for oppositioning and understanding of the other, the dialectic is lost. That is the relation to the other is lost. What is at work, here, is of course nothing else than the logic of ontotheology, or what Levinas would call the transmutation into the Same, where the other is forgotten. The result being that the self is understood from the subject as center, without recourse to being as being-*with*. Or, if we should ask what is problematic with such a conception of the other, Nancy (2000: 78) would answer: ‘What is properly lacking or passed over in this false emergence is the moment of the *with*’.

Restated, what appears in the overcoming of the Hegelian dialectic, Nancy (2000: 79) names the ‘solitude’ of the self; the ‘solitude’ of the isolated subject that expresses the failure to measure the solitude of the other. An attempt to understanding the other in the midst of such a failure is with recourse to the divine Other that measures the other, i.e. gives meaning to the relation to the other (a very Levinasian attempt indeed). Hence, due to the solitude of the

subject that hinders access to an other, the subject needs a transcendent reference point (or trace) to make sense of the other, in a seemingly ontotheological fashion. The point, nonetheless, is that what makes solitude come about is the neglecting of being-*with*, which means denying the sense of the world that is always co-created. The result thereof is being alone, in solitude, outside the world. Nancy (2000: 78) writes that ‘solitude par excellence is solitude of the self insofar as it relates to itself, outside of itself *in extremis* and *in principis*, outside of the world, existing existence. Consciousness of self is solitude’. The world, here, is of course the Heideggerian *Mitwelt* or again the co-created world in Nancian terms. Additionally, the relation, or then failure thereof, to the other emphasizes this solitude; ‘the other is this very solitude exposed as such: as a self-consciousness that is infinitely withdrawn in itself, into itself—in itself as into itself’ (Nancy, 2000: 78). The same goes for the other where the other (from the perspective of the subject in solitude) is also perceived as a self withdrawn. This withdrawal of the self in the subject or as in the perceived other, constitutes the *aporia* mentioned above. In terms of this metaphysical way of thinking the other, because of the need to overcome the *aporia*, the other receives, not only in the traditional manner, but also in its altered form in Levinas, their meaning or identity with reference to the divine Other, serving as the ground that grounds and unifies. Or in Nancy’s words:

As such, the coexistent—the other person, but also the other creature in general—appears as that which is in itself infinitely withdrawn. It appears inaccessible to “me” because it is withdrawn from the “self” in general, and because it is as the self-outside-itself: it is the other in general, the other that has its moment of identity in the divine Other, which is also the moment of the identity of everything, of the universal *corpus mysticum* (Nancy, 2000: 78).

Furthermore, this way of measuring the other in terms of the Other, is constituted by reference to sameness in the other, which becomes the Other, i.e. the dialectic of the self and the other with the *Aufhebung* to the Other. Thus, the ‘we’ are understood according to the sameness, the social is constituted by the common or higher *Being* or subject we refer to as the Other. Or again, the relationship between the self and the other is determined by or always in reference to the Other. For Nancy, thinking after metaphysics, this way of measuring the other, or the incommensurable, contrasts with the measure of incommensurability according to the *with*:

In contrast, being-*with* designates the other that never comes back to the same, the plurality of origins. The just measure of the with or, more exactly, the with or being-

with as just measure, as justness and justice, is the measure of dis-position as such: the measure of the distance from one origin to another' (Nancy, 2000: 81).

Thus, in contrast to the thought of Hegel then, or any other form of overcoming the dialectic by referring to a higher value, for Nancy (2000: 78) to be open to the other, which means also occurring as other, the self has its originarity in the loss of self. Or, as stated previously, the self finds itself in the decentering of the subject, in thinking identity post-metaphysically, where the self, and the other, find themselves in terms of being-*with*. The loss of the self (metaphysical identity) thus opens the space now experienced as the realm of the *with*, of the event of appropriation. Here, we find Nancy meeting the second criterion (decentering the subject) that in turn makes it possible to meet the third criterion (to think the other). Nancy (2000: 78) puts it as follows: 'Birth and death become the marks of a point of origin (*provenance*) and destination within the other: an origin/destination as a loss, as the memorial mourning of the im-memorial, and as the reconquering or re-appropriation of an inappropriate aseity in all its irreducible alterity'. In terms of the other and the *with*, Nancy (2000: 78) states that this other is not "with"; it is no longer and not yet "with"; it is nearer and further away than every being-together. It does not accompany identity; it crosses through it, and transgresses it; it transfixes it. This distinction is important in order not to replace the moment of the *with*, with the fixation and negotiation of the metaphysical identity of the other. Therefore, Nancy writes, 'within the discourse about alterity, a general mode of *trans-* (transport, transaction, transcription, transfer, transmission, transformation, transparency, transubstantiation, transcendence) continually runs along-side the mode of *cum-*, but it will never be able to eclipse it or replace it' (Nancy, 2000: 78). Here, we get a first glimpse of the notion of transcendence in Nancy, transcendence as the *with* that crosses through the ego and the other. As that which enables the relation to the other, but belongs to neither and that is no transcendent Being, or the trace of one, inside or outside the word. We shall return to Nancy's notion of transcendence in more detail in the below.

Thinking the other in decentering the subject can also be examined in another fragment by Nancy referring to the world. A world, which is not constituted and given meaning by the subject and that has no outside origin but is rather constituted by being-*with*. Nancy (2000: 29), echoing Heidegger's fundamental ontology, puts it as follows: 'That which exists, whatever this might be, coexists because it exists. The co-implication of existing (*l'exister*) is the sharing of the world. A world is not something external to existence; it is not an extrinsic addition to other existences; the world is the coexistence that puts these existences together'.

Thus, the world needs no reference to something inside or outside and is not created by or in reference to the subject or the Other. The world is created by the co-existence of the self and the other, which are co-original. Or again, ‘the world, however, is not a room into which one enters. It is also impossible to start from the fiction of someone who is alone and finds him- or herself in the world: in both cases, the very concept of the world is destroyed. This concept is that of being-with as originary’ (Nancy, 2000: 81). Once more:

If the world does not “have” an origin “outside of itself,” if the world is its own origin or the origin “itself,” then the origin of the world occurs at each moment of the world. It is the *each time* of Being, and its realm is the *being-with* of each time with every (other) time. The origin is for and by way of the singular plural of every possible origin (Nancy, 2000: 20).

Here again, as explicated above, Nancy refers to the *Jemeinigkeit* Heidegger uses to describe the uniqueness of every existence in opposition to a set example regarding a genus, etc. Put differently, every origin or each time of Being in its being-*with* constitutes an origin of the world uniquely, making up the plurality of origins. Nancy goes as far as to say that when we encounter the other, we do not merely encounter the other as an other, but as an origin.

A final instance of decentering the subject that allows for thinking the other, in Nancy, may be referred to in terms of meaning. Here, meaning is not created by the subject, or with reference to the Other, even as reference or measure of the incommensurable. According to Nancy (2000: 83), ‘The “with” is the measure of an origin-of-the-world *as such*, or even of an origin-of-meaning as such. To-be-with is to make sense mutually, and only mutually. Meaning is the fullest measure of the incommensurable “with.” The “with” is the fullest measure of (the) incommensurable meaning (of Being)’. Put differently, ‘In being-with and as being-with, *we* have always already begun to understand meaning, to understand ourselves and the world as meaning. And this understanding is always already completed, full, whole, and infinite. We understand ourselves infinitely—ourselves and the world—and nothing else’ (Nancy, 2000: 98).

To reiterate, the re-thinking of the *with* in terms of the other requires being open to the other as a loss of the self (own metaphysical identity), which in turn reveals the other not in their identity (metaphysically), but in their being-*with*. The implication is that the other is not understood with regard to overcoming the dialectic, i.e. from the perspective of solitude self standing in across an *aporia* from the solitude other, both withdrawn into themselves therefore requiring an *Aufhebung* to the Other that may serve as the measure to accord the

place of the other in the world and meaning. Instead, the other is revealed in terms of the *with*, revealing the other as the other of the *with*, as co-creator of the world and therefore meaning by way of the structure of co-existence.

As Nancy, in contrast to Heidegger, does not renew the analysis of *Mitsein*, for metaphysical purposes alone, the political implications of meeting the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics may also be outlined here. The answer may be sought by asking the following question: How does leaving the metaphysics of ontotheology behind relate to a new sense of politics? Or again, how does decentering the subject (community) relate to thinking a new sense of politics? I have already sketched the answer in discussing the relation of ontotheology and the subject and by extension the identity of the community based on the model of the subject, that leads to a politics of exclusion incarnated in totalitarianism. This line of thought, nevertheless, may also be found in Nancy when he writes:

In this sense, philosophical politics regularly proceeds according to the surreptitious appeal to a metaphysics of the one-origin, where, at the same time, it nevertheless exposes, *volens nolens*, the situation of the dis-position of origins. Often the result is that the dis-position is turned into a matter of exclusion, included as excluded, and that all philosophical politics is a politics of exclusivity and the correlative exclusion—of a class, of an order, of a “community”—the point of which is to end up with a “people,” in the “base” sense of the term (Nancy, 2000: 24).

In other words, answering the question above, ontotheology, which takes the origin or identity of a community as the ground that grounds and unifies, i.e. the common being of such a politics, needs to be avoided. The reason for avoiding the logic of ontotheology is because it leads to the exclusion of others, as it forgets, suppresses, undermines or fails to acknowledge that existence is always being-*with*. A being-*with* that is not only being with those that are of common being, attribute, metaphysical identity or political history to name a few examples, and thereby denies the existence of difference. But being-*with* that is fundamentally given and therefore allows difference. Put differently, Nancy thinks Heidegger the same different, to decenter the subject or community in order for the other to be thought in terms of being-*with*. Hence, Nancy (2000: 43) declares that repairing fractures or describing structures will never be able to take the place of a thinking of Being itself as being-together.

Again, the reason for the politics of exclusion is found in the failed attempt of dealing with co-existence from a metaphysical perspective. According to Nancy (2000: 43), coexistence is

always subject to weak and unpleasant connotations and designates a constraint, or at best an acceptable concomitance, but not what is at stake in being or essence, unless in the form of an insurmountable *aporia* with which one can only negotiate. This negotiation concerns metaphysical identities and therefore does not take the step back, which opens the space to the all to think being-*with*. Thus, the implication of Nancy's thinking after metaphysics for politics is based on the co-creation of the political in being-*with*, enabled as we shall see by the transcendence of the *with*, which is not a singular origin, neither inside the world nor other worldly that grounds the political and gives meaning to the world. Rather the *with* crosses the ego and the other, exposing one to an other, to the co-orginary of the plurality of singularities and the co-creation that lies between us.

In short, the imperative to think being-*with* is due to the political implications of the failure to account for co-existence on a metaphysical level. Therefore, I claim, that Nancy in meeting the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics is enabled to formulate an alternative sense of politics that accounts for co-existence, i.e. allows difference. This alternative sense of politics that starts from thinking being-*with*, in turn, allows Nancy to think a sense of community differently, to which the discussion turns now.

#### **2.4.1. Re-thinking being-*with* and Community**

Thus far I have aimed to outline how Nancy meets the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics in his thinking Heidegger's analysis of *Mitdasein* the same different by decentering the subject that allows for thinking the other according to the *with* of being-*with*. It is in meeting the three criteria I further argued that Nancy is enabled to formulate a new sense of politics, starting from being-*with* that is thinking-*with* or the co-creation of the political in the mutual exposure of the one to an other. It is this new sense of the political that aids Nancy in re-treating the sense of community that I will attempt to unfold briefly next. A community that is inoperative, due to the constant co-creation of the plurality of singularities that make up the community, never allowing it to become fixed. But rather setting forth an infinite process of construction and destruction. The question of community Nancy takes up more prominently in the book entitled *The Inoperative Community* first published in English in 2006, retreated in the article Nancy co-authored with Laurens Ten Kate named *Cum Revisted* (2010); *Cum* as already mentioned is the Latin for *with* or the German *mit*.



