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The Marrano God: Abstraction, Messianicity, and Retreat in Derrida's "Faith and Knowledge"

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Abstract: This article conducts a close reading of Derrida's 1994 essay, "Faith and Knowledge", devoted to the analysis of what Hegel called 'the religion of modern times'. The reference to Hegel's "Glauben und Wissen" is crucial here, since my reading is meant to offer a supplement to Michael Naas' commentary on "Faith and Knowledge", *Miracle and Machine*, in which Naas states that he is not going to pursue the connection between Derrida and Hegel. It was, however, Hegel who defined the 'modern religious sentiment' in terms of the 'religion of the death of God', and this definition constitutes Derrida's point of departure. Derrida agrees with Hegel's diagnosis, but is also critical of its Protestant–Lutheran interpretation, which founds modern religiosity on the 'memory of the Passion', and attempts a different reading of the 'death of God' motif as the 'divine retreat', pointing to a non-normative 'Marrano' kind of faith that stakes on the alternative 'memory of the Passover'. The apparent visibility of the 'returning religion' Derrida witnesses at the beginning of the 90s hides for him a new dimension of the 'original faith', which Derrida associates with the universal messianic justice and which he ascribes to the paradoxical position of the Marranos: the secret followers of the God 'in retreat'.

Keywords: Derrida; Hegel; Marranos; Faith and Knowledge; messianism; universalism

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> The feeling that God himself is dead is the sentiment on which the religion of modern times rests.
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> G.W.F. Hegel, "Faith and Knowledge"[1]

> How then to think—within the limits of reason alone—a religion which, without again becoming 'natural religion', would today be effectively universal? And which, for that matter, would no longer be restricted to a paradigm that was Christian or even Abrahamic?
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> Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge"[2]

> Claims have also been advanced to the effect that the question of Marranism was recently closed for good. I don't believe it for a second. There are still sons—and daughters—who, unbeknownst to themselves, incarnate or metempsychosize the ventriloquist specters of their ancestors.
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> Jacques Derrida, "Marx & Sons"[3]

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1 (Hegel 1977, p. 134).
2 (Derrida 2002, p. 53). Later on as FK.
3 (Derrida 1999, p. 262).

My aim is to offer a close reading of Derrida's seminal essay, "Faith and Knowledge", the sole subject of which is the analysis of 'the religion of modern times'. Hegel, who coined this phrase in his version of *Glauben und Wissen*, deeply convinced that modern form of religiosity is a true novelty, was still concerned about maintaining continuity with Christian theology in its reformed, Protestant-Lutheran, denomination. Derrida, no longer sharing this concern, experiments with a new concept of a non-normative Marrano religiosity, to which he himself leans in his autobiographical writings.[4] Yet his goal is the same as Hegel's: it is to define *die Religion der neuen Zeiten* in the new condition of 'globalitinization' [*mondialatinisation*] as an ubiquitous presence which spreads its 'good news' through all the possible channels of tele-phonia and tele-vision, making everybody witness its 'miracles' through the medium of the globally operating 'machine'.

In the symphony of voices, which Derrida orchestrates in his extremely rich essay, there is one on which I want to focus here: Hegel, since it is in the polemic with his concept of 'the death of God' and the mournful 'memory of the Passion' that Derrida develops his alternative Jewish–Marrano idea of the 'memory of Passover'.[5] In the text, also traditionally titled "Faith and Knowledge", Hegel refers to the 'modern religious sentiment' as the 'religion of the death of God', and—unlike Nietzsche, who will use this phrase in his critique of monotheism as an irreligious religion without a sense of the true *sacrum*—he connects it to the Christian motif of *kenosis*. The Hegelian God who dies as the sovereign ruler and creator—eternally safe and sound, the very paradigm of indemnity—in order to become contaminated by the creaturely element and work within this condition of impurity as the Spirit, is the kenotic God at his extreme. One cannot imagine a greater 'self-humbling' than the original death, retreat, self-restraint, self-withdrawal, and radical self-negation in which the Infinite becomes ashamed of its unscathed sovereignty and gives up on its perfect pleroma for the sake of the adventure of becoming. This 'kenosis in creation', which Hegel smuggled surreptitiously under the heading of *Entäusserung*—the word meaning 'exteriorization' in the Hegelian vocabulary, but before that used by Martin Luther in his translation of Paul's term *kenosis*—is the divine self-humbling to the point of self-erasure, from which there begins the 'Golgotha of the Absolute Spirit'. It commences with the self-emptying of the First Idea, which gives itself over to the world, loses itself in the alien being in order to resurrect in the future, outlined by Hegel as the dawn of the Absolute Knowledge. In the meantime, however, the Spirit's sacrifice is remembered in the form of the 'infinite grief': the 'religion of modern times' is the religion of mourning.

