Writing With(out) God? *

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abstract

In recent years Jacques Derrida has argued that he has always been writing about himself and God as a *confiteri*. Since the modern world claims that God is dead what might it mean to now write without God? Indeed what *is* God and what might God's death also mean? This paper explores what God and a possibility of writing with(out) God as a form of confession might mean. Whilst considering the arguments of Derrida it sides more with Bataille to argue that God is more literally Absence rather than without being or absent. Importantly this absence is revealed to, leaves and continually contaminates us with an overwhelming feeling of loss that destabilises 'self' and 'being'. The contaminated, insufficient 'self' writes as a lost confession and a confession of loss: it is an outpouring of words through the rupture of 'being'. This paper is one such *confiteri*.

Introduction

> Quid ergo amo, cum Deum meum amo? Can I do anything other than translate this sentence by SA [Saint Augustine] into my language? (Jacques Derrida, 1993: 122)

> That's what my readers won't have known about me … to be bound better and better but to be read less and less well over almost twenty years, like my religion about which nobody understands anything. (Jacques Derrida, 1993: 154)

> [Y]ou have spent your life inviting calling promising, hoping sighing dreaming, convoking invoking provoking, constituting engendering producing, naming assigning demanding, prescribing commanding sacrificing. (Jacques Derrida, 1993: 314)

The works of Jacques Derrida have been considered for some time in contemporary management literature (Cooper, 1989; Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992; Chia, 1996). Whilst these are important in their own right I would contend that they tend to preference the various writers' beliefs that Derrida writes 'on' something. My concern in this paper however is not to demonstrate that Derrida writes *on* a subject rather than about it – this has been done eloquently before (Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992) – but to consider *why* Derrida writes at all.

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In this paper I will argue, following Derrida (1992b, 1993), that much of his work has taken the form of *confiteri*. In using the term *confiteri* I want to distinguish between this mode of address and the more modern understanding of confession. For Derrida:

> When he [Saint Augustine] asks in truth of God and already of his readers why he confesses himself to God when God knows everything, the response makes it appear that what is essential to the avowal or the testimony does not consist in an experience of knowledge. Its act is not reduced to informing, teaching, making known. … [but is a performative act] in order to 'stir up' love … by 'doing the truth' (*veritatem facere*). (1992b: 286)

Confiteri is a performative act of faith, a declaration of love for God rather than an announcement of truth and fact that demands forgiveness. Thus for Derrida Augustine's Confessions, and his own Circumfession, is not an attempt to close the distance between writer and reader but a free invitation without obligation, to the reader to find faith (Derrida, 1995a: 14). The issue is not whether we 'know', 'believe' or 'forgive' Augustine (or Derrida) but to reconcile ourselves to God. *Confiteri* is given as an (overwhelming) passionate testimony of faith, a sacrifice, a waste of the subject, a gift without return as a way through the *aporia* of a modern onto-theological metaphysics mired in appropriation and (self-)interest:

> We speak *in* and *on* a language that, while being opened by this *ference*, says the inadequation of the reference, the insufficiency or the lapse of knowing, its incompetence as to what it is said to be the knowing of. … And the language of ab-negation or of renunciation is not negative … because it denounces as much as it renounces; and it denounces, enjoining; it prescribes overflowing this insufficiency; it mandates, *it necessitates* doing the impossible, necessitates going (*Geh*, Go!) there where one cannot go. Passion of, for, the place, again. I shall say in French: *il y a lieu de* (which means *il faut*, 'it is necessary,' 'there is ground for') rendering oneself *there where* it is impossible to go. (Derrida, 1995b: 58, emphasis in the original)

We (St Augustine, Derrida and I) do not seek your forgiveness, we do not attempt to protect and retain what we have but give it all up willingly, we sacrifice ourselves in-front of you to God. What *faith* is there then in management and the restricted economy! As a highly personal and emotional act of faith, an emotional outpouring of a bleeding and ruptured being, it is an admission of failure, a tormented cry of someone who finds themself to be insufficient, less than perfect before an all-knowing and perhaps impersonal God (Derrida, 1992b; Bataille, 1988b). It is the supplicant's cry, 'God knows that I am human, all too human'. Whatever Hegel and various latter day thinkers may think we will never attain perfection, there is no supersession, nothing is retained, held back, reserved!