First, the imperative to rethink community, that functions according to ontotheological model of the subject, in short leading to a politics of exclusion as discussed above, might be rephrased as follows:

In the name of “the community,” humanity - in particular in 20th century Europe - has shown an unexpected capacity to destroy itself. This destruction has been quantitative - mass extermination on such a scale that the very concept of quantity and of quantification was perverted and inverted into a quality: the quality of the unquantifiable, numbers becoming innumerable, becoming absolute, infinite figures. And at the same time this autodestruction has been qualitative, for the idea and the value of “humanity” and of “human nature” itself was destroyed, and its fragile texture being torn up; precisely because of this, human singularities were reduced to numbers, quality being perverted and inverted into quantity (Ten Kate and Nancy, 2010: 37)

The need to think community, i.e. politics, can be restated as resulting from the reduction of human singularities to numbers. That is also another way of stating the forgetting or neglecting of the other to the extent of forgetting or neglecting the value of humanity. What is being referred to here, is of course none other than the events occurring under the rule of the ‘Nazi community’. As explicated above, it is thinking the other (third criterion) in terms of decentering the subject (second criterion), or a community that functions according to the model of a subject, I hold, that permits Nancy to re-treatment of the sense of community. Hence, this leads Nancy to reformulate a sense of community in the following manner:

As soon as people are exposed to one another in a plurality – and what else could humanity be than precisely this reciprocal exposition of people and peoples? – “there is community”. But this fundamental form of community is not simply their product, nor their operation or “oeuvre”; it is not just the sum of individuals *having* something in common. It is a place where they, inadvertently, *are* in common, only to discover that this “in-common” cannot be controlled by them and so eludes them (Ten Kate and Nancy, 2010: 37)

To reiterate, community is not defined as a group of people sharing a common being, or having something common. Community is rather a place, where people are (being) in common. Being in-common refers to being-*with*. Significant here, is that this being in-common cannot be controlled by someone. The implication of this being in common, which no-one can control, is that ‘anything can happen, can take place in this strange place of the “inoperative community” (of “that” in a community which remains inoperative): peace and violence, order and disorder, cohesion and destruction’ (Ten Kate and Nancy, 2010: 37). Because anything can happen, a community is possible where the ‘forgetting’ of human value

takes place. Such a place, however, becomes impossible to appropriate, cherish and glorify. Restated being-*with*, that is co-creation of the world, meaning and the political, does not ensure that a positive (or prevent a negative) outcome of the co-creation. Anything might happen. Or again, ‘the being-in-common is a condition and not a value (nor counter-value)’ (Ten Kate and Nancy, 2010: 38). As shown above, a further implication of the being in-common, is that the subject can only be derived from the in-common and not the reverse, which is beyond any notion of intersubjectivity. Or, in Ten Kate and Nancy (2010: 38) words, ‘first there is this strange topos, with all its ambivalent possibilities of destruction, and only from there the constitution of an ethical subject and the construction of a collective identity might be thought’. Thus Nancy’s alternative sense of community as being in-common, has no foundation or core in an ontotheological sense, but rather, a dynamic of autoproduction (self-constructing and self-destructing). A dynamic which has been playing itself out ever since the so-called death of God as transcendent reference point and foundation:

From a historical viewpoint, the community, at least since the beginning of modern times, has been left to its own fate and devices; it is left with itself and can only found and construe itself. It has released itself from the religious framework that gave hierarchic and hieratic consistency to the premodern community, subjecting it to a regime of fear. In this way, the community opened itself to a necessarily common history of *self-production*. With no substance, no sense left outside it (the Church, the Saints, the Gods) to produce and install it, the community had to look within itself for grounds and substances on which it could establish itself. It had to *be* its own fundament. Caught up in this strange double structure – to build oneself on... oneself – its substance became radically finite and contingent: whereas its authoritative, symbolic and identificational “centre” had become empty – had become the elusive, “inoperative” in-common typical of the modern community – this emptiness had to be filled time and again with self-produced substances (Ten Kate and Nancy, 2010: 38):

Rephrasing the logic of autoproduction made possible by its autodestruction of the common being or symbolic and identificational center, with regard to ontotheology, we can say that what has invariably been constructed or produced and consequently destructed, is the ground and highest principle of ontotheology. In short, one ontotheology replaced by the next. Or again as Ten Kate and Nancy (2010: 38-9) describes the movement of the autoproduktive community:

That the community has to produce itself means that it will always already have destroyed itself. It is entangled in a violent and infinite spiral of production and destruction, where temporary, phantasmagoric substances alternate with each other

in order to – desperately – fill up community’s empty truth: that the topos of the in-common remains inappropriable. A logic of the *autos* is powering this movement of establishing a common, consistent and infinite self on this topos, but precisely because we are dealing here with a logic of *autoproduction*, it has to fail and destroy itself.

Once more, regarding the notion of inoperative community; the modern community ‘has to appropriate the in-common in order to become “community” in an operative sense, and, simultaneously, it cannot appropriate the in-common, for it would stop being “community”’ (Ten Kate and Nancy, 2010: 39). Important here is the notion that when a community wants to control the in-common, it stops being community. In other words, by attempting to control the dynamic autoproduction of the identity of community and turning it into a fixed identity that may serve as reference point, our being-*with* as the fundamental mode of existing is sublated. Rephrased:

The operationalization of war and death in the previous and in the present century has indeed taken place in the name of the community – here that of a self-produced people or race, there that of a selfconstrued humanity. Precisely this development has made it impossible to simply rely on some given entity of the community (blood, substance, filiation, essence, origin, nature, consecration, election, organic or mystic identity): these entities are produced and again destroyed by themselves, and their only “entity” lies in their necessity to deny this (Ten Kate and Nancy, 2010: 39).

Hence, it is this realization that in the end, a community can never control its in-common, never control “itself”, taken as structure or failure built-into the modern and ‘postmodern’ community, that flows from Nancy meeting the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics.

Thus, Nancy’s re-thinking the other, in terms of being-*with*, allows for an alternative sense of community. That is a sense of community that avoids a fixed ontotheological foundation by acknowledging its own autoproduktive nature. Put differently, Nancy’s sense of community thought according to being-*with* does not aim to exclude the other by constructing a common being built on a single identity. Rather this sense of community allows for the plurality of singularities that, in the constant co-creation of meaning and the world, ever time uniquely, accounts for the construction and destruction dynamic of community.

## **2.5. Nancy’s notion of transcendence as transimmanence**

In making a case for Nancy providing a possible alternative sense of transcendence that enables an alternative sense of politics, I have up until now outlined how Nancy, via meeting the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics, formulates an alternative sense of politics. A

politics that allows for difference in its sense of community. What is left is to account for Nancy's alternative sense of transcendence, that enables or opens up the sense of politics explicated above. Hence, one can ask: What is Nancy's notion of transcendence? And how does it enable an alternative sense of politics, i.e. community that does not reduce difference?

In the discussion on Nancy's re-appropriation of Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*, it was mentioned that the *with* of being-*with*, which lies between the I and the other, belongs to neither. Instead, the *with* exposes one to an other. This *with* is nothing, in the sense of a substance, and is also not a value to be mythologized, neither a category of the subject's existence. It is rather an exposure to our ontological mode of existence, i.e. to *Mitsein*. It was also noted that the experience of *with* which transcends us, by cutting across the I and the other, exposes the one to the immanence of the other. In short, we had the first glimpse of Nancy's notion of transcendence as transimmanence. Specifically, when it was shown that for Nancy 'within the discourse about alterity, a general mode of *trans-* (transport, transaction, transcription, transfer, transmission, transformation, transparency, transubstantiation, transcendence) continually runs along-side the mode of *cum-*, but it will never be able to eclipse it or replace it' (Nancy, 2000: 78). Once more, the notion of transcendence was preliminarily discussed as the cutting of the *with* across the 'self' (ego) and the other, thereby exposing one to another. The cutting across is a movement (*trans*) that transcends both the I and the other, exposing one to another. A movement, as we shall see, that in its transcendence goes nowhere outside of the world, but rather stays in the world, not as a substance, but by going (moving) to an other, as circulating, i.e. movement as transimmanence. It is in this notion of transimmanence that I will claim, here, Nancy responds to the search for an alternative sense of community and opens a politics that does not reduce alterity. In order, then, to elaborate on the conception of transcendence as transimmanence, a step back may be taken to explore briefly Nancy's notion of transimmanence in comparison to the traditional, or modern as Husserl holds, distinction between transcendence and immanence. Hence, we circle back to the 'starting point' I proposed in Chapter 1, that is Husserl's redefinition of the realms of immanence and transcendence.

Nancy I suggested follows Husserl in rejecting the modern distinction of immanence and transcendence. For Husserl, again, the problem lies in:

Modern descriptions of the relationship between immanence and transcendence tend to invoke two complementary themes: inside versus outside and accessibility versus inaccessibility. When immanence is described as an enclosure containing mental processes and impressions, transcendence is correspondingly defined as whatever remains outside of that enclosure. When immanence is described as a region of indubitable givenness, transcendence is defined as a region populated by unknowable things-in-themselves (Cobb-Stevens, 1994: 5).

For Husserl, thus, there is no outside world where transcendence may dwell, which may need some form of mediation. Transcendence, rather, is found in the broadened realm of immanence, which can be accessed via intentionality. Consequently, Husserl holds that what is lacking here is intentionality towards the previous unknowable things-in-themselves, and he, therefore developed the phenomenological reduction as a means of gaining direct access to the things-in-themselves through intentionality. Nancy, one can say, does agree with Husserl concerning the false distinction made and, as seen above, that there is no outside of the world. Nancy, conversely, goes about differently in rejecting and redefining the previous distinction between the inside and the outside. To understand how Nancy goes about rejecting and redefining this distinction, a closer look at his critique of not only immanentism but also transcendentalism, forming, I hold, two sides of the same coin, is required.

To start with the latter, it is important here is to be reminded that Nancy takes serious the notion of the death of God, of ontotheology that is the search for a ground or substance that may serve as the ultimate reference point and highest principle. Therefore, Nancy rejects transcendentalism, or transcendental thinking, that is the search for a being or substance that is outside the immanent, the world, which provides meaning or sense for the here and now. The traditional concept of God is the best example here. As Hutchens (2005: 91) puts it, ‘Nancy proves to be singularly critical of the forms of transcendence, exteriority or otherness often presented by religious thought. He insists that there is no “beyond” of sense, no superlative source of sense from which meanings can be gleaned’. Moreover, where it is ‘often believed that one can simply not say enough about a god that is incomprehensible, Nancy conjectures that “there is nothing more to be said about God”, because its theme or question “no longer means anything to us”’ (Hutchens, 2005: 92). Here, Nancy is, of course referring to the God of ontotheology. Nancy, according to Hutchens, also writes against post-secular thought represented by diverse thinkers as Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion. Thinkers with whom ‘the concept of god has dissipated into a plethora of forms, such as “infinity”, “Other”, “Being”, “Enigma” and so on’ (Hutchens, 2005: 92). Restated broadly:

post-secular thought dissolves monotheism into a polyatheism, in which all forms of a god are diluted into ontological and anthropological schemes, saying nothing about the god and leaving nothing about it to be said. The temptation to find divinity “traced” in human experience, as if the god left a trace of itself (or a “trace of a trace”) in passing (as in Levinas’ famous formula) is one that Nancy insists must be avoided (Hutchens, 2005: 93).

In other words, as Hutchens (2005: 97) writes, for Nancy ‘the existence of the world discounts the existence of a god, which is to say that “there is” does not include the god and the sense of this world is available only when the notion of the god does not mediate in thinking of the sense of the world’. Moreover, ““There is” means there is a world, the “there” designating the whole of the world, such that “there is” that there is. There is no Other, he insists, nor is the “there is” an Other, just the “punctual and discrete spacing between us”” (Hutchens, 2005: 97). That is, of course, the *with* of being-*with*. Therefore, ‘against the transcendentalist commitments of theology and post-secular theology, Nancy insists that sense is produced from and in a world, or in other words, meaning adheres to the things of the world themselves, and cannot be divorced from the plurality of singular bodies’ (Hutchens, 2005: 97). Put differently, meaning and the world are co-created and not found in reference to an external source. For Hutchens, the problem is that these approaches Nancy writes against do not ‘reflect an appreciation of the depth of the challenge the “death of God” ineluctably poses’ (Hutchens, 2005: 92). In Chapter 3, I will discuss an additional reason for criticizing Levinas as formulated by Nancy.

Nancy does not only reject transcendentalism but also rejects immanentism as discussed earlier, as the search for a being or substance inside the immanent that may serve as providing meaning or sense. Thus after the death of God, the pursuit of an absolute reference point was conducted in the realm of immanence, i.e. inside the word. As we have seen above, the subject of modernity may serve as a metaphysical example, or regarding politics the identity of a community like *Das Volk*, or even the later Heidegger’s notion of the myth of the Greek origin to name a few. These examples, like that of the traditional concept of God, serve as the highest and grounding principle. In a sense, the immanent is made into transcendence, given transcendental meaning. Hence, one might consider both transcendentalism and immanentism as two sides of the same coin, as both search in an ontotheological fashion for a grounding principle. Moreover, Nancy’s notion of the inoperative community in acknowledging the dynamic of construction and destruction echoes

the rejection of a search for an absolute fixed reference point, both immanent and transcendent.

Rephrased, Nancy rejects both the subject and the community that functions according to the model of a subject, becoming an immanent form of transcendent meaning. Or as Hutchens (2005: 35) describes it, ‘the immanence of atomic individuals in closed association with one another’ and ‘the immanence of a group of individuals reflecting upon their cohesion as such’. The politics intertwined with these conceptions of immanentism, with its ontotheological constitution, results, as discussed, in exclusion and is incarnated in totalitarianism. Hutchens reaffirms this when he writes:

In particular, politics (including its henchman “myth”) superimposes totalizing systems that estrange us from one another by drawing us together under a “myth” that mimetically provides the means of individual self-identity (NM: 296-304). Totalitarianism, especially in respect of the “kitsch” described so poignantly by Milan Kundera, is the most obvious kind of “closed” immanence because all political questions and answers alike are provided proleptically. It establishes man in general as the essence of community, but only in terms of the linkages between individuals provided by economics, technology and political will (Hutchens, 2005: 35).

Hutchens importantly adds that for Nancy, this logic of the myth which serves as both reference and grounding point is not limited to totalitarian politics, but is also found in the onto-theo-logic of liberal individualism. Here the reflective myth is not that of the community, but rather the individual itself becomes the closed off immanent structure:

The collapse of totalitarian communism reawakened the ideal of liberal individualism, which seals each individual into an equally closed atomic subjectivity. Both totalitarianism and liberal individualism share this emphasis upon an immanent production and “playing back” of the essence of substantial community to itself (IC: 1-4). One might conceive this immanence as being closed to transcendence altogether, but in actuality it is closed by means of the reference to a transcendent reserve of meaning (Hutchens, 2005: 34-5).

In short, what we find here is a closed immanence; either as community or as individual subjectivity. Closed in the sense that the transcendental figure or symbol of meaning is fixed and enclosed in the system of immanence, which serves as a reference point from where the self can be identified. In completing the circle, this is, of course the problem as formulated in the introduction. A politics that has its birth in immanentism that leads to totalitarianism or (liberal individualism), which reduces difference by sublating the relation to the other.

As an alternative sense of the political found in Nancy, in meeting the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics has been explicated, one is left asking here: how does Nancy account for the relation to the other that opens up this relation without being sublated under the identity of the subject or that of a community? In short, what enables Nancy's alternative sense of the other, community and therefore politics? The answer, I claim, is opened by Nancy's notion of transcendence, which avoids both transcendentalism and immanentism, i.e. ontotheology, as transimmanence. In other words, in avoiding both transcendental thought, as well as immanentism, we find Nancy's notion of transimmanence opening the way for an alternative sense of politics. Thus, Nancy takes the notion of the death of God serious, the God of ontotheology, but he neither subscribes to nihilism or its philosophical alternatives (Hutchens, 2005: 36).