Hegel would return to the idea of 'the infinite grief in the finite' many times, always accentuating the tragic clash between infinity and finitude, which inevitably demands the sacrifice of the latter. If, as Kant already argued, Christianity is the only 'moral religion', it is because it focuses solely on the act of ethical compensation, in which the believer, following the law of the talion, pays with his

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[4] Take, for instance, his famous declaration from *Circonfession* written in 1991, three years before the first draft of "Foi et Savoir": "I am a kind of Marrano of French Catholic Culture, and I also have my Christian body, inherited from St. Augustine … I am one of those Marranos who, even in the intimacy of their own hearts, do not admit to being Jewish" (Derrida 1993, p. 160). On the significance of Derrida's Marrano declaration see: Helene Cixous, "The Stranjew Body" (Cixous 2007, p. 55); Yvonne Sherwood, "Specters of Abraham", (Sherwood 2014); my introduction to *Jewish Cryptotheologies of Late Modernity: Philosophical Marranos* (Bielik-Robson 2014) and "*Burn After Reading*: Derrida, the Philosophical Marrano" (Bielik-Robson 2017a).

[5] I will apply a similar rule in regard to the symphony of Derrida's commentators and choose one reader, Michael Naas, who devoted the whole book to Derrida's "Faith and Knowledge": *Miracle and Machine* (Naas 2012), later on as MM. Nass, however, makes little of Hegel's presence in Derrida's essay on religion, despite the borrowing of the title. In his "Observation on Hegel", Naas admits that it is always possible that Derrida is hiding his major influence, but "a lot of interpretative work would need to be done to make this case, and even more would need to be done to show that Derrida was trying, in 'Faith and Knowledge', to intervene in the debate between Kant and Hegel. In his attempt to understand the nature of religion today, Derrida had other things in view. For instead of ending his text with a reference to the speculative Good Friday, he concludes with an equally dramatic reference to violence, to ashes, to the massacre at Chatila, and to 'an open pomegranate, one Passover evening, on a tray'" (MM, p. 310). While not disagreeing with Naas, I would like to challenge his dismissal of Hegel, and demonstrate that Derrida constantly refers to Hegel in order to subvert, but to also supplement his 'memory of the Passion' with a different memory of a different mourning, violence, and ashes: a Marrano testimony of the forced loss of God, which created a different kind of memory and commemoration.

'sensuous life' for the loss of the infinite vitality that God had sustained in the process of incarnation. Unlike the 'pagan' cults, therefore, which praise God's infinite vitality, Christian religion consists of a mournful cultivation of the sense of guilt and debt (*Schuld*), which must be duly repayed. The prospect of reconciliation between man and God becomes possible only if man agrees to die in God's image, i.e., to engage in the *imitatio Christi* as the faithful repetition of the 'tragedy of the cross'. For Hegel, faith is precisely this faithful mimesis that occurs in the inner shrine of the soul:

> For the reconciliation of the individual person with God does not enter as a harmony directly, but as a harmony proceeding only from the infinite grief, from surrender, sacrifice, and the death of what is finite, sensuous, and subjective. Here finite and infinite are bound together into one, and the reconciliation in its true profundity, depth of feeling, and force of mediation is exhibited only through the magnitude of harshness of the opposition which is to be resolved. It follows that even the whole sharpness and dissonance of the suffering, torture, and agony involved in such an opposition, belong to the nature of the spirit itself, whose absolute satisfaction is the subject-matter here.[6]

By referring to Freud's famous 1917 essay on *Mourning and Melancholia*, we can phrase the main question of Hegel's philosophy as: can the 'infinite grief' ever be finished? Can it realise itself in a complete work of mourning, or must it perpetuate into infinity as an unworkable burden of melancholy? Hegel is visibly torn between the idea of the infinite process of mourning, which maintains the sacrificial scheme of the 'death of God religion' for ever, and the prospect of the sublation of religion into philosophical knowledge, which simultaneously ends religion/faith with its call for sacrifice and keeps it going on a higher, abstractly ontotheological form. In his own take on *fides et ratio* theme, Derrida points to this aporetic tension in Hegel's logic, which makes 'grief' infinite (i.e., non-sublatable) and temporal (i.e., sublatable) at the same time:

> Infinite pain is still *only a moment, and the moral sacrifice of empirical existence only* dates the absolute Passion or the speculative Good Friday. Dogmatic philosophies and natural religions should disappear and, out of the greatest 'asperity', *the harshest impiety*, out of kenosis and the void of the most serious privation of God [*Gottlosigkeit*], ought to resuscitate the *most serene liberty* in its highest totality. Distinct from faith, from prayer or from sacrifice, ontotheology destroys religion, but, *yet another paradox*, it is also what perhaps informs, on the contrary, the theological and ecclesiastical, even religious, *development of faith*. (FK, p. 53; my emphasis)

