

conception of the intact that is not brought into play as an effort to restore intactness, but to leave intactness to what has not yet been thought. Of course these issues cannot be solved here, but they do indicate that the meaning for thinking of both figures of thought – faith as well as the holy – remains an issue for thought after Heidegger and after Derrida.

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"Safe, Intact": Derrida, Nancy, and the "Deconstruction of Christianity"

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It is a safe bet to say that whenever there is a discussion of "the unscathed" in Derrida's work, the terms "safe" and "intact" almost always accompany each other, while in the work of Jean-Luc Nancy they are held apart.¹ An exploration of the occurrence of the words "safe" and "intact" in the writings of Derrida and Nancy, I would like to suggest, allows us to catch a glimpse of some of the fundamental differences between the late work of these two thinkers as well as to distinguish the most salient features of their divergent interpretations of deconstruction.

Since his heart transplant in the early 1990s Jean-Luc Nancy seems to have had a new lease on life. He has been an extremely prolific thinker and writer, publishing a healthy number of texts on a variety of subjects – democracy, justice, love, sleep, identity, the city, art – at an enviable pace (Nancy 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b). Arguably, many of his major texts have been authored after his transplant and the ensuing illness caused by an antirejection drug. In a number of these works, Nancy has been vigorously engaged in the project of the "deconstruction of Christianity," which to date includes two books, *Dis-Enclosure*, *Adoration*, and other related publications. As well as being a thinker of extraordinary caliber in his own right, Jean-Luc Nancy, as an interlocutor and friend of Jacques Derrida for decades, has been at the vanguard of deconstruction, such that after Derrida's death he has been treated as the main inheritor of and spokesperson for deconstruction. While Derrida and Nancy's relationship is extremely complex and interwoven and would require several volumes to carefully explicate, it is worthwhile to make an attempt, however modest, to differentiate their projects and their approaches to deconstruction. It is true that a cluster of shared themes, terms, motifs, and methodologies link the two thinkers, and for any attentive reader of their work, their disagreements regarding

certain themes – like community, fraternity, democracy, generosity, faith, and belief – will not be new. Their abiding friendship also speaks to the fact that neither views friendship as the necessity to always be in agreement. What marks out the singularity of each thinker, I would like to argue, is the way each understands the meaning of deconstruction.

Over the decades that they knew each other, Derrida and Nancy collaborated on a variety of projects. After Derrida's first visit to Strasbourg in 1970, Nancy and his colleague Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe participated in Derrida's seminars at the École Normale Supérieure in the early 1970s. All three were involved in GREPH (Groupe de recherches sur l'enseignement philosophique), which lobbied for the earlier instruction of philosophy in the French educational system (resulting in the publication of a collective volume in 1977) and in editing the book series "La philosophie en effet" with Sarah Kofman, initially for the publisher Flammarion in 1975 and then for Galilée starting in 1985. In 1980 Nancy, with Lacoue-Labarthe, also organized the first Cerisy conference devoted to Derrida's work, "Les fins de l'homme," and at the invitation of Derrida both formed the Centre de recherches philosophiques sur la politique at the École Normale, lasting from 1980 to 1984, producing two volumes investigating the relationship between deconstruction and the political. In the later years, Derrida and Nancy often appeared together at countless conferences. Their long friendship, however, did not prevent Derrida from expressing his philosophical disagreements with Nancy, which are given voice in *Politics of Friendship* (regarding the question of community and fraternity), *On Touching* (concerning the prominence and privilege bestowed upon the sense of touch since philosophy's inception), and *Rogues* (in particular, on the subject of freedom). This chapter will not focus on the well-documented early exchanges between the two thinkers, but will concentrate on the intersection of the later writings of Derrida and Nancy concerning the general topic of "religion." What is of particular interest is the significant role that the interpretation of the term *salut* – which in French has two meanings "greeting, salutation" as well as "salvation" – plays in this interaction.²

In broad outlines, for Derrida, the goal of "religion," if it can be said to have one, is to keep the living – the adherents of "religion" – safe, unscathed, and intact. The "unscathed (*indemne*)" – the untouched, the uncontaminated, *heilig*, safe and sound – is that which has not suffered damage. It can also refer to either a virgin state that once existed, in which no damage was suffered, or to a state where things will be restored as unharmed. "Religion" thus functions to indemnify: to prevent and secure against hurt or damage and to restore purity, as well as to compensate for any loss that is incurred. Derrida writes of "the necessity for every religion or all sacralization also to involve healing" or the promise of a cure (FK, 74 n. 30). The role of religion, then, is to heal, to restore as unscathed. Yet that which desires to be intact (unscathed, untouched) cannot sustain its goal. It cannot remain whole nor have perfect integrity because unwittingly it is in-tact, in touch. Its auto-immunity means that what desires to be safe, cannot ensure its safety.

Conversely, in Nancy's view, it is only the deceased that is intact. What is safe is that which remains whole, unscathed, and intact. And it is only the dead one that is safe, intact, out of reach. The deceased is untouchable in its death. What death can "offer" is to touch – a touch *without contact* – or to greet the intact. *Salut*, according to Nancy, is thus not a wish to save but an address, an invitation that wishes safety for its addressee. A salutation declares: Be safe, be whole, intact in death. It touches the intact, the untouchable, but without any *contact*. While reserve and restraint are appropriate only for the dead one in Nancy's view, in Derrida's assessment, as we will see, it is the living who have the right to respect and restraint, since it is the task of "religion" to save the living as intact.