Rather, and here comes Nancy's answer that opens and enables an alternative politics as outlined above, he still prescribes a notion of sense as world, not in the world as a substance, but world as sense, as the circulation of sense between the plurality of singularities, thus allowing difference. It is in this circulation of sense through the cutting across of being-with where *transcendence* is to be found, not as a substance, but rather as the movement of the *with* across both the ego and the other, which exposes one to an other. One might add here, in a symmetrical fashion. This movement ('trans-') comes and goes, meaning it is not a substance which is fixed and infinite. Therefore, it is finite. It is the moment of sense which exposes the co-originality of *Mitsein*. Restated in Hutchens's words:

If society is the "network and cross-referencing of coexistence", then it knows itself (without exposing its knowledge) to be constituted in the open immanence of co-appearance (BSP: 32, 69; BP: 182). In other words, there is a plurality of "finite transcendences" within the closure of immanence, but these transcendences neither form a totality nor disrupt one. The world just consists of a plurality of singular "ones" that lack any exteriority from which their sense could originate and which are infinitely exposed to the sense of the world itself. Ultimately, there is no transcendent origin of sense imposed upon a given world, but rather a sense that is constitutive of the world itself in a *transimmanent* fashion. In other words, sense may constitute the world, but it is accessible to thinking only in bursts of contact between singularities as it appears to divagate across their relations (Hutchens, 2005: 36).

Hence, sense is neither fixed outside nor inside the world. Sense is rather co-extensive with the world, within 'open immanence' (Hutchens, 2005: 36). Sense, exposed by the *with*, runs alongside the world. Or again, the world is the co-creation of being-*with*, as sense. More importantly, 'Nancy utilizes the term "*transimmanent*" to describe this coextensivity of



world and sense discernible in the incessant affirmation of singularity (SW: 55)' (Nancy cited in Hutchens, 2005: 44). Or again, 'sense is "transimmanent". It "takes place" and "crosses through presence" in coexistences among singularities and their finite thinking (BSP: 5)' (Nancy cited in Hutchens, 2005: 49). Thus, if one may offer a definition of transimmanence, it would read as follow:

There is nothing but a world lacking exteriority, a world through which sense circulates in the exposures of singular beings. Sense is neither transcendent (an exterior reserve pregnant with meaning) nor immanent (a pregnant reserve of meaning within the world), but "transimmanent", that is, coextensive with the world in its plural singularities. Roughly speaking, sense passes along being without issuing from within it or from outside it; it slides through social relations without substantializing them. It makes them meaningful without giving them a (reducible) meaning (Hutchens, 2005: 167).

Put differently, transimmanence is the movement of the *with*, cutting across both the 'self' and the ego, thereby not substantiating either, but rather exposing one to another creating sense. Instead of sense being fixed in a point (transcendent or immanent), sense circulates and moves between the plurality of singularities that make up the world, i.e. sense is transimmanent.

In sum, it is Nancy's notion of transcendence as transimmanence in describing the movement of sense between every unique origin, never fixed but always circulating, that not only avoids the constitution of an ontotheology, but also opens the way for an alternative sense of politics that allows difference.

## 2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have aimed to make a case for Nancy that suggests an answer to the question of an alternative sense of transcendence, which opens an alternative sense of politics that allows difference, which may be traced in his thought. Hence, I have outlined that Nancy's notion of transcendence as transimmanence in describing the movement of sense as circulating between the subject and the other, therefore never being fixed in either, nor in an external source that opens the way for an alternative sense of politics. A sense of politics that meets the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics. That is by thinking Heidegger's analysis of *Mitsein* the same different, that enables a decentering of the subject and opens the way to think the other as co-originary in creating the sense and meaning of the world. A way kept open by transimmanence as a movement, resisting the constitution of a fixed reference

point for meaning, i.e. ontotheology, thereby also accounting for the dynamic of the inoperative community that is a dynamic of construction and destruction. A dynamic that in being acknowledged lets the constant co-creation of the world, according to being-*with*, play itself play out. That is instead of the subject or a community being tempted to violently and with totalizing systems attempt to control this dynamic of community along with the transimmanent movement of meaning, which is an act with dire consequences and a lesson that has played itself out multiple times in recent history.

## Chapter 3: The movement of love

### A debate between the thought of Levinas and Nancy

Transcendence will thus be better named the crossing of love. What love cuts across, and what it reveals by its crossing, is what is exposed to the crossing, to its coming-and-going-and this is nothing other than finitude.

Nancy (1991: 98)

#### 3.1. Introduction

I am not the first to propose a case for a thinker opening the way to conceive an alternative sense of transcendence, which enables a sense of politics that allows difference. In other words, there are differing ways of going about attempting to formulate a way (not the way) for answering this question. An alternative has most notably been argued for by Simon Critchley (1992), advocating an approach found in Levinas' answering of the question above. Critchley, as we shall see, argues his perspective at the expense of Nancy's thought. Thus, the case made for Nancy might be regarded as entering into debate with Critchley. A debate between Levinasian and Nancian thought on thinking an alternative sense of transcendence that allows for a politics of difference. This debate, I suggest, hinges on the diverging interpretations of Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*. Moreover, it is in line with Levinas' rejection of Heidegger, that Critchley criticizes Nancy in his re-appropriation of Heidegger. In this chapter, I will accordingly introduce the debate starting with Levinas' rejection of Heidegger, and a subsequent overview of his alternative that Critchley argues sketches an answer to the overarching question of the study. The case for Levinas will be followed by Critchley's Levinasian critique of Nancy. In turn, I will attempt to formulate a Nancian critique and reply as a discussion on transimmanence as love, highlighting Nancy's relation to Levinas. Something, I argue, Critchley overlooks in his critique on Nancy, only fixated on his Heideggerian link. This discussion will also allow me to highlight nuances in Nancy's thought. The most significant of these nuances being the promise of love (transimmanence) that does not ensure the keeping of the promise, instead anything may happen. Therefore, I will argue that this notion not only serves as a Nancian reply to Critchley's critique, but also

further accounts for the differing outcomes in the mutual exposure of the subject to the other, one to an other.

### 3.2. Levinas' rejection of *Mitsein* and a sense of community

Levinas' alternative approach to the overarching question of the study, may be understood regarding his rejection of Heidegger. In other words, 'Levinas formulates his notion of originary otherness as an explicit reaction to Heidegger's Being-with' (Rugo, 2013: 128). In reference to Chapter 1, Levinas' complete dismissal of the notion of *Mitsein* might be understood according to Heidegger's becoming a Nazi in 1933, and the adaptation of the ideas in *Sein und Zeit* to justify the Nazi regime. Moreover, Levinas also poses a number of reasons, on a philosophical level, why he does not articulate the question of otherness in terms of *Mitsein*, to which the discussion returns now. Accordingly, Levinas' rejection of Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein* may be cited in two passages (Rugo, 2013: 128). The first is to be found in *Time and the Other* (1983):

the other in Heidegger appears in the essential situation of *Miteinandersein*, reciprocally being for on another [...] the proposition *mit* here describes the relationship. It is thus an association of side by side, around something, around a common term and, more precisely, for Heidegger, around the truth. It is not the face-to-face relationship, where each contributes everything, except the private fact of one's existence. I hope to show for my part that it is not the preposition *mit* that should describe the original relationship with the other (Levinas cited in Rugo, 2013: 128).

The second in an interview, almost forty years after *Time and the Other*:

In Heidegger the ethical relation, *Miteinandersein*, the being-with-another- person, is only one moment of our presence in the world. It does not have the central place. *Mit* is being next to [...] it is *zusammensein* (being together), perhaps *zusammenmarschieren* (marching-together). (Levinas cited in Rugo, 2013: 128)

The critique of Levinas against Heidegger may consequently be summarized in two points (Rugo, 2013: 128): The first concerns 'the merely propaedeutic role of the with, which remains in a subordinate position; the fact that the with simply states a juxtaposition, a being next to that does not involve responsibility'. In turn, the second states that 'the with does not only fall short of the ethical command, it also constantly runs the risk of embodying a violent movement: a crowd walking side by side, the vicious rustling of a march'.

Thus, in order to formulate an alternative conception of the other, Levinas rejects Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*. Instead, Levinas turns to Martin Buber (1878-1965) in whom

he found as a thinker to open the originality of the ethical register, especially in the elaboration of the notions of ‘relation’ and ‘meeting’ (Rugo, 2013: 129). In other words, to avoid the sublation of the dialectic relation to the other, Levinas does not look to Heidegger but rather appropriates the thought of Buber. For example, where Buber wrote: ‘In the beginning is relation’ (Buber cited in Rugo, 2013: 129). Levinas accordingly, acknowledges that: ‘the discovery of that order (the ethical relation) in its full originality and the elaboration of its consequences, and, if one may designate them this, its “categories”, remain inseparable from the name Buber, whatever may have been the concordant voices in the midst of which his own made itself heard’ (Levinas cited in Rugo, 2013: 129).

What did Levinas, then, find in Buber over against Heidegger? Three things may be mentioned. The first concerns the subject-object relation, where Buber provides Levinas with a model that ‘allows him to reformulate the Husserlian subject-object relation without having to turn to Heidegger, as he had done in *Theory of Intuition* (Rugo, 2013: 130). Buber understands this relation in terms of a bursting forth through the expression of a *meeting*, in which a degree of reciprocity is always possible, which is at the same time mutual and symmetrical. This description reminds one very much of Nancy’s version of the movement of transimmanence that cuts across, mutually exposing one to an other. Levinas, conversely, eventually adds the crucial concept of *asymmetry* to the meeting distancing his thought from Buber.

The second thing Levinas takes from Buber concerns the motif of language, where the primary nature of language does not entail the naming of things or the expression of Being (Heidegger), but rather its dialogical nature, i.e. the triggering of relations. Stated differently; ‘The relational tone of language and the primacy of the dialogical mode structured around few original words (*Grundwort*) allows man to meet the world and the Thou as an I that utters the relation’ (Rugo, 2013: 133). Levinas, however, once more differs in his appropriation of Buber’s thought. ‘For Levinas what triggers the relation with the Other is not as much my uttering a Thou, although this dialogical irruption constitutes an important moment, as my responsibility for him. Responsibility does not need to be triggered by any particular event; rather, it lies always there, before any encounter, before experience and before any actual, concrete, eventual call’ (Rugo, 2013: 133).

It is from this responsibility that lies before experience or referral to any personal history, that Levinas argues that ‘the relation to the other cannot reside in reciprocity and symmetry. Quite

the opposite, it rests on the original difference, neither mediate nor immediate, that proceeds by a-symmetrical confrontations' (Rugo, 2013: 133). Or again, the main difference between Levinas and Buber lies in the ethical responsibility to the other that is found in the asymmetrical relation to the other rather than the symmetrical relation constituted in my speaking out to the other. Therefore, Levinas writes: 'in my own analyzes, the approach to others is not originally in my speaking out to the other, but in my responsibility for him or her. That is the original ethical relation' (Levinas cited in Rugo, 2013: 133). Thus, given the differences between the two thinkers, Buber still provides Levinas with the resources to move beyond *Mitsein* and thereby start freeing the Other from the Same, or what I called decentering the subject, found in Buber's one-to-one relation.

The third thing, then, Levinas found in Buber is the reference to Jewish thought and mysticism, i.e. echoing his own project of delineating a way outside the philosophical tradition of the West. Which for Caputo, as shown in Chapter 1, was one of Levinas' main points of contention also against Heidegger's focus on the pure Greek origin.

Additionally, the rejection of Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*, by Levinas, can also be seen in his mistrust of any conception of community. For Levinas, the notion of community thought in terms of *with* always leads to a process of fusion into the crowd, the masses, *Das Man*, which has a logic, and single-minded destiny that leads to the mastery of the individual by a surrender to the Same. In short, Levinas associates community as always function according to ontotheology with the common being and common destiny as ground. Accordingly, what Rugo (2013: 134) calls *a reversal of terms* motivates Levinas' refusal of 'with'. The reversal is explained by Levinas as follows: 'Being before the existent [...] is freedom before justice [...] The terms must be reversed' (Levinas cited in Rugo, 2013: 134). In other words, Levinas' intention is that of reversing the terms of the question of what comes first. His answer is of course; the face to face would be more original than the 'with', for the 'with' would still refer to an understanding of sociality communicated through unity', i.e. a conception of community where 'individuals would be aggregates undertaking an always latent process of fusion' (Rugo, 2013: 134).

Here, Levinas differs from Nancy, where Nancy holds that the relations to an other (one-to-one) and the relation to others are co-original, i.e. (the relation of) being is singular plural. Being is the relation of being-*with* that is singular and plural at the same time. In contrast, 'Levinas fears that by placing the with as the primary mode of relation one would be then

obliged to surrender to the Same; Being-with would then be being-within-the-same, a holistic ending Levinas cannot accept' (Rugo, 2013: 134). In short, it is the subordination and submission of the relation to the other that Levinas argues against. A relation that Levinas instead finds in the Buberian I-Thou, and subsequently appropriates in his notion of the face to face relation.

The question that comes to mind, here, is; who is 'right'? Maybe a bit crude, but stated differently, is Levinas' rejection of Heidegger's *Mitsein* altogether justified? Or, is there still a potential for a re-appropriation as Nancy argues? I shall return to these questions in the general conclusion.

