THE NEW APOPHATIC UNIVERSALISM: DECONSTRUCTIVE CRITICAL THEORIES AND OPEN TOGETHERNESS IN THE EUROPEAN TRADITION
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At stake in interrogating "cosmopolitan conviviality," particularly in the European tradition, is a rethinking of the very meaning of universality and of its claim upon us.[1] We are challenged to consider the claim of universality to being, in some sense, a European vocation as well as, more broadly, an inescapable human concern and perhaps imperative. The rethinking I propose here is guided by the tradition of apophatic or negative theology, but also more specifically by deconstruction and critical theory, which I take to consist, in crucial respects, in adaptations and extensions of apophatic thinking in the postmodern world.[2]

In our postmodern intellectual context, the universality that can be envisaged and defended is no longer that of the Hegelian concept. The concept is built on a logic of determinate negation that works from defined notions along with their inevitable exclusions. Any actual concept has an expressible content that excludes everything else—everything which is not comprehended within its definition: A is *not* not-A. But what is at stake in apophatic thinking is rather a universality without any definitive or definable content, a universality that consists instead in an attitude of radical openness toward all others. Careful attention is paid to other cultures and their different, specific expressions, yet always on the basis of what can be confined to no particular or specifiable entities or identities—the infinite and inconceivable—as holding open a space that must be preserved against appropriation by all inevitably idolatrous conceptualities. It is, of course, possible to argue that Hegel's dialectic is moving in just this direction, as some of the more postmodern approaches to Hegel have attempted to do.[3] Hegel, especially in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, can well be interpreted as an heir and a precursor of certain types of apophatic thinking transmitted through Nicholas Cusanus and Jacob Boehme, among others. Nevertheless, the idea of the System closed by Absolute Knowing through the concept, which was and is typically taken as Hegel's final testament, provoked the rebellion of numerous highly influential thinkers, notably in France in the second half of the twentieth century, giving rise to various postmodern styles of thinking.[4]

This postmodern milieu and its provocations form the background here for an attempt to rethink the idea of universality in a way that takes account of and integrates several decades of revolutionary ferment and radi-

cal reflection particularly in the fields of literary theory and cultural studies. One of the main thrusts of these movements has been to challenge and disperse Eurocentrism, and yet their impetus can also be seen as deeply and enduringly European in origin and inspiration. I aim to show, in any case, that a revolutionary and transformative notion of universality issues from Europe's involvement in world history and specifically from the engagement of European thinking and theory with other cultures throughout the world.

EUROPE'S VOCATION TO COSMOPOLITAN UNIVERSALISM

Europe's geographical shape and orientation as continuous with and opening upon the Euro-Asian landmass inscribes a kind of call to cosmopolitanism into its very physical constitution and cartographical outline. It takes on the paradoxical shape of an incontinent continent—one that cannot contain itself. This uncontainable flowing out beyond its own ostensible boundaries is more than just a superficial impression gathered from a rapid glance at the map. Europe's historical emergence from and dependence upon the Mediterranean (literally the "Mid-Earth") Sea as a connecting passage to other continents likewise sets it up as rebounding back upon other areas of the earth rather than withdrawing into itself in continental autarky. From its inception, and even before acquiring any specific institutional structure, Europe is configured geographically as a way of passage more than as a separate territory or entity unto itself. It is in this regard nothing like the Central Country (as China's name for itself—"Zhōng guó"—says) or a destined New World or an eschatological Promised Land. Each of these is, in its own way, a place that has no need of any other, a place of sufficiency, plenitude, and perfection, a place where everything is present, a place that contains everything within itself. Europe, in contrast, folds back upon, and turns outward towards, a world that exists before—as well as beyond and outside—itself. In this respect, Europe originates in and with its relation to others.

The symbolic value of this configuration is itself highly suggestive and has been exploited by philosophers who have addressed themselves to questions concerning the formation of a European identity. There is a fascinating sub-field of philosophical reflection devoted to speculative interpretation of the meaning and destiny of Europe, which may or may not include hypotheses regarding any actual predestination by geography. Among relatively recent contributors, Rémi Brague, in *Europe, la voie romaine,* broached the idea that Europe is nothing but a container for content coming from elsewhere. He influentially philosophized the status of Europe as determined by an "eccentric identity" ("identité excentrique"), since its veritable sources were in Judaism and Hellenism. These two extrinsic sources conferred upon Europe a character of "Romanity" ("Romanité"), which carried a strong connotation of cultural secondariness ("secondarité culturelle").[5]

Rome is noted for having "invented nothing" ("n'a rien inventé"). Its achievement was rather the transplantation of culture into new contexts. In this regard, Rome contrasts with the insistence on autochthony dear to the Greeks. As the direct successor to Greece on the stage of world power, Rome well knew itself to be the transmitter of another culture superior to its own. As Horace (65-8 B.C.) long ago recognized, Greece, having been made captive by arms, conquered its Latin conqueror in turn by arts: "Gracia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis / Intulit agresti Latio" (*Epist*. II.I.156). Rome saw itself as situated between Hellenism, as a classicism to be imitated, on one side, and barbarity, as a rude uncouthness needing to be educated, on the other. It was but the conduit between the two. The Roman aqueduct is symbolic of Rome's function of drawing from a higher source (Greece) in order to transmit civilization to the uncultivated hordes ("barbarians") below it.

These aspects of Romanity remain by and large applicable to European culture generally in its most characteristic expressions. Brague examines in detail the consequences of the fact that European civilization, as it flourished in the West, was based essentially on appropriations from elsewhere, particularly the East, its two principal progenitors being Judaism and Hellenism. These antecedents were preserved in their integrity, with acute attention to original source texts and languages, especially in recurrent moments of "renaissance" or renewal and return to these founding traditions. Both cultures were thereby opened to worldwide dissemination and to world-historical transformation in a newfound or newly created dimension of universality.

Distinctive of this European transmission of the past was that it idealized and even canonized the original cultures that it transmitted, conferring a classical status on them. The Arabic transmission of the same traditions, on the other hand, rather than preserving their sources as classics, tended to dispense with them. Islam digested and discarded the original texts, transfusing a selection of their contents into its own new linguistic and cultural corpus. For Islam, according to Brague, in its assimilation of Greek science and philosophy, the Arabic translations wholly superseded and supplanted the originals. Once they existed, the Arabic translations alone were considered authoritative, indeed the only true and reliable form of the knowledge in question. The source texts in comparison were typically held to be inferior and erroneous and often to have been compromised by deliberate falsification. All that was true in them had been absorbed without remainder into the Arabo-Islamic rendering that was considered to be incomparably superior and, thenceforth, normative. The Qu'ran itself, in its assimilation of Jewish and Christian traditions, similarly claims to correct the original source texts and to reveal a religious truth that they are held to distort and corrupt. In this manner, the source cultures in question are wholly appropriated and their alterity erased.