And although Derrida does not identify with Hegel's position, which he understands as the full sublation of religion/faith into philosophical absolute knowledge, he nonetheless is willing to pick up the Hegelian thread of the universalizing ontotheological abstraction—and then to play it out differently. Derrida's high argument consists in the attempt to abstract, that is, to detach 'the most serious privation of God' from the tragic remnants of the sacrificial scheme, which linger in the notion of the 'infinite grief'. By simultaneously continuing and correcting the Hegelian analysis of *die Religion der neuen Zeit*, Derrida will thus claim that the current return of the religious 'proclaimed in every newspaper' (FK, p. 43) or this 'machine-like return of religion' (FK, p. 53), which did not disappear despite all the light-therapy applied by Enlightenment, should be challenged by the Hegelian 'feeling that God himself is dead' resulting in the 'harshest impiety'. Far from dismissing the religious as the bygone element of dark ages, scorched out by the modern 'light of the day' (FK, p. 46), Derrida throws himself straight into the Hölderlinian paradox: the coincidence of the highest danger and the growing possibility of redemption, i.e., the aporetic oscillation between 'the most radical evil' and the 'promise of salvation' (FK, p. 43), which he sees as the defining moment of the returning

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[6] (Hegel 1975, p. 537).

religion. If 'radical abstraction', by which religion travels today all over the globe thanks to the machine of telecommunication, spells the evil of "deracination, delocalization, disincarnation, formalization, universalizing schematization, objectification" (FK, p. 43), it is also still a possibility of a 'new reflecting faith' (FK, p. 49), which breaks with the dogmatic cult of any sort and opens itself to a universal moral appeal. And if the 'harshest impiety' brought by the Enlightenment may mean the 'war on religion' waged for the sake of 'killing God', it may also suggest a retreat to 'the void of the most serious privation of God', the very 'desert in the desert' in which there is no telling 'what is yet to come' (FK, p. 47): what God, living or dying, might appear on the radically emptied horizon. The proper abstraction could thus still overcome the false one, while a new form of a reflecting faith could form the ground "in whose name one would protest against" the existing form of religiosity which "only resembles the void". This protest against the distorted forms of the modern faith, therefore, is not ventured on the grounds of knowledge, but rather on the grounds of another—withdrawn, invisible, 'harsher'—*foi originaire* which Derrida wants to reveal (as much as it is possible) and defend:

> The abstraction of the desert can thereby open the way to everything from which it withdraws. Whence the ambiguity or the duplicity of the religious trait or retreat, of its abstraction or of its subtraction. This deserted *re-treat* thus makes way for the repetition of that which will have given way precisely for that in whose name one would protest against it, against that which only resembles the void and the indeterminacy of mere abstraction. (FK, p. 55)

1. The 'Deserted Re-Treat': *Kenosis*, *Tsimtsum*, and *Khora*

But what would be the real void, the true *kenoma*, and not the one which only pretends to be humble and empty? And what would be the mechanism of such pretence? The discussion on globalitinizing Christianity, in which Derrida engages in "Faith and Knowledge" in the first section, written in the Roman Italic as the privileged font of the Global Christian Latin, is organized around these two questions. Derrida's thesis seems to be the following: the merely apparent desert that only 'resembles the void' (FK, p. 55) derives from the falsity of the Christian *kenosis*, which overtly presents itself as an act of self-humbling—the God plunging into the scathed dimension of the finite life—but secretly harbours the inversion where all the pride of the unscathed—the *perfect* self-sacrifice—is still being preserved. The positive thesis is more implicit, more 'secretive', but nonetheless crucial in Derrida's text: the real void, beyond any pretence—and in that sense truly *kenomatic*—is offered by the act of *tsimtsum*, the non-sacrificial re-treat of God, which does not leave creation in the state of the 'infinite grief', and the necessity to repeat the gesture of self-offering.[7] While Christianity follows to tee the logic of 'religion as the ellipsis of sacrifice' (FK, p. 88), this other possibility—which, as I will try to show, Derrida attaches to the modern Marrano experience—allows an exodus out of the sacrificial paradigm, which constitutes the first source of religion, and open it to the second source: the future-oriented messianicity propelled by a single imperative—no more sacrifices!