### 3.3. Levinas' alternative approach: Transcendence as the trace of the Other

Having rejected Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*, Levinas places the one-to-one relation as original and before the *with*. Hence, Levinas calls first philosophy the relation of to the other, i.e. ethics. It is because Levinas places the face-to-face relation first, ethics as starting point for philosophy, where ethics accordingly forms the 'model' for politics as we shall see below, that Critchley argues Levinas provides an answer to the overarching question of the study. Restated, in putting ethics first, Levinas can be seen to be decentering the subject. Thereby, meeting both the second, and third criteria for thinking after metaphysics. Critchley confirms this when he writes:

ethics occurs as the putting into question of the ego, the knowing subject, self-consciousness, or what Levinas, following Plato, calls the Same (*le même; to auton*). It is important to note at the outset that the Same refers not only to the *res cogitans*, but also to its *cogitata*. In Husserlian terms, the domain of the Same includes not only the intentional acts of consciousness (*noeses*), but also the intentional objects which give meaning to those acts and which are constituted by consciousness (*noemata*). Or again, in Heideggerian terms, it includes not only *Dasein*, but the world which is constitutive of the Being of *Dasein* (*Dasein* as *in-der- Welt-Sein*). Thus, the domain of the Same maintains a relation with otherness, but it is a relation in which the 'I', ego, or *Dasein* reduces the distance between the Same and the Other, in which their opposition fades (*TeI 99/II 126*). Now, the Same is called into question by the other (*l 'Autre; to heteron*); or, to use Levinas' word, the 'alterity' (*altérité*) of that which cannot be reduced to the Same, that which escapes the cognitive powers of the knowing subject (Critchley, 1992: 4-5)

In other words, ethics for Levinas is a critique, 'it is the critical *mise en question* of the liberty, spontaneity, and cognitive emprise of the ego that seeks to reduce all otherness to itself. The ethical is, therefore, the location of a point of alterity, or what Levinas also calls

‘exteriority’ (*extériorité*), that cannot be reduced to the Same’ (Critchley (1992: 5). Levinas names this exterior being ‘face’ (*visage*), and is therefore defined as ‘the way in which the other (*l’Autre*) presents himself, exceeding the *idea of the other in me*’ (*TeI* 21/*TI* 50). Furthermore, ethics is not to be understood as the simple overcoming or abandonment of ontology, but rather, as Critchley phrases it, the deconstruction of the latter’s limits (what I called a thinking the same different) and its comprehensive claims to mastery (functioning according to ontotheology).

To rephrase it once more regarding Husserl, in relation to his redefinition of the realm of immanence to include transcendence presented in Chapter 1, alterity here is understood as transcendence. Which can and is experienced in the realm of immanence, but cannot be reduced to the reference point (Same) of the subject; it rather interrupts this process of assimilation. I shall return to Levinas notion of transcendence shortly. But first, we need to consider Levinas move from ethics to politics.

Accordingly, one can pose the question: how does Levinas move from the one-to-one relation to that of a sense of community (without reducing difference)? The answer, for Levinas, formulated in *Totality and Infinity*, lies in the ethical relation itself as already constituting the relation to a third- *le tier*. The relation to the other forms the ‘model’ for the relation to all other. In other words, the ethical relation for Levinas is not like Buber’s I–Thou relation, which is intimate, ‘self-sufficient’ and ‘forgetful of the universe’. Rather, and here comes the answer again, ‘the third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other – language is justice’ (*Le tiers me regarde dans les yeux d’autrui - le langage est justice*) (*TeI* 188/*TI* 213) (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 225). Thus, the third party, here, ensures that the ethical relation always takes place within a political context, within the public realm, due to the third party who looks at me in the eyes of the Other. Thereby, my ethical obligations to the Other, does not stay in the face to face relation, but open onto the wider question of justice for others, i.e. for humanity as a whole (Critchley, 1992: 226). Importantly, Critchley points, out that the passage from ethics to politics for Levinas is not chronological, i.e. starting with the Other then moving to the third. Or, as Critchley (1992: 226) citing Levinas writes: ‘It is not that there first would be the face and then (*ensuite*) the being it manifests or expresses would concern itself with justice; the epiphany of the face as face opens humanity’. In short, ethics is already politics. Hence, my mention of the ethical ‘model’ for the political must be understood accordingly.



Furthermore, the entrance of the third also brings with it the notion of equality. Where the ethical relation as presented above concerns an asymmetrical or unequal relation to the Other, seen in the face of an other (being) who is not my equal (the stranger or poor one). Regarding *le tiers*, then, ‘the Other also presents him or herself as an equal in so far as the relation to the Other is a relation with *le tiers*. The relation to the third is the communal bond, a relation among equals, a *we*’ (Critchley, 1992: 226). Here, one finds Levinas’ notion of community regarding the double quality of the relation to the Other:

Thus my ethical relation to the Other is an unequal, asymmetrical relation to a height that cannot be comprehended, but which, *at the same time*, opens onto a relation to the third and to humanity as a whole – that is, to a symmetrical community of equals. This simultaneity of ethics and politics gives a doubling quality to all discourse, whereby the relation to the Other, my Saying, is at the same time the setting forth of a common world, what in this context Levinas calls ‘prophecy’. Levinas would appear to be thinking of prophecy here in the sense that the prophet is the person who puts the community under the word of God, who binds the community and makes it a commonality (Critchley, 1992: 226).

What is presented here is the double structure of community in Levinas’ terms, which names the passage from ethics to politics, not in terms of time, but rather is ‘a commonality among equals which is at the same time based on the inegalitarian moment of the ethical relation’ (Critchley, 1992: 227). The ‘essence of community’ for Levinas, is thus derived from the ethical relation. Put differently, for Levinas, the coincidence of beings in a community is based on the non-coincidence of the Same and the Other in the ethical relation (Critchley, 1992: 227). Further, ‘to express this dialectically, *community is the coincidence of coincidence and non-coincidence*, what Levinas calls, in a rather uncomplicated manner, ‘human fraternity’ (*la fraternité humaine*). *Fraternitas*: a community of brothers bound around a double bind’ (Critchley, 1992: 227). It seems, that Nancy and Levinas come close with regard to Nancy’s notion of being singular plural, and the double structure of in Levinas. Both thinkers are, of course, attempting to keep open a sense of difference that constitutes the singularity of an individual, in the relation between the plurality of individuals that make up a community. Both rely on an alternative notion of transcendence that enables their respective attempts. It is, however, regarding the notion of transcendence where Nancy and Levinas fundamentally differ. As Nancy’s notion of transcendence as transimmanence has already been developed in Chapter 2, as the movement of the *with*, that cuts across the ego and the other, exposing one to an other; the discussion may now turn to Levinas’ notion of

transcendence, which enables his alternative sense of politics, via the passage through ethics that allows difference.

In contrast to Nancy, Levinas, in his conception of transcendence, often refers directly to God. Or, as Rugo (2013: 153) outlines, Levinas articulates God as the movement of infinity, indivisible, in-multipliable, each time singular in its voice, retaining all the infinity of its absence even in the personal order, showing itself through its absence (the trace) and so forth. Although Nancy rejects speaking about God (or the trace of God), a similarity between Nancy and Levinas might also be pointed out here, where both describes transcendence as a movement, unique every time. The fact that Levinas refers to God, nonetheless, does not mean that he speaks of God or a transcendence as in the traditional sense of the meaning, i.e. an ontotheological God. Rather, Levinas thinks after ontotheology. Thus for Levinas, as with Nancy, thinking transcendence aims to avoid an ontotheological conception thereof, i.e. meets the second criteria. Stated differently, both Levinas and Nancy takes serious Nietzsche's claim of the death of God, a certain kind of god, the god of ontotheology. This claim is confirmed by Critchley in citing the following passage Levinas wrote:

In this work which does not seek to restore any ruined concept, the destitution and de-situation of the subject are not without signification: after the death of a certain god, dwelling in the hinter-worlds (*les arrières-mondes*), the substitution of the hostage discovers the trace – unpronounceable writing – of that which, always already past – always ‘he’(‘il’) – does not enter into any present and to whom neither the names designating beings nor the verbs where their *essence* resounds are suitable – but who, Pro-name (*Pro-nom*), marks with his seal everything that can bear a name (*AE 233/OB 185*) (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 113).

Thus, according to Critchley (1992: 113), Levinas, rather than opposing Nietzsche's account of the death of God by a reintroduction of some ruined concept, he accepts that God, that is the god of metaphysics, the god of ontotheology, the god that reifies, or ‘congeals’, who transcendence into a ‘world behind the scenes’, this God is dead. Accordingly, ‘after the death of that god, the ethical subject is able to discover the sense (*sens*: both direction and signification) of transcendence that was lost or reified in metaphysics: the transcendence of the Other’ (Critchley, 1992: 113). In other words, both Nancy and Levinas aims to think after the metaphysics of ontotheology. Nancy, however, rejects any reference to God, not even a trace. Whereas Levinas, holds that the death of a god (of ontotheology), opens the space for a rediscovery of the trace of God (the Other) in the face of the other.

Moreover, in the trace of God (the Other) in the face of the other, Levinas, I claim also decenters the subject. Hence, in the moment of the trace, the relation to the other, for Levinas, becomes asymmetrical, i.e. the reversal of the traditional relationship of symmetry where the Same becomes substituted with the Other. Or again, for Levinas attempting to describe and enact the ethical, ‘subjectivity is ultimately described as a ‘hostage’ (*ôtage*) to the Other (*AE* 142/*OB* 112); that is, the subject is taken captive to the point of substituting itself for another (*AE* 16/*OB* 13)’ (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 113). Thus, ‘substitution is the very subjectivity of the ethical subject, which means that the subject is structured as responsibility to the Other prior to preoccupation with oneself’ (Critchley, 1992: 113). In short, the ethical subject means the constitution of an asymmetrical relation with the Other, where the Other becomes the preoccupation of the ‘self’. The self is decentered.

Additionally, it is the decentering of the subject through the trace of the Other in the face of the other, that leads one to the ethical realization of the responsibility to the Other. Put differently, responsibility, according to Levinas, ‘is the very religiosity of the subject (*AE* 150/*OB* 117) (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 113). The religious claim being made here is that after the death of a certain god, subjectivity qua substitution and hostage discovers the trace of that which does not enter into any present and which is designated by the pronoun ‘he’ (Critchley, 1992: 113). In other words, what the Levinas’ subject as substitution (being-for-another) discovers in the face of the other (each being) is the trace of the Other’s face, which is that of the he, or French *Il*, the *Pro-nom* (Fore-name). In short *Il* or *Illeity*, is a term Levinas employs instead of ‘God’ (the Other) and should be regarded as an enigma, ‘which attempts to set forth that which escapes comprehension or thematization: “the otherwise than Being”’ (Critchley, 1992: 114).

The question of community, for Levinas, is also closely related to the entrance of transcendence into politics, to the question of God. This relation of transcendence to politics may be found in Levinas naming the double structure of community, which is both, equal and unequal, symmetrical and asymmetrical, political and ethical: *mono-theism* (Critchley, 1992: 228). Restated, regarding, the double structure Levinas names, which ‘is the passage to *le tiers*, is also a passage to the prophetic word, the commonness of the divine father in a

community of brothers'<sup>48</sup> (Critchley, 1992: 228). 'Monotheism signifies this human kinship, this idea of a human race that refers back to the approach of the Other in the face, in a dimension of height, in responsibility for oneself and for the Other' (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 228). The same relation of transcendence and the political may also be found in *Otherwise than Being*, again, in reference to *le tiers*. Levinas writes that it is "thanks to God" that I am an Other for the others' (*AE 201/OB 158*), (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 228). 'That is to say, my relation to all the others takes place only in so far as it binds me to the other person whose alterity stands in the trace of *Illeity*. What prevents the community from becoming wholly immanent to itself is the transcendence of the relation with the Other, a transcendence that comes from the order of the trace, the trace as the opening of the divine as an absence' (Critchley, 1992: 228). In short, transcendence as the trace of the Other, in the face of the other, not only lets the subject discover his/her ethical responsibility, but also constitutes the political responsibility towards all others through the relation to the Other.

In sum, similar to Nancy, it is the alternative notion of transcendence in Levinas that enables him to rethink ethics as the relation to the other, and, therefore, first philosophy. An ethics that, in turn, serves as the 'model' for the political. Hence, enabling an alternative sense of politics that allows difference. Or again, a transcendence that reveals the ethical in the face of the other, which also, with the entrance of a third other, leads to a politics that allows for alterity. Thus, Levinas may be considered to propose an alternative way to answer the overarching question, in an attempt that also meets all three criteria for thinking after metaphysics. In other words, Levinas' concept of transcendence also attempts to enable an alternative sense of politics in avoiding ontotheology by decentering the subject that allows for thinking the other. Moreover, Critchley claims Levinas provides such an answer at the expense of Nancy's attempt, to which the discussion turns now.

### **3.4. A Levinasian critique of Nancy**

Having discussed how Levinas' approach, argued by Critchley, may be regarded as an attempt to answer the overarching question, we may accordingly consider Critchley's Levinasian critique of Nancy. The critique, I claim, can be understood as a continuation of Levinas' rejection of Heidegger discussed above. In other words, Critchley's argument may

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<sup>48</sup> Critchley notes a possible point of critique here concerning a patriarchal structure found in Levinas' formulation and expresses a potential response. Cf. Critchley (1992: 228).

be summed up as follows: because Nancy re-appropriates Heidegger, the same Levinasian critique against Heidegger does not escape the work of Nancy.

To be reminded, Levinas critiques Heidegger for ultimately failing to account for alterity in *Sein und Zeit*; ‘although Heidegger acknowledges that *Dasein* is *Mitsein*, this question is only a moment of an existential analytic whose ambition is the elaboration of the question of the meaning of Being’ (Critchley, 1999: 65). Consequently, Critchley argues that, from this perspective, one can understand Nancy’s first philosophy of being-with rejoining the philosophical tradition of ontology with its suppression of ontic plurality and multiplicity (Critchley, 1999: 65). Critchley, nevertheless, does acknowledge that this claim is not (entirely) true of Nancy’s work. But states that ‘Nancy might still be said to fall foul of the same critique insofar as the relation to the other, as mediator, always already presupposes the ontological pre-comprehension of my *Mitseinsverständnis* (Critchley, 1999: 65).