Europe, in contrast, remained obsessed with its sources as permanently external and other to itself and as unsurpassable. They enshrined mythic, mystic moments of preternatural creativity and even divine revelation in relation to which its own transmission remained always secondary. Cultural secondariness with respect to its Hellenic origins and religious secondariness in relation to its Jewish heritage prevented Christian Europe from ever seriously considering itself to be its own source ("de se considerer elle-même comme sa proper source").[6]

> Dans le domaine religieux comme dans le domaine culturel, l'Europe a un même rapport à ce qui précède: elle ne s'arrache pas au passé, elle ne le rejette pas. L'Europe ne prétend pas, quant à la culture profane, avoir absorbé en elle tout ce que contenait l'hellénisme ou, en religion, tout ce que contenait l'Ancien Testament—de telle sorte que l'on pourrait jeter la coquille vide.[7]

> In the religious domain as in the cultural domain, Europe has the same relation to what precedes it: it does not break with the past and does not reject it. Europe does not claim with respect to profane culture to have absorbed into itself everything that was contained in Hellenism nor, in religion, all that which the Old Testament contained—in such manner as to be able to discard the empty shell.

For Brague, the role of mediating and transmitting what it receives entails that Europe is open to others and open upon the universal. He thus conceives of it not as a determinate content that can be possessed but as an infinite task of self-opening and of mediation ("le contenu de l'Europe, c'est justement d'être un contenant, d'être ouverte sur l'universal").[8]

We would, nonetheless, be remiss should we fail to note also an acquisitive aspect to this openness: nothing is really proper to Europe except "to appropriate what is foreign to it" ("son propre est une appropriation de ce qui lui est étranger").[9] The ambiguity expressed in Europe's historical record of both deconstruction and domination—of self-critique or self-deconstruction *and* colonial imperialism—begins to show up even in this preliminary sketch moving from the propositions of Brague, who does not, however, highlight or even specifically identify such an ambiguity.

In a critically reflective extension of Brague's argument, Denis Guénoun, *Hypothèses sur l'Europe: Un essai de philosophie,* effectively brings out the significance of the myth of Europa, who was herself an Asian princess abducted by Jove to the land that would be called by her name.[10] This myth clearly conveys how Europe from its inception is endowed even with its name by others from beyond its borders—indeed others who are violated. The myth of Europa becomes emblematic of the European predicament defined as possessing nothing originally of its own. All that is proper to Europe is having nothing proper to itself at all—and, consequently, its appropriating everything from others.

This originary dependence and openness to its ostensible others and outsides is bound up with another aspect of Europe's predisposition for and preoccupation with universality. It is an aspect that I wish to place into particular relief, namely, Europe's vocation to critique, especially to self-critique. Whatever may appear prima facie as one's own and as proper tends, when subjected to close critical scrutiny, to show up as derivative, as actually borrowed or adapted from elsewhere. From this point of view, what makes Europe come harshly to light as more acquisitive in appropriating others' goods may be its characteristic (self-) critical awareness and outspokenness as much as its actual rapaciousness. In its actual disposition to acquisitiveness, Europe is not terribly distinct from numerous other civilizations. It is, however, distinguished by an outstanding critical and especially self-critical emphasis that can be traced in European intellectual tradition from an early matrix in the philosophical critique of myth by logos. This predisposition to critique defines the very origin of philosophy, which in crucial ways counts as Europe's most characteristic and distinguished contribution to world culture.[11]

Self-critique flourishes throughout European tradition at least from the time of Socrates and already, for example, in ancient Neoplatonism, which in its final stages can even be defined as "limitless criticism." This self-critical spirit undergoes constant metamorphoses throughout European intellectual history all the way to contemporary theory, with its many applications in cultural studies and literary criticism.[12] A critical temperament naturally issues in acute self-consciousness vis-à-vis the exterior civilizations from which one's own is born, or at least is endowed. This is patently the case already for Rome, as we saw, with regard to Greece, and such critical self-consciousness is typical of Europe's relation to history in general. It has become especially evident and self-conscious in European intellectual and cultural history up to and through contemporary movements such as deconstruction in French philosophy or, again, Critical Theory in the wake of the Frankfort school.

The new universality in question here does not entail the imposition of any content: indeed, Europe here is considered to have no content proper to itself. It is rather only a critical, and especially a self-critical, clearing of an empty space—precisely the space necessary for "conviviality." Critique is another kind of universalism, one perhaps bound up with and yet also radically different from that of appropriating everything and assimilating it to oneself. It is predicated on detachment from all particular and parochial bias and from any contingent circumstances. This has clearly been the case ever since the Kantian critique stipulated that disinterestedness is prerequisite for valid universal judgment. Such is, for Kant, definitively in the *Critique of Judgment* (*Die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790), the condition of the universality and therewith, equivalently, of the validity of (aesthetic) judgment.

Critique, however, was essential to the European spirit already long before Kant and even before the skeptical currents in ancient thought that left their imprint on mature Neoplatonism, indeed before philosophy altogether. It began more originally and radically as critique of idolatry in one of Europe's most indispensible eccentric centers, namely, the Bible.[13] The inadequacy of all representations of God, the supreme principle of reality, is written into the Ten Commandments, with its interdiction of graven images (Exodus 20:4), and even into the strictures against taking the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20:7). The latter proscription, considered critically, applies to virtually any verbal formulation: what name for God on human lips could not (failing miraculous saving grace) but be profane? This rigorous critique of representations of the divine should be held alongside the type of critique that flourishes in the other principal source of European culture—in the Hellenistic tradition, particularly with the birth of philosophy and its reflective, critical bent. This searchingly critical tendency develops to a pinnacle in the late Neoplatonic philosophy of Damascius.[14]

With respect to these sources and precedents, Rome is realized not so much in a creative act of self-expression and self-affirmation (like Greece) as in a reflective, self-critical movement that is acutely conscious of its own limits. The pervasive, melancholic, often self-deprecating sense of inferiority in Virgil's *Aeneid* vis-à-vis its Homeric forerunner is a classic expression of this attitude.[15] The awareness of one's own secondariness calls forth an attitude of critique, which entails another kind of universalism that is different from englobing all in one's own order or bringing it under one rule, one's *own* rule. Such is the spirit of critique that has culminated in postmodern times in what is currently called "deconstruction."

Considered as a generating principle for European and (in historical perspective) specifically for Christian civilization, deconstruction involves first and foremost *self*-deconstruction, as Jean-Luc Nancy brings out in his *Deconstruction of Christianity*.[16] Of course, again, these two universalisms, that of domination and that of deconstruction, which have so marked European history and, as a consequence, also world history, are not likely to exist independently of one another and without intimate interconnectedness and even secret collusion. Consequently, holding on to the tension between these often dissonant aspects of the *quest* for the universal and/or the *conquest* by means of the universal is surely a prerequisite for understanding the ambiguities of universalism and the motivation for introducing the new vocabulary of "conviviality" into the discussion.