1. The Unscathed – Derrida's "Faith and Knowledge"

Derrida lays out the core of his views on "religion" in a series of dense, elliptic paragraphs in "Faith and Knowledge," which are by now familiar and often cited.³ Derrida writes that a discourse on "religion" cannot be dissociated from a discourse on salvation [*salut*], that is, "to save, be saved, save oneself" (FK, 2, paragraph 2). Early in the text, he asks whether "the unscathed [*indemne*]" is not "the very matter – the thing itself [*la chose même*] – of religion" (FK, 23, paragraph 27). By the unscathed, Derrida explains in a footnote, he is referring to "that which has not suffered damage or prejudice, *damnum*" (FK, 69–70 n. 16). Thus the word "unscathed" speaks of "the unimpaired": "the pure, non-contaminated, untouched, the sacred and the holy before all profanation, all wound, all offence, all lesion" (FK, 69–70).

He also notes that the French word *indemne* has often been used to translate *heilig* ("sacred, safe and sound [*sain et sauf*], intact") in Heidegger (FK, 70 n. 16). In the footnote mentioned above he further elucidates that *damnum* gives the French language the word *dam*, which among other things is tied to the sacrifice offered to the gods as ritual compensation. Thus, a discussion of the unscathed will also involve *indemnification*, "the process of compensation and the restitution, sometimes sacrificial, that reconstitutes purity intact, renders integrity safe and sound, restores cleanliness and property unimpaired" (FK, 69–70 n. 16).

In the footnote, Derrida informs us that throughout "Faith and Knowledge" he will regularly associate the words "unscathed," "indemnity," "indemnification" with the words "immune," "immunity," "immunization," and above all "auto-immune" (FK, 69–70 n. 16, paragraph 27). It should be noted that the inclusion of the notion of auto-immunity here, and its association with the unscathed, indicates that the unscathed or the intact is by no means that which remains or can remain whole with perfect integrity, but that which, in the drive to remain whole and unscathed, in order to protect itself, harms itself. In another important footnote on auto-immunity, Derrida observes that while immunity designates freedom or exemption from charges and obligations, as well as the inviolability of the asylum sought in the

Christian church, auto-immunity refers to a living organism protecting itself against its self-protection by destroying its own immune system (FK, 72 n. 27, paragraph 37). If the goal of "religion" is defined as the desire to remain unscathed, its association with the auto-immune suggests that this desire for absolute immunity is a structurally untenable phantasm: whatever seeks to be auto-immune cannot be kept intact, for it is vulnerable to self-harm and to sacrificial self-destruction.

Later in the same text Derrida speculates that the religious is in fact bound up with the convergence of two experiences. The two strata or two sources of "religion" are the experience of *belief* [*croissance*] and the experience of the unscathed, of *sacredness* [*sacralité*] or of *holiness* [*sainteté*] (FK, 33). In French *sainteté* means "saintliness" or "holiness" as well as "sanctity." This allows Derrida to refer later to the "sacro-sanct" (derived from Lat. *sacrosanctus*, from *sacer* "sacred" and *sanctus* "holy," "worthy of veneration"; also bearing the ironic modern meaning of "untouchable, taboo"). Benveniste glosses the two terms that compose the compound word: what distinguishes *sacer* from *sanctus* is the difference between "implicit" and "explicit" sacredness. What is *sacer* has its own proper value by itself whereas *sanctus* is "a state resulting from a prohibition for which men are responsible, from an injunction supported by law" (Benveniste 1973, 455). Thus, *sacrosanctus* is "what is *sanctus* by a *sacrum*: what is defended by a veritable sacrament." In the second part of his essay entitled "... and pomegranates" Derrida states that all the values associated with "sacro-sanctity (*heilig*, holy, safe and sound, unscathed, intact, immune, free, vital, fecund, fertile, strong, and above all ... 'swollen')," or what he calls "the semantic genealogy of the unscathed," have to be thought together with the "machine-like [*machinique*]" (FK, 48, paragraph 38).

Speaking of this "drive to be unscathed [*la pulsion de l'indemne*], on the part of that which is allergic to contamination, *save by itself, auto-immunely* [*sauf par soi-même, auto-immunément*]" (FK, 25, paragraph 28) Derrida further explains:

We are here in a space where all self-protection of the unscathed, of the safe and sound [*sain(t) et sauf*], of the sacred (*heilig*, holy) must protect itself against its own protection, its own police, its own power of rejection, in short, against its own, which is to say against its own immunity. It is this terrifying but fatal logic of *the auto-immunity of the unscathed* that will always associate Science and Religion. (FK, 44, paragraph 37)

Drawing on Benveniste's "rich chapter" on "the Sacred [*Le sacré*]" in *Indo-European Language and Society*, Derrida notes that the holy and sacred character is also defined through a notion of exuberant and fecund force (FK, 74 n. 30). Even though Benveniste does not note this fact in his discussion, Derrida adds that there is a necessity for

(... every religion or all sacralization also to be healing [*guérison*] – *heilen*, *healing* [*in English*] – health, *salut*, or promise of a cure – *cura*, *Sorge* – horizon of redemption, of

the restoration of unscathed, of *indemnification*). The same must also be said for the English "holy," neighbor of "whole" ("entire, intact," therefore "safe, saved, unscathed in its integrity, immune")... Whoever possesses *le "salut,"* that is, whose physical integrity is intact, is also capable of conferring *le "salut."* "To be intact" is the luck that one wishes, predicts or expects. It is natural to have seen in such perfect "integrity" a divine grace, a sacred meaning. By its very nature, divinity possesses the gift of integrity, of *salut*, of luck, and can impart it to human beings. (FK, 74–75 n. 25, paragraph 39, citing Benveniste 1973, 451–452)