The question that comes to mind, which Critchley also states, is: ‘how is this possible given that Nancy’s book is devoted to the question of the singular plurality of being?’ (Critchley, 1999: 65). Critchley’s answer reads as follow:

Thus, even given the radicality of Nancy's rewriting of *Being and Time*, his conception of being-with constitutes what one might call a *neutralizing of ethical transcendence* or a *flattening of the structure of ethical experience*. What I mean is that the other person is no longer “the widow, the orphan, the stranger” who stands to me in an asymmetrical relation of height, but the other becomes my colleague, my comrade, my *semblable*, perhaps also my lover. Nancy’s conception of being-with risks reducing intersubjectivity to a relation of reciprocity, equality, and symmetry, where I rub shoulders or stand shoulder to shoulder with the other, but where I do not *face* him. That is, I do not see in the other person that dimension of surprise, separateness or secrecy that continually defies my attempts at comprehension and appropriation. In more Hegelian terms, it would seem that the self in Nancy is constituted through the desire for recognition—the dialectic of intersubjectivity that defines the Subject through its appropriation of absolute otherness. The other is my other or an other for me, a logic that must always think intersubjectivity on the model of *love*. For Nancy, I speak of “me” and “you” as a “we”, and speak of our world as a “with”-world (Critchley, 1999: 65-66).

Moreover, because Critchley follows Levinas, he makes the claim that ‘perhaps ontology is not fundamental’ (Critchley, 1999: 66), referring, of course, to the Other as being more fundamental than ontology. Accordingly, he adds that ‘perhaps one is never fundamentally “with” the other and the relation to the other is’. And therefore, ‘perhaps, I am also “without” the other, and perhaps, most of all, in love—in a relation that demands my *acknowledgement* because it exceeds the bounds of my knowledge. Perhaps, the co-existential structures of

being-with overlay a prior level of “being-without,” a being-without the other that is without being’ (Critchley, 1999: 66). The sketch Critchley (1999: 66) is drawing here, is that for Nancy there is only being-with, and accordingly the relation with the other is in a sense predetermined, or over-determined, in a positive sense of community. In other words, because I am always in a positive with relation to the other, there is no room for the interruption of the ethical, that would be then hyper-positive. What is lacking in Nancy is a negative, according to Critchley (1999: 66), is a negative sense of a relation to the other, a without, which may allow for the positive epiphany of the face. Or again in Critchley’s own words:

Nancy’s model of being-with might be said to produce the desired political virtue of solidarity. Yet, my view is that unless solidarity is underpinned by the separation, distance, and radical non-solidarity of the ethical relation to the other, a relation that I have sought to understand elsewhere in terms of the psychoanalytic model of trauma, then it will ineluctably lead back to an ontological tradition that has shown itself incapable of acknowledging that which resists knowledge, that is, the source of ethical experience—what Levinas identifies as the other, what Lacan calls *das Ding*, what Genet calls “saintliness”, what Derrida calls justice, and what Lyotard more provocatively (and not unproblematically) names “the Jews” (Lyotard 1998). The face-to-face risks effacing itself in the reciprocity of the “with” and it is therefore a matter—ontologically, ethically, politically—not of thinking without the “with,” but of thinking the “without” within this “with” (Critchley, 1999: 66).

### **3.5. A Nancian critique: Thinking Levinas the same different**

Other than Critchley, who portrays Nancy’s thought as standing in contrast with Levinas because of his re-appropriation of Heidegger, I aim to discuss, Nancy’s relation to Levinas here. Nancy’s relation to Levinas, yet, unlike what the title of this section may suggest, is not only one of critique but also one of appropriation. Something that Critchley overlooks in his critique on Nancy fixated on Nancy’s Heideggerian link. Secomb (2016: 452), then, describes Nancy’s relation to Levinas as follows: ‘Nancy’s loving philosophy is indebted in part, and perhaps most of all, to Levinas a debt, a gift, a legacy that Nancy lovingly announces through an exposition of Levinas and an exposure of his own thought to that of Levinas’. Nancy himself recognizes this debt to Levinas speaking of love when he writes: ‘Every philosophical inquiry on love today carries an obvious debt toward Levinas, as well as points of proximity, such as are easily detected here. For Levinas cleared the path toward what one can call, in the language of *Totality and Infinity*, a metaphysics of love, to the point that this metaphysics commands, at bottom, his entire oeuvre’ (Nancy, 1991: 104-5). This debt of Nancy to Levinas, to be more precise, is found in the themes taken over from Levinas in

thinking the relation to the other, and most notably in the movement of transcendence thereby exposing alterity.

Importantly, this does not mean that Nancy merely appropriates Levinas' thought uncritically. Rather, Nancy thinks Levinas *the same different*. Or, restated, 'in a Derridean ethical manner he does not return the gift through eulogy, or dutiful discipleship, for example, and instead disseminates the gift of Levinasian ethics. This dissemination involves an engagement with Levinas that is both a critique and a further elaboration; a redirection and re-signification of Levinasian ethics' (Secomb 2006: 452). Hence, there are also quite distinct differences, for instance in their respective interpretations of Heidegger, that will briefly feature again, here, discussed with a Nancian flavor. Moreover, what opens these differences can be partly found in Nancy's critique of Levinas in the text *Shattered Love*, to which the discussion turns now.

Nancy starts off his critique by claiming that love, for Levinas, remains *equivocal*, thereby reducing itself to egotism, where its transcendence lifts the equivocation only by transcending itself into fecundity, filiation, and fraternity (Nancy, 1991: 105). Love as egotism may be understood as regarding the subject relation to the other (love), overcome by a return to the Same (egotism or self-love) (Nancy, 1991: 94). Or again, 'to love, is also to love oneself within love and thus to return to the self' (Levinas, quoted in Nancy, 1991: 95).

Hence, this perplexity leads Levinas to distinguish between two types of love; *Agape* and *Eros*. The distinction may be unpacked as follows: 'While the love of the ethical face-to-face relation preserves love of other, erotic love involves egotism' (Secomb 2006: 452). Once more, 'this reduction to self-love is transcended through fecundity and fraternity but erotic love is a carnality that occludes the face' (Secomb 2006: 452). In this distinction, however, there is an applied hierarchy, *Agape* above *Eros*. Moreover, there is a movement in the hierarchy enabled by the trace that decenters the subject (self-love) toward the discovery of the ethical responsibility that is at the same time the passage to politics. This movement for Nancy is teleologically determined:

If I, for my part, do not thematize such notions here, it is because another work would be necessary to attempt to extract them from the oriented sequence that, in Levinas, in a rather classical manner, hierarchizes them and prescribes them to a teleology. This teleology proceeds from the first given of his thought, "the epiphany of the face": love is the movement stressed by this epiphany, a movement that

transcends it in order to reach, beyond the face, beyond vision and the “you,” the “hidden-never hidden enough-absolutely (Nancy, 1991: 105).

Thus, in the passage starting with the subject toward ethics and ultimately politics, Nancy identifies a hierarchy at work. A hierarchy that leads to a teleology *en route* to a fraternity, a community under the word of God, which is higher than the relation to the other in an erotic sense (or any other for that matter). But, the moment of hierarchizing and teleology leads to Nancy identifying another moment, that is of the brief overcoming of the dialectic of the face:

From this “vertigo that no signification any longer clarifies” (that of the Eros), the fraternity of children, lifting its equivocation, can emerge, the fraternity of children in which, again, the epiphany of the face is produced. Love thus retains at least certain traits of a dialectical moment. It retains them, it seems to me, due to the motif of the face. The latter signifies the primordial relation as the expression of another and as signification. Because this signification is given at the beginning, it must disappear within love and be recaptured in its surpassing. I can, on the contrary, grasp the relation with the face only as second and as constituted (Nancy, 1991: 105).

In other words, although Levinas holds that the ontic face is primordial, therein keeping the dialectic as the relation to the other as starting point for philosophy. He nonetheless has a moment where the face, and therefore the dialectic relation to the other, is overcome, by love. That is the Love of the Other, only to return to the face, leaving the dialectic asymmetrical toward the other. Thus, the dialectic is overcome, briefly, in the moment of love due to the hierarchy and teleology that Levinas prescribes to love. In contrast, Nancy states above, that love for him is primordial, which in terms of his thought means, the *with* of being-with. Hence, love happens on an ontological level for Nancy, and not on an ontic level, which is to be overcome, be it briefly. Love de-constitutes the subject; therefore, the relation to the face that constitutes a subject comes second for Nancy and is perhaps also why Levinas needs to overcome it in order to reach what is more primordial, i.e. love.

Restated, ‘for Nancy, Levinas hierarchizes love creating a dialectical teleology, commencing with ethical love in the epiphany of the face and moving through an erotic self-centered swooning that is finally sublated in paternal and fraternal love in which the face returns once more’ (Secomb, 2006: 452). Love as transimmanence, for Nancy, in contrast, cuts across both the subject and the other from the ‘outside’ or alongside, thereby opening one to an other. The exposing of one to an other does not occur by looking at the face of the other, which only can come after the moment of love, therefore, being second and constitutes the



subject. Reformulated, ‘Nancy disturbs and displaces this opposition and dialectical movement implicit in Levinas’ formulation, suggesting that love shatters this dialectic and shatters the heart, and that this is the event that constitutes the self’ (Secomb, 2006: 453). Or, again: ‘being-with takes place only according to the occurrence of being, or its posing into shatters. And the crossing - the coming-and-going, the comings-and-goings of love - is constitutive of the occurrence. This takes place before the face and signification. Or rather, this takes place on another level: *at the heart of being*’. (Nancy, 1991: 105).

Furthermore, the reason, according to Nancy, Levinas keeps the notion of the face, can be understood by his opposition to Heideggerian thought interpreted as leading to a generality that negates particular beings for Being as such. ‘Levinas opposes it, and pre-poses it, “to the unveiling of Being in general,” a Heideggerian theme in which he sees “the absolute indetermination of the *there is - of* an existing without existents-incessant negation, infinite limitation,” “anarchic”’ (Nancy, 1991: 105). Nancy, agrees with Levinas, having certain reproaches of Heidegger’s thought, which we covered in Chapter 2: ‘I can be in solidarity with Levinas’s distaste for certain accents, we say, of dereliction in Heidegger’s discourse’ (Nancy, 1991: 105). But after such reproaches, Nancy, unlike Levinas, still appropriates Heidegger’s thought because, according to Nancy, it precisely still allows for particularity. ‘But in the *es gibt* (“it gives [itself]”) of Being, one can see everything except “generality.” *There is* the “each time,” an-archic in fact (or even archi-archic, as Derrida might say?), of an existing, singular occurrence. *There is no* existing without existents, and *there is no* “existing” by itself, no concept - it does not *give itself* - but there is always being, precise and hard, the theft of the generality’ (Nancy, 1991: 105). In short, we find here once more the re-appropriation of Heidegger’s thought referring to the notion of *Mitsein*, being singular plural. Or as Nancy explicates it in this text, ‘Being shattered’: ‘Being is at stake there, it is in shatters, offered dazzling, multiplied, shrill and singular, hard and cut across: its being is there’ (Nancy, 1991: 105).

Moreover, both Nancy and Levinas (for which Nancy is in debt to) takes the question of thinking alterity, serious, i.e. a sense of community which does not exclude difference. Perhaps one might say that the importance of thinking alterity Nancy finds in Levinas, but formulates it via Heidegger; ‘Being-with is constitutive of this stake-and that is what Levinas, before anyone, understood’ (Nancy, 1991: 105). Thus, Nancy thinks Levinas the same by thinking that aims to avoid the suppression of difference, i.e. the forgetting of the other

(love). But Nancy also thinks Levinas different by rejecting the hierarchization of loves. Hence, because what is to be thought is the plurality of singular beings, which in turn means the plurality of singular loves, there can be no hierarchy of loves. Nor, one love that has the telos of reaching another. Whereas, Levinas insists that “Love is originary” (Levinas cited in Secomb 2006: 453) he also bisects love, separating and hierarchizing *Agape* above *Eros*. ‘Agape, experienced in the face-to-face, preserves ethics and responsibility; in Eros, love becomes egoistic enjoyment (Levinas cited in Secomb, 2006: 453). In contrast, Nancy writes:

There are no parts, moments, types, or stages of love. There is only an infinity of shatters: love is wholly complete in one sole embrace or in the history of a life, in jealous passion or in tireless devotion. It consists as much in taking as in giving, as much in requiring as in renouncing, as much in protecting as in exposing. It is in the jolt and in appeasement, in the fever and in serenity, in the exception and in the rule. It is sexual, and it is not: it cuts across the sexes with another difference (Derrida, in *Geschlecht*, initiated the analysis of this) that does not abolish them, but displaces their identities. Whatever my love is, it cuts across my identity, any sexual property, that objectification by which I am a masculine or feminine subject (Nancy, 1991: 105).

Hence, love is neither hierarchical, nor reducible to *Eros* as egotism due to my identity that is cut across by love. Meaning that there cannot be a return to any form of identity, or face, in the moment of love, as they are displaced, exposed to the other by love, i.e. all forms of love. Restated in Secomb’s (2006: 453) words, ‘Nancy, like Levinas, makes solicitude toward the other central, but in his conception this concern, experienced in all forms of love, cuts us and exposes us, forming us in relation with the other’. Once more in Nancy’s words:

To think love would thus demand a boundless generosity toward all these possibilities, and it is this generosity that would command reticence: the generosity not to choose between loves, not to privilege, not to hierarchize, not to exclude. Because love is not their substance or their common concept, is not something one can extricate and contemplate at a distance. Love in its singularity, when it is grasped absolutely, is itself perhaps nothing but the indefinite abundance of all possible loves, and an abandonment to their dissemination, indeed to the disorder of these explosions. The thinking of love should learn to yield to this abandon: to receive the prodigality, the collisions, and the contradictions of love, without submitting them to an order that they essentially defy (Nancy, 1991: 83).