THE NEGATIVITY OF IDENTITY: FROM NEGATIVE THEOLOGY TO CONVIVIALITY VIA THEORY

It is in terms of criticism and even of limitless self-criticism that negative theology, in its historical forms in Neoplatonism and medieval mysticism, but also in its contemporary theoretical guises of deconstruction and Critical Theory, turns out to be key to defining European cosmopolitanism and more particularly to determining the sense of any European ideal of universalism. This is so because of the impossibility of these tasks. The universal and cosmopolitan prove to be precisely what cannot be defined or given any determinate sense.

This, I submit, has been revealed especially through the vicissitudes—the evolution and devolution—of literary and cultural theory in recent decades. Particularly the quest for identity in the midst of the multiplicity of cultures that have emerged more and more in the postmodern era in all their inextricable hybridity has proved identity to be nothing if not elusive. This impasse to the quest for identity lies at the very origin of the attempt to reconceptualize certain aspects of the postmodern predicament in terms of convivial cosmopolitanism. Paul Gilroy has proposed conviviality as, in crucial ways, an alternative to or at least a refinement upon the vocabulary of multiculturalism and its attendant identity politics:

I hope an interest in the workings of conviviality will take off from the point where 'multiculturalism' broke down. It does not describe the absence of racism or the triumph of tolerance. Instead, it suggests a different setting for their empty, interpersonal rituals, which, I suggest, have started to mean different things in the absence of any strong belief in absolute or integral races. Conviviality has another virtue that makes it attractive to me and useful to this project. It introduces a measure of distance from the pivotal term 'identity,' which has proved to be such an ambiguous resource in the analysis of race, ethnicity, and politics. The radical openness that brings conviviality alive makes a nonsense of closed, fixed, and reified identity and turns attention toward the always unpredictable mechanisms of identification.[17]

Gilroy's conclusions, which are rooted in contemporary British politics and cultural theory, corroborate the views I wish to elaborate here from a broadly apophatic perspective grounded in comparative philosophy, religion, and literature. Identities are flimsy, fragile, relative, and exclusionary constructions. They need to be critiqued in the interests of universal conviviality. Otherwise, they tend to become rivalrous and invidious forms of self-assertion in the Enlightenment liberationist tradition. Such movements of self-affirmation typically aim at autonomy. However, the original insight into *difference* that motivated and sparked off the whole multicultural movement was a vision of universal relativity, of difference without positive terms, in the famous Saussurian formulation that gave such a powerful impetus to the rise of literary theory in the last several decades of the twentieth century. Not essentializing differences as identities but rather the opposite was at the source of the resurgence of theoretical reflection that issued in Cultural Studies and in many other parallel projects and programs emphasizing differential particularities.

The language of "radical openness," which we have just seen used by Gilroy, is actually a classical component of European tradition, once we include therein the heterodox, radically critical (and especially self-critical) expressions of this tradition reaching back to classical negative theology, for example, in Plotinus.[18] Precisely this language defines also Ulrich Beck's notion of Europe as cosmopolitan: "Radical openness [radikale Offen-

heit] is an essential distinguishing trait of the European project and the true secret of its success" ("Die radikale Offenheit ist ein Wesensmerkmal des Europäischen Projektes und sein eigentliches Erfolgsgeheimnis").[19] The explicit link to the term "cosmopolitan" is made a few pages later: "The adjective 'cosmopolitical' stands for this openness, limited by the critique of ethno-nationalism, which battles for the recognition of cultural difference and diversity" ("Das Adjektiv 'kosmopolitisch' steht für diese Offenheit, begrenzt durch die Kritik des Ethnonationalismus, der für die Anerkennung der kulturellen Differenz und Diversität streitet").[20] And yet there is something contradictory in a battle for open, cosmopolitan universalism being waged under the banner and in the interests of particular differences and exclusive identities.

There is an odd confluence in the genealogies of identity-based regional, gender, class, or special-interest groups and movements that can make their agendas conflictual, or at least confusing. Are these ideologies of identity informed by the structuralist insight into the relativity of all oppositional terms that lies at the origin of the critical theory revolution of the last several decades, especially since poststructuralist reflections like those of Derrida, Foucault, or Baudrillard that began having such an impact around the 1970s? This theoretical paradigm entailed a powerful valorization of difference—and consequently led to strong self-assertion by non-mainstream groups of their different identities.[21] Or are these ideologies of identity and difference beholden rather to the Enlightenment agenda of promoting free-standing, autonomous individuals? This latter agenda has also been important in fueling a wide spectrum of liberation movements since the 1960s.

The assumptions of the Enlightenment have been placed under a heavy pressure of critique within the ambit of theory, especially postmodern theory: *post*modern theory has most typically been *anti*-Enlightenment in its premises and persuasions and has turned against the Enlightenment as the leading project of modernity. Even the philosophy of the Frankfurt school itself (and therewith Critical Theory), for all its continuity with Enlightenment thinking, made programmatic especially by Habermas, was based on a deep sense of the ambiguities inherent in the *dialectic* of the Enlightenment, whereby the Enlightenment was charged with generating its own myths of individual autonomy and mastery by means of instrumental reason that eventually led to the totalitarianism of consumer society and global markets.[22]

Critical Theory has been aware of the importance of theology and specifically of negative theology in assuming a posture of critique vis-à-vis the world of total immanence and functionality that has gained ascendency in times of total technological, technocratic domination of the planet.[23] European traditions of negative theology, as explored also by Jacques Derrida and extended by Jean-Luc Nancy, Gianni Vattimo, Slavoj Žižek, Eric Santner, etc., can be drawn on in order to think the "democracy-to-come" from the basis of the unknowability of God extended to the non-identity, and thus also the unknowability, of individuals in their deepest core. Recognizing this inherent non-identity may be the key discovery that European thought can contribute to opening the way toward a convivial cohabitation of the planet.[24] Negative theology emerges here as the deep root for thinking a radical openness and its possible social incarnations in the European tradition.

It must be admitted that, ironically, just this sort of insight has been legendary in Eastern traditions such as Advaita Vedanta, Mahayana Buddhism, and Taoism, so the "contribution" in question here is again a matter of a particular manner of mediating and realizing something that is anything but unique to Europe. The *Mulamadhyamakakarika* of Nagarjuna (*circa* 150-250), for example, the fundamental text of the Madhyamaka school of Mahayana Buddhism, is a relentless deconstruction of any sort of concept of stable or self-subsistent identity.[25] Again, even in its most radically self-negating forms, the critical universalism by which Europe ostensibly distinguishes itself (since such an outlook has been so decisive there historically) turns out on historical and cross-civilizational examination to be a factor actually connecting Europe with other cultures and traditions rather than separating it from them.

