

The Space of Finitude

Emmanuel Falque and the Chaotic Interpretation of Khōra

by Trevor B. Williams

The French philosopher Emmanuel Falque has recently made several overtures to the concept of *khōra* that touch on the significance of revelation. Jacques Derrida reinterpreted this concept and employed it in his 1997 discussion with Jean-Luc Marion. However, despite proposals to the contrary, through his ‘great bifurcation,’ Falque does not believe he has to choose between emptiness (Derrida) or excess (Marion), for it is not about opting for *khōra* or God, it is about starting from our humanity ‘in common.’ This essay contends that Falque turns to *khōra* because it represents a real space for finitude that must first be understood as separate from God before it can be incorporated or transformed. At its core, his interpretation associates *khōra* with the ‘chaos’ from Greek thought and the *tōhū wā-bōhū* (Gen. 1:2) from Hebrew Scripture, meaning that his chaotic interpretation stresses the corporeal depths of finitude and the extent of God’s kenosis. This essay begins with an exploration of Derrida’s interpretation of *khōra* before beginning an extended survey into its use in Falque’s authorship.

The French philosopher Emmanuel Falque has recently made several overtures to the concept of *khōra* that touch on the significance of revelation. *Khōra* first appears in Plato’s *Timaeus* (c. 360 B. C. E.), but Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) utterly transformed it, shaping it into a near cognate of *différance*. Derrida mentions this in his 1997 discussion with Jean-Luc Marion at Villanova University.¹ He remarks that he had sought to “account for, to interpret, the anthro-po-theological reappropriation of the meaning of the gift as the meaning of the event on the groundless ground of what I call *khōra*.”² John D. Caputo adopts *khōra* in his appropriation of Derrida and asserts that both atheism and theism “stand side by side *within* undecidability, or *différance*, or in the space of *khōra*, in competition with each other, but not in competition with *khōra/différance*,” since they supply “the differential spacing within which these debates can be conducted.”³ This line of argument led Richard Kearney to pose the decisive question: “Khora or God?” He notes how *khōra* is “not only a-theological but a-donational. It even eschews the more contemporary idioms of transcendence and mystery – the Levinasian idiom of infinity (otherwise than being), the Marionesque gesture of donation (God without being) or the Heideggerian principle of

¹ Jacques Derrida, “On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion, moderated by Richard Kearney,” in: John D. Caputo; Michael J. Scanlon (eds.), *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, Bloomington 1999, 54–78.

² Ibid., 67.

³ John D. Caputo, “The Chance of Love: A Response to Olthuis,” in: Marko Zlomislíć; Neal DeRoo (eds.), *Cross and Khōra: Deconstruction and Christianity in the Work of John D. Caputo*, Eugene 2010, 187–196, here 191 f.

event (the gift of being).⁴ He poses his either/or to Caputo because, for him, one has to choose between God (excess) and the abyss (emptiness), specifically if *khōra* occupies a conceptual place that is more “fundamental” or “really real” over and above God.⁵ For Falque, however, the proposed either/or facilitates his positive evaluation of finitude, with *khōra* helping him advance a conception of revelation that is existentially situated amidst human limits.⁶

Falque does not believe he has to choose between emptiness (Derrida) or excess (Marion), for it is not about opting for *khōra* or God, it is about starting from our humanity “in common.”⁷ This essay contends that Falque turns to *khōra* because it represents a real space for finitude that must first be understood as separate from God before it can be incorporated or transformed, which becomes only further evident as his thinking about it evolves.⁸ *Khōra* becomes less of a groundless ground as it is in Derrida’s way of thinking and increasingly linked to a kind of ‘subterranean’ concept that accents what comes *prior* to revelation and pertains more closely to the chaos of our existence. This essay thus includes the fact that Falque eventually subjugates *khōra* to newer concepts in his thought – namely, what he has recently advanced in *Hors phénomène* (2021).⁹ He associates his argument in this latest book with a “third” way between Derrida (below) and Marion (high). At its core, however, his interpretation associates *khōra* with the ‘chaos’ from Greek thought and the *tōhū wā-bōhū* (תהו ובהו, Gen. 1:2) from Hebrew Scripture (a position that Caputo strongly rejects).¹⁰ In *The Loving Struggle* (2014), moreover, Falque claims that *khōra* “contains something of the very limit which I am striving to reach both in the ‘chaotic depths’ of the unattainable, or almost unattainable, within phenomenology’s framework of significance (as I explored in the *Wedding Feast of the Lamb* [2011]) and in the infra-linguistic, which the orientation towards pure expressivity would never be able to tap into (as I attend to in *Crossing the Rubicon* [2013]).”¹¹ Falque’s chaotic interpretation stresses the corporeal depths of finitude and the extent of God’s kenosis.¹²

⁴ Richard Kearney, “Khora or God?” in: Mark Dooley (ed.), *A Passion for the Impossible: John D. Caputo in Focus*, New York 2003, 109 f.

⁵ Ibid., 114.

⁶ Falque has much to say about donation in relation to Marion and Derrida without even mentioning *khōra*. See Emmanuel Falque, *Le livre de l’expérience: D’Anselme de Cantorbéry à Bernard de Clairvaux*, Paris 2017, 111–157.

⁷ Id., “Philosophy and Theology: New Boundaries,” in: Martin Koci; Jason W. Alvis (eds.), *Transforming the Theological Turn: Phenomenology with Emmanuel Falque*, Lanham 2020, 3–24, here 11.

⁸ This line of thinking about creation resonates with some recent theological accounts of *creatio ex nihilo*. Cf. Ferdinand Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus: The Drama of the Question of Being*, trans. by D.C. Schindler, Washington, D.C. 2018; and Brian Robinette, *The Difference Nothing Makes: Creation, Christ, Contemplation*, Notre Dame 2023.

⁹ Emmanuel Falque, *Hors phénomène: Essai aux confins de la phénoménalité*, Paris 2021. All translations are mine.

¹⁰ Caputo, “The Chance of Love” (see fn. 3), 188.

¹¹ Emmanuel Falque, *The Loving Struggle: Phenomenological and Theological Debates*, trans. by Bradley B. Onishi and Lucas McCracken, New York 2018, 22; id., *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, trans. by Reuben Shank, New York 2016; id., *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Eros, the Body, and the Eucharist*, trans. by George Hughes, New York 2016.