One could perhaps even say, that in thinking Levinas the same different, Nancy turns to Heidegger, to think Levinas against himself, that is to think the alterity of love.

### 3.6. A Nancian reply: The movement of love

The discussion of Nancy's thinking Levinas the same different, also suggests that Critchley's claim that Nancy's notion of being-with is predetermined and overdetermined in a positive sense of community is misplaced. Most notably in Nancy rejecting any hierarchy of loves, that would also include community love on top. But, one might still ask here whether Nancy's notion of being-with is not predetermined positively regarding the outcome of all forms of love. Restated, does the cutting across of love, exposing one to an other, always lead to a 'loving' encounter, an 'ethical' interaction? And if not, does Nancy account for this? It is in the notion of the promise of love that I will attempt to outline a Nancian response to these questions. To discuss this response, I will briefly further unpack what has been opened by Nancy thinking Levinas the same different. In other words, I will consider how Nancy formulates his philosophy of thinking being-*with* regarding love in various fragments, using the remaining criteria set in chapter 1 as guiding posts along the way.

#### 3.6.1. Thinking love as avoiding ontotheology

As a reminder: To avoid ontotheology, means to avoid a search for the idea of a ground (God, subject, national myth, etc.), which not only grounds but also serves the highest principle. We have shown in Chapter 1, concerning the role of National Socialism in Heidegger's thought, that such a metaphysical conception is intertwined with a politics of exclusion. Or, regarding immanentism that results in totalitarianism. Thus, in avoiding ontotheology, a way perhaps starts to open for conceiving a notion of the political that does not reduce difference.

As mentioned above Nancy rejects any set definition, hierarchy, or *telos* of love. Hence, Nancy avoids ontotheology by not suggesting a common ground (substance) and highest principle as a conception of love that might lead to other kinds of love being excluded or looked over - forgotten. Instead, what Nancy calls for, via Heidegger, contra Levinas, is the plurality of singular loves:

But this reticence might signify that all, of love, is possible and necessary, that all the loves possible are in fact the possibilities of love, its voices or its characteristics, which are impossible to confuse and yet ineluctably entangled: charity and pleasure, emotion and pornography, the neighbor and the infant, the love of lovers and the love of God, fraternal love and the love of art, the kiss, passion, friendship, [...] (Nancy, 1991: 83).

In other words, Nancy, here, avoids a thinking according to ontotheology, not only in his refusal to make a conception of love the common substance or highest *telos* but also by not

choosing between loves, or hierarchizing them. To think love is rather to think the abundance of loves by abandoning the dissemination of them into an illustratable order, i.e. practicing reticence to think according to ontotheology. Or again, to think love is to think the alterity of love, to think the plurality of singularities of love. Moreover; ‘The thinking of love - if it is necessary to solicit it, or if it is necessary that it be proposed anew, as a theme to be discussed or as a question to be posed - does not therefore lay claim to a particular register of thinking: it invites us to thinking as such’ (Nancy, 1991: 84). Hence, Nancy aims to equate thinking, that is, of course, thinking being-*with*, i.e. the plurality of singularities, with thinking love. Restated; ‘Love does not call for a certain kind of thinking, or for a thinking of love, but for thinking in essence and in its totality, and this is because thinking, most properly speaking, is love’ (Nancy, 1991: 84).

Accordingly, love then is the *with* of being-*with*, which for Nancy is to be thought as first philosophy; to think being-*with* is to think love, a thinking which is not ontotheological, but rather thinks according to love as the *with* of being. To think love, therefore, in a Heideggerian sense, is not a category of one’s thinking, but rather fundamental to it. Again, in Nancy’s words love is: ‘Neither genre nor species, perhaps not any genre or perhaps all species. However, this may be, “love” thus employed would be, so to speak, existential rather than categorical, or again it would name the act of thinking as much as or more than it would its nature’ (Nancy, 1991: 84). Thus, in contrast to Levinas, love is fundamentally ontological, and does not proceed from the ontic, but rather precedes the ontic. Or, again love as ontology is fundamental, therefore, thinking is love. This notion, Nancy (1991: 84) points out, is obviously modeled on the ancient “God is love,” which for Levinas would be the trace of God is love and entailed the same formal implications. That is ‘we know nothing more about what this means. We only know, by a sort of obscure certainty or premonition, that it is necessary, or that it will one day be necessary to attest this phrase: *Thinking is love*’ (Nancy, 1991: 84).

Furthermore, to avoid ontotheology also entails a decentering of the subject. To recapitulate, the decentering of the subject, as discussed thus far, occurs in the dialectic relation of the subject to the other. Nancy, via Levinas one might say, critiques the metaphysics of the subject, where the other is sublated in the return to the Same (the metaphysical identity of the subject), where the result is the overcoming of the dialectic relation to the other. Levinas’ alternative, of course, entails a reversal of terms where the subject becomes a hostage of the

Other, thereby decentering the subject. That is, instead of forming an asymmetrical relation towards the Same, the asymmetrical favors the Other in the face of the other. There is, also, a brief moment of the overcoming of the dialectic in Levinas, as it disappears in the trace of the Other, the movement of love, to return in the asymmetrical relation.

In turn, Nancy also rephrases love in terms of the dialectic. Distinguishing, however, the movement of love from that of the dialectic. The movement of love is similar to the dynamic of the dialectic. But, where the dialectic has a moment of sublation, love has a moment of exposition:

If the dialectic is the process of that which must appropriate its own becoming in order to be, exposition, on the other hand, is the condition of that whose essence or destination consists in being presented: given over, offered to the outside, to others, and even to the self. The two regimes do not exclude one another (they do not form a contradiction), but they are not of the same order (Nancy, 1991: 89).

Accordingly, Nancy (1991: 89) writes, ‘that which has the power of the dialectic is not a heart, but a subject. Perhaps one could find a heart in the subject. But this heart (if there is one) designates the place where the dialectical power is suspended (or perhaps shattered)’. Or again: ‘The exposed being is perhaps also the subject of a dialectical process, but what is exposed, what makes it exposed, is that it is not completed by this process, and it “incompletes itself” to the outside; it is presented, offered to something that is not it nor its proper becoming (Nancy, 1991: 89). What Nancy is describing here, is, of course, what I called the decentering of the subject. Thus, for Nancy (1991: 89) the heart, as decentered subject, ‘does not sublimate contradictions, since in a general sense, it does not live under the regime of contradiction-contrary [...]. The heart lives-that is to say, it beats-under the regime of exposition’. Once again; ‘the heart is not a subject, even if it is the heart of a subject. [...] The heart exposes the subject. It does not deny it, it does not surpass it, it is not sublated or sublimated in it; the heart exposes the subject to everything that is not its dialectic and its mastery as a subject’ (Nancy, 1991: 90). Hence, the movement of love decenters the subject by exposing one heart to an other.

Nancy also rephrases the decentering of the subject, in another fragment as the subject broken, and opened up by love that cuts across it: ‘Love re-presents I to itself broken (and this is not a representation). It presents this to it: he, this subject, was touched, broken into, in his subjectivity, and he is from then on, for the time of love, opened by this slice, broken or fractured, even if only slightly’ (Nancy, 1991: 96).

To reiterate, love, rethought according to being-*with*, exposing the plural singular of being, leads to the decentering of the subject, the breaking open of the metaphysical identity, in that the dialectic is not sublated or overcome. Rather, the dialectic is maintained by the subject being exposed to the other, one to another, in the cut across by love, by that which transcends, and therefore opens up, breaks open, its immanence, but the subject does not stay the same, the subject becomes broken.

### **3.6.2. Thinking love as thinking the other**

Another fragment may be considered regarding the movement of love that emphasizes Nancy's thinking the other, opened in the attempt to avoid ontotheology by decentering the subject. In this instance, the dialectic is reformulated in terms of the I and the other in love (*with*) each other. As above, the 'I' is named a heart and not a subject, i.e. the decentered subject. The same can be said for the other, the other as a heart. 'The heart exposes, and it is exposed. It loves, it is loved, it does not love, it is not loved. Thus, affirmation and negation are present here as in the dialectic' (Nancy, 1991: 89). But the important difference is that 'in its modes of affirmation and negation, the heart does not operate by reporting its own judgment to itself (if it is a judgment)' (Nancy, 1991: 89).

In other words, Nancy (1991: 89) writes: 'It does not say "*I love*" which is the reflection or the speculation of an *ego* (and which engages love neither more nor less than the *cogito*), but it says "I love you," a declaration where "I" is posed only by being exposed to "you"'. (It is, then, in the moment of the return to the subject, under the sublimation to the same, that love, which emerges in the dialectic, gets dissimulated. Whereas in the moment of exposure, the heart does not return to itself beyond itself and there is no sublimation of the heart, nor of love. Instead, love emerges, love that is what it is, 'identical and plural, in all its registers or in all its explosions, and it does not sublimate itself, even when it is "sublime." It is always the beating of an exposed heart' (Nancy, 1991: 90). Hence, love emerges and exposes the heart to the other beyond the self (I love you).

### **3.6.3. Love and the movement of transcendence as transimmanence**

What enables this exposure of love and the decentering of the subject? The answer, as we already know, is found in Nancy's notion of transcendence as transimmanence. Hence, the

discussion will continue with Nancy describing the movement of love as transcendence, i.e. transimmanence that breaks open the subject, when he writes:

The love break simply means this: that I can no longer, whatever presence to myself I may maintain or that sustains me, propose myself to myself (nor impose myself on another) without remains, without something of me remaining, outside of me. This signifies that the immanence of the subject (to which the dialectic always returns to fulfil itself, including in what we call “intersubjectivity” or even “communication” or “communion”) is opened up, broken into - and this is what is called, in all rigor, a transcendence. Love is the act of transcendence (of a transport, of a transgression, of a transparency, also: immanence is no longer opaque) (Nancy, 1991: 97).

In other words, the movement of transcendence then comes from the outside and breaks open the immanence of the ‘self’, the subject, of self-love to be exposed to the other. Moreover, this movement of transcendence, that is of love, ‘does not go from the singular being toward the other, toward the outside’ (Nancy, 1991: 97), (nor does it come from the other as subject or from its identity). Thus, Nancy is again, here, thinking Levinas the same different. The movement of love is appropriated from Levinas, but the movement does not have its origin as a trace in the face of the other. Rather, the movement runs along, or between the subject and the other, exposing one to another, never originating from the one nor the other. Restated, it is the movement of love, of the *with*, that makes the other, the other, which transcends both the identity of the ‘self’ and that of the other, exposing one to another. Accordingly, ‘this transcendence thus fulfills nothing: it cuts, it breaks, and it exposes so that there is no domain or instance of being where love would fulfill itself’ (Nancy, 1991: 97).

Nancy, additionally emphasizes that this transcendence of the movement of love is not what is more commonly known in the theory of the sublime, a negative presentation, which includes Levinas’ notion of the trace. For Nancy, to the contrary, love takes place, it happens; ‘When the transcendence that touches me presents the unfulfillment of love (which becomes neither substance nor subject), it at the same time offers its actual advent: love takes place, it happens, and it happens endlessly in the withdrawal of its own presentation’ (Nancy, 1991: 97). Thus, it happens but withdraws as soon as it occurred, this withdrawal again is not into the same but rather in its departure or withdrawal; the other is exposed. Once more: ‘Love arrives, it comes, or else it is not love. But it is thus that it endlessly goes elsewhere than to “me” who would receive it: its coming is only a departure for the other, its departure only the coming of the other’ (Nancy, 1991: 98). In short, love is an action, a movement, ‘what is

offered by transcendence, or as transcendence, is this arrival and this departure, this incessant coming-and-going' (Nancy, 1991: 98).

Who is offered by the movement of transcendence, exposed by and to the arrival and departure? The answer, of course, is the other that is not the Levinasian Other, which fixes its trace in the face of the other. Rather, because of the movement, an other which is never fixed as identity, substance, subject. 'What is offered is the offered being itself: exposed to arrival and to departure, the singular being is traversed by the alterity of the other, which does not stop or fix itself anywhere, neither in "him," nor in "me," because it is nothing other than the coming-and-going' (Nancy, 1991: 98). Restated, the other is not fixed; 'the other comes and cuts across me, be it immediately leaves for the other: it does not return to itself, because it leaves only in order to come again' (Nancy, 1991: 98).

Therefore, the movement of love as transcendence does not reveal anything than the immanent, the finite, which it crosses. That is, no higher unity, or substance, or identity that arises from the sublimation of the dialectic, but rather, the finite other. Or, as Nancy writes:

Transcendence will thus be better named the crossing of love. What love cuts across, and what it reveals by its crossing, is what is exposed to the crossing, to its coming-and-going-and this is nothing other than finitude. Because the singular being is finite, the other cuts across it (and never does the other "penetrate" the singular being or "unite itself" with it or "commune"). Love unveils finitude. Finitude is the being of that which is infinitely inappropriable, not having the consistency of its essence either in itself or in a dialectical sublation of the self. Neither the other nor love nor I can appropriate itself nor be appropriated ("Infinity of one and of the other, in the other and in the one"-Valery) (Nancy, 1991: 98).

Thus, love does not transfigure or bring about the trans-substantiation of finitude in infinity. Rather, 'love cuts across finitude, always from the other to the other, which never returns to the same-and all loves, so humbly alike, are superbly singular. Love offers finitude in its truth; it is finitude's dazzling presentation (Nancy, 1991: 98)'.