I have used the Hebrew word *tsimtsum* for a purpose, not only because Derrida's account of Hegel, especially in *Glas*, is secretly lined with Isaac Luria and his dramatic narrative of God, the primordial *Ein Sof*, undergoing a radical contraction in order to 'give place' to the world as the Other. The very concept of withdrawal/retreat, which plays such a fundamental role in "Faith and Knowledge", derives also from the Lurianic kabbalah, which for the first time puts the talmudic term *tsimtsum* [contraction] to metaphysical use, by turning it into the primary creative act: the Infinite

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[7] Although the very term—*tsimtsum*—by which the 16th century kabbalist, Isaac Luria, denotes the 'contraction of God', does not appear explicitly in Derrida's essay (which can also be seen as a typically Marrano manoeuvre of covering up the traces), there is one early text, testifying to his profound knowledge of the theme: "Dissemination", devoted to Philippe Soller's novel *Nombres*, where Derrida states that the idea of *tsimtsum* is "linked to the mythology of Louria" (as he pronounces his name according to the French usage) (Derrida 1981, p. 344). Derrida was also highly aware of the importance of the divine 'retreat' in the work of Lévinas.

receding—withdrawing, retreating—for the sake of the alterity of the finite being.[8] And although Derrida almost never mentions *tsimtsum* explicitly (at least not in "Faith and Knowledge") and even distances himself from the anthropo-theological appropriations of his 'deserted *re-treat*', which he wants to guard in its cold abstraction, it is nonetheless Luria's intervention that is precursorial to all subsequent notions of the self-negating Absolute: Hegel's '*kenosis* in creation', Heidegger's *Entzug des Seins*, as well as Derrida's self-effacing spatiality of *khora*, which, though Platonic in origin, is not described as 'withdrawing' by Plato.[9] In *Timeus*, Plato talks about *khora* as a passive, indifferent and infinitely susceptible 'receiving vessel' capable of accommodate all forms (*pandechos*), and, by calling her a 'nurse of generation', he denies her/it even the slightest activity that is implied by such Derridean terms as 're-treat', 'withdrawal' or 'making-place'. This residual activity imposed on *khora*, in which *khorein* consists in receding for the sake of all things to appear, seems to derive from a different tradition: the one of *tsimtsum* which, in "Faith and Knowledge", will secretly shimmer under the guise of messianicity.

We could even go further and say that Derrida's peculiar idiom of practicing 'Jewish cryptotheology' in a 'greekjew–jewgreek' style culminates precisely in his treatment of *khora*, which is being 'secretly' reinscribed as *makom*, according to "a deep affinity with a certain nomination of the God of the Jews, [where] He is also The Place".[10] While the talmudic tradition of naming God *makom*/place gave canvass to Luria's metaphysical speculation on *tsimtsum* as precisely the act of place-making, this also becomes the main attribute of *khora*, which patiently gives room to everything emerging as a 'pure singularity', and, as such, provides a 'link to the other in general', or a 'fiduciary link' that "precedes all determinate community, all positive religion, every onto-anthropo-theological horizon" (FK, p. 55). There is a good reason why Derrida should conceal the Lurianic source: it is his reluctance to be associated with any particular messianic traditions, the Jewish–kabbalistic included, which all grow out of the kenomatic abstraction of the 'desert in the desert'. In the light of his 'harshest' abstracted messianicity, which relates to the Lurianic messianism in the same manner as the general structure of revealability (the Heideggerian *Veroffenbarkeit*) relates to the concrete revelation (*Veroffenbarung*), *khora* emerges as a better candidate for the second—truly *kenomatic*—source of religion, because it is free of any secondary anthropotheosophic associations. If it gives room/place/space, it does it abstractedly, indifferently, and mechanically: not out of love, kindness, or generosity, which motivate the Lurianic *Ein Sof* in his miraculous act of self-retreat.

And yet, it gives: the machine of ontogeny, inscribed into *khora*, automatically paves the way to messianicity which focuses on the miracle of *tsimtsum*. Even if *khora* itself just "links pure singularities prior to any social or political determination, prior to all intersubjectivity, prior even to the opposition between the sacred (or the holy) and the profane" (FK, p. 55), the messianic promise, which repeats forward the gesture of self-retreat, cannot arise without an ethical interpretation of this gesture which it interprets precisely as—gesture. The miracle is thus in the very machine: that it makes place. This is

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[8] This version of *tsimtsum*, in which God 'takes in his breath' and restricts his glory for the sake of something else to emerge, derives already from Isaiah, as described by Elliott Wolfson in his interpretation of one of the bahiric texts: "The notion of withdrawal, itself withdrawn and thus not stated overtly, is a secret that is exegetically derived from the verse *lema'an shemi a'arikh appi u-tehillati ehetam lakh le-vilti hakhritekha*, 'For the sake of my name I will postpone my wrath and my glory I will hold in for you so that I will not destroy you' (Isa 48:9). The plain sense of the prophetic dictum relates to divine mercy as expressed as God's long-suffering, the capacity to restrain his rage. The expression *tehillati ehetam*, literally 'my glory I will hold in', is parallel to *a'arikh appi*, 'I will postpone my wrath'. One may surmise that at some point in ancient Israel, the notion of a vengeful god yielded its opposite, the compassionate god who holds in his fury" (Wolfson 2006, pp. 132–33).

[9] On the significance of the Lurianic heritage, especially for German Idealism, see my "God of Luria, Hegel, Schelling: The Divine Contraction and the Modern Metaphysics of Finitude" (Bielik-Robson 2017b).