¹² Cf. Emmanuel Falque, Richard Kearney, “Embrace and Differentiation: A Phenomenology of Eros,” in: Sarah Horton; Stephen Mendelsohn; Christine Rojewicz; and Richard Kearney (eds.), *Somatic Desire: Recovering Corporeality in Contemporary Thought*, Lanham 2019, 71–89, 84 f.

This essay begins with an inquiry into Derrida's interpretation of *khōra*, getting to the root of his disagreement with Marion over the concept of revelation and the gift. Next, it turns to an extended survey of Falque's use of *khōra*. *The Loving Struggle* plays a pivotal role in this analysis, but his arguments in *Crossing the Rubicon* and *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* show its methodological breadth for him. Falque uses *khōra* when he discusses the depths of finitude and corporeality but transforms his use of it when thinking about Freud, psychoanalysis, and the crisis evoked by trauma. In this light, we can now turn our attention to Derrida's formative contributions to this discussion and his purpose in modifying *khōra*.

1. Derrida and the Emptiness of *Khōra*

Plato's original formulation of *khōra* is cosmological such that it acts as a mediatory receptacle, being neither "intelligible" nor "sensible." *Khōra* facilitates the transferal or emanation of ideas (or essences) from the intelligible to the sensible, meaning that it provides a spaceless space that mediates being. This concept did not make as strong an impression as Plato's other cosmological notions, being replaced by the role of consciousness, for some, or the immanent infusion of forms in Aristotelianism. Plato's *Timaeus* indicates that *khōra* is a "third" space between the intelligible and sensible, which makes it "a receptacle of all becoming – its wetnurse."¹³ John Sallis interprets this passage in his book *Chorology* (2020), lamenting that *khōra* (χώρα) has often been interpreted within an "economy of meaning, an eidetic memory," that has cheapened the *Timaeus*. He suggests that the "resulting interpretations produced a reduction of the χώρα, situating it within a horizon of sense that it would otherwise both limit and escape, effacing its distinctiveness in the very gesture of interpretation."¹⁴ *Khōra* depends on the tension of form and formlessness, because "it can itself receive, be stamped, or impregnated by, all those kinds called paradigms or intelligible εἶδη, but it is not *itself* determined by any of them"; furthermore, if it has a "meaning, it would have to be a kind of meaning beyond meaning, just as the third kind (to be said as/by χώρα) is a kind of kind beyond kind."¹⁵ This intense liminality points us to Derrida's interest in *khōra*.

Derrida's essay *How to Avoid Speaking: Denials* (1986) holds a pivotal place in his interrogation of "negative theology" and, in turn, his development of *khōra* beyond the scope of Plato's original vision.¹⁶ He makes the tendentious observation that, in its denials, "the ontotheological reappropriation always remains possible – and doubtless *inevitable* insofar as one is speaking, precisely, in the element of ontotheological logic and grammar."¹⁷ Derrida employs *khōra* during his treatment of the three moments that address deconstructive questions on the subject of 'negative theology'. The first is the Greek paradigm that, while

¹³ Plato, *Timaeus*, 49a.

¹⁴ John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus*, Bloomington 2020, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," in: *Psyche: Inventions of the Other*, vol. 2, ed. by Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford 2008, 143–195.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

including two traditions of negativity that inspired the apophatic, also includes *khōra* as a way of “treating the beyond (*epekeina*) of the limit.”¹⁸ Derrida clarifies that at least one way of speaking about *khōra* can contribute to “reappropriating the thinking of the *khōra* for ontology and for the Platonic dialectic in its most dominant schemas.”¹⁹ This observation signifies Derrida’s rejection of what he believes to be a metaphysics of presence and how, in using *khōra* for his own project, he hopes to avoid the potential for the return of *khōra* to its original mediatory function in Plato’s sensible/intelligible cosmology.

Jean-Luc Marion critiques Derrida’s framing of ‘negative’ theology because it carries an insufficient understanding of what the apophatic tradition is doing with its negations.²⁰ Moreover, beyond their 1997 discussion at Villanova, Marion offered a written response in the volume on *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (1999), in addition to including a revised version in his book *In Excess* (2001).²¹ However, neither version truly grapples with Derrida’s use of *khōra*, which is odd given how important it is in their dispute about the gift. It is crucial for at least describing Derrida’s position, or in my case, examining what Falque sees of it that is of value. Again, in *How to Avoid Speaking*, Derrida claims “all the aporias, which Plato does not dissimulate, would signify that there *is there* [*il y a là*] something that is neither a being nor a nothingness; something that no dialectic, participationist schema, or analogy would allow one to rearticulate with any philosopheme whatsoever.”²² For him, the ‘spacing’ of *khōra* permits a new orientation in the limits of philosophical language. Derrida further argues that this concept resists any placement in the sphere of economic engagement, for metaphors “are not only inadequate, in that they borrow from the sensible forms inscribed in the *khōra* figures that are without pertinence for designating the *khōra* itself, they are also no longer metaphors.”²³ Derrida hopes to exploit *khōra*’s indeterminacy.

Derrida further emphasizes that *khōra* must even resist the language of “receptacle” because it still participates in the Platonic language of being. He specifies that his interpretation of *khōra* is both a-human and a-theological: “one cannot even say that it *gives* place or that there *is* [*il y a*] the *khōra*. The *es gibt*, thus translated, still announces or recalls too much the dispensation of God, of man, or even that of Being of which certain of Heidegger’s texts speak (*es gibt Sein*).”²⁴ This approach to the gift foreshadows Derrida’s discussion with Marion at Villanova. Derrida asserts that “nothing happens through” *khōra* and “nothing happens to it,” which further distances the term from the *Timaeus*.²⁵ The

¹⁸ Ibid., 170.

¹⁹ Ibid., 171.

²⁰ Marion’s defense of apophaticism is one of the central points of dispute here, which includes the way that it wishes to overcome the ‘dual’ between the apophatic and kataphatic. In this regard, the term ‘negative theology’ is an insufficient term to describe its approach. Cf. Martin Laird, “‘Whereof We Speak’: Gregory of Nyssa, Jean-Luc Marion and the Current Apophatic Rage,” in: *The Heythrop Journal* 42/1 (2001) 1–12.