What this is not is yet another discourse on dialectics. It cannot and should not be collapsed under the weight of the subjectivist-objectivist, inside-outside, distal-proximal arguments that continue to haunt so much of management writing under the guise of a post-(structural, modern, psychoanalytic, colonial, feminist, and so on – fill in the blank as you see fit) versus modernist argument. In *Sauf le Nom* Derrida (1995b: 73-75) discusses the "tradition of *Gelassenheit*, this serenity that allows being without indifference" (1995b: 73). This is not a subjective position or an explication of (a self-conscious and egoistic) interiority but rather an opening to or reception of difference. In these terms the subjectivist and (occasionally) 'autobiographical' works in some management discourse that preference the use of 'I' remain as a form of onto-theological metaphysics in that they remain based on a relational logic of form and also

appropriation, reserve, accumulation and interest: 'I am this, you are that'. *Confiteri* however is "to give oneself up [*se render*] and to surrender one's weapons [*render les armes*] without defeat … [to] a love without jealousy that would allow the other to be – after the passage of a *via negativa*" (Derrida, 1995b: 74). Derrida's message is simpler, sweeter and perhaps all the better for being so – we write as a performative cry to an absent God 'Come, yes, yes'.

But what God does Derrida cry for? God is not deconstruction. Whilst deconstruction can be seen as an attempt to prevent the closure of metaphysics from within, Derrida's interest in apophatic theology and God is concerned with 'more' than this process. His concern is with a generalized messianic theology as an attempt to relate to the Impossible (as God, as other, as the *tout autre est tout autre*) that is beyond metaphysics and representational being (Derrida, 1995b: 35-85) hence: "God (is) beyond Being but as such is more (being) than Being: *no more being* and *being more than Being*: being more" (Derrida, 1992a: 90, emphasis in original).

It is worth noting that whilst "very early on [Derrida] was accused of – rather than being congratulated for – resifting the procedures of negative theology" (Derrida, 1992a: 74) deconstruction is not negative or apophatic theology. Deconstruction remains a performative process by which we make ourselves ready for the in-coming of God as *tout autre* but apophatic theology is an attempt to 'understand' God beyond understanding: the first passionately inclines us to the Impossible (Derrida, 1995a) the second *is* the Impossible. Our *aporia* is that we cannot separate the two: God is prior to and more than being, representation and language.

What is Derrida's understanding of God and does it avoid onto-theological metaphysics? Derrida (1992a) argues that by displacing God into an infinite future yet to come (if indeed it ever does) that he avoids reducing God to presence and form. But does he? In order to draw out and put into play some of Derrida's concerns requires a consideration of God and *confiteri*: what is God as *via negativa* and how is *confiteri* performative; how does it open a way through the *aporia* of metaphysics to the Impossible beyond?

In the remainder of this paper I will attempt several (impossible moves). A theoretical consideration of what Derrida understands, or perhaps suggests, by God. Alongside this I will offer an example of *confiteri*. We so often attempt to understand and know experience only through and following on from theory but it is not prior to the experience of the *via negativa*. However, one should be read with, through and against the other: *confiteri* is an attempt to stop the closure of theory, an opening in the *aporia* of metaphysics to God and the Impossible beyond. In both cases I can neither write about something but must play on various themes and in so doing expose myself to the glare of the Sun and readers alike.

In my play(fullness) I will go in a direction that Derrida leaves untravelled though no doubt is aware of, to consider Bataille's (1989, 1995b) argument of God *as* Absence rather than absent. This is risky business, a road less travelled and with someone whom Sartre, that expert on being God, considered mad, bad and dangerous to know. Bataille nonetheless has important issues to discuss concerning God, and Derrida has a long

standing familiarity and respect for him (Derrida, 1978): so there is some recourse to my madness and risk. However if *confiteri* was merely a communication with God or someone else as other I would not risk myself – this may be the supplicant's cry before God but it is also to, and may ultimately only be for, themselves.