Thus, the "absolute imperative" or the "law of salvation [*loi du salut*]" is "saving the living as intact, the unscathed, the safe [*le sauf*] (*heilig*), which has the right to absolute respect, restraint [*retenue*], modesty" (FK, 49, paragraph 40). This sets up the necessity of an enormous task: reconstituting the chain of analogous motifs in what Derrida calls

the sacro-sanctifying attitude or intentionality, in relation to that which is, should remain or should be allowed to be what it is (*heilig*, living, strong and fertile, erect and fecund: safe, whole, unscathed, immune, sacred, holy [*saint*] and so on). Salvation and health [*Salut et santé*]" (FK, 49)

This intentional attitude, Derrida continues, bears several names belonging to the same family: respect, modesty, restraint, inhibition, *Achtung* (Kant), *Scheu*, *Verhaltenheit*, *Gelassenheit* (Heidegger) all of which mark a restraint or holding back [*halte*] in general, constituting "a sort of universal structure of religiosity" (FK, 49, paragraph 40). These terms open the possibility of the religious, a possibility that itself remains divided. On the one hand, it involves "respectful or inhibited abstention before what remains sacred mystery, and what ought to remain intact or inaccessible, like the mystical immunity of a secret." On the other hand, this holding back "opens an access without mediation or representation" to what remains unscathed, but "not without an intuitive violence" (FK, 49). All (of the above) "stop short of that which must or should remain safe and sound, intact, unscathed, before what must be allowed to be what it ought to be, sometimes even at the cost of sacrificing itself and in prayer: the other" (FK, 50, paragraph 40).

2. Tact and Touch: Derrida's *On Touching* – Jean-Luc Nancy

In *On Touching* – Jean-Luc Nancy, Derrida's monumental book on touch, touching, the *sense* of touch in the history of philosophy, and Nancy's body of work, the entirety of which is referred to as an "immense philosophic treatise of touch" (TJLN, 107), Derrida turns to what links "religion," specifically Christianity, to touching.⁴ At the beginning, Derrida comments on a 1978 essay by Nancy entitled "Psyche," written on a phrase from Freud ("Psyche ist ausgedehnt: weiss nichts davon").

Derrida writes of an impassive, untouchable, and intact Psyche ("Psyche the untouchable, Psyche the intact"). Even though Psyche (or in other words, soul or thought) is "extended," this is an extension that is untouchable. This Psyche is a Psyche that does not touch anything. It has an intangible body, which is also intangible to itself.

Derrida remarks on the Aristotelian legacy that any thought on touching has to concern itself with both the tangible and the intangible. In ch. IV entitled "The Untouchable, or the Vow of Abstinence," he discusses what he calls "the law of tact." He suggests that the law is the untouchable prior to all the ritual prohibitions imposed on touching by religion or culture. The law enjoins us to respect, which commands us to keep a distance, to not touch. At the origin of law, thus, there is tact and the law (of tact) commands to touch *without* touching. After all, what is tact but "knowing [how] to touch *without* touching, without touching *too much*" (TJLN, 67). There is the law of tact. As Derrida writes, approaching "the *figure* of touching," touching touches what it does not touch. It "brings into contact (without contact) contact and noncontact" (TJLN, 75).

There must be some "touchable-untouchable" (TJLN, 78 n. 17). We must think, Derrida states, "the logic of an untouchable that remains right at, right on [*reste à même*], if we can say, the touchable" (ibid.). The touchable-untouchable is not someone and should not be confused with what in certain cultures is called an "untouchable."⁵ The untouchable could not be named and identified, Derrida writes, except insofar as "there is some touchable-untouchable in general, before every religion, cult or prohibition" (ibid.). In fact, every vow of abstinence "experiments with the touchable as untouchable" (ibid.).

Derrida sets up his analysis of Christianity's relation to touch in "Tender," the following chapter. The Gospels, he writes, present the Christic body as a "touching body as much as *touched*, as a touching-touched flesh. Between life and death" (TJLN, 100). As Derrida suggests "one can take the Gospels as a *general haptics*. Salvation [*le salut*] saves by touching, and the savior, that is, the one who touches, is also the touched: saved, safe, unscathed. Touched by grace" (TJLN, 100). Derrida provides examples from the Gospels of salvation by touching: "Jesus the Savior is 'touching,' he is the One who touches, and most often with his hand, and most often in order to purify, heal, or resuscitate. To save [*Sauver*], in a word. He heals or purifies the leper by touching him" (Matt. 8:3). He "heals Peter's mother-in-law by touching her hand with his hand" (Matt. 8:15); "heals the blind by touching their eyes" (Matt. 9:29–30); "cures the deaf and the mute" (Mark 7:32–36); "heals and saves from fear" (Matt. 17:7–8); "he even cures death itself by touching a coffin" (Luke 7:13–15). Often (vulnerable and innocent) children are touched by Jesus (Luke 18:15–17). Jesus touches, having been touched to the heart, where he is "first moved and touched" (TJLN, 100–101).