²¹ Jean-Luc Marion, “In the Name: How to Avoid Speaking of ‘Negative Theology,’” in: Caputo; Scanlon (eds.), *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism* (see fn. 1), 20–42; and id., *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. by Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud, New York 2002.

²² Derrida, “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials” (see fn. 16), 172.

²³ Ibid., 172. This description of metaphors is consistent with what the apophatic tradition hopes to do with images, but the dispute is inevitable in light of the empirical nature of human knowing.

²⁴ Ibid., 173.

²⁵ Ibid., 173

emptiness of *khōra* is retooled to reverse the negativity of apophatic theology and, it seems, identify a 'superessential' logic that he thinks it carries in the content of revelation. *Khōra* is not negative in the sense that it attempts to ascend toward God or the Good, nor is it situated within 'negative theology' itself, for it does not refer to "an event nor a gift, nor an order, nor a promise."²⁶ Derrida contends that *khōra* is outside of these categories as he wishes to demonstrate how "apophasis puts itself in motion, it *initiates itself*, in the sense of initiative and initiation, from the event of a revelation that is also a promise. The latter belongs to a history; or rather, it opens a history and an anthropo-theological dimension."²⁷ The notion of the "anthropo-theological" was also cited in Derrida's discussion with Marion, but it was his book *Given Time* (1991) that primarily incited their conversation, and so warrants commentary here.²⁸

Derrida's argument in *Given Time* indicates that "if there is a gift, it cannot take place between two subjects exchanging objects, things, or symbols. The question of the gift should therefore seek its place before any relation to the subject, before any conscious or unconscious relation to self of the subject."²⁹ Although Derrida does not explicitly use *khōra* in *Given Time*, he discusses the logic of 'place' in a way that hints toward a fuller understanding of why he is so fascinated with the concept. He posits that "Only an *atopic* and *utopic* madness, *perhaps* (a certain *perhaps* or *maybe* will be both the modality and the modality to be modified or our meditation), could thus give rise to the gift that can give only on the condition of not taking place, taking up residence or domicile: *the gift may be, if there is any*."³⁰ *Khōra* is a place that is not a place, meaning that this appeal to an atopic madness functions as a space that is before and beyond what is given.³¹ This language complements what Derrida argued in the 1997 discussion at Villanova, when he spoke of the "groundless ground" of a "there is." He uses this concept to argue that, without the "non-giving structure" of *khōra*, "there would not be this extraordinary movement or desire for giving, for receiving, for appropriating, for *Ereignis* as event and appropriation."³² For Derrida, *khōra* is prior to the event, the very event that, on his view, is the basis for any speech related to a 'negative' theology. His interpretation advances what he has to say about negations and their connection to the 'excess' of being.

Derrida's argument has some slippage in how it relates *khōra* and the event, but this relationship sheds light on the anthropo-theological dimension he critiques. In *How to Avoid Speaking*, Derrida states that *khōra* is not an event,³³ but in *On the Gift*, he specifies that *khōra* is both a groundless ground for an event and some kind of non-historical event.³⁴ This phrasing can be clarified by considering how *khōra* resists history. Derrida suggests that,

²⁶ Ibid., 174.

²⁷ Ibid., 183.

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. by Peggy Kamuf, Chicago 1992.

²⁹ Ibid., 24.

³⁰ Ibid., 35.

³¹ In this way, *khōra* seems to function like a soft metaphysic despite its denials.

³² Derrida, "On the Gift" (see fn. 1), 67.

³³ Id., "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials" (see fn. 16), 174.

³⁴ Id., "On the Gift" (see fn. 1), 76.

“what I call a ‘desert in the desert’ is this place which resists historicization, which is, I will not say ‘before,’ because that is chronological, but which remains irreducible to historicization, humanization, anthropo-theologization of revelation. This resists even *Offenbarkeit*, which is not revealed and cannot be revealed, not because it is obscure, but because it has nothing to do with the gift, with revelation or with anything we are discussing here. That is what I point to when I refer to *khōra*.”³⁵

These are observations that Derrida also makes in three texts titled *Passions*, *Sauf le nom*, and *Khōra*.³⁶ Robyn Horner clarifies this usage of Heidegger’s terminology on revelation, saying that the placement of *Offenbarkeit* (‘revealability’) over *Offenbarung* (‘revelation’) helps Derrida in his search of something ‘prior to revelation’ or even outside the economy of revealability in a broader sense. The ‘prior’ Horner identifies is the desert within the framework of a messianism with no messiah.³⁷ The resistant character of *khōra* emphasizes the conflictual, tensive (non-)ground of thought. *Sauf le nom* associates this concept with the abyss,³⁸ to some degree, but *Khōra* provides a few more developed insights, adding that *khōra* escapes the logic of noncontradiction proposed by the philosophers and has a “logic other than the logic of the *logos*.”³⁹ This affirmation marks Derrida’s strongest break from Plato.

The philosophical discourse around *khōra* shows how it designates a space that language struggles to designate. Originally, *khōra* served a mediatory function or third space between the intelligible and the sensible, but the discourse around Derrida’s transformation shifts it into a postmodern key. Marion’s *In the Name* appeals to the saturated phenomenon as a “third way” that “does not hide an affirmation beneath a negation, because it means to overcome their dual, just as it means to overcome that between the two truth values wherein metaphysics plays itself out [...]. Negation itself submits its very own operation, and above all its duel with affirmation, to the final transgression.”⁴⁰ Marion’s argument gestures towards a fuller conception of apophatic theology that outstrips Derrida’s use of the term ‘negative theology.’ However, in their debate at Villanova, this distinction did not register the way it could have because what Derrida was interested in doing was much different than Marion’s concern about getting apophatic negations right. Seen this way, John D. Caputo’s interpretation of *khōra* is consistent with Derrida, but that he retains God where he does results in a highly kinetic relationship. For Richard Kearney, it is an unnatural coupling that forces an ultimatum or either/or. Falque also senses the kinetic force at work in the question of God or *khōra*, but he reinterprets it as a bifurcation and appropriates it for a different end. In this, Falque’s *khōra* makes a break from some of Derrida’s restrictions on historicization and, eventually, the space that it indicates, which is clearly not the same as Caputo’s interpretation. However, the upside is that Falque uses *khōra* because

³⁵ Ibid., 76.