There remains however at least one other purpose to this paper. It is a development of my earlier suggestion that "*The Impossible* for Organizational Theory…be a continually transgressive praxis" (O'Shea, 2001: 61). It takes some of the themes in that paper, re-writes, subverts and puts them in to play. Be careful what you wish for.

Confiteri

The positivistic elements of management theory have been well identified for some considerable time. Nonetheless in some management journals we are still exhorted to write objectively, preferably in the third person, exclude subjectivity and be able to generalise our findings. At the 2000 Academy of Management Conference an invited speaker went so far as to say that 'good writing' is never written in the first person before offering Charles Dickens as a doyen of 'good narrative style'. It seems that much of 20th century literature, at least for this speaker, is not 'good writing'. I am a 'bad writer', writing both continually in the 1st person and admiring and wanting to emulate others, such as Proust and Andre Gide. What space and what hope can there be for the likes of me in management discourse? Am I forever to be banished beyond the margins, silenced, left to take the risks yet receive none of the rewards: isn't this the very fate and poisoned chalice bestowed already on some recently in a review article in the Academy's journal?

Writing on management outside the space of literature and (respectable management) discourse I am confronted by nothing. This void, this khōral *desert (Derrida, 1995c) voids me, empties me, makes me nothing and then exhorts me to speak. Outside rationalised space the very absence of things reveals the absence of God. But it does more: it demands that 'I', not the 'I' that I was but that I will become as* tout autre *to myself, find myself, speak about myself and lose myself again in a never ending cycle of sacrifice. How does one write on management in the absence of*

Derrida's God

The concept of an ontological and kataphatic Christian God may be traced from the ancient Greeks, through Plato to the age of Luther (Taylor, 1999). This is God figured as something, 'God is love'. Against this negative theologicians have long argued that God is not an essence or being, love may stem from God but God is not love. For some, since the death of God in Nietzsche, negative theology leaves us with a foundationless silence about God. Derrida raises a challenge for (his understanding of current) negative theology: if one is to avoid speaking (of, and limit God to, Being), does one have to remain silent about God (Derrida, 1992a)?

Derrida's God (Derrida, 1992a, 1995a) is a response, or challenge, to this negativity: how to think and speak about God without reducing God to an onto-theological presence. His is a God that whilst yet to come we are nonetheless required to prepare for (Derrida, 1992a, 1993, 1995a, 1999; Caputo and Scanlon, 1999). This, for Derrida avoids trapping God as of metaphysical kataphatic being or apophatic *hyperousia*. Or does it?

Derrida equates God with the

a stable self, in a continual collapse of being, in a space beyond ('good') literature and God? Pick up the pieces even as they slide through your fingers and change, play with them, rearrange them, write on them not about them (Bataille, 1992), isn't this poetic? This is poetic discourse as sacrifice, as a continual self-subversion (Lala, 1995) and where discourse on management in the absence of God becomes a narrative of vulnerability (Banks and Banks, 1998). It is an autobiography of risk where the subject dies and writing is confessional (Derrida, 1993; Blanchot, 1986): poetic writing as sacrifice not about oneself or some reified, ontical other but literally on oneself: play with the ashes, rearrange the pieces, write on the skin (Bataille, 1992). How does one do such a sacrificial confession? I'll start with a confession as it's good for my immortal catholic soul: it offers me the ghost of a chance that I might catch sight of St. Augustine's (1998) City of God. (But I'll never enter, as I'm damned for eternity: I know this to be true, my father told me so as a child. Augustine's City of God has no use for shit.)

A (brief) confession: My work, or so I've been told by some colleagues, is highly subjective and in danger of being monothematic. Quite simply I keep talking about myself and family. I cry out. If I must speak about what I 'know', then I must be silent. I know nothing, the only thing I have (an incomplete) knowledge of is my life. And I confess, I must speak, I am driven to communicate, the excess of experiences that are more than me but help to (re-)constitute me, overflow me and force me to share them through communication.

So please God hear my confession.