However, Jesus is not only touching,

the one who Touches, but he is also the Touched . . . he is "*to be touched*, he can and must be touched. This is the condition for salvation. To be safe and sound, to attain immunity, *touch*, to touch him [*le toucher, le toucher*], Him. Or better, to touch, without touching that which would come into contact with his body, that is, like a fetish, or the origin of fetishism, his garment, his cloak and thus what saves is not touching, but the faith that this touching signifies and attests to. (TJLN, 101)

Derrida notes that it appears that the "literal allusions to touching are more rare, almost absent in the Gospel according to John" (TJLN, 102). This may be because "Jesus becomes for a moment untouchable" and "the 'Touch me not' (*noli me tangere, me mou haptou*) addressed to Mary Magdalene at the moment when, still in tears near the grave, she has just recognized him" is reported by John (TJLN, 102). Moreover, Derrida adds, the motif and the lexicon of touching in the Epistles (in Corinthians, Colossians, Timothy, Hebrews) are commonly associated with "a prohibition: do not touch, so that it remains untouchable" (TJLN, 103 n. 23).

What comes to pass when one has to touch the untouchable? This theme gets broached in Nancy's text *The Experience of Freedom* published in 1988. There Nancy employs "the figure of touch" in relation to the limit: by being led to the limit, philosophy has touched the limit (TJLN, 103). On the one hand, Derrida explains, no one has ever touched such an abstract thing as a limit, but on the other hand, one only touches a limit – to touch is to touch a limit. This limit, which philosophy will have thus touched (upon), finds itself to be at the same time touchable and untouchable. Thus, there can only be "a *figure* of touch"; for one "only touches by way of a figure," as the touchable is what is impossible to touch. "History of the untouchable, therefore, of immunity, of the unscathed, of the safe [*du sauf*]. Save, safe – touching [*Sauf – le toucher*]" (TJLN, 104). However, Derrida expresses a reservation regarding this *figure* of touch: what is the logical or rhetorical legitimacy, the phenomenological status of that which one cannot "without trepidation" call "the *figure* of 'touch'" (TJLN, 106)?

Has the entire tradition of Western philosophy not been a "haptology" or, what Derrida calls, a "haptocentric metaphysics?" Even though touching, for Nancy, is a resistance to all forms of idealism and subjectivism, does it still not function as "the motif of a kind of absolute realism" (TJLN, 46)? Does not this thinking of the body with its connotations of immanence, immediacy, and intuitionism imply an almost seamless relation between that which touches and what is touched? In *On Touching* Derrida seeks to show the theological foundations of a thinking of the body, its propriety and its integrity; a thinking that privileges the notion of touch as a kind of contact. This thinking, with roots in Christian thought and in the Christian conception of incarnation, where spirit is made flesh in the body of Christ, demonstrates the belonging together of Western philosophy and Christian theology, of phenomenological thought and a doctrine of incarnation. Derrida labels Nancy's appeal to

and recuperation of touch, a "quasi-hyper-transcendental-ontologization of tact" (TJLN, 292).

3. Do Not Wish to Touch Me: *Noli Me Tangere*

Prompted by Derrida's *On Touching*, Nancy's *Noli Me Tangere* may be read as a response to what Nancy calls Derrida's "rabbinical skepticism," a riposte, an impassioned corrective regarding the question of touch, and an innovative reworking of the notion of resurrection (Nancy 2008a, 25–26 n. 4). Devoted to an analysis of exemplary representations of the life of Jesus by artists such as Rembrandt, Dürer, Titian, Pontormo, Cano Alonso, Bronzino, and Correggio, *Noli Me Tangere* takes the form of meditations on specific episodes or scenes from the Bible. In this short book Nancy takes up Christ's relation to touching, while presenting a new interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus. This text is also Nancy's most extensive meditation on the notion or concept of resurrection in general.⁶

In Christian and post-Christian iconography, moments of the account or narrative of Jesus (an account that is presented as a succession of scenes) have been taken up as motifs by painters and sculptors. If the life of Jesus, Nancy explains, is "a representation of the truth that he claims himself to be," then this life is identical to "the truth that appears in being represented" (2008a, 4). Thus, underscoring the identity of the truth and its figures (2008a, 5), the *logos* cannot be taken as "distinct from the figure or the image" (2008a, 4).

Nancy writes that the phrase *Noli me tangere* has made touching "a major stake in taboo as the constitutive structure of sacrality" (2008a, 13). "The *untouchable*," whose most striking example is the Hindu figure of the pariah, Nancy remarks, is "everywhere present wherever there is the sacred, that is, [wherever there is] withdrawal, distinction, and the incommensurable" (2008a, 13–14).⁷ However, in Christianity, Nancy contends, nothing and no one is untouchable, particularly because "the very body of God is given to be eaten and drunk" (2008a, 14). One could even say that "Christianity will have been the invention of the religion of touch, of the sensible, of presence that is immediate to the body and to the heart" (ibid.). This would thus render the famous scene of *Noli me tangere*, mentioned by Derrida and the subject of Nancy's book, an exception (ibid.).

Nancy's proposal is to think together the two sayings *Noli me tangere* and *Hoc est corpus meum* "in an oxymoronic or paradoxical mode" (ibid.). What is paradoxical and exceptional about the *Noli* scene, he claims, is that "Christ expressly rules out the touching of his resurrected body" (ibid.). While the resurrected body is "tangible," here "it does not present itself as such" (ibid.). This is the only time that Christ does not want to be touched, Nancy makes clear, only because he "does not want to be held back, for he is departing" (2008a, 15).