³⁶ Jacques Derrida, “Passions: ‘An Oblique Offering’” (trans. By David Wood), “Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum)” (trans. by John P. Leavey, Jr.), and “Khōra” (trans. by Ian McLeod) in id., *On the Name*, Stanford 1995, 3–34, 35–88, 89–127.

³⁷ Robyn Horner, *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology*, New York 2001, 234.

³⁸ Derrida, “Sauf le nom” (see fn. 36), 76 f.

³⁹ Id., “Khōra” (see fn. 36), 89.

⁴⁰ Marion, “In the Name” (see fn. 21), 63.

it helps him articulate something about finitude that is, at once, consistent with the disagreement between Marion and Derrida at Villanova and invested in what lies beyond it. Falque's interpretation will retain much of what Derrida specified, but like Marion, he will designate a new term as a third way, a space of finitude that is limited but that carries the capacity for transformation.

2. Falque and the Space of Finitude

Falque affirms the tensions presented by Derrida's interpretation of *khōra*. However, based on its role in the discussion with Marion, its appropriation is not obvious at first glance. Derrida's *khōra* provides a conceptual contrast to what he believes are the blind spots of 'negative theology' and even the historicity upon which revelation depends. In his own work, Falque notes his adoption of *khōra* in *The Loving Struggle* and explains how it is useful for his project in phenomenology. As seen in the introduction to this essay, Falque claims that *khōra* "contains something of the very limit which I am striving to reach both in the 'chaotic depths' of the unattainable, or almost unattainable, within phenomenology's framework of significance (as I explored in the *Wedding Feast of the Lamb*) and in the infra-linguistic, which the orientation towards pure expressivity would never be able to tap into (as I attend to in *Crossing the Rubicon*)."⁴¹ The first part of this section therefore addresses the framework of significance and expressivity as Falque understands them. The second part of this section turns toward Falque's direct interpretation of Derrida in *The Loving Struggle*. Finally, the third part interprets his more recent arguments in *Nothing to It* (2018), followed by his comments about trauma and the extra-phenomenal in his recent book *Hors phénomène* (2021).⁴²

2.1. The Framework of Significance and Expressivity

Falque's quote from *The Loving Struggle* offers a sound foundation for thinking about what *khōra* means for him and how it relates to revelation. His most sustained methodological account of what constitutes a common humanity is in his book *Crossing the Rubicon*, which specifies that the "distinctiveness of faith 'in God' can only take root upon the common pedestal of faith through an irreducible passion of 'believing in general'."⁴³ Falque then claims that the "same world, always 'pre-given,' precedes and founds all belief, whether philosophical or theological," meaning that a common belief or perceptual faith founds "every proposition in *an originary, there is, an overflowing of self* by self, or a *brute nature* that must now be questioned, less to unveil it than to ever better take root in it."⁴⁴ He frames his analysis of the *there is* (*Il y a*) and brute being using the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), adding that "it would be more accurate to recognize in the brute being

⁴¹ Falque, *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 22.

⁴² Id., *Nothing to It: Reading Freud as a Philosopher*, trans. by Robert Vallier and William L. Connelly, Leuven 2020.

⁴³ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon* (see fn. 11), 80.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 94.

a kind of primordial anonymity, most often baptized ‘flesh’ or ‘flesh of the world.’”⁴⁵ Falque’s explicit appeal to *khōra* in *Crossing the Rubicon* occurs during his analysis of Merleau-Ponty that accounts for the ‘infra-linguistic’ dimension mentioned in *The Loving Struggle*.

Falque contends that the “*there is* of the author of *The Phenomenology of Perception* [1945] reaches the heights, or rather the depths, of the *khōra* of Plato’s *Timaeus*: ‘To return to the things themselves is to return to this world prior to knowledge’ in the “‘there is’ which underlies [sc. scientific thinking; T.W.]”⁴⁶ This turn to the positive evaluation of corporeality represents the core of Falque’s interest in *khōra*. He expands on the importance of this concept for phenomenology, writing:

“the prereflexive will no longer find its end or goal in the reflexive alone as if it were only preparing for it or establishing its foundation as in Husserl’s phenomenology, any more than the unconscious will orient itself to consciousness, as in Freud’s psychoanalysis. An exploded and nonoriented ‘unconsciousness of the body,’ such as Nietzsche advances, is always impossible to synthesize amidst the diversity of our experience. To recognize this impossibility is a way not to flee the chaos from which we are fashioned.”⁴⁷

Falque’s call to *remain* in ‘chaos’ follows naturally from his commitment to the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. We do not *flee the chaos from which we are fashioned*, not only because we recognize our filiation with the world but also because this is our foundation for finally recognizing our limits and willingly accepting them as a reality that constitutes our historicity. Falque hopes that thinking further about the infra-linguistic and how it grounds consciousness will underscore what is common about humanity and how finitude is a positive good that has depths beyond the linguistic. His stress on humanity’s chaos is precisely what Falque will develop in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*.

In *The Loving Struggle*, Falque appealed to *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* because, as a complement to *Crossing the Rubicon*, it speaks to “the ‘chaotic depths’ of the unattainable, or almost unattainable, within phenomenology’s framework of significance.”⁴⁸ His argument in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* begins by directly confronting the limits of finitude expressed by the abyss (in continuity with *The Metamorphosis of Finitude* [2004]),⁴⁹ but he also appeals to the “descent into the abyss” that he calls “Chaos, Tohu-Bohu, or the mass of sensations,” since it is what “makes humankind. It is what humankind is constructed upon.”⁵⁰ Falque makes no direct reference to *khōra* in the course of his argument, but its thematic presence can be discerned as an intrinsic aspect of what he wants to convey about

⁴⁵ Ibid., 96.

⁴⁶ Ibid., citing *Maurice Merleau-Ponty*, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Donald A. Landes, New York 2013, lxxii; and id., *The Eye and the Spirit in the Primacy of Perception*, trans. by William Cobb, ed. by James Edie, Evanston 1964, 160.

⁴⁷ Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon* (see fn. 11), 96 f.

⁴⁸ Id., *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 22.