THE NEW APOPHATIC UNIVERSALISM

Recent revolutions in literary and cultural theory have come full circle—or perhaps spiraled back around—to

a concerted quest for universal values and ideals or principles and projects. After several decades of accentuated splintering into national, regional, sexual, racial, class, and religious particularisms, the cry has gone up for attempting to recover some sense of a common bond of universal democratic enfranchisement.[26] Such a universalist perspective and sentiment is felt to be imperative for our collective survival on the planet—and for our being able to live peacefully and productively together in a globalized world. The cry comes from a variety of quarters, both academic and political, and most remarkably from the very self-styled progressivist factions of the intelligentsia that had, until recently, spearheaded the denunciation of universalistic categories and claims as an ideological instrument serving for the oppression of disempowered minorities and colonized masses. The language of universality is again in vogue, after having been the target of strident protest on account of its presumed complicity with the ethnocentrism manifest in racialism, colonialism, and associated evils. This regained popularity depends on decisive new nuances in the term "universal," slanting it towards what Gilroy calls "conviviality" and what I strive here to work out in terms hailing from apophatic tradition.

This means, of course, that the notion of the universal "returns" metamorphosed. It is no longer the universality of a closed system or of a delimited concept, but rather an open and in some ways indeterminate universal that is in question. The new universality is characterized most importantly by a non-conceptual act of opening of self. My contention is that this new universality is currently being, and perhaps must be, rethought in what are at least implicitly apophatic terms. In other words, I contend that the apophatic tradition can serve as a crucial and even an indispensable guide to framing the new universalism and to making it fruitful. This is so because it is not a new concept of universality so much as a non-concept that is necessary.[27]

Theology, in its traditional and yet radical form as *negative* or apophatic theology, is revealed or rediscovered as the custodian of rich resources for elaborating a general philosophy of precisely this type. Identity and universality in their intrinsic negativity—their being apprehended always only through difference and as elusive, indefinable ideals—prove to be analogous to the transcendent God who cannot be apprehended except negatively. The ways and means of this incapacity can be learned from negative theology, where they are explored in depth and in detail. The critical examination of identity and universality follows patterns established by negative theological discourse in its critical turn against all idolatries, including conceptual idolatries—and toward denial of any positive definitions of the divine. Indeed, there may well be some vestige of divinity lingering in every purportedly essential identity, whether of person or party or people.[28]

Thus the crucial breakthrough in the rethinking of universality can best be understood as a turn to construing it not as conceptual but rather as what defies conceptualization.[29] Universality, in the sense that is now becoming current, is non-predicative and must be thought of as "that which resists or exceeds the closure of identity."[30] So construed, the discourse of universalism expresses an apophatic sensibility. It opens a radically alternative vision to that of the Enlightenment philosophies that have typically paraded under the banner of universality. At the same time, it also undermines the traditional opposition between rational enlightenment and religious or mystical obscurantism. Indeed such an opposition was challenged all along, beginning in the very heart of the *Aufklärung* itself, by religious thinkers such as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81) and Johann Georg Hamann (1730-88).[31] The universal in this new sense opens up a mysterious region of incommensurability as, paradoxically, our only common measure; it is not any rational formula or faculty: it is nothing that can be defined at all.

Identity, in this perspective, is more profound than anything that we can possess. It should be thought of as a common wound—our being separate from others. Whatever identifies us also individualizes us and sets up categorical exclusions vis-à-vis others. And yet precisely this state or condition of separation from one another is something that we share most deeply with others. We are thus co-gifted with this open wound in our very being and deepest identity. We are one another's gift: this is just what the word "common" or co-munus (from Latin *munus*, gift) says etymologically—"co-gifted." Taken in this sense, "common" becomes in many regards a more adequate term for what philosophy today, as well as yesterday in some of its most challenging forms, strives to think under the concept of the "universal."[32]

This sense of the open mystery of the other—and of our mutual woundedness, in and from one another—is prerequisite to convivial cosmopolitanism. Paul Celan (1920-1970) thought of language as bearing the scars of this woundedness, which his poems so effectively expose, placing it excruciatingly into evidence. In his poeto-logical discourse "Der Meridian" (1960), Celan describes the language of the poem as wounded by and search-ing for reality ("wirklichkeitswund und Wirklichkeit suchend").[33] The wound is a recurrent, neuralgic image in his poetry. A sort of metaphorical wounding is repeatedly performed by the (de)realizations of language in virtually every poem.[34] In some sense, all his poetry stands in the shadow of the wound or scar up in the "air"—suggesting a negative incarnation of language's inevitably violent idealizations. This woundedness of language is intimately related to its standing for no one and nobody—in the kenotic moment of self-emptying or self-wounding:

> STEHEN im Schatten
> des Wundermals in der Luft.
>
> Für-niemand-und-nichts-Stehn.
> Unerkannt,
> für dich
> allein.
>
> Mit allem, was darin Raum hat,
> auch ohne
> Sprache.
>
> (TO STAND in the shadow
> of the scar up in the air.
>
> To stand-for-no-one-and-nothing.
> Unrecognized,
> for you
> alone.
>
> With all there is room for in that,
> even without
> language.)[35]

The wonder or "miracle" (Wunder) of this "wound" (Wund) is, first of all, that both meanings indissociably inhabit Celan's ingenious invention "Wundermals." In this curious coinage, "mals" verbalizes both nouns into events happening one or more "times." The miracle or wonder consists, furthermore, in this expression's open-ing a passage beyond language altogether and thereby making room for the other, for no one, for an indetermi-nate "you." This other is unrecognizable within any language and can first emerge only when one is "without language" ("ohne Sprache"). Standing in shadows, Celan's *Wundermals* turns in the air like a mill (Mühle) in which words are ground down to nothing, exposing the human wounds beneath.

Having learned a good deal from Celan, as also from Georges Bataille, about language as inscribing an origi-nary woundedness, and emphasizing particularly the origin of language in the wound of écriture as writing or "script" (a word related to Old Saxon, Old Norse, and Proto-Germanic words for scraping and scratching and to Old High German *rizan* for tearing), Derrida announced the democracy to come ("démocratie à venir") as based on such a sense of ineradicable rupture and tornness, of structural openness to an always unattainable Other, such as is cultivated and theorized in negative theology. Negative theology (so Derrida) keeps in view the unfathomable depth of an otherness that it cannot grasp. Yet this faculty of leaving space for the Other is not confined to theology, since "Every other is wholly other" (*Tout autre est tout autre*).[36] Every other human,

too, is absolute and places us before the abyss of the unsayable, of what eludes every word and concept.