Nancy presents a nonreligious meaning of "resurrection" as "the departing into which presence actually withdraws . . . Just as it comes, so it goes: that is to say, it is not" (ibid.). Resurrection is thus "the uprising, the sudden appearance of the unavailable, of the other and of the disappearing *in the body itself and as the body*" (ibid.). This is because "He dies indefinitely," he is the one who does not "cease to depart" (2008a, 16). The one who says "Do not touch me" is the one whose "presence is that of a disappearance indefinitely renewed or prolonged" (ibid.). It is as if, Nancy writes, he is saying "I am already going away; I am only in this departure; I am the parting of this departure" (ibid.; Nancy's emphasis). This Nancy calls "a stance before death" (2008a, 18), "a standing upright before and in death" (ibid.). What is affirmed is "the stance (thus also the reserve, restraint) of an untouchable, of an inaccessible" (ibid.). If touching (him) indicates "the immediacy of a presence," then Christ is "the untouchable who holds himself beyond reach" and is not touched by Mary Magdalene (2008a, 21).

According to Nancy's analysis of the pictorial representation of the resurrection, painters generally depict an episode that is not given to be seen. In the "textual scenes" where the resurrected one appears, however, Jesus invites the disciples to touch him to assure them that he is there in flesh and blood (2008a, 22). What this demonstrates for Nancy is that "faith [*la foi*]," in contrast to belief [*croissance*], "consists of seeing and hearing *without tampering*" (ibid.). In Nancy's assessment, the *Noli* is to be read as "Don't touch me, for I'm touching you, and this touch is such that it holds you at a distance" (2008a, 36). Later in the chapter entitled "The Hands," Nancy qualifies this by adding that *Noli me tangere* does not simply say "Do not touch me" but also "Do not wish to touch me" (2008a, 37).

In Nancy's estimation, resurrection is not a return to life or a process of regeneration (2008a, 17). As he writes in *Noli me tangere*, "the resurrection [of Christ] is not a resuscitation [*réanimation*]: it is the infinite continuation of death that displaces and dismantles all the values of presence and absence, of animate and inanimate, of body and soul" (2008a, 44, trans. modified). He is careful to stress that "this raising [*levée*] of the body is not a 'relève' in the sense given to this word by Derrida to translate the Hegelian *Aufhebung*" (2008a, 18), not a dialecticization or a mediation of death. There is no passage into another life (ibid.). In addition, *anastasis* does not come from the self; it comes to the self from the other (2008a, 19). For Nancy, the statement "I am resurrected" does not signify the accomplishment of an I but rather a passivity. This is why he claims that "I am dead" and "I am resurrected" say the same thing (ibid.). Resurrection, Nancy writes, "designates the singularity of existence": "everyone resurrects, one by one and body for body" (2008a, 46).

That Nancy is bent on presenting resurrection as a "more discreet," mundane, "familiar," rather than "spectacular" affair (2008a, 22), with a "less flamboyant," "natural" character rather than a "supernatural" one, can be discerned from his descriptions, as well as from the negative valence he gives to terms such as "a spectral body" (he tells us that the resurrected body is not a spectral or phantasmagoric body

but a tangible one) (2008a, 15); "supernatural magic" (2008a, 25); "fantastic film" (the episode of Lazarus is not a fantastic film, we are informed) (2008a, 18); "magical trick" (2008a, 15); "apparition" (2008a, 45); and "miracle" (the episode of Thomas is not at all miraculous, he tells us (2008a, 22 n. 36)).⁸

A summary of Nancy's views on resurrection, and other related concepts such as "eternal life," highlights the differences between Derrida and Nancy. Rather than a return to life, resurrection, for Nancy, signifies a reconfiguration of death and dying. He underscores the importance of a notion of death in his analysis when he remarks in *Noli Me Tangere* that "without death there would only be contact, contiguity, and contagion, a cancerous propagation of life that would as a consequence no longer be life" (2008a, 45). In addition, belief is linked to the spectacular, whereas faith consists of seeing and hearing where there is nothing exceptional for the eyes and ears (2008a, 22). Faith knows to see and hear without touching. Further, the living (or the adherents of religion) have no desire to be intact. Since Christianity can correctly be described as the religion of touch, it is only the departing body of the resurrected Christ that is untouchable. Therefore, the prescription "Noli me tangere" is to be understood as an exception or an anomaly.

4. Intact: Nancy's "Consolation, désolation" and "Salut à toi"

Nancy returns to Derrida's previous comments on a couple of occasions before and after Derrida's passing away, where he takes up Derrida's objections to his portrayal of resurrection. It is worth pointing out that the word "intact" occurs on a number of occasions. In the yet to be translated three-page "Foreword" to *Chaque fois unique* (published in October 2003), Derrida directly addresses Nancy's uptake of resurrection (AVP, 9–11). Resisting any reworking of resurrection in whatever shape or form, no matter how radical, Derrida contrasts it with what he calls "the end of the world." Writing in the French edition of what first appeared as a book of farewells in English as *The Work of Mourning*, a collection of pieces written after the death of friends and colleagues, Derrida observes that each death and each farewell is unique (and thus resists being compared to another and, perhaps, to being gathered together in a collection). Each farewell, he tells the reader, is the farewell of a salutation that is resigned to greet the possibility and necessity that it be not returned and to greet the end of the world as the end of every resurrection, thus putting an end to all resurrection. For, however different it may be from "classical resurrection," *anastasis* will continue to console, a consolation that contains some grain of cruelty. *Anastasis*, for Derrida, "postulates the existence of some God and assures that the end of a world will not be the end of the world. Each death spells the end of the world. The world has gone away; there can be no world – and this end leaves no room for resurrection (AVP, 11).