[10] Jacques Derrida, "Abraham, The Other" (Derrida 2007, p. 33). Michael Naas also notices Derrida's 'jewgreek–greekjew' tendency to produce a dense interference of the two idioms, for instance, in the description of his tallith in "A Silkworm of One's Own" which brings it close to *khora*: " . . . and, finally, the tallith, the white tallith, as what belongs to the 'night, the absolute night' also resembles *khora* as 'the place of absolute exteriority', the 'nocturnal source' of both religion and science. The tallith is thus, in some sense, another name for khora, the place that gives place and has no name that is absolutely proper to it" (MM, pp. 231–32).

the gist of the Lurianic version of messianism, where the kenomatic 'God of Void' willingly makes out of himself a room for other beings, and by doing so, sets the ethical example for his creation to follow: to always be in retreat and restraint for the sake of the other. Yet not in the sacrificial manner, in which we would 'mourn' the gesture of God's self-offering. In the *tsimtsum* version of withdrawal, there is nothing to mourn: the emergence of pure singularities related to one another by a 'fiduciary link' (FK, p. 55) in the freely 'available space' is an act of the most emphatic affirmation—a truly 'good news' to be rejoiced and not deplored.[11]

Thus, in his deconstruction of the sovereign paradigm of religion, which starts as early as *Glas*, and then continues through "Faith and Knowledge" up to his last seminars, Derrida follows closely Hegel's definition of the modern religious sentiment as the 'religion of the death of God', but he also modifies its affective register. While in Hegel, this sentiment is 'the infinite grief of the finite', the essentially endless work of mourning in which the finite beings are destined to commemorate the dead God, in Derrida's reading, it emerges as a more joyous and future-oriented attitude in which the theological content is offered possibility of a further, albeit secret, *survie*, 'living-on'.[12] Both Hegel and Derrida agree that in order for the singular beings of the world to come to the fore as the proper object of new metaphysics of finitude, God's previously all-powerful and infinite existence has to diminish: its all-pervasive light of *Lichtwesen* must 'set down', and hide from sight. It must commit itself to the self-offering, the 'holocaust', which, at the same time, coincides with the joyous surprise of the 'irruptive event of the gift'.[13] The modern God, therefore, is the hidden God, *deus absconditus*: sent off down to 'under the table' (Benjamin) or straight to the 'crypt' (Derrida), almost—but never completely—erased or forgotten. The modern 'atheism' is thus never pure and simple; it is rather, as in Gershom Scholem's seemingly oxymoronic expression, a pious atheism.[14] A 'harshest impiety', looking straight into the eye of negativity and 'the most severe privation of God'—yet, paradoxically, not without its own pious sense of complicity with God's self-denying intentions.

I have invoked Scholem's name—not in vain. One of the tenets of this essay is to prove—via Derrida's subtle wrestling with Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger—that the 'death of God religion' is not a Christian monopoly. Almost all thinkers that are associated with the 'death of God theology'—Thomas Altizer, Jean-Luc Nancy, Slavoj Žižek—insist on the absolute uniqueness of Christianity as the only religion which harbours atheism structurally within itself, and as such, paves the way to what we tentatively call the modern process of secularization. Yet a similar—even stronger: precursorial—manoeuvre of 'a/theologization' occurs already in the tradition of Jewish messianism, beginning with the Lurianic kabbalah and ending with Derrida's attempt to pluralize the concept of the 'death(s) of God(s) religion(s)' in "Faith and Knowledge". Having learned from Scholem's studies that there is an elective affinity between Lurianism and Marranism, Derrida—obliquely and allusively—calls this heterodox lineage 'Marrano' after the experience of the Spanish and Portuguese *conversos*, forced to convert to Christianity but keeping their Judaic faith undercover or, in the secret imitation of the Lurianic God, 'in retreat'.[15] It is precisely the Marrano 'secret'—almost forgotten, bordering on a/theology or even atheism, yet at the same time, not without its own irregular form

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[11] In Naas' great comment: "Before any social or political space, it [khora] would join or link singularities by saying simply, in an infinitely low voice, and in the name of another tolerance, *Space Available*" (MM, p. 182). Yet, in fact, in order for it to speak with such a 'low voice' (*bat kol*), or to simply speak at all, it already must be partly 'appropriated' by a certain messianic tradition which decides to interpret its passive 'letting-things-be' as an at least vestigially active 'making-place', i.e., to turn its indifference into generosity. In this domain, therefore, everything is contaminated: there is no pure source of 'revealability', and no pure abstraction of 'messianicity'.

[12] (Hegel 1977, p. 190).

[13] (Derrida 1986a, p. 241).

[14] (Scholem 1976, p. 283).