But there is nothing to hear my prayers, nothing to witness my tears in the desert, nothing to witness my death(s). But in the distance I can see a spectral shimmer of light: is it the City of God or just another phantasm, just another organized state or organization that will fall to dust in my hands? Oh God why doesn't thou forsake me: Oh father why do I forsake you? All I want to do is

Impossible and thus argues that God is outside of metaphysics (Derrida, 1995b) and so beyond reduction to a kataphatic understanding. God, as *causa sui*, is "this birth that *carries itself* without premise" that "appears impossible, more than impossible, the most impossible possible, more impossible than the impossible if the impossible is the simple negative modality of the possible" (ibid: 43). This impossible beyond being is wholly affirmative, "the 'yes,' the 'come'" (ibid.) that opens us to the other: God as an experience of desire for the ineffable, the other. God as such is an openness to the infinitely different and deferred future beyond the phenomenological horizon, but which haunts our thoughts. We thus have a faith in, and confess to a non-representable God that John D. Caputo (1999b: 208-215) describes as Derrida's phenomenology of the non-appearing; the specter of what is to come that calls us forth and that we welcome by passion, prayer, *confiteri*, by having faith in something that we do not understand but can only experience. A phenomenology of the non-appearing is a faith in an interruption of phenomenological experience by an absolute, infinitely distant rather than a foreseeable future.

> [Y]ou have spent your life inviting calling promising, hoping sighing dreaming, convoking invoking provoking, constituting engendering producing, naming assigning demanding, prescribing commanding sacrificing (Derrida, 1993: 314.)

*talk to you, about you, on you. So I'll start by
talking about myself because you are not there oh
God of absence, God as Absence.*

Confession

*Date: July 7th 2000.
Place: Athens, Greece.
How do you talk about someone
you have never met? How do
you close an infinite distance of
an absent other? There's
nothing to see, nothing to re-
present, nothing to even miss in
representing. Nothing then to
mis-represent? But who would
take this risk, indeed what is
risked? You or the other
represented in their absence?*

*Oh to risk myself and talk about
Bataille but I'm too insufficient
for that! The half-hour of clock
time that I've been given to
present on Bataille seemed so
brief at first, but now faced with
the reality it's dilated out in to
infinity. I feel myself fall into
this starless night and Bataille
isn't here to save me, all that
there is is the experience of
falling and loss. Found wanting
whilst trying to touch the (black)
Sun Bataille, I fall back knowing
only that I'm insufficient, not
enough, not good enough. Yet
my experience has left me
contaminated, even in his
absence Bataille is here
contaminating me with his
(non-)presence, seeping through
my skin, rupturing my mind,
dissolving my body. He's just
too much for me, he's excessive
and this excess forces me to
speak.*

*So I speak, not about Bataille
but on loss, risk and*

Confession

This passage relates to my experience of presenting a paper on Bataille at SCOS 2000. I abandoned the paper at the start and instead spoke about experiencing myself as loss, lost and insufficient in relation to two incidents in my life. These were the birth of my daughter and the day my father left me as a 7 year old child with the words 'You've never been the son I wanted'. My father expelled me from his life for over 25 years: not his son, less than human, just shit. Reconciliation? There is only absence. The passage makes use of some 15 of Bataille's concepts contained primarily in the *Encyclopedia Acephalica*, *Inner Experience* and *Visions of Excess* (Bataille, 1995a, 1988b and 1985 respectively).

Georges Bataille has come to be recognised as someone who wrote at the limits of poetic language (Derrida, 1978; Kristeva, 1984; Guerlac, 1997). Indeed both Julia Kristeva and Suzanne Guerlac argue that Bataille's work continually transgresses the limit of language. He not only evades truth, beauty and limits but actually forces them to slip and founder. He achieves this only because God is an absence rather than either an onto(theo)logical presence or an absent presence. At and beyond the limits of discourse truth is not merely deferred and different, it is dissolved and lost in the present (O'Shea, 2000).