Derrida, of course, resisted others' attempts to identify deconstruction with negative theology, as if that gave it a known figure and pigeon-holed it in intellectual history. However, at other moments he recognized the resistance against all such identificatory reductions as the peculiar resource of what he, too, *faute de mieux,* calls "theologie négative." Indeed Derrida suggests that the openness and indeterminacy of negative theology may be necessary for any tenable idea of Europe and for any possible political democracy, or any universal, law-governed community, today. It is necessary to the very intelligibility of our indispensable axiological, evaluative terms: "But there would no longer be any 'political' or 'juridical' or 'moral' *without* this possibility [of negative theology], that same possibility which obliges us from now on to put these words in quotation marks. Their sense will have trembled" ("Mais il n'y aurait plus de 'politique', de 'droit' ou de 'moral' *sans* cette possibilité [de théologie négative], celle-là même qui nous oblige désormais à mettre ces mots entre guillemets. Leur sens aura tremblé").[37] All of these determinations, which lie at the foundations of constitutional law and jurisprudence and ethics and any other human sciences, depend fundamentally on their own indeterminacy.

Among many coming in the wake of Derrida, exemplary in this vein is the work of Jean-Luc Nancy in his deconstruction of Christianity as responding to a vocation to radical openness that characterizes Europe and particularly its Christian heritage. Metaphysics and Christianity turn out, according to Nancy, to bear the seeds of their own deconstruction within themselves. , As Nancy argues in *La Déclosion* (2005), Christianity assumes a role of bearing the vocation of opening or "dis-enclosure" (*déclosion*) characteristic of the West and its Enlightenment into the modern and postmodern worlds. Turning toward ("ad") and opening through *or*ifices such as the mouth (the *or*al cavity), notably in prayer ("*or*atio"), is the very meaning of "Ad-or-ation" in its Latin roots and in the title of the companion volume and sequel *L'Adoration* (2010). *L'Adoration* turns traditional Christian language outwards toward a world in process of dissolution and of liberation from all its metaphysical moorings. Christianity has the leading role in this historical deconstruction leveraged from the West (Europe) and its Enlightenment heritage.

Such is the purport likewise of Gianni Vattimo's deconstructive project, in which Christianity opens to radical secularity as the foundation for a common life of humanity across cultures. Both Nancy and Vattimo rely on Marcel Gauchet's thesis, in *Le désenchantement du monde* (1985), concerning Christianity as the religion of the exit from religion ("la sortie de la religion"). However, Nancy's Christianity is radically Protestant. At least that is the tradition he valorizes as radically carrying out the self-deconstruction of Christianity through its Death of God theology.[38] The Christianity of Vattimo, by contrast, is Catholic and hermeneutic—in the sense of basing itself not on the letter of revelation so much as on its realization historically in the life of the community. In either case, Christianity in its self-deconstructing impetus is what Europe's historical experience most specifically has to offer to face the challenge of rising above divisive identities and into world community. These directions of thought, as tradition-laden as they are, can nevertheless provide guidance for reading Paul Gilroy's and Ulrich Beck's appeal for "radical openness" and exposure to our colonial past and postcolonial present.

Vattimo, in *Dopo la cristianità: Per un cristianesimo non religioso*, works especially from two paradigmatic historical models (among others). One is Joachim of Flores's prophetic eternal gospel, especially as proclaimed in his *Liber Concordiae Novi ac Veteris Testamenti* (1260). By dint of his subsuming of universal history into his own visionary, typological interpretation, Joachim represents for Vattimo the affirmation of a hermeneutic approach to reality, which becomes an interpretive construction without remainder. The Christian, for Joachim, is no longer under the authority of either the letter of Scripture, as were the Jews in the age of the Old Testament, or of the Church, as in the age of the New Testament: now the Holy Spirit itself illuminates each individual directly and without need of institutional authority or mediation. For Joachim, who was a Cistercian monk, a truly new Third Age opened with Saint Benedict and the advent of the monastic orders. In this new age of free spiritual life for individuals, all the Lord's people become truly prophets, just as Moses had wished (Numbers 11:29).

Joachim's vision is projected forward to a poetic apotheosis by Dante in his *Paradiso*, where the Calabrian abbot Joachim ("il calavrese abate Giovacchino") himself "endowed with prophetic spirit" ("di spirito profetico dotato," Canto XII, verse 141) appears transfigured in glory. Joachim enjoys beatitude there in harmonious conviviality together with some of the very saints and sages with whom he was most at loggerheads during his life on earth. He is celebrated in the poem specifically by Saint Bonaventure, who in *his* life on earth aggressively attacked the radical Franciscans of Joachimite inspiration. Although there is a fantastically positive and assertive symbolic theology in Joachim, he nevertheless inaugurates a revolutionary break with the old religion and its certitudes, opening everything radically to unceasing re-interpretation by individuals living freely in the Spirit. Nothing that has been said is definitive or binding for those living in the freedom of the Spirit; perhaps nothing definitive can be said at all.

Another exemplary historical moment of such universal openness is represented for Vattimo by Novalis's Romantic vision in *Christenheit oder Europa* (1799). Novalis's tract builds in some ways on Kant's treatise on perpetual peace, *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795), even while reversing its secular Protestantism into a Catholic, poetic universalism. In contrast with Kant's call to autonomous individuals to take up the task of constructing an enlightened modernity by thinking for themselves and throwing off the yoke of tutelage imposed by tradition and authority, Novalis expresses a medievalizing nostalgia for an inextricably communal life, one still in unsevered communication with a living, throbbing cosmos. Such a sense of cosmic communion can be conveyed best by poetry and its universal symbols. Novalis finds in this medieval Catholic world-view the figure of a Messianic future. However, in the very midst of his discernment and celebration of such cosmic communication of the divine, Novalis also acutely expresses the apophatic predicament that relates to . . . it knows not what, since the sense of these communications is not intelligible to us:

> Alles, was wir erfahren ist eine *Mittheilung*. So ist die Welt in der That eine *Mittheilung* – Offenbarung des Geistes. Die Zeit ist nicht mehr, wo der Geist Gottes verständlich war. Der Sinn der Welt ist verlohren gegangen. Wir sind beym Buschstaben stehn geblieben. Wir haben das Erscheinende über der Erscheinung verlohren.[39]

> All that we experience is a *communication*. Thus the world is in fact a communication—a revelation of spirit. The time is no longer when the spirit of God was understandable. The sense of the world has been lost. We remain behind with just letters. We have lost what it is that appears over and beyond the appearing itself.

Yet the limits of our conceptualization become fruitful because, rather than simply stopping us in our effort to know the absolute, the experience of the limit is sounded in the affect-laden judgments of aesthetic perception, as well as through the exercise of the will in ethical action. These new dimensions of relationality are opened up by the check to intellectual assimilation: the arrest itself forces mind and spirit and body into a movement reaching beyond conceptualization.