[15] Derrida's take on the Marrano secret as simultaneously attacking the religious sovereignty and realizing that the messianic message goes indeed hand in hand with Gershom Scholem who, in his studies on the Marrano theology, wrote: "The psychology of the 'radical' Sabbatians was utterly paradoxical and 'Marranic'. Essentially its guiding principle was: Whoever is as he appears to be cannot be a true 'believer'. In practice this means the following: The 'true faith' cannot be a faith which men publicly profess. On the contrary, the 'true faith' must always be concealed. In fact, it is one's duty to deny it

of piety and memory—that offers the aptest model for the 'religion of modern times'. Just as the Marrano encrypts the Jewish *deus absconditus* in the inner crypt of his seemingly impious self, so does the modern faith hides behind the façade of knowledge and develops further (FK, p. 53), undercover and in secrecy. Knowledge, therefore, not only represses faith in the (once) Living God, but it also protects faith in the second source of the messianic re-treat. This alternative, *fides abscondita*, is not to be dragged out from the shadow of the crypt into the light of presence: if it develops and becomes a new 'religion of the new times' (*der neuzen Zeiten*), it is only thanks to the darkness of the 'desert in the desert', which is its hiding place. The hiddenness is the necessary condition of its survival.

2. Not Kenosis, But Kenoma

What I, following Derrida's logic, propose to call the Marrano *kenomatic* God is a further radicalization of this already radical image of the divine 'ordeal' (*epreuve*): God who not only humbles himself in the act of *kenosis*, but truly 'empties himself out', *entäussert sich*, by transforming into the 'desert in the desert' which the Jewish–Gnostic tradition calls *kenoma–tehiru*: 'the void of the most serious privation of God (*Gottlosigkeit*)' (FK, p. 53). Thus, if Hegel describes 'modern religious sentiment' in terms of the 'abandonement by God', it also—or rather, most of all—means that God had abandoned himself; that he *verliess*, let go and gave up his sovereign Godhead, or, in Derrida's idiom, that God resigned his unscathed purity for the sake of contamination with the alien element of the world.

The crucial step further, therefore, is to 'abstract' this highly vulnerable, non-immune and self-atheologizing deity from the Christian context of *kenosis* that still keeps Hegel in its thrall, by arresting him in the blind spot of the aporia, which he cannot (or will not) solve dialectically. This aporia is a typical 'double bind': on the one hand, *kenosis* implies the highest possible sacrifice on God's part, ending in the Hegelian 'feeling that God himself is dead'—on the other, however, *kenosis* appears always within the Trinitarian 'machine', in which God can simultaneously plunge into the depths of creation as the incarnated Son, and somehow—miraculously and paradoxically—remain unscathed as the first person of the Trinity, God the Father. This Trinitarian trick of God dying and resurrecting at the same time; this 'play' [*Spiel*] in which the 'harm' [*Verletzung*] can be done and undone simultaneously, maintains the kenotic abandonement of the life unscathed still within the traditional scheme, which demands an instant restoration of this very life.[16] This means, however, that while Christianity, especially in its modern version, makes a move towards the acceptance of finitude—it is immediately counteracted by the traditional structure of the Trinitarian compensation, which brings the 'harmed' God back to his untouchable infinity in—literally—no time.[17]

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outwardly, for it is like a seed that has been planted in the bed of the soul and it cannot grown unless it is first covered over. *For this reason every Jew is obliged to become a Marrano*" (Scholem 1995, p. 109; my emphasis).

16 As Hegel himself observed in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, calling the 'facile' Trinitarian synthesis *ein eitles Spiel*: "Thus the life of God and divine cognition may well be spoken of as disporting of Love with itself; but this idea sinks into mere edification, and even insipidity, if it lacks the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labour of the negative. In itself, that life is indeed one untroubled equality and unity with itself, for which otherness and alienation, and the overcoming of alienation, are not serious matters" (Hegel 1976, p. 11). This objection, uttered mostly against Schelling's notion of the self-healing Absolute, marks a significant change in Hegel's theological views. Before, i.e., at the stage of "Christianity and Its Fate", he would still maintain the idea of the holy as *das unverletzte Leben*, 'life unharmed'—the obvious prototype for Derrida's *vie indemne*—which excludes by definition any moment of negativity: lack, suffering, or death. It is only in the mature middle phase, when he composes *Phenomenology*, that he opens himself to another possibility: of fully and seriously admitting 'the terrible thought that God himself is dead' and that negativity is not just an attribute of the profane, but also a most holy affair.