#### **3.6.4. The promise of love**

Having discussed Nancy's thinking being-*with*, as thinking love, which is the transimmanence of love that decenters the subject through the mutual exposure of the subject and the other, one to an other, we may now turn to Nancy's notion of the promise of love. This notion that I hold may also serve as a Nancian response to not only Critchley's claim that Nancy's thought is overdetermined in a positive sense of community. But also to the question



whether the cutting across of love, exposing one to another, always lead to a ‘loving’ encounter, an ‘ethical’ interaction?

The promise of love, then, accounts for the experience that not every encounter is ‘loving’, or that every interaction is ‘ethical’, in that the exposure of love (I love you) is at the same a risk. ‘It is when the affirmation “I love you” is given over to that which is neither contradictory nor noncontradictory with it: the risk that the other does not love me, or the risk that I do not keep the promise of my love’ (Nancy, 1991: 89). There is a risk involved, because love exposes one to another, revealing the promise of love. This promise, then, has to be kept, the ‘I’ has to go then on and love the ‘you’, and the ‘you’ the ‘I’, but perhaps the ‘I’, or the ‘you’, fails in keeping the promise or in loving me back.

Or again, from another angle, because the movement of love does not become fixed, but always departs for the other, ‘*I love you*’, therefore, names nothing and does nothing. Once more, “I love you” (which is the unique utterance of love and which is, at bottom, its name: love’s name is not “love,” which would be a substance or a faculty, but it is this sentence, the “I love you,” just as one says “the cogito”) - the “I love you” is something else’ (Nancy, 1991: 100). What then is this something else? The answer a promise, where the promise, by its constitution, ‘is an utterance that draws itself back before the law that it lets appear’ (Nancy, 1991: 100). In other words, the promise does not describe, nor does it perform (in a sense then it is vain because it does nothing), but the promise rather lets appear a law, from which it draws back. This law is the law of the given word, namely that this must be. “I love you” says nothing (except a limit of speech), but it allows to emerge the fact that love must arrive and that nothing, absolutely nothing, can relax, divert, or suspend the rigor of this law’ (Nancy, 1991: 100). Love (as the movement of the *with* of being-*with*, as transimmanence) brings forth the law of being-*with*, the exposure of one to another, to the plural singular of being, which is the ethical imperative to be thought and therefore not be relaxed, suspended or diverted.

But, and here comes the response to the question above, the promise cannot assure the completion of this ethical imperative, because it does not ‘anticipate or assure the future: it is possible that one day I will no longer love you, and this possibility cannot be taken away from love - it belongs to it. It is against this possibility, but also *with* it, that the promise is made, the word given. Love is its own promised eternity, its own eternity unveiled as law’ (Nancy, 1991: 100). More importantly, ‘the promise must be kept, but if it is not, that does

not mean that there was no love, nor even that there was not love. Love is faithful only to itself. The promise must be kept, and nonetheless love is not the promise *plus* the keeping of the promise' (Nancy, 1991: 100). Love is not the promise *plus* the keeping of the promise, not the revealing of the ethical imperative *plus* providing the ethical act *par excellence*. Since 'it cannot be subjected in this way to verification, to justification, and to accumulation (even if there are, indisputably, illusory or deceitful loves, loves without faith and law, that are no longer of love-but these are counterfeits...)' (Nancy, 1991: 100). In other words, the promise is not a substance or act that can be used to make a normative ideal with. Rather, 'love is the promise and its keeping, the one independent of the other. How could it be otherwise, since one never knows what must be kept? Perhaps unlike all other promises, one must keep only the promise itself: not its "contents" ("love"), but its utterance ("I love you")' (Nancy, 1991: 100). In this sense, the promise is kept open, incomplete, always coming and going, bringing the ethical imperative again, and again, never once and final in a specific form or act. Put differently:

When the promise is kept, it is not the keeping, but it is still the promise that makes love. Love does not fulfil itself, it always arrives in the promise and as the promise. It is thus that it touches and that it traverses. For one does not know what one says when one says "I love you," and one does not say anything, but one knows that one says it and that it is law, absolutely: instantly, one is shared and traversed by that which does not fix itself in any subject or in any signification' (Nancy, 1991: 101).

For instance, when a receiver of a verbal declaration of love does not return the same affirmation to the speaker, both are still touched by the promise, which is separate from its keeping; 'the same holds true when one hears "I love you" said by an other whom one does not love and whose expectations will not be met. Despite everything, it cannot be that one is not traversed by something that, while not love itself, is nonetheless the way in which its promise touches us' (Nancy, 1991: 101).

Finally, the notion of the moment of love as a promise, which is separate of its keeping, therefore, a risk, also reminds us of the discussion on the inoperativeness of community. A sense of community where, due to not only the circulation and co-creation of meaning in being-*with* but also, we may add now, the risk in the promise of love, anything can happen. Hence, the promise of love also accounts for the dynamic of construction and destruction. It designates the movement of love, as transimmanence, which cuts across any sense of absolute community, but does not ensure a 'loving' community in turn. Rather, it reveals a sense of community, which does not stop this process of becoming as the circulation of sense

amongst the plurality of singularities, always coming and going, kept in progress by the movement of love, i.e. transimmanence.

### 3.7. Conclusion

For Critchley, Nancy's attempt at the outlining an alternative sense of politics fails, because of his appropriation of Heidegger. Hence, instead of rethinking a sense of transcendence, Critchley, following Levinas, holds that Nancy in thinking being-*with*, like Heidegger, neutralizes transcendence with difference disappearing under the overdetermination of a sense of community. What becomes evident, here, concerning the different approaches of Levinasian and Nancian thought is the diverging interpretations of Heidegger. In short, Critchley via Levinas rejects Heidegger and, therefore, also Nancy in his re-appropriating of Heidegger. Instead of engaging the debate by regarding only the interpretations of Heidegger, where a case for the re-appropriation of Heidegger was made in Chapter 1 and which will feature once more in the conclusion. I, in turn, have suggested that Nancy should also be regarded in his relation to Levinas, a relation of thinking the same different, which Critchley overlooks. Moreover, where Critchley may hold that that Levinas conclusively rejects Heidegger for forgetting the other, Levinas one must add, introduces a hierarchy of loves, *Agape* over *Eros*, excluding difference in his own way. Accordingly, I suggest that perhaps Nancy opens a way to think Levinas against Levinas, formulated via Heidegger, that is to think the alterity of love. Perhaps Levinas does not think alterity to its limit. And perhaps in also thinking the plurality of singular loves, Nancy does open a way to conceive of an alternative sense of politics, by a sense of transcendence that does not favor one type of love forgetting the other. Perhaps in the movement of love as transimmanence, a sense of community opens up that allows for difference, even in love. Love as a promise and the risk of all its possibilities.

## Conclusion

### Towards a politics of love?

This would not at all imply the invention of another “love” or of a beyond love. It would imply letting love once again open up its paths within thought, letting it once again call thought toward it, thought exposed to missing love as well as to being touched by it, exposed to being betrayed, as well as to taking account of its miserable means of loving.

Nancy (1991: 94)

#### 4.1. Chapter summaries

*Is a notion of transcendence still possible, after metaphysics, which might enable a sense of the political that does not reduce difference?*

In the search for a possible answer to the question above, I suggested, in **Chapter 1**, Husserl’s redefinition of the distinction between immanence and transcendence as a ‘starting point’ for the endeavor. In short, the discussion on Husserl concerned the redefinition of the realm of immanence to include transcendence in terms of the subject and its relation to the world, setting the tone for the rest of the chapters. Next, I outlined three criteria for guiding the set-out task and thinking after metaphysics. The first criterion concerns the *modus operandi* for thinking after metaphysics, I called a *thinking the same different*, taken over from Heidegger’s way of engaging with the history of thought. The second criterion was formulated from the critique of ontotheology, also provided by Heidegger. This critique describes the ontotheological constitution of metaphysics, which provides the dialectical model that leads to the sublimation of difference and a politics of exclusion. Thus, the second criterion entails avoiding ontotheology which is synonymous with thinking after (a certain) metaphysics, i.e. the metaphysics of ontotheology. Appropriating Heidegger also requires taking account his involvement with the Nazi regime, which was attempted in demythologizing Heidegger with the help of Caputo. The third and final criterion demands thinking the other (not the Other), sprouting from Levinas’ critique of Heidegger sublimating alterity.

Having suggested a ‘starting point’ and three criteria for thinking after metaphysics *en route* to searching for a possible answer to the question above, I set out in **Chapter 2** to make a case for Nancy’s thought. The case was made by discussing how Nancy meets all three criteria for thinking after metaphysics thereby outlining an alternative sense of politics which allows for difference. This alternative sense of politics is found in Nancy’s re-appropriation of Heidegger’s notion of *Mitsein*, as thinking the *with* of being-*with*, which concerns the plurality of singularities. Moreover, I argued that it is Nancy’s notion of transcendence as transimmanence that enables his alternative sense of politics. Transimmanence understood as the movement of the *with*, cutting across the subject and the other, exposing each unique origin to an other. This constant exposition enables the co-creation of sense, which, in turn, is also circulation between the plural singularities that make up a community. Thus, sense is circulating, and not fixed in the subject, the other, God, nor a trace inside or outside the world. Additionally, the circulation accounts for the inoperativeness of community that is the dynamic of constant construction and destruction. In short, Nancy’s alternative sense of transcendence as transimmanence enables an alternative sense of politics that allows for difference in the constant co-creation of sense and community.

In **Chapter 3**, the larger debate regarding the question above was introduced, more specifically the debate between Levinas’ thought and that of Nancy. The debate I hold hinges around the diverging interpretations of Heidegger. Hence, Levinas’ rejection of Heidegger was outlined that leads to his alternative approach to the question as argued by Critchley. An alternative, which I also discussed meets the criteria for thinking after metaphysics. Accordingly, Critchley’s Levinasian critique against Nancy based on his re-appropriation of Heidegger was considered. A critique that holds Nancy like Heidegger neutralizes ethical transcendence, i.e. reduces alterity under an overdetermined positive sense of community. In turn, I attempted to formulate a Nancian reply starting with, instead of the differing interpretations of Heidegger, Nancy thinking Levinas the same different. Hence, in Nancy’s critique and appropriation of Levinas, something Critchley overlooked in his critique of Nancy, I discussed Levinas’ own sublation of difference in the hierarchizing of loves. The suppressing of other forms of love, of *Eros* under *Agape*, that reveals perhaps that Levinas does not think alterity at its limit. Instead, I suggested that Nancy thinks Levinas against himself via Heidegger that is the alterity of love. Thus, in the discussion of Nancy’s philosophy of being-*with*, rephrased in terms of love, I tried to formulate a reply to

Critchley's critique found in Nancy thinking Levinas the same different by thinking the plurality of singular loves. Thereby, allowing for the difference in loves, not hierarchizing the one above the other, neither community nor *Agape* to let them play out in the movement of love. The movement of love as transimmanence that exposes one to an other, in the promise of love as a risk meaning anything can happen.

#### 4.2. Why Nancy (and not Levinas)?

If both Nancy and Levinas provide an approach that meets the three criteria for thinking after metaphysics, and, moreover, may serve as an alternative sense of transcendence, which enables the outlining of an alternative sense of politics that allows difference, then why do I align my thought with Nancy? I would like to propose two reasons here. The first regards the critique found in Nancy's rethinking Levinas the same different discussed in the debate in Chapter 3. The second concern Levinas interpretation of Heidegger.

Let us, then, first be reminded about the different projects of Levinas and Nancy in answering the questions above. Rugo summarizes the divergent projects as follows:

...the two, moving as mentioned on radically different paths, propose the ethical not as a set of norms, but as absolute demand that compels the human from beginning to end. Levinas proceeds by introducing what he terms metaphysical desire and the links this establishes with a third term that does not take part in desire or in relation whilst nonetheless judging it and adjusting the measure of one's responsibility to the other human being. On the contrary, Nancy resolves the ethical problem through a more apparent Heideggerian twist: ethics is not to be found outside ontology, but is rather ontology's central problem. The ethical can follow only from a reformulation of ontology that would take into account a co-existential analysis, an ontology that takes the world of bodies as its starting point. Whilst Levinas then attempts to move beyond ontology and beyond philosophy, Nancy on the other hand goes at the very bottom of it, at its core (the overcoming of philosophy as a consequence is produced as a releasing of philosophy's limit). According to Levinas one reaches ethics by stepping into otherwise than being, whilst Nancy finds it at the core of Being as the co-essentiality of with and Being (Rugo, 2013: 127).

Regarding the first instance, what is significant in Nancy thinking Levinas the same different is firstly the critique Nancy poses against Levinas. Nancy's critique, to briefly summarize, points out most significantly that in Levinas there is a hierarchy of loves that for Levinas, where *Agape* love is higher than *Eros* (or any other type of love). 'While the love of the ethical face-to-face relation preserves love of other, erotic love involves egotism' (Secomb 2006: 452). Thus, the *Eros* is to be overcome by *Agape*: 'this reduction to self-love is

transcended through fecundity and fraternity but erotic love is a carnality that occludes the face' (Secomb 2006: 452).

As discussed, this suggests that Levinas perhaps does not think alterity at its limit, and where Nancy thinks Levinas against Levinas via Heidegger in thinking the alterity of love. Hence, for Nancy, thinking alterity means avoiding any hierarchizing by making value claims of this nature where one has to be overcome, transcended by an other. Even regarding love, even if only to be overcome briefly. Rephrased, 'for Nancy, this would risk a continuation of the hierarchy, which constructs erotics (and by implication, I would add, the feminine) as secondary, and would finally sublimate them both within the dialectical return of the face-to-face in the paternal relation' (Secomb 2006: 452). What this critique in other words suggests is that perhaps Levinas opens the door again for an ontotheology in terms of love.

In contrast, Nancy does not discriminate between any forms of love, but rather states that all forms of love are possible in the relation to the other, exposed as a promise in the transimmanent movement of love. Or again in Secomb's (2006: 454) words: 'While Nancy does not seek to conflate all forms of love - "charity and pleasure, emotion and pornography, the neighbor and the infant, the love of lovers and the love of God, fraternal love and love of art, the kiss, passion, friendship"' (Nancy cited in Secomb), he does attempt to discern the cut that touches and creates being-with evident in all of these possibilities of love'.