⁴⁹ Id., *The Metamorphosis of Finitude: An Essay on Birth and Resurrection*, trans. by George Hughes, New York 2012.

⁵⁰ Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* (see fn. 11), 5.

signification. He offers an approach to chaos that is both broad and particular, using theological language to flesh out his philosophical observations. He claims, however, that his interest in *this is my body* (“*hoc est enim corpus meum*”) is an affirmation of God’s filiation with humanity, placing it in the milieu of a “*interior Chaos* that was taken on board and metamorphosed by God himself.”⁵¹ Falque identifies this concept with *khōra* and it is crucial for his argument in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* because, for him, chaos and *tohu-bohu* will “recapture and deal with” its “force and content.”⁵² To be clear, Falque holds that chaos should *not* be identified with the cosmos because it is “its opposite.”⁵³ His take on *tōhū wā-bōhū* represents the Hebrew tradition and primarily asserts that this concept (from Genesis 1:2) speaks to a formlessness at the beginning of creation. However, Falque emphasizes that, in both, something of “the original opening or yawning gap *is always there*.”⁵⁴ For him, this conception of chaos precedes revelation, so even if we are created by God, humans always bear the distinction of being made from nothing (*ex nihilo*).

The ‘always there’-part of Falque’s argument is crucial for the integrity of his position, because he believes that “the liturgy reaches up to and includes the Chaos of the world and our humanity – going, we might dare to add, as far as our animality.”⁵⁵ Indeed, when we read this in light of *The Metamorphosis of Finitude*, *khōra* functions as a mode of phenomenality, with the apophatic standing as “splendor of the divine” (Pseudo-Dionysius) and *khōra* serving as the “poverty of the human” (Bonaventure).⁵⁶ In philosophical terms, the former corresponds to excess (Marion) and the latter to emptiness (Derrida). Falque’s argument in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* specifies the limits of the phenomenon using the case of suffering and self-invasion. In insomnia, for example, “this invasion of myself by something that I do not recognize as myself – that is ‘the physiology of my flesh’ that encumbers me (Nietzsche) or ‘the impersonal ‘field of forces’ of existing’ (Levinas) – certainly makes my existence a matter of existing, but *existing without existents*; that is, it is without an ego (*moi*).”⁵⁷ Falque notes that, despite this obvious tension, one recognizes that “it is still me,” so chaos is not merely “vacancy or nothingness,” it represents an “invasion” and “is the impossibility of coming to terms with the ‘mass of sensations’ – not simply in that it breaks open the framework of what we can come to terms with, to signify in another way (the saturated phenomenon), but, inversely, because it shows us that it is not able to formulate itself (the limited phenomenon).”⁵⁸ Falque’s interior chaos depends on the concept of animality and “ensures that our embodiment, or our drives, reach into what we live

⁵¹ Ibid., 10.

⁵² Ibid., 15.

⁵³ Ibid., 16.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 16 f.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁶ Id., *The Metamorphosis of Finitude* (see fn. 49), 20. This distinction is a debatable point that I cannot adjudicate here, but Denys Turner, for example, clearly distinguishes Dionysius and Bonaventure while holding them together as two figures in continuity with one another. It is not clear, for Turner, that one would need to appeal to *khōra* to name kenotic immanence; cf. *Denys Turner, The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge 1995, 102–134.

⁵⁷ Falque, *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* (see fn. 11), 21 f.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 22.

without ever being able to signify what it is that we live.”⁵⁹ The limit of the phenomenon, in this sense, thwarts any easy account of revelation and underscores experiences that overwhelm phenomenality.

2.2. Falque Grapples with Derrida

The core of Falque’s interest in *khōra* pertains to his positive evaluation of finitude, its limits, and the humanity in common that subsists in chaos. In *The Loving Struggle*, he further develops these ideas through his engagement with Derrida and the concept of *khōra*. He points to the abyss and suggests that “more original than chaos, deeper than the chasm, and even more meaningless than the abyss, there lies the ‘amorphous’ or, even better, the ‘receptacle’ and, as it were, the wet-nurse of all becoming: *Khōra*.”⁶⁰ Naturally, Falque touches much of the same ground as Derrida, but his argument is that *khōra* “marks a ‘great bifurcation’ between two modes or pathways for philosophy in general: either the ‘higher way’ of negative theology (*On the Name*), or the ‘lower way’ sought by a non-reflexive philosophy (*Khōra*).”⁶¹ Falque’s bifurcation exists within this tension and seeks to grapple with both sides of it. He asserts, for instance, that “the Greek word *khōra* itself refers to something negative that Christian apophysis does not reach, but to which God himself, in his kenosis, could not remain indifferent.”⁶² Falque’s interpretation of kenotic immanence is a controversial claim for mystical theology and studies of Franciscan thought,⁶³ but to be clear, he does not abandon the road of excess and the apophatic, he finds something useful in the invasion of *khōra* and orients them according to where the philosopher begins without foreclosing the potential of transformation.

The premise behind Falque’s appropriation of *khōra* is that it has the capacity to balance out a philosophical lacuna he perceives in the path of excess. Falque cites Derrida’s claim that *khōra* provides a “logic other than the logic of the *logos*”⁶⁴ and links it to the theological concept of kenosis, Christ’s act of self-emptying (Philippians 2:7) in the Incarnation. He contends that Derrida’s insight about *khōra* is impossible for Christians to completely ignore. His previous mention of the ‘framework of significance’ in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* and the ‘infra-linguistic’ in *Crossing the Rubicon* thus takes on new meaning when we view them retrospectively: the former has to do with human limitations and the latter has to do with the originary ground of belief. Falque adds, in this context, that “The ‘descent into the abyss’ or the ‘entry into chaos’ operative in the first part of *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb* was seeking a kind of ‘desert’ within us and within the world, or better, a kind of ‘desert in the desert’, that ‘place’ which *Khōra* both designates and inhabits.”⁶⁵ His interest

⁵⁹ Ibid., 26.

⁶⁰ Id., *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 19.

⁶¹ Ibid., 20. Note that the translation for *The Loving Struggle* mentions “On the Name” here, which might be confused for Marion’s essay “In the Name”. Still, Falque is nevertheless distinguishing Marion and Derrida by using these very terms.

⁶² Ibid., 21.