17 The objection that the 'wound' sustained by the Father is merely a *dokos*, a 'facade', all too easily healed in the Trinitarian play, appears often in Derrida's writings, most of all in *Glas* (where it is leveled against Hegel's romantic conception of the self-healing and scarless wounds of the Spirit), as well as in *Dissemination*, where the Trinitarian play is contrasted with the 'real' crisis in the godhead, resulting in the 'real' dispersion of beings, and calling for the 'real' messianic action. In Trinity, therefore, the 'death of God', in which the Father loses his breath/Spirit/*ruah*, remains merely apparent, because the Father "loses his breath in sustaining, retaining, idealizing, reinternalizing, and mastering his seed". In consequence, the crisis is quickly 'mastered', as it "would be acted out [. . .] between father and son alone: aitoinsemination, homoinsemination, reinsemination" (Derrida 1981, p. 45). Whereas, the eponymous *dissemination* is a 'real' loss of integrity, unity, and safety

Contrary to this, the *kenomatic* God, whom Derrida proposes (though merely implicitly, as if, as Michael Naas would say, 'under his breath'), a God truly emptied and harmed (*verletzt*), is absolutely past and beyond the safe and sound of the Trinitarian medicine of self-healing. As such, he promises to go beyond the mechanical horizon of the medicine of salvation as a direct vitalist manifestation of life. Submerged in the sphere of the Hegelian immediacy, religion, with all its mechanisms of spontaneous healing, precludes 'reflection', and as such, is indeed at—not, as in Kant, within—the limits of reason alone. In order to think about religion, one must abstract it from the realm of immediacy and tear it away from the spontaneous vitalist mechanism of the self-healing life. This, however, can only be achieved with that which does not heal, and is the very opposite of the unscathed: an eternal wound and an irreversible trauma, which does not undo its 'damns' and 'harms' in the circular process of pre-historical life, but ventures beyond the biological cycle into History proper.

Thus, while the first source of religion is the *pleromatic* vision of always 'safe and sound' life, in which there is no room for anything else—the second source is the very opposite: it is the *kenomatic* act of radical withdrawal/retreat that makes room for everything else. It is essential to repeat it again and again that the second source is *kenomatic*, and not just *kenotic*: it constitutes an ultimate openeness to the 'wound' which is no longer conceived as a sickness-to-be-healed or a crisis-to-be-overcome. No longer a negative concept, it does not denote a *skandalon* (as Saint Paul named the divine incarnation resulting in God's crucifixion) which calls for a cosmic revenge, that is, for the apocalyptic self-annihilation of the world, thus paying back for the sacrificial gift of being and redeeming itself in the symmetrical sacrificial process: offering for an offering, a pure calculation of the salvatory machine based on the *jus talionis*. While Christian *kenosis* still rings with the overtones of the metaphysical scandal, which demands 'the moral sacrifice of empirical existence'[18] as the precisely calculated repayment of the debt, the *kenoma* which God willingly assumes in order to make a room for the otherness of the other—the surprise of alterity, the 'real' product of dissemination beyond any control and mastery—presents the 'death of God' in far less sacrificial manner, and therefore also no longer mechanically inducing sin, guilt, and debt.

This is probably the most crucial moment of the whole reasoning, first announced in "Faith and Knowledge", and then endlessly elaborated in Derrida's last seminars, all devoted—in the most passionate and religious sense of the word—to life. Yet not Life with the capital L, modelling itself after the Hegelian *unverletztes Leben* of the self-healing Trinity, but life of the singular living: finite, precarious and thus always inescapably 'scathed'. Already here we see the transition which Derrida will then restlessly attack and deconstruct: the tacit link between the Christian obsessive 'memory of the Passion' (Hegel again), which in the name of the highest divine life demands sacrifice of the human finite life—and the Christian sublimation of Thanatos, which, by the chiasmatic logic, turns the kenotic 'death of God' into a new, once again unscathed, 'God of death'. The modern Christian God—the one emerging from the writings of Kant and Hegel and their 'certain Christianity' (FK, p. 50)—is the God who dies, but only in order to 'give death': to force the believer to repeat—inevitably, mechanically—the same sacrifice of life: to make him renounce his 'natural' life as pathological and worth only of being offered for the sake of the *restitutio ad integrum* of the lost divine pleroma. For, as Hegel puts it in *Phenomenology*, the only function of the life of the believer is to 'resurrect God daily'.[19] This mysterious leap from the love of the life immortal and unharmed, in which our finite life wishes to augment itself, into a cult of something 'more than life', which turns against the finite life and demands its sacrifice in order to stay whole and healthy, is, according to Derrida, the most dangerous mechanism of religion, and not just the Christian one. The seemingly spontaneous, purely mechanical logic of

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of the divine which gives itself over to the risk, empties itself out completely, without a remainder, and opens itself to the irreversible process of alienation.

[18] (Hegel 1975, p. 537).