Once more, for Levinas, the subject in the ethical relation becomes a hostage of the Other, 'that is, the subject is taken captive to the point of substituting itself for another' (Levinas cited in Critchley, 1992: 113) in an asymmetrical relation, as being preoccupied with thinking the Other. But does this formulation account for the fact that the subject does not always obey the ethical imperative? And moreover, as discussed above, the only relation that is important for Levinas, is the ethical relation. This begs the question, how to regard the everyday relations with the other, with others? Nancy, in contrast, does not make a value distinction between types of relations (loves) with others. Instead, he allows for the plurality of singular loves. Furthermore, Nancy also attempts to account for the everyday experience that not all relations with others are the fulfillment of the promise of love (the ethical imperative) in the exposing of one to an other. Instead, anything can happen, the promise of love cannot be kept, the ethical imperative might be violated. This is not a value claim, but rather accounts for the differing forms of human relations. In turn, the failure to keep the promise,

nonetheless, does not mean that there was not love, that the ethical imperative was not invoked in the relation to the other. Rather love exposes one to an other, in the promise of love, which is not the promise and its keeping.

In short, as a first instance, I align my thought with Nancy, who thinks difference to its limit, allowing difference to play itself out, in whatever form; love, identity, community, gender, and so forth. The second reason for siding with Nancy, over Levinas, concerns Levinas' rejection of Heidegger, or to be more precise, of Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*. Why, again, does Levinas (and therefore Critchley) reject Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein*? To recapitulate, firstly, Levinas rejects Heidegger's thought because of his Nazi affiliation in 1933. Secondly, for Levinas, the *with* only serve as juxtaposition, as constituting a side by side association, which is not a face-to-face relation, i.e. a being next to that does not involve responsibility. Thirdly, in its failing of producing an ethical command, the *with* runs the risk of embodying the violent movement of a crowd that marches side by side, in other words, again forgetting the other (singularity). Thus, Levinas rejects a sense of community thought in terms of *with*, because such a community will *always* function according to ontotheology with the common being and common destiny as ground.

In contrast, I have made the case in Chapters 1 and 2 why Nancy may re-appropriate Heidegger's *Mitsein*, after demythologizing Heidegger (Caputo), which in short means not following Heidegger in appropriating the *Dasein* as *Das Volk* in service of National Socialism. Thus, what is left is Levinas' interpretation on a philosophical level of Heidegger that leads to his rejection of his thought.

Taking the lead from Derrida, I agree with Rugo, when he writes that there seems to be one fundamental misreading motivating Levinas' position. Derrida points out in this regard that Levinas is taking Being-with as a 'derivative and modified form of the originary relation with the other' (Derrida 2002: 112). Or in Rugo's words, 'whilst Heidegger explicitly says that "with" belongs to the existential character of *Dasein*, Levinas appears to evoke what is an existential possibility under the traits of a category'.

Accordingly, Levinas' (mis)interpretation has a number of consequences. Firstly, 'it means to interpret Being-with as instrumental intersubjectivity, the plural readiness-at-hand of actual individuals' (Rugo, 2013: 135). This interpretation, conversely, is in contrast to what Heidegger writes, as pointed out in Chapter 2: 'the kind of Being which belongs to the



*Dasein* of Others, as we encounter it within-the-world, differs from readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand' (Heidegger cited in Rugo, 2013: 135). Stated differently, here with Levinas, 'the "with" is reduced to an incident of solitary Da' (Rugo, 2013: 135). Alternatively, as Lewis puts it - 'being-with is taken to be little more than a placatory appendix to a description of what is ultimately a solipsistic ego' (Lewis 2005: 18).

Secondly, Levinas seems to emphasize an undifferentiated equality (a symmetrical relation) at the heart of Being-with. Or, as Critchley puts it, an overdetermination of a positive sense of community. By doing so, Levinas is 'overlooking the fact that the equality that makes co-existence possible (*Mit-dasein*) rests on the being-open of entities to one-another' (Rugo, 2013: 135). It is exactly this openness that prevents 'the constitution of a pure subject (therefore also of a pure sociality, which Levinas names philosophy of communion), to which world and others would be added' (Rugo, 2013: 135). This misinterpretation is not only confirmed by Heidegger's argument that 'the being-there-too (*Auch-da-sein*) is not a simple Being- present-at-hand-along-with, but also by the fact that the with constitutes a relational difference, where every and each *Dasein* discloses the world as a with-world' (Rugo, 2013: 135).

Lastly, Levinas (over)stresses that 'Being-with remains confined within the limits of the They, therefore taking the They as the purely negative moment of banality' (Rugo, 2013: 136). In contrast; 'The They, although it constitutes the moment of indifference (*Dasein* does not recognize its absorption), must also mean, in Jean-Luc Nancy's words "the site of disclosedness"' (Nancy cited in Rugo, 2013: 136).

Thus, in short, Levinas (mistakenly) takes *Mitsein* as a category, and not an existential possibility necessary to *Dasein*, thereby making the relation to the other an occasion of its world. Therefore, 'Levinas can criticize the fact that by calling into question Being in the compound expression Being-with, Heidegger describes a relation that refers constantly to an element outside of itself' (Nancy cited in Rugo, 2013: 136). Put differently, *Mitsein*, for Levinas, is not seen as co-original with *Dasein* that leads. Hence, the other is to be regarded second to the subject and therefore runs the risk of being sublated in the return to Same. The return to the Same, for Levinas, therefore, has to be overcome, i.e. transcended by the trace of the Other, in the face of the other thus ensuring difference.

Having outlined the misinterpretation by Levinas as *Mitsein* being a category of *Dasein*, and not co-original as Nancy terms it, I do not mean that Nancy does not take serious the shortcomings that Levinas pointed out in Heidegger's thought. I have, in fact, argued the opposite. Firstly, Nancy in taking serious Levinas' critique of Heidegger sublating a thinking the other (note not *the Other*), meets both the second and third criteria for thinking after metaphysics in Chapter 2. Secondly, in Nancy thinking Levinas the same different in Chapter 3. Nancy, moreover, also critiques Heidegger. The difference is that Nancy's critique rests on the fact that Heidegger did not take the analysis of *Dasein* as *Mitsein* far enough, unpacked in Nancy's re-appropriation thereof in Chapter 2. Restated:

Whilst one can, as Jean-Luc does, advance the critique that Heidegger's question of the with as co-existential to the Da basically leaves open just two possibilities - a crowd with no proper names or a People forged around the destiny of its Proper Name - one should nevertheless be careful not to mistake Being-with for a category. What one would rather reproach Heidegger for is that Being-with often seems to float on the surface of the analysis of *Dasein*, never becoming as fundamental as, according to Heidegger's announcement, it should be (Rugo, 2013: 136).

Therefore, Nancy, unlike Levinas appropriates Heidegger's thought because according to Nancy it precisely still allows for particularity. 'Nancy shows a possibility to understand Being-with differently. His argument addresses a dynamic opposite to the one Levinas seems to detect: "we do not have to identify ourselves as 'we' [...] we have to disidentify ourselves from every sort of 'we' that would be the subject of its own representation"' (Nancy cited in Rugo, 2013: 138).

Finally, it is the notion of transimmanence that describes the movement of the *with* of being-*with*, which Nancy adds in his re-appropriation of Heidegger. The movement of love that decenters the subject in cutting across the I and the other, exposing one to an other, which avoids any form of hierarchy (even in love). It is this notion of transcendence, which enables an alternative sense of politics that allows for difference in all its forms, that is the most gripping of Nancy's thought.

#### **4.3. Towards a politics of love**

As a final tentative remark concerning Nancy's rethinking the political through the notion of transimmanence, I propose to outline some of the implications this movement of love and the promise of love over against a conceptualization of ontotheology for the South African context. In other words, how does a thinking after metaphysics, i.e. that avoids ontotheology

and allows difference to play itself out relate to the South Africa struggle to conceive of identity post-Apartheid? A clue may be found in the following fragment where Nancy describes thinking as the reticence of conceptualizing that will lead back to an ontotheology:

But this generous reticence would be no different from the exercise of thought itself. Thinking rejects abstraction and conceptualization as these are recognized by understanding. Thinking does not produce the operators of a knowledge; it undergoes an experience, and lets the experience inscribe itself. Thought therefore essentially takes place in the reticence that lets the singular moments of this experience offer and arrange themselves (Nancy, 1991: 84).

Thus, instead of abstracting particular attributes, like culture for instance, in order to conceptualize an identity, Nancy rather suggests that the plurality of singular beings, which forms the singular moments of experience in the exposure through the movement of love, are to be allowed to arrange themselves. In other words, instead of reducing the singularity of individuals under a few distinct conceptions of identity, and keep these identities from mixing, as was the aim of Apartheid, let the singularities form and re-form the plurality of their identities in the constant exposure to others. Or again, let the inoperativeness of community, the constructing and deconstructing, play itself out. That is to resist the temptation of wanting to control the dynamic of a community by fixing its identity, which would mean the suppressing of difference.

Let us consider this implication once more regarding Nancy's reformulation of the inoperativeness of community as *melee*.<sup>49</sup> 'Nancy conceives of community as a *melee*, avoiding ontotheology, as 'an action rather than a substance' (Nancy cited in Secomb, 2006: 456). Accordingly; 'Melee suggests first combat, confrontation, and disagreement, although Nancy also points beyond the *melee* of Ares to that of Aphrodite. Both these forms of *melee* (that of combat and that of love) require the other: an "appeal to the other as an always other other"' (Nancy cited in Secomb, 2006: 456). Moreover, 'Nancy defines *melee* very specifically as "crossing, weaving, exchange, sharing"' and he adds: "in a *melee* there is countervalance and encounter, there's resemblance and distancing, contact and contraction, concentration and dissemination, identification and alteration"' (Nancy cited in Secomb, 2006: 456). What we have here is, of course, the movement of love as transimmanence,

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<sup>49</sup> Secomb confirms this when she writes: 'In his essay "In Praise of Melee," Nancy speaks of cultures rather than communities. Yet his elaboration of culture as *melee* is already discernable in "The Inoperative Community"'.

cutting across the plural singularities in a community or culture, thereby exposing one to another, i.e. enabling *melee*.

Consequently, in line with the avoidance of ontotheology, immanentism, and a politics that leads to totalitarianism, Nancy also rejects both racial purity and a “melting pot” homogenizing multiculturalism, where even the well-meaning talk of unity within diversity oversimplifies and misleads (Secomb, 2006: 456). In contrast, ‘what is needed, Nancy speculates, is not a mixture of race, sex and other differences, as this implies that there is a pre-existing purity that can be combined. Moreover, mixture becomes either a fusion that homogenizes differences or an entropic disorder that is resistant to engagement, sharing and connection’ (Nancy cited in Secomb, 2006: 456). Restated, the *melee* does not take place between constituted subjects and their metaphysical identities. Rather, *melee* takes place between the decentered subject exposed to the other, one to another, by the movement of love. Therefore, Nancy following Serres, holds that:

Every culture is from the outset this *melange* and *medley*. Even and especially “the West,” priding itself on its “Greek” origins that is already a cosmopolitan *melee* of “Egypt, Mesopotamia...Asian Minor...Syrian-Lebanese...Crete... Mycenae” and also “the near East and the Aegean Cretans, Mycenaean’s, Palestinians, Nubians, Canaanites . . .”. Culture is always and already *melee*, undermining cultural and racial purity: culture does not exist outside this “confrontation, transformation, deviation, development, recomposition, combination, cobbling together” (Nancy cited in Secomb, 2006: 456-7).

Important here is that Nancy acknowledges, nonetheless, that there are distinct peoples, nations, and civilizations. These distinct cultures, these singularities, nevertheless, ‘produce their specificity through the *melee* of differences jousting and exposed to each other within culture’ (Secomb, 2006: 457). Nancy explains this as follows: ‘It is a *melee* that, within any given “culture,” brings out a style or a tone; equally, however, it brings out the various voices or vocal ranges that are needed in order for this tone to be interpreted. There is a French culture. But this culture has many voices and is nowhere present “in person” as it were’ (Nancy cited in Secomb, 2006: 457). Regarding South Africa, we might in a similar fashion recognize the various styles and tones of Zulus, Venda’s, Dutch, French, Xhosas, Afrikaans, Khoi-San, Ndebele’s, Setswana’s, Indian, English, Tsongas, Malaysian, Scottish, German, Swati’s, Southern Sesotho’s, ‘queer and conventional, conservative, radical, conformist, republican, socialist, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, atheist,

privileged and marginalized’ and so forth, ‘that muddle along together, creating the ever-transforming particularity of antipodean being-rebelliously-together’ (Secomb, 2006: 457).

Thus, this melee of culture and community is not harmonious and unified in an ontotheological fashion, but is rather is an encountering and countering, a resisting and engagement, that enables and requires a preserving of difference as well as a “combination (and) cobbling together” (Secomb, 2006: 457). Rephrased: ‘If a multicultural homogenizing mixture were enacted there would no longer be this joyous and painful, enamoured and passionate, melee there would only be an “inert, empty, colorless and flavorless” identity and identification’ (Nancy cited in Secomb, 2006: 457). This means that there is no one South African voice representing a pure South African culture, ‘but there is the exchange, the touch, the contestation producing the singularity and plurality of living’ (Secomb, 2006: 457) in the South African melee.

A last word: what Nancy’s notion of love as transimmanence enables is a community or culture that is never fixed because it rejects the notion of a pure identity or culture that may ground a politics of exclusion. Rather, it allows for the difference of the plural singularities, a melee, in that we are always already exposed to, or touched by others. A sense of community always in becoming, to come, kept in motion by, perhaps, a politics of love.

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