⁶³ Monica Tobon, “Bonaventure and Dionysius,” in: *The Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. by Mark Edwards, Dimitrios Pallis, and Georgios Steiris, Oxford 2022, 350–366, here 350.

⁶⁴ Derrida, *Khōra* (see fn. 36), 89; Falque, *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 21.

⁶⁵ Falque, *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 23.

in *khōra* is directly connected to his philosophical triduum's positive evaluation of finitude and its relationship to human corporeality. Indeed, he invokes *khōra* to open a path to the desert that corresponds to an alternative logic to the *logos*.

Falque's understanding of this alternative logic is different than Derrida. For him, the logic *other than the logos* is a-logical because it is not a competitive peer to God. This is, for example, a major difference between Falque and Caputo's appropriation of *khōra*. Caputo denies that *khōra* is in any way identifiable with *tōhū wā-bōhū* (Hebrew) or Chaos (Greek).⁶⁶ His reasoning for why he does this is consistent, for like Derrida, he does not want metaphysics to slip back into the discourse. However, because Falque maintains the chaos structure of *khōra* and aligns it with the nothing of *tōhū wā-bōhū*, he can exist with both, without becoming trapped in a contradiction, especially when he moves from philosophy to theology. Thus, regarding Falque's identification of a bifurcation between excess (apophatic) and emptiness (*khōra*), he maintains that "the keeping silent that comes from a lack of intuition in *Khōra* is different than the silence arising from an excess of signification in *On the Name*, despite appearing quite the same [...]. Even still, it is certain that only God, in his kenosis, could ever truly reach *Khōra* and the ground of that which, in us, remains formless."⁶⁷ The formless void prior to creation is determinative for us and touches on the discursive ground of revealability. Again, he does not abandon excess and the apophatic but finds something useful in the invasion of *khōra*, which is understandable from the perspective of Falque's commitment to a common humanity.

Falque dives into Derrida's use of the term and quotes him saying that the "desert in the desert" is "the place which *resists historicization* [...] the place of the *non-gift* which makes the gift possible by resisting it."⁶⁸ This passage was already examined in the discussion of Derrida, but here, Falque adopts the resistance of historicization, which at first seems to threaten the possibility of revelation but ultimately shows how *khōra*'s emptiness opens the door for a new reading of kenotic immanence. In this, there is a kind of non-revelation revelation obtained when being-there encounters a failure of signification (not a breakdown resulting from the failure of sin). For Falque, this limitation signals the theological depths of the Incarnation, which he says is what "weaves the two [God and humanity] indissociably together."⁶⁹ Such a relationship is attested as Falque describes God's relationship to *khōra* in more specific terms for Christian theology. For this, he relies on the kenotic language referred to above. Falque hopes to preserve as much of Derrida's original insight as he can, writing that, "by crossing into theology with *khōra* in mind, I merely aim to explore [...] what for Christians, a *kenotic descent* of God into *khōra* might signify, descending not necessarily to give form to the formless but, rather, to inhabit it – the formlessness of the world to be sure (chaos and *tohu-bohu*) but also that of our own interior

⁶⁶ Caputo, "The Chance of Love" (see fn. 3), 188.

⁶⁷ Falque, *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 24. See comment in note 61.

⁶⁸ Derrida, "On the Gift" (see fn. 1), 76; Falque, *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 27.

⁶⁹ Falque, *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 29.

life.”⁷⁰ Falque’s kenotic God inhabits the depths of *khōra* in a divine act of self-abandonment.⁷¹ In Jesus Christ, God thus inhabits the formlessness of *khōra* without extinguishing the emptiness it signifies.

The argument in *The Loving Struggle* contains many of the same elements highlighted from *Crossing the Rubicon* and *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*: we see the theme of ‘crossing,’ the retention of formlessness (chaos and *tohu-bohu*), and the role of the interior life as it is powered by drives that make the ‘self’ difficult to quantify. Most of all, the retention of formlessness (even as God enters *khōra*) seeks to preserve finitude from divine erasure.⁷² This passage thus summarizes what Falque draws from Derrida’s interpretation of *khōra*. Falque goes on and adds that “The *descent into khōra* is named ‘kenosis’ because God does not simply give form to the formless but consents to sacrificing his (divine) form for our (human) form, which is formlessness in its very constitution (*khōra*).”⁷³ Falque uses this concept for a Trinitarian end – namely, humanity’s incorporation into God. The descent into *khōra* (in kenosis), however, continues to evolve in the scope of Falque’s thought. Indeed, his adoption of *khōra* as a logic other than the logic of the *logos*, no matter how it is situated, increasingly strains against the limits of Falque’s language. Falque’s thought awaits a further elaboration of what this descent truly entails with regard to a finitude that makes revelation possible.⁷⁴

2.3. The Depths of Freud’s ID and the Crisis

Falque’s appeal to humanity’s interior chaos already contains something of the psychological insight he pursues in *Nothing to It* (2018). This book provides a philosophical reading of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) that contains several examples of Falque’s developing interpretation of *khōra*. He defines his terms, saying that “‘nothing to it’ [*Ça n’a rien à voir*] means, strictly speaking, that the Id [*Ça*], is not seen [*ne se voit pas*] – because it precisely never becomes defined as a ‘phenomenon’ and even definitively escapes any horizon of phenomenality.”⁷⁵ *Nothing to It* includes citations of Derrida and *khōra* in reference to Falque’s other works but especially with regard to Merleau-Ponty.⁷⁶ One of the best examples of how this connects to other parts of his authorship is his claim that the “Self [*Soi*] that knows me is not, or no longer only, the Ego [*Moi*] that I [*je*] know [...] the other who knows me is in me – and that other is the Id [*Ça*].”⁷⁷ The *Id* eliminates the possibility of comprehensive self-knowledge, for the unconscious drives of human life persist whether

⁷⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁷¹ Falque’s interpretation of this issue is deeply reminiscent of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988), which is a characteristic of his eucharistic theology that has already been noted by others. Cf. Jonathan Martin Ciraulo, “Viscera to Viscera: Emmanuel Falque on the Body of the Eucharist,” in: *Modern Theology* 34/1 (2018) 103–110.

⁷² Note that this motive signifies Falque’s attempt to grapple with a major assumption amongst his peers in philosophy.