Bataille's concept of a general economy beyond the restricted rational one of the modern world demands another form of negative theology where God is both an infinite absence *and* continual squander: God both takes and gives without return and without end. In this absence *as* God meaning and truth will slip, falter and lose themselves. If we enter this void, if we *fall* into it, we will not become God but will be lost. Poetic language is our attempt to communicate this infinite void, this *mise en abîme*, and to commune with it. Knowing God, or rather how we 'know' God, become inextricably connected to poetic writing. Bataille's is not a negative theology understood and

insufficiency. This suppurating wound pours out words about the shit that I am before collapsing into silence. A presentation about Bataille? No! But perhaps it was an experience on Bataille.

Confession

Date: July 7th 2000;
Place: Athens, Greece.
How can the shit that I am have been part responsible for my baby daughter? I know that I am shit, my father told me so as a child. He left me with a wound that I cannot close. I bleed; I pour out my filth continuously. I have no choice; in his absence he contaminates me with his excess. Out of sight, out of mind? No, in his absence he is always with me, he cannot be denied, he makes me what I am –
a continual collapse of being, good and evil, less than a Sartrean no-thing, much less than zero. And yet from this filth, this less than zero, arises the beautiful potential of my baby daughter. As pure potential she is more than me, more than I can have, more than I can be. She helps to show that although less than zero I am still more than nothing. I am not God: I'm too insufficient for that. I'm only human yet perhaps that is my saving grace.

described by Derrida but is God *as* an excessive absence that demands communication whilst swallowing or voiding any sense of meaning. Having spent (squandered) so much time thinking about God it now seems time to talk about God and poetic language.

Plato, Beautiful Poetry and God

The onto-theological God is the God of Plato's world. It is a God of presence whom the poet has a divine access to and duty towards (Asmis, 1992). This is a God that the poet must represent; this is a God that the poet knows. Yet how can a mortal *know* God: what is this presumption if not an objectification *of* God? Doesn't the poet reduce the ontological Being of God to a mere being? Doesn't the poet become more than God and thus everything? If God is only the "author of…good only" (Plato, 1948: 358) what is the poet author of? God? Everything and nothing? Good and evil? And everything beyond good and evil? Does not the poet become the author of the being God? The Platonic poet, as author of God, does not re-present God's word but their own. This poet is not beyond but both good and evil, yet Plato believes that they would deny part of their existence! As insufficient as I am I cannot do that, I am neither God nor more than God, but I am and cannot deny myself as both good and evil.

Plato, at least for me, leads us to a position where poetry comes to constitute everything and deny that it is everything by denying evil. Plato's poet must know God to represent God: in so doing they become less than human by attempting to be more than God. His poet places a double negative on language, a melancholic never-never where the poet denies being evil and so cannot repeat evil. The poet who constitutes God becomes less rather than more than human.

Yet, as Nietzsche argues, we are human because we are both good and evil. We deny God *and* ourselves by denying our evil and the solution out of this melancholic repressed identity (Butler, 1997). Plato's poet becomes a limited effect of language at the very moment of limiting poetic discourse. This poetic discourse is only a passive form of power as it is representational. As such it is a poetry that is already and always limited by words: restrained by limit and non-transgressive – this is not Bataille's poetry.

Against the Name

Seven year old boys so often idolise their fathers, rightly or not the father becomes God. I wasn't an exception. In parting he said, 'You've never been the son I wanted.' yet this wasn't enough for him, it wasn't excessive enough, he had to add, 'Fuck off and die'. I am dead, have been since the age of seven. Lost in the kingdom of the dead, in the desert khōra I have neither home nor can ever enter the City of God. Derrida writes on the Name (of the Father), Kristeva about the Mother. In the very absence of my father, an absence that didn't herald but brought my death, I die(d) and so have nothing left to risk. And so I write against the Name – (in the) Absence of God, stop making sense.

Absence

I shouldn't be – a double negation inscribed on being. I exist only because of a space left for me by another – the son whom I am not. My parents only wanted two children and I am the third in a denied trinity: the first is my sister, the second my dead brother, finally and least come I.

My brother died stillborn after my father kicked my mother down two flights of stairs whilst she was 5 months pregnant. He left her haemorrhaging life onto a cold concrete floor.