> Ganz begreifen werden wir uns nie,
> aber wir werden und können uns weit mehr als begreifen.
> (*Blutenstaub: Fragmente* [1797-1798], Sprüche 6)

> (We never intellectually grasp ourselves completely,
> But we become much more and can do more than simply grasp ourselves intellectually.)

The general human predicament described here is one in which we are oriented towards what exceeds and transcends us in all our thinking and feeling and seeing and hearing:

> Alles Sichtbare haftet am Unsichtbaren-
> Das Hörbare am Unhörbaren-

> Das Fühlen am Unfühlbaren.
> Vielleicht das Denken am Undenkbaren.
> (*Neue Fragmente* [1800/02]: *Traktat vom Licht* #2120)
>
> (All that is seeable cleaves to the unseeable -
> The hearable to the unhearable -
> The feelable to the unfeelable -
> Perhaps the thinkable to the unthinkable.)

This is Novalis's version of a philosophy of revelation which anticipates some aspects of what will be developed explicitly under that title a little later by Schelling[40]: in and through phenomena, we relate to we know not what beyond phenomena. But perhaps this was always so. Of course, in other cultural predicaments, for example, that of the Middle Ages and its shared faith, this situation seemed different—and to that extent perhaps *was* different. But in any case, there is a new and acute consciousness of the apophatic predicament that comes to articulation here in the recognition of all experience as leading up to the threshold of what defies and defeats experience.

Novalis's vision expresses aspects of the philosophy of revelation—and, at the same time, revolution—of the early Jena Romantics. It bears much in common also with the program of the German Idealist philosophy that germinated in the youthful exchanges among Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin and produced their "Oldest System Program of German Idealism" ("Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus," 1796).[41] Here we see already among key formative modern thinkers the swing in the theoretical understanding of identity that moves it toward a revolutionary kind of universal opening which embraces even religious revelation. These crucial architects of modernity are uncannily close to broaching ideas that will later be considered characteristic of postmodern thinking. Perhaps most significantly, they help us to discern the negative theological matrices of the new thinking of universality that is emerging into explicit formulation at present.

In the last several decades, theory has passed from the epistemological and ontological generality of "high" theory to the particular political agendas of various vindications of identity. This has often resulted in the quest for individual or sectarian liberation following an Enlightenment paradigm of autonomy. But the dialectic of Enlightenment is such that it also generates its own myths, its own forms of closure and oppression. Conviviality endeavors to bring theory back to universalist perspectives in a new key that does not eclipse difference and social-political specificity. Yet the ethos of conviviality must also open to the infinite mystery of the Other. This is learned from authors like Nancy and Vattimo, who are working out of and transmitting negative-theological or apophatic traditions. It may be mystification and therefore also anathema for many, especially for the more politically minded of those in the following of Gilroy. And yet apophatic critique is an efficacious antidote to the ambiguities and—I daresay—to the *idolatries* of identity politics that Gilroy himself has felt the need to react against.

"Radical openness" such as Gilroy and Beck both prescribe as crucial to the call of conviviality can be interpreted as pointing in either of two directions: 1) towards a universal humanism or 2) towards infinite openness to an inconceivable otherness. My conviction is that any universal *that can be defined* will inevitably become a vicious circle of self-affirmation and exclusion of otherness and will eventually defeat the aims of conviviality in their most radical challenge. We are returning to the challenge and the quest of universality today and need to do so, but this quest needs also to remain open to what it cannot quite define or even conceive in order not to become inevitably exclusionary and oppressive. This is the type of critique that negative theological modes of thought have exerted upon all forms of idolatry throughout the ages. It has arisen again lately in the Critical Theory of Adorno and Horkheimer *contra* the conceptual idolatry that is rampant in modern and postmodern culture, with their unbridled consumerism, their commodity fetishism, and their culture industry dominated by technocratic power. Such critique is being further extended still today by authors such as Nancy, Vattimo, and Giorgio Agamben.[42]

DECONSTRUCTIVE NEGATIVE THEOLOGY, NIHILISM, AND CHRISTIANITY

A related viewpoint, yet one which is often in tension with the radically self-critical and deconstructive approach to the question of European universalism that I have pursued here following Brague, Guénoun, *et al*. (it is arrestingly represented also by Massimo Cacciari in *Geo-Filosofia dell'Europa*, 1994), has been broached by Peter Sloterdijk.[43] Sloterdijk castigates most post-1945 Cold War European thought for its self-effacing, sometimes even nihilistic attitude and temperament: he deplores its being dominated by the ideology of absence and emptiness ("Ära der Vakuum-Ideologien"; "Nachkriegs Nichtigkeit," "Nihilismus,"; "europäischen Absence-Ideologien").[44]

Sloterdijk analyzes the negative, self-emptying approaches as a sort of Christian nihilism and as symptomatic of Europe's trauma upon being decentered after 1945. This analysis turns out to echo Nietzsche's at an earlier epoch, although with only faint acknowledgment. At any rate, Sloterdijk sees in this negativity only sterility and not its endless creative potential: he expresses consternation and dismay that this self-minimizing sentiment, which gripped Europe in its dismal post-Yalta condition and lasted throughout the period of the Cold War, should have been taken up eagerly by American intellectuals as well.[45]

Following Paul Valéry's "La crise de l'esprit," *Variété* 1 (1924), Sloterdijk attributes to Europe as its defining characteristic rather a maximum development of activity and intensity in all respects—economic, scientific, vitalistic (28)—and an unlimited "intensification of power and life" ("Intensivierung von Macht und Leben").[46] He considers the decentering and self-emptying of Europe, its *Vakuum-Ideologie* in the era of its absence ("die Zeitalter der Absence"), to belong to the period of Europe's being caught in a vice between victorious superpowers (Russian and American) and its temporary self-deprecating renunciation of a leading role in the world-historical process.[47] He calls Europe to awake into a new era, a return (*Wiederkehr*) in which it is to reassume its maximizing destiny on the world stage (*Maxima-Politik, Maximierungsformel* of Valéry) as Mother of Modernity.[48] The essence of Europe is to be found in its metamorphoses translating the imperial ideal of a unified order for all that was handed down throughout the successive ages of its history ("Imperium-Metamorphosen," "Mechanismus der Reichübertragung").[49]

Thus Sloterdijk, too, in aiming to reclaim for Europe its central place in the world, exhorts Europe to wake up to a universal mission that would take it beyond all its national boundaries. He fails to acknowledge, however, that this needs to be done without overlooking certain negative conditions of this vocation. Indeed Sloterdijk, in reacting with impatience against the ideologies of emptiness and impotence that held sway in Europe and crippled its self-confidence during the Cold War period, envisions for a reawakened Europe a role that will be a transformation of its past imperial avatars into some new form of "visionary," "prophetic" apprehension of wholeness and greatness.[50]

I submit that this kind of universalizing vision could hardly be circumscribed or given a definitive content once and for all. It must remain open and receptive to an otherness that exceeds and defies adequate conceptual apprehension. Moreover, even in embracing the heritage of the *translatio imperii*, Sloterdijk propounds a European universal vision according equal human status, with recognition of cultural variations, to all members of the species. This is starkly unlike the typical generic divisions in the ancient world between wild barbarians and civilized burghers. His new incarnations of empire are emphatically purged of all forms of "imperial contempt" ("Verachtung,")[51], and thus it would seem that he too can hardly do without Europe's characteristically intense engagement in self-critique as a check to the unscrupulous programs of overweening self-aggrandizement that inevitably arise.