The dead one is safe and intact, and what is intact is out of reach, not to be touched. This is what Nancy declares in "Consolation, désolation," an essay written for a special issue of *Magazine Littéraire* devoted to Jacques Derrida (Nancy 2004a). In this brief piece Nancy relates what is intact to what is dead. In contrast to Derrida's view, for Nancy it is not the adherents of religion who wish to be safe, but safety is reserved for the dead one, who is greeted. As Nancy explains: "the noun 'salut' denotes address, invitation or injunction with a view to being safe" (2004a, 58). Discussing the double valences of the word *salut*, Nancy attempts to distinguish that which is "safe [sauf]" from "the saved [le sauvé]." Safe (*salvus*), he explains, is what remains whole, unscathed, intact. While "the saved" refers to what has "escaped from the injury or the blemish that it had suffered from," safe is "that (or that one, he/she) [cela (ou celui, celle)] which remains intact, out of reach. In other words, it is "that which has never been touched" (ibid.).

In this way the dead carry off with them, as we say, the unique and sole world each of them was. They thus carry off the entire world, for never is the world a world if not unique, alone, and entirely intact. *Solus, salvus*: there is salvation only of the sole [il n'y a de salut que du seul]. (Nancy 2004a, 59)

Nancy clarifies that "to console," signaled in the title of his essay and referred to by Derrida in his "Foreword" to *Chaque fois unique*, is never to comfort, to soothe the pain, or to restore the life of the dead. "*Solor*, to comfort, is foreign to *solus*" but "fortif[ies] desolation," makes "its harshness inflexible and untouchable" (2004a, 58). The deceased, whose death is untouchable, thus "disappears in the absolute isolation" of his or her death (2004a, 59). "The salutation desolates [the name] as it desolates itself" (ibid.). And before this isolation, "I am alone, each time absolutely alone" (ibid.). What death "offers us," Nancy writes, is to "touch the intact" (2004a, 58). However, no contact (whether sensible, intelligible, or imaginary) with the intact is possible. For, "the salutation touches the untouchable," but it does so in the form of an address "that confirms for him his death (2004a, 58–59). This salutation (*le salut*) "salutes the other in the untouchable intactness of his or her insignificant propriety or ownness" (ibid.).

Taking issue with Derrida's suspicion or refusal of any salvation while referring to the 16 deceased figures eulogized in *Chaque fois unique*, Nancy writes that "Derrida's *salut*" "still saves no matter what" (2004a, 59). "It does not save anything from the abyss" but it "salutes the abyss saved" (ibid.). "To save [sauver]," Nancy claims, "is not 'to heal'" (2008b, 27). Moreover, saving is not a "process, and it is not aimed toward an ultimate 'health' (*salvus* and *sanus* are not the same word). It is a unique and instantaneous act by which the one who is already in the abyss is held back or recovered" (ibid.). Saving, then, "does not annul the abyss" but "takes place in it" (ibid.). Glossing the notion of resurrection discussed in his previous essays, Nancy

writes that *anastasis* would designate nothing other than "redress [*redressement*] (*anastasis*)," a "raising up [*levée*] (and not sublation [*relève*])" (2004a, 59). There is only salutation "for there is nothing to save" (*ibid.*). In his or her dying, "each one is saluted by himself, inasmuch as this 'himself' is desolated, intact, and does not and will not come back to us or to himself" (*ibid.*).

In his first item of writing on Derrida penned in October 2004 immediately following his death, a brief homage called "Salut à toi, salut aux aveugles que nous devenons," Nancy responds to the notion of *salut* developed in a number of places by Derrida (Nancy 2004b). Sending Derrida a salutation, Nancy wishes him safety: "salve, be safe! [*salve, sois sauf!*]." Extending this notion to safety in death and as death, Nancy wishes for Derrida to "be safe not from death but in it, or else if you allow, if it is allowed, be safe as death [*sois sauf comme la mort*]. Immortal like it [death]." Safety, then, is what is wished for, and reserved for, the dead, not the living.

5. There's Deconstruction and There's Deconstruction⁹

In a piece entitled "Deconstruction of Christianity," first delivered as a lecture in 1995, published as an article before appearing as a chapter in *Dis-Enclosure*, Nancy claims that "Christianity is the very thing – *the thing itself* [*la chose même*] – that has to be thought."¹⁰ This claim is of course a gloss on, and a kind of response to, Derrida's insistence in "Faith and Knowledge," quoted above, that the unscathed is "the very matter, the thing itself" to be thought about religion. Since the appearance of the original article, Nancy has made good on the promise of continuing to pursue a project of the deconstruction of Christianity, which to date spans two books, *Dis-Enclosure* and *Adoration*, and other related publications. It would be impossible to make definitive judgments regarding Nancy's project, which is ongoing and constantly being amended and supplemented by new writings. We will restrict our discussion of this ever-expanding enterprise to the features that distinguish Nancy's sense of deconstruction from that of Derrida.

Writing of "the deconstruction of Christianity" in *On Touching*, Derrida claims that at a time when there is a *doxa* spreading powerfully on the subject of "globalization," at a time when Christian discourse informs in a confused but sure way all the import of this *doxa*, a *doxa* that carries with it the "world [*monde*]," with its vague equivalents globe, universe, earth, or *cosmos* (in its Pauline usage), Nancy's remarks may be intersecting with a strand of the Heideggerian project: "to dechristianize the thinking of the world, [of] the 'globalization of the world' [*mondialisation du monde*], of the world insofar as it worldifies or worldizes (*weltet*) itself" (TJLN, 54). Nancy's stated project of the deconstruction of Christianity, Derrida writes, "will be the test of a dechristianization of the world." This dechristianization, however, "will be a Christian victory" (TJLN, 54). In a number of places in *On Touching*, Derrida "speculates," in his own words, "rather freely" about Nancy's project even though, by his own

admission, he has only been familiar with the title of the project (TJLN, 54 n. 31). The deconstruction of Christianity, he comments later in the text, "appears to be a task so difficult, so paradoxical, almost impossible, always in danger of being exposed as a Christian hyperbole" (TJLN, 220).