What a waste, what a sacrifice,

Dead Gods and Derrida's God

> We have in fact only two certainties in this world – that we are not everything and that we will die. (Bataille, 1988b: xxxii)

Modern Christian theology, for many, follows in the wake of the concept 'God is dead' (Marion, 1995; Taylor, 1999). Negative theology, restricted to a dead ontological God, opens us to an impossible possibility: that we can replace and so become God. Sartrean existentialists thus argue that the human condition is now inextricably linked to a state of angst where we have an unfulfillable desire to become God since we must cease to be ourselves at the very moment of attaining divinity; we are thus a 'useless passion' (Sartre, 1958: 615). This returns both poet and poetic language to Plato: without God there is no good or evil, in desiring to be God we desire the very ground from which we can constitute what is good and evil, yet this is an empty 'desire-for' the Impossible. This form of negative theological circle not only reveals to the poets that they are 'a useless passion', it is the ultimate in cruelty: the poet is shown everything, made to want it, but access is denied. Poetry becomes less a language of Sartrean angst and more an instrument of infinite torture. It is also left incomplete, a language that cannot constitute itself and, in the absence of good and evil, has lost its own (Platonic) *raison d'être*. Who would be a poet here?

Absence of God

Derrida demands of poetic language the impossible, to dream the Impossible, whilst restricting it to an enclosed space of purpose. His absent God is his response to his understanding of negative theology where God is dead. It is a demand to prepare for the return of an absent God and so it demands of poetic language an answer to the question 'What is God?' Yet, rather like Blanchot (1982) shows of Sartre's question, the very asking in this sense presumes an essentialist ground: God as Being beyond our present understanding of Being. Thus poetic language can only follow from and is placed under control of this. Poetic language attains a purpose, albeit one that it may never fulfill in Derrida's God of difference, but a purpose nonetheless. It is left referring, indeed deferring and in deference, not to itself, not even to nothing, but to a *tout autre* that has yet to come. The poet as slave to an absent

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what an event to follow, what a space to fill. I am not my father's son – he died many years ago.

Oh but my brother could have been anything, at least everything that I am not and perhaps he would have received from my father everything that I did not. I am so little that he must be (close to) everything for my father – in his negation he approaches God even as I'm left in his wake. I am so little and know virtually nothing, but I do not want to be God. For me there is no desire-for or desire-of God.

And what did my father leave when he divorced and left my mother to live in South Africa? Beyond the phenomenological horizon, out of sight but not entirely out of mind, the trace of an absent presence that is yet to come?

Do I miss the point? There is not, within or inscribed by this absence, any idea that I will say either 'Come back, yes yes. I miss you…' or failing to recognise him, 'When will you come back?' Absence has not made this heart grow fonder, I haven't, and can never, forget the physical and mental cruelty. Absent or not, I remain in his debt.

Sacrificed, denied, perpetually in debt, all that remains is ashes. There is no City in the dessert, only ashes, only a desertification of being.

master!

Against all of these Gods the poet stands accused, limited by words, restricted by language, and passive. It seems as if there is no way out in the presence of these deities. How can poetic language be transgressive?

Bataille's God is one of absence that joins excessive squandering with loss. It is also one that allows for an active performativity, and thus transgression as a form of self-subversion without limit (Lala, 1995; O'Shea, 2001). This is a poetic discourse where language does not merely operate at the limits of discourse: it continually attempts to rupture and go beyond it. It can do this because God is an excessive absence into which we may fall and expend ourselves without end. As an endless void we may lose ourselves. In this experience of loss we transgress ourselves because we are made formless: we can be self-subversive because there is no longer a self left to risk. In the infinite and starless night that is Bataille's God we are in Death's kingdom. There is now no sense that we turn away from death, refuse it and so refuse to risk ourselves because we fear death; we are already there. God as a shattering and loss of presence. God as non-presence. God as Absence.