⁷³ Falque, *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 40.

⁷⁴ See id., “God-Extra Phenomenal: For a Phenomenology of Holy Saturday,” in: *Journal for Continental Philosophy of Religion* 4 (2022) 190–217.

⁷⁵ Id., *Nothing to It* (see fn. 42), 20 f.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 35, 86.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 36. Falque’s reading of Freud here contains the philosophical ingredients for his view of power, notably in its Nietzschean inspiration.

we like it or not. Falque's appeal to psychoanalysis and his persistent reliance on human corporeality continues to build on his previous arguments about signification and the infra-linguistic.

Crucially, Falque's argument echoes what he said about the limits of the phenomenon and self-invasion in *The Wedding Feast of the Lamb*. He claims that *khōra* (Derrida) and brute being (Merleau-Ponty) "await Freud's Id to attain the ultimate point where the 'ego' or self-knowledge is no longer solely what expects to be 'pacified' but also what accepts being 'cornered' – in self-struggle within the Self."⁷⁸ This identification of the struggle 'within' us is, at least in the individual, clear evidence of the chaos structure of finitude. However, Falque modifies his phrasing around *khōra* and claims that the *Id* is "more radical" than *khōra* and "more unformed" than brute being. He adds that,

"So if there is a God, or if we can have an experience 'of God,' he would not only (and not solely) hover in the cloud of a sovereign distanced Good (Dionysius), but also in the lowliness and humility of the incarnated Word (Bonaventure). After the God of the 'descent of Khōra' (Derrida) and then the 'savage God' (Merleau-Ponty), next and curiously there is the 'God of the Id' or the 'Id of God' (Freud), in so far as nothing [...] can escape from a conception of the divine whose first ambition is to take on or shoulder everything or even to transform everything."⁷⁹

In this passage, Falque connects the Id in Freud to the motif of transformation that lies at the heart of his own thought. His addition of Pseudo-Dionysius and Bonaventure, however, highlights a major point of continuity with his great bifurcation. This reference to mystical theology is one of the most significant connecting threads between *Nothing to It* and the previous instances of *khōra* in Falque's authorship.

As an important transition point between the *khōra* of *Nothing to It* and its role in Falque's interpretation of trauma, in 2018, he published an article in the *Diakrisis Yearbook of Theology and Philosophy* called *The Extra-Phenomenal* that subjugates *khōra* in a more intense way than he did with his threefold analysis above.⁸⁰ Falque cites philosophers, like Levinas and Nietzsche, who claimed something like *il y a* or chaos, arguing that "They all refer to the erasure of the horizon of phenomenology, which means that immanence is neither leapt beyond through apophatism [sic] (Marion), nor *burrowed beneath* through *khōra* (Derrida), nor identified with its frame (Deleuze), nor reduced to pathos (Henry), but obstructed and transformed into radically 'alien.'"⁸¹ Falque's book *Hors phénomène* (2021) follows this exact trajectory in its way of using *khōra*, which is principally represented in his use of more subterranean language (lower elevation) to describe it. He applies this language to *khōra* and works to advance the "extra-phenomenal" as that which signifies how "the rift precedes the revealed."⁸² In §7 ("Outside Gift") of *Hors phénomène*, he indicates that,

⁷⁸ id., *Nothing to It* (see fn. 42), 37, 63.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 77, 96.

⁸⁰ Id., "The Extra-Phenomenal," in: *Diakrisis Yearbook of Theology and Philosophy* 1 (2018) 9–28.

⁸¹ Ibid., 12. Emphasis mine.

⁸² Ibid., 14.

“We therefore do not abandon phenomenology, but we struggle and operate in another fidelity, or rather in a *more radical fidelity*, to the phenomenon – or better still to the ‘extra-phenomenal.’ Far from thinking solely about a type of phenomenality which ‘awaits’ its display (the infra-phenomenal in withdrawal, for example) or which ‘overflows’ by its donation (the supra-phenomenal in the face, the gift, or the auto-affection), the extra-phenomenal ‘destroys’ the transcendental conditions of appearance itself, and therefore makes any manifestation impossible (the *extra-phenomenal* in light of trauma).”⁸³

Falque identifies the infra-phenomenal with the German strain in phenomenology and the supra-phenomenal with the French. His argument in *Hors phénomène* seeks an alternative path that he identifies with the insight about human depths going back to Husserl.

This objective is principally shown during his discussion in §8 (“Outside Signification”) and cites *khōra* much like his article *The Extra-Phenomenal*. He explains that “the ‘outside’ (Blanchot), ‘Il y a’ (Levinas), ‘chaos’ (Nietzsche) or the heterogeneous (Bataille),” now speak to the “negation of the horizon of phenomenology itself” such that “immanence is here neither surpassed in apophatism (Marion), nor burrowed beneath in *Khōra* (Derrida), neither identified with its frame (Deleuze), nor reduced to its pathos (Henry), but quite simply obstructed, or rather become for us the radical ‘outsider.’”⁸⁴ Falque mentions *khōra* in two passages during references to *The Loving Struggle*, which produces a further nuance to his framing of givenness in *Hors phénomène*.⁸⁵ He is grappling with Marion’s approach to the gift, not to erase it, but to point to what lies prior to revelation. Falque thus ruminates about what is new in his approach and states that “The ‘great bifurcation’ between the limit below (*Khōra*) and the limitless above (*Apophase*) is certainly not invalidated, but rather surpassed, or let us say otherwise positioned. For it is not enough [...] to oppose ‘*Khōra*’ (Derrida) and negative theology (Marion), nor to refer solely to a ‘phenomenology of the underground’ (Merleau-Ponty), to liberate the field of extra-phenomenality.”⁸⁶ Falque’s preoccupation with this opposition or, rather, “great bifurcation,” further signifies how he refuses to draw an either/or.