In *Rogues* Derrida details the dissimilarities between deconstruction as he sees it and other similar projects, among which one could include Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity. In addition to pointing out the contrast between deconstruction and critique, Derrida summarizes these other differences as consisting of four features.

(1) The status of *logos*: Compared to deconstruction, Heideggerian *Destruktion* proceeded in the name of a more "originary" reinterpretation of *logos*. In contrast to deconstruction, it never really opposed logocentrism and was never against *logos* (ROG, 150 n. 14).

(2) The role of diagnosis: Derrida's deconstruction, distinct from the one practiced by Heidegger, never took "the objectifying form of a knowledge as 'diagnosis'" (ROG, 150 n. 14). Derridean deconstruction is "inscribed, undertaken, and understood in the very element of the language it calls into question" (*ibid.*). Moreover, it never associated itself with themes such as "after" or "post," death (of philosophy, of metaphysics, etc.), "completion," "surpassing," "overcoming (*Überwindung*)" or the end (*ibid.*). For deconstruction, it was never a matter of "the end of metaphysics" and that its closure did not signify the end. For, the closure of metaphysics does not surround or enclose something like "Metaphysics" in general and in the singular.

(3) The role of Luther: One should not only say "*Luther qui genuit Pascal*," Derrida remarks, but perhaps also "*Luther qui genuit Heidegger*" (*ibid.*). Derrida refers to the Lutheran legacy (*destructio*) of Heideggerian deconstruction in *On Touching* by cautioning that if "we do not want to mix up all the 'deconstructions' of our time," we should "never forget this Christian (Lutheran, Pascalian, Hegelian, Kierkegaardian, Marxian, etc.) memory" of Heideggerian deconstruction (*Destruktion*), which will never leave us when reading Heidegger (*ibid.*). In Theses 19 and 20 of *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), discussing the difference between Aristotelian Scholasticism's *theologia gloriae* and Paul's *theologia crucis*, Luther translates the Pauline term "destroy [*apolo*]" from *I Corinthians 1* into Latin as *destruere*, "to pull down, to dismantlè, to destroy" (see Luther 1957). Heidegger first used the term *Destruktion* in his winter semester 1919/20 lecture course, when referring to Luther's *destructio* of Aristotle (van Buren 1994).

"A 'deconstruction of Christianity,' if it is ever possible," Derrida cautions us, "should therefore begin by untying itself from a Christian tradition of *destructio*" (TJLN, 60). He adds that "the theme and word *Destruktion* designated in Luther a desedimentation of instituted theology (one could also say ontotheology) in the service of a more originary truth of Scripture." Despite his great respect for this tradition, Derrida explains, "the deconstruction that concerns me does not belong, in any way, and this is more than obvious, to the same filiation" (ROG, 150 n. 14).¹¹

(4) *Aporia*: While giving credit to what his thought owes to Aristotelian *aporia* and the Kantian antinomies, Derrida acknowledges "the privilege" that the deconstruction he favors grants to "aporetic thought" (ROG, 150 n. 14).

In the Ninth and Tenth Sessions of the first year of the recently published *La peine de mort [Death Penalty]* seminars (1999–2000) Derrida distinguishes Nancy's venture from the mode of reading that, since the 1960s, he has named deconstruction. Linking the overarching themes of his seminar, perjury and pardon, Derrida notes that Christianity is the religion that calls itself and is in its very essence the "religion of a forgiveness of sins" (SPM, 333). This singularity of a religion of forgiveness, he points out, is indissociably linked to "the Passion, thus the death of God, of the son of God, of God the Father made man as sacrifice and redemption of sins" (ibid.). Derrida notes that it is difficult to dissociate this idea of forgiveness from some death of God (the death of God, of course being "a Christian theme par excellence") from his resurrection and redemption (SPM, 334).

Thus Nancy's project of the deconstruction of Christianity, Derrida writes, is "the very thing [*la chose même*], business, and initiative of Christianity" (ibid.). For, what is a deconstruction that "overcomes itself as it is carried out, that sublates itself" (using Nancy's own description in "The Deconstruction of Christianity") but "a Christian deconstruction." Derrida states that by "the other deconstruction," the deconstruction that overcomes itself, we must understand a Christian deconstruction, pointing out its Lutheran legacy, a legacy also shared by Heideggerian *Destruktion* (ibid.). After all, Christianity, for Nancy, is what has been in a state of self-overcoming, a state that belongs to its very inner logic.

But one can, perhaps, Derrida suggests, think another deconstruction, "a deconstruction without sublation of this deconstruction," in other words, a deconstruction that does not sublate or overcome itself, what in a parenthetical remark during the session he calls "a radically non-Christian deconstruction" (SPM, 334n.). The question still remains, Derrida wonders rhetorically, whether or not "to self-deconstruct" amounts to the same thing as "'to ask forgiveness' or to pass through the ordeal of forgiveness" (SPM, 334). In the seminar, the indemnity of the unscathed, posed as the question of "religion" in "Faith and Knowledge," also emerges as the question of the death penalty. What both religion and the death penalty share, Derrida states, is a similar concern: "to come out *unscathed* [*sortir indemne*]" (ibid.). In the seminar Derrida deems "a deconstruction of death" to be insufficient since it involves a pre-understanding of the meaning of death, which itself must rest on the determination of the instant of death, the supposedly objective knowledge of what separates life and death. For Derrida, it is not enough to deconstruct death in order to assure one's salvation. As a result of this deconstruction, nothing (neither life nor death) "comes out unscathed [*ne sort pas indemne*]" (SPM, 328).