Deconstructive Christianity and self-critical Europe incorporate and share in common a vocation to radical openness towards others and toward the indefinably Other. The crucial role of radical Christianity (Protestant for some, including Nancy, but Catholic for others like Vattimo, building on Joachim and Novalis) in this European vocation to universalism—in the sense of a universal openness without fixed content—has been dis-

cerned by thinkers of the most varied and divergent persuasions. It has been underlined in some startling and paradoxical ways by the discussion of contemporary European philosophers around the claim of universalism in Saint Paul and in the intellectual revolution embodied by primitive Christianity. Alain Badiou touched off the debate with his explicitly atheist account of Paul's revolutionary project of a universal truth not reserved for a philosophical elite and not just a matter of objective contemplation of intellectual truth but rather of adherence in faith to a historically revealed truth that is lived and that revolutionizes all of the subject's perceptions and possibilities.[52] Other likewise atheistic appropriations of Paul's revolutionary and apocalyptic vision, which upsets every rationally objective order of the world and breaks it open to a very new and different kind of universal claim upon all who can hear, were then proposed by Giorgio Agamben and Slovej Žižek.[53]

These contributions illuminate the need to avoid the idolatry of the human and political in order to remain truly open to the cosmic, the event of truth—*aletheia,* as Heidegger understands it, particularly in his *Brief über den Humanismus* (*Letter on Humanism*). Building on this event-character of truth, Agamben, in *The Time that Remains,* interprets Paul's announcements that "the time is short" and that "the fashion of this world passes away" (I Corinthians 7:29-31) as indicating how the present time ("the time that remains") becomes universal eschatological time. It concentrates all time into itself, into a present in which the end of time is already being accomplished proleptically. The present thus relativizes and revolutionizes all finite, worldly forms, opening them to a beyond, to an event of salvation that is always still in arrival and that must remain forever open to the one who is coming. Walter Benjamin's Messianism of the *Jetztzeit* works similarly at the level of a kind of divine violence that violates inevitably idolatrous human orderings of history and society.[54]

Paul's Christian Messianism, as reflected on by these European thinkers, represents another break-through moment in history, one at which polity and cosmos practically come to coincide. These moments can serve as models for the construction of a convivial cosmopolitanism. Europe becomes the locus of a cosmic revelation of freedom and of political and social revolution. This happened in spectacular fashion following the French Revolution, particularly as it was taken up by the German Idealists. Something comparable, in crucial ways, had already occurred pursuant to what might be called the "Franciscan Revolution" in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, drawing its inspiration from Saint Francis and from his advent as it was interpreted particularly by Joachim of Flores. The Romantic, post-revolutionary German "state" and the medieval Franciscan order respectively were imagined as forming polities that opened upon the universal. *Polis* expanded without limits to become coextensive with cosmos, while conversely cosmos was realized as concretely incarnate in some visionary form of *polis*. Both directions are indicative of a realization of universalism in politics and religion and ethics and aesthetics all at once and in one. Some such cosmic openness of our political community beyond invidious exclusions is what is necessary for living together in cosmo-politan con-viviality. Its indispensable precondition is to be sought in the unexpressed and inexpressible, in the darkly vanishing apophatic background of the (self-) critical discourse of universalism in the European tradition of En-light-enment.

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NOTES

1. The ideas developed in this essay were originally presented extemporaneously at the international conference "Interrogating Cosmopolitan Conviviality: New Dimensions of the European in Literature" held at the University of Bamberg on May 24-25, 2012. My thanks are due especially to the organizers, Christoph Houswitschka and Federico Fabris. A version of the essay appears as "Cosmopolitan Conviviality and Negative Theology: Europe's Vocation to Universalism," *The Journal of European Studies* (2014): 44/1 (2014): 30-49.

2. I trace the trajectory of apophatic tradition from its ancient origins to its postmodern avatars in *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), vol. 1: Classical Formulations, vol. 2: Modern and Contemporary Transformations.

3. See, for example, Slavoj Žižek, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis, *eds., Hegel and the Infinite: Religion, Politics, and Dialectic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) and Andrew W. Hass, *Hegel and the Art of Negation: Negativity, Creativity, and Contemporary Thought* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013). *I deal with this issue in detail in chapter II, section ii of A Philosophy of the Unsayable (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), where I agree with Merold* Westphal, "Hegel's Theory of the Concept," *Hegel, Freedom, and Modernity* (New York: SUNY Press, 1992) that *Hegel thinks the concept in a way which actually overcomes the characteristic exclusiveness of conceptual thinking.* Hegel attempted to embrace both Aristotelianism and Christianity, and hence his legacy remains ambiguously poised between finite, determinate being and the infinite—giving precedence now to one, now to the other, attempting to mediate their difference.

4. Mark Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1987), offers one probing treatment of the turning upon and against Hegel particularly by French postmodern thinkers influenced by the interpretations of Hegel developed by Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard 1947), and Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946). Taylor emphasizes Hegel's ultimate reduction of difference to identity through the doctrine of the identity of identity and difference.

5. Brague, *Europe, la voie romaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992).

6. Ibid., 143.

7. Ibid., 143-144.

8. Ibid., 184; cf. 186-87.

9. Ibid., 36.

10. Guénoun, *Hypothèses sur l'Europe: Un essai de philosophie* (Paris: Editions Circé, 2000). Now translated by Christine Irizarry as *About Europe: Philosophical Hypotheses* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

11. See, for instance, Peter Trawny, *Heidegger und Hölderlin oder Der Europäische Morgen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.2004), 10, for this thesis typical of German Hellenism as crystallized especially by Hegel. See, further, Martin Heidegger, "Europa und die deutsche Philosophie," in Hans-Helmut Gander, ed., *Europa und die Philosophie* (Frankfurt a.M.: , 1993)

12. For the development of this critical penchant from Neoplatonism to Critical Theory, see *On What Cannot Be Said*, volumes 1 and 2. For "limitless criticism," see "Apophasis and the Turn of Philosophy to Religion: From Neoplatonic Negative Theology to Postmodern Negation of Theology," in *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 60 (2006): 64.

13. Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry*, trans. from Hebrew by Naomi Goldblum (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

14. "Damascius. Of the Ineffable: Aporetics of the Notion of an Absolute Principle," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 12/1 (2004): 111-31.

15. The pervasive, melancholic, often self-deprecating sense of inferiority in Virgil's *Aeneid* vis-à-vis its Homeric forerunner is a classic expression of this attitude. See "The Secondariness of Virgilian Epic and its Unprecedented Originality," *College Literature: A Journal of Critical Literary Studies* 40/1 (2013): 11-31.

16. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Déconstruction du christianisme*, vol. 1: *La Déclosion* (Paris: Galilée, 2005) and vol. 2: *L'Adoration* (Paris: Galilée, 2010).

17. Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), xv.

18. For a reconstruction of this tradition, see *On What Cannot Be Said*, vol. 1.

19. Ulrich Beck, *Der kosmopolitische Blick: oder Krieg ist Frieden* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 250.

20. Ibid., 253.

21. Representative of this tendency are bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990) and Jane Flax, *Disputed Subjects* (London: Routledge, 1993). Especially influential is Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). The issues are posed acutely in John Rajchman, ed., *The Identity in Question* (New York: Routledge, 1995). Some more recent critical revisions can be found in Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) and Linda Martín Alcoff, Michael Hames-García, Satya P. Mohanty, Paula M.L. Moya, eds., *Identity Politics Reconsidered: Future of Minority Studies* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

22. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido,

1944).

23. See Eduardo Mendieta, ed., *The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers* (New York: Routledge, 2005). I treat this topic in *Poetry and Apocalypse: Theological Disclosures of Poetic Language* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 67.

24. An approach to planetary conviviality is explored by Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, Part One: The Planet, pp. 29-83.

25. Jay L. Garfield, ed., *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

26. On this topic, see, for example, Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), especially chapter 2: "'Nous' et les 'Autres' (We and the Others) Is Universalism Ethnocentric?" pp. 24-49. Further indicative references are available in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) and *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, eds. Linda Martin Alcoff, Michael Hames-García, Satya P. Moanty, Paula M. L. Moya (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

27. I have previously dealt with this issue in another context in "The Canon Question and the Value of Theory: Towards a New (Non-)Concept of Universality," *The Canonical Debate Today. Crossing Disciplinary and Cultural Boundaries*, eds. Liviu Papadima, David Damrosch, and Theo D'haen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 55-71.

28. This perspective is developed with panache by Taylor in *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

29. One recent landmark of this realization is Hans Blumenberg's *Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit,* ed. A. Haverkamp (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2007).

30. Bonnie Honig, "Difference, Dilemmas, and the Politics of Home," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, p. 257.

31. For an overview, see Max Seckler, Berhard Welte, and Richard Schaeffler, *Aufklärung und Offenbarung*, *Christlicher Glaube in moderner Gesellschaft* 21 (Freiburg: Herder, 1980). Crucial source texts include Lessing's "Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts" (1780) in *Lessings Werke* (Salzburg: Bergland-Buch, 1964) and Hamann's *KONSOMPAS: Fragmente einer apokryphischen Sibylle über apokalyptische Mysterien* in *Sämtliche Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Josef Nadler (Vienna: Herder, 1949-57).

32. François Jullien suggestively explores this vocabulary in *De l'universel: De l'uniforme, du commun et du dialogue entre les cultures* (Paris: Fayard, 2008). Thinking the common is crucial also to the project of Jean-Luc Nancy, notably in *L'Adoration*. It is highlighted even at the outset, in the "Ouverture" of *La Déclosion*.

33. Paul Celan*, Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bände*, ed. Beda Allemann et al. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972), vol. III, 186.

34. The wound motif in Celan is examined most exhaustively by Ralf Willms, *Das Motiv der Wunde im lyrischen Werk von Paul Celan: Historisch-systematische Untersuchungen zur Poetik des Opfers* (Munich: AVM Verlag, 2011).

35. Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. II. English translation by Michael Hamburger in *The Poems of Paul Celan* (New York: Persea Books, 1995), 232-33.

36. This recurrent Derridian formula is placed on display, for example, in the title of the final chapter of Derrida's *Donner la mort* (Paris: Galilée, 1993).

37. *Sauf le nom* (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 106. The mutual implication of democracy and deconstruction is explored from a variety of critical perspectives in *La démocratie à venir: Autour de Jacques Derrida*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet (Paris: Galilée, 2004).

38. See, for example, Nancy, *L'Adoration*, 50-51.

39. Novalis, *Fragmente und Studien* 1797-1798, in *Novalis Werke, ed.* Gerhard Schulz *(*München: C.H. Beck, 2001), # 71, 401.

40. See excerpts from Schelling's *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (Philosophy of Revelation) in Franke, *On What Cannot Be Said,* vol. 2, 64-73.

41. G. W. F. Hegel, *Frühe Schriften* in *Werke*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. 1, 234-36.

42. One intense encounter with apophatic thought by Agamben is his *La ragazza indicibile. Mito e mistero di Kore*, with Monica Ferrando (Milan: Electa, 2010).

43. Peter Sloterdijk, *Falls Europa erwacht. Gedanken zum Programm einer Weltmacht am Ende des Zeitalters ihrer politischen Absence* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1994).

44. Ibid., 16, cf. 53; 19; 23.

45. Ibid., 23.

46. Ibid., 30.

47. Ibid., 27, 32.

48. Ibid., 27.

49. Ibid., 34.

50. Ibid., 50-53.

51. Ibid., 58-60.

52. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: La fondation de l'universalisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), trans. Ray Brassier as *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

53. Giorgio Agamben, *Il tempo che resta: Un commento alla lettera ai Romani* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000), trans. Patricia Dailey as *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford University Press, 2005). Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003) and Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), c. 3: "The Politics of Truth, or, Alain Badiou as a Reader of St. Paul," pp. 127-170. A crucial reconstruction of the development of the discussion is Dominik Finkelde, *Politische Eschatologie nach Paulus: Badiou-Agamben-Žižek-Santner* (Vienna: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2007). An important precursor text is Jacob Taubes, *Die politische Theologie des Paulus*, ed. Aleida Assmann (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993), trans. Dana Hollander as *The Political Theology of Paul* (Stanford University Press, 2004). Rich contributions reflecting on the debate are found in John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff, eds., *Saint Paul Among the Philosophers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009) and in John Milbank and Slavoj Žižek, *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology,* ed. Creston Davis (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2010).

54. James R. Martel, *Divine Violence: Walter Benjamin and the Eschatology of Sovereignty* (New York: Routledge, 2012).