The groundless ground of *khōra* helps Falque situate his comments about the extra-phenomenal as signifying the “rupture of eventality.”⁸⁷ The event, as we have seen, is an important part of Derrida’s argument about *khōra* and how, for him, “apophysis puts itself in motion, it *initiates itself*, in the sense of initiative and initiation, from the event of a revelation that is also a promise. The latter belongs to a history; or rather, it opens a history and an anthropo-theological dimension.”⁸⁸ Falque has used this as a frame to further nuance his philosophy as starting ‘from below.’ This has allowed him to expand on the chaos pertaining to finitude without dispensing with the historical nature of revelation.⁸⁹ In Chapter

⁸³ Id., *Hors phénomène* (see fn. 9), 65. Note that Falque refers to his concept in *Hors phénomène* as both the ‘extra’ or ‘outside’ phenomenal, which is sometimes reflected in the text. However, in translating here, the option of ‘extra’ is usually chosen because that is the predominant term that exists in Falque’s English discussion of the term, despite there being many well-reasoned arguments for the alternative.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 66. This translation is partly influenced by the work of Luke McCracken.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 81 and 104.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 104, citing id., *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 19–75.

⁸⁷ Id., *Hors phénomène* (see fn. 9), 104.

⁸⁸ Derrida, “How to Avoid Speaking: Denials” (see fn. 16), 183.

⁸⁹ Falque, *Hors phénomène* (see fn. 9), 133.

3 of *Hors phénomène*, however, Falque articulates a new direction for his thought. He claims that “we will therefore not think [...] of a ‘beyond’: through the face (Levinas), the word (Chrétien), the gift (Marion), self-affection (Henry) or the inexperience of the experience (Lacoste).”⁹⁰ This is consistent with his previous approach as deliberately starting from below but he adds that we must further shift terminology from different forms of the ‘below,’ with *khōra* (Derrida) and the phenomenology of the underground (Merleau-Ponty). Falque thus adds that,

“we will now radicalize thought to the point of reaching not a ‘high’ (negative theology) or a ‘low’ (*Khōra*), but a ‘third’ or an ‘outside’ [§14]: not the *supra-phenomenal* (from above) or the *infra-phenomenal* (from below), but the *extra-phenomenal*, or the ‘outside the phenomenon as such.’ The neutral (Blanchot), the heterogeneous (Bataille), or Chaos (Nietzsche), in what will perhaps be the closest names...even though we cannot reduce what is being tried here to a single form of conceptuality.”⁹¹

Based on his argument in this passage, Falque still retains his bifurcation, but, in his words, radicalizes it such that he seeks not the ‘high’ (Marion) or even the ‘low’ (Derrida) but a *third* place. Again, he does this to show how ‘thinking the unthinkable’ allows one to dwell in a “space that is precisely where thought stumbles, indeed gets lost and destroyed, over what it had not imagined.”⁹² His argument in *Hors phénomène* attempts to provide a thicker description of the rift in human existence that precedes revelation. This provides a notable distinction to Marion’s identification of the saturated phenomenon as a third way.

3. Conclusion

Falque’s chaotic interpretation of *khōra* tries to surpass the debate between Derrida and Marion on revelation and the gift precisely by diving into it proposed as a bifurcation. The ‘Great Bifurcation’ places *khōra* in a position that gives further depth to finitude and the *homme tout court* without reducing the distinction to language. It marks his conceptual thinking as it pertains to corporeality as something distinct that is held in common by all human beings. However, in his interpretation of *khōra*, Falque has gone from using it almost on its own, then associating it more frequently with the corporeality of Merleau-Ponty, then shifting it into a lower hierarchical position with Freud’s *Id* and other terms in philosophy. Throughout his citations, he continues to appeal to the kenotic descent of the incarnate Word in Bonaventure. With his book *Hors phénomène*, however, Falque continues the direction in *Nothing to It* by ascribing a subterranean notion to *khōra* – the language of the depths – with a turn to a ‘third’ way. This approach contrasts Jean-Luc Marion’s claim in *In the Name* while incorporating Derrida’s perspective shared in *On the Name*. The third way, for Falque, is the space that exists within the gap between the ‘above’ and ‘below,’ which continues to rely on the bifurcation posited in *The Loving Struggle*. Falque

⁹⁰ Ibid., 160.

⁹¹ Ibid.; Cf. id., *The Loving Struggle* (see fn. 11), 19–44 (Derrida) and 45–75 (Merleau-Ponty).

⁹² Id., *Hors phénomène* (see fn. 9), 160.

retains a rich sense of revelation, but he wants to be clear about what lies prior to it. For him, this requires securing an extended inquiry into the framework that places *Offenbarkeit* ('revealability') over *Offenbarung* ('revelation'). That Marion identifies his third way as being more properly apophatic than Derrida's account of negative theology signals the complexity of their discussion. Falque's transformation of these concepts represents a *real space for finitude* that must first be understood to be separate from God before it can be incorporated. He takes what is presented in Derrida and Caputo as a kind of either/or and draws it out into a process of transformation where God comes to be with us. In this important way, Falque's philosophy intends to divide in order to unite.

Der französische Philosoph Emmanuel Falque hat in jüngerer Zeit mehrere offenbarungstheologisch relevante Annäherungen an den Begriff der *khōra* vorgenommen. Jacques Derrida hat diesen Begriff neu interpretiert und ihn 1997 in seiner Diskussion mit Jean-Luc Marion verwendet. Trotz gegenteiliger Behauptungen glaubt Falque im Licht der sogenannten „great bifurcation“ jedoch nicht, zwischen ‚Leere‘ (Derrida) und ‚Überfluss‘ (Marion) wählen zu müssen; es geht nämlich nicht darum, sich für *khōra* oder Gott zu entscheiden, sondern von unserem ‚gemeinsamen Menschsein‘ auszugehen. In diesem Beitrag wird dafür argumentiert, dass Falque sich der *khōra* deshalb zuwendet, weil es einen realen Raum der Endlichkeit gibt, der zunächst als von Gott verschieden verstanden werden muss, bevor er inkorporiert oder transformiert werden kann. Im Kern assoziiert seine Interpretation die *khōra* mit dem ‚Chaos‘ des griechischen Denkens und dem *tōhū wā-bōhū* (Gen 1,2) der hebräischen Bibel; was wiederum bedeutet, dass Falques ‚chaotische‘ Interpretation die ‚körperliche‘ Tiefe der Endlichkeit und das Ausmaß der Kenosis Gottes betont. Dieser Beitrag beginnt mit einer Erkundung von Derridas Interpretation der *khōra*, bevor er eine ausführliche Untersuchung seiner Verwendung in Falques Denken anschließt.