We cannot inhabit Death's Kingdom for long and still be: *la petite mort*, the many other small deaths that we die during life, 'being' formless, all are but temporary. Without form we cannot inhabit Augustine's City of God but nor can we remain wandering in the desert for long. Death is not ours to have, to hold, to command, delay or to share (Derrida, 1995d; Blanchot, 1998), and unless Death has finally come to us we must ultimately return to (a) 'being' alive in the face of Death: life is only a special condition of Death (Bataille, 1985). 'Being', even though it is insufficient and second to Death, nonetheless retains, or is contaminated by, (part of) God: the sacred is ever present even whilst it is denied in the profane (Bataille, 1988b). What might this suggest for our understanding of 'self'?

Nothing to Lose

As nothing I have nothing to lose. This sense of loss, of absence, leaves me incomplete, pouring endlessly out from a gaping wound, hemorrhaging life endlessly onto a cold concrete floor. That and a nothing devoid of a master. I'd rather be this than a slave. This is not quiescence but an affirmative cry to be everything that you shouldn't be.

See my wounds…

> See my wounds; I do not hide them. (Augustine, *The Confessions* 10.28.39)

Bataille, along with Augustine, argues that there is no stable sense of self. Augustine's argument in *The Confessions* is a *confiteri,* a mode of speaking made possible and authorised only by God. For Augustine we are not who we think we are and any claim to an understanding of 'self' can only be made in the presence of God. However, for Derrida it requires that we beseech God's help (Caputo, 1999a). The 'self' exists and can only be experienced in the presence, or coming to presence, of God. Bataille's argument is somewhat different, here God's very presence *as* a void continually ruptures being and any stable concept of 'self'. Whilst Derrida's *confiteri* expresses the phenomenological Bataille's remains deeply non-phenomenological: Derrida's seeks help but Bataille is an outpouring of loss. The 'self' for Bataille is ruptured by *non-savoir* rather than one that seeks *ça*-SA (Hegel's *Savoir-Absolu* Derrida, 1986). Our very modern concept of complete, whole, knowing selves flounders because of this rupturing contamination that makes us what we are. We cannot be whole *because* an absence or void infects us; we only exist because of this contamination – without it we would be/remain dead but it is not something that we can either understand or that will bring us to the *Savoir Absolu*. Into this black hole we pour our words, not in order to fill it – which would be impossible – but because we must.

Why *Confiteri?*

God as an absence forces us to communicate and drives us back into language because it is an excessive experience (Conner, 2000; O'Shea, 2000, 2001). Once God and the Sacred has been revealed to us we are contaminated by it: all our communication becomes *confiteri*. This is not a confession *to* God but an outpouring of a confused soul because of a sacred revelation for which they were insufficient and remain insufficient to know, understand and communicate it. Whilst poetic language transgresses the limit of discourse, discourse remains as the only means we have to communicate. The poet and poetic language may transgress language but must use it in order to communicate. Words may not be enough but they are all that we have and use them we must.

Since the death of God, a death that supposedly signalled the end of metaphysics, good and evil, truth and fact, poetic language has had a profound question to answer, 'how to speak in the absence of God'. Derrida has some interesting points to make on this in his attempt to make sense of God. Derrida would reduce God to presence in order to make sense of God and in so doing subject poetic language to his sense of God. Bataille offers

a way out by arguing that there is no Being God, no presence, no sense, only an excessive absence that we lose ourselves in. In the absence of God we cannot make sense of God and we really should not limit ourselves to a world made by God.

Too much management writing, whether subjective or objective is presented behind the thin veneer of perfection, clarity, lucidity; yet all we are, and should confess to being, is human. We are not God. We are contained within and are God's creation. Less than perfect we should recognize this and its import. For management theory this is not just a case of importing a subjective quality to our work but also a realisation of the very imperfection, incoherent and ephemeral qualities that make us human, all too human. Without these a quasi-Hegelian wish would be granted; we would obtain Spirit, the *Savoir Absolu*, time would stop and with it Death would reign. On seeing the atomic bomb reek its destruction Oppenheimer was heard to say "I have become alpha and omega, destroyer of worlds. I have let loose Death upon us." Be careful what you wish for!

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