But what does "to come out unscathed" mean? In Session Ten, Derrida explains that indemnity—providing a further gloss on a crucial term in "Faith and Knowledge"—can

either mean "*being-unscathed* (that is, safe, sound, intact, virgin, unhurt, *heilig*, undamaged, holy)" or "*being-indemnified*, that is, being rendered once again unscathed, made unscathed, that is, paid, reimbursed by the payment of a compensation, redemption, by the payment of a debt" (SPM, 334). Derrida equates the death penalty's fantasy of a "calculating decision that attempts to put an end to finitude, to master the future, and to protect itself against the irruption of the other," with "what is called religion" (SPM, 349). But this "phantasm of the end of finitude" is the "other side of an infinitization," an infinite survival (ibid.). In other words, we desire to give ourselves death and to infinitize ourselves by giving ourselves death in a calculable, calculated, decidable fashion. This "phantasm of infinitization at the heart of finitude, an infinitization of survival assured by calculation," he states, "is at one with God" or "with belief in God, the experience of God, relation with God, faith or religion" (SPM, 350).

What religion and the death penalty have in common, then, is that in the desire to come out unscathed, they wish to master finitude and put an end to it. Since according to Nancy the trajectory of Western philosophical thought is inseparable from Christianity's trajectory and since the closure of metaphysics entails its own self-overcoming, it is Christianity, and its major tenets such as resurrection, incarnation, creation, and eternal life that require further thought and deconstruction. Yet Derrida's later writings on the topic of "religion" demonstrate that the very thing to be thought is not simply Christianity but rather the unscathed. Further, Derrida shows that the desire for being unscathed, safe, and intact—religion's desire—is bound to fail: for what desires to be safe and intact (the follower of a religion and not the dead one) is irreducibly auto-immune.

Notes

- 1 Due to changes in "fair use" (copyright) laws the three epigraphs chosen for this chapter were removed, since all epigraphs require permission and the publisher did not wish to obtain permission for them. I have thus reproduced the epigraphs below in this note. It is highly ironic that epigraphs have been excised or their use not permitted in a volume devoted to Derrida. After all, more than any thinker, it was Derrida who questioned the "proper" boundaries of a text, making the *exergue*, the *parergon*, the outwork, the footnote, etc.—the list of these terms is endless—the very subject of his writings.

The spitsport, kiljoy [*Le trouble-fête*] that I have remained . . . like an incorrigible choirboy, and Jewish no less (TJLN, 59).

In the end, I would prefer a real classical resurrection (Jacques Derrida, quoted in Nancy 2004c, x).

intact adj. — Lat. *intactus*, from negatival prefix *in* + *tactus*, past participle of *tangere* "to touch." *Le Petit Robert: Dictionnaire de la langue française*: intact adj. — 1. "A quoi l'on n'a pas

touché" (1835), "Qui n'a pas subi d'altération, de dommage" = entier 2. Vierge 3. Sauf. *Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary*: intact adj. 1. untouched, especially by anything that harms or diminishes: entire; uninjured.

- 2 References to the two aspects of *salut* in Derrida date back at least to "Avances" (1995), further developed in a number of texts since 1996: CIR; GD; FK; AEL; DFT; TJLN.
- 3 See Naas's exemplary analysis in Naas (2012).
- 4 For informative treatments of *On Touching*, see Miller (2009, 245–305), Bennington (2010), and McQuillan (2008, 2009).
- 5 See note 8 for Nancy's comments on the untouchable precisely in relation to culture.
- 6 For other discussions of resurrection by Nancy not discussed here, see "Blanchot's Resurrection" in Nancy (2008b).
- 7 The Untouchables (*Dalit*): "ground," "suppressed," "crushed," "broken to pieces" (Sanskrit). First used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, historically associated with Hindus, the term Dalit refers to those who pursued activities and held occupations considered as "polluting" and ritually impure among the Hindus, such as those involving butchering, leatherwork, removal of refuse, animal carcasses, and waste. They were segregated and banned from full participation in Hindu social life and consigned to work as manual laborers cleaning streets, latrines, and sewers.
- 8 Interestingly the description that Nancy provides in *Noli me tangere* of a dead person uncannily fits Derrida's description of a specter. At first, Mary Magdalene does not recognize Christ, for a dead person (*un mort*), as Nancy explains, "no longer properly appears" (2008a, 28). It is "the appearing of an appeared and disappeared" (28). I discuss Nancy's reading of Blanchot in Saghafi (2012).
- 9 This is a modification of the phrase "For there is deconstruction and deconstruction" (TJLN, 60). McQuillan (2008) refers to this phrase in his analysis of the relation between Derrida and Nancy.
- 10 Nancy (1998); I have used the English version of the essay, which subsequently appeared in Nancy (2008b).
- 11 As a rejoinder, Nancy (2008b, 189) calls for a "closer examination" of the uses of the term *destructio* in Luther before an eventual revisiting of the employment of *Destruktion/Zerstörung/Abbau* in Heidegger and of *Abbau* in Husserl.

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