[19] (Hegel 1976, p. 299).

the first pleromatic source, which feeds on all life in order to keep its living plenitude intact, must, therefore, be arrested, that is, made at least 'reflective':

> This mechanical principle is apparently very simple: life has absolute value only if it is worth *more than* life. And hence only in so far as it mourns, becoming itself in the labour of infinite mourning, in the indemnification of a spectrality without limit. It is sacred, holy, infinitely respectable only in the name of what is worth more than it and what is not restricted to the naturalness of the bio-zoological (sacrificeable)—although true sacrifice ought to sacrifice not only 'natural' life, called 'animal or 'biological', but also that which is worth more than so-called natural life. The price of human life, which is to say, of anthropo-theological life, the price of what to remain safe (*heilig*, sacred, safe and sound, unscathed, immune), as the absolute price, the price of what ought to inspire respect, modesty, reticence, this price is priceless. It corresponds to what Kant calls the dignity [*Würdigkeit*] of the end in itself [. . .] This dignity of life can only subsist beyond the present living being. Whence, transcendence, fetishism and spectrality; whence, the religiosity of religion. This excess above and beyond the living, whose life only has absolute value by being worth more than life, more than itself—this, in short, is what opens the space of death that is linked to the automaton (exemplarily 'phallic'), to technics, the machine, the prosthesis: in a word, to the dimensions of auto-immune and self-sacrificial supplementarity, to this death-drive that is silently at work in every community, every *auto-co-immunity*, constituting it as such in its iterability, its heritage, its spectral tradition [. . .] Religion, as a response that is both ambiguous and ambivalent is thus an ellipsis: *the ellipsis of sacrifice*. (FK, pp. 87–88; my emphasis)

Yet, Derrida's aim is not just to 'arrest' the sacrificial logic of the first source, which is the cult of the unscathed pleromatic life. Having in mind the second—kenomatic—source, he also immediately asks the question: "Is a religion imaginable without sacrifice and without prayer?" (FK, p. 88). And then we almost hear, 'under his breath': perhaps, perhaps . . . Just few pages before, Derrida told us that it is ontotheology which is 'without sacrifice and without prayer' (FK, p. 53): the new philosophical doctrine which, in a semi-Hegelian fashion, sublates/devours the religious content in order to preserve it in the abstracted form. Another subtle gesturing towards this 'perhaps', seemingly in a completely different direction, lurks in the passage in which Derrida describes the challenge to the Christian 'memory of the Passion' posed by Judaism and Islam, the "two non-pagan monotheisms that do not accept death any more than multiplicity in God [. . .], alienating themselves from a Europe that signifies the death of God" (FK, p. 51). This alienation, however, should not be conceived as a simple reminder that monotheism signifies a 'faith in the living One' (FK, p. 51), but as a prompt suggesting that the 'death of God' itself is not an exclusively Christian affair of the 'tragedy of the cross', and that it can also be thought in terms of God's most surprising survival—of a God-in-retreat, a *tsimtsem* God, who is not to be mourned, but celebrated in his peculiar mode of living-on: among his followers and in the world.

3. The Self-Deconstructing Religion, or the Scathed Life

It is quite justifiable to read "Faith and Knowledge" as the critique of all religions understood as the cults of the unscathed—and Martin Hägglund's *Radical Atheism* is the best example of such interpretation. According to Hägglund, Derrida, who defends the 'time of life' against any eternalizing hypostasis, is the most radical type of atheist, and fundamentally so in the phenomenological sense of the word. His investment in the ever-disseminating temporality, which can only leave a transient trace of its presence, makes Derrida a staunch enemy of any form of the Absolute conceived as a timeless *nunc stans*. By insisting on the inherent connection between transience and life, Derrida dismisses all religious attempts to think in terms of life infinite and immortal as leading out of the domain of life and into the realm of death: the unchanging and untouchable Absolute can never be alive, it is death pure and simple. For, as long as there is life, there is exposure to time, scathedness and vulnerability:

the idea of an Absolute Life, essential to all religions, is thus a *contradictio in adjecto*. Life can only affirm itself as a constant effort of survival, which, according to Hägglund, is the defining feature of radical atheism. It is merely the desire for survival which dissimulates itself as the desire for immortality. However, while it precedes the latter, it also contradicts it from within: "There is thus an internal contradiction in the so-called desire for immortality. If one were not attached to mortal life, there would be no fear of death and no desire to live on".[20]

Hägglund's interpretation aims at re-reading the whole of Derrida's work, from his earliest deconstruction of Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena* up to his latest seminars on the death penalty and sovereignty, in terms of the determined attempt to reformulate our attitude to survival as ultimately positive: "The radical finitude of survival—he says—is not a lack of being that is desirable to overcome. Rather, the finitude of survival opens the chance for everything that is desired and the threat of everything that is feared".[21] Because of that, the very concept of God who is "beyond everything that can be predicated by a finite being" and who cannot die ("If God were not immortal, he would not be God")—must be abandoned.[22] To say, therefore, that 'God is dead', is not enough. According to Hägglund, Derrida radicalizes the atheist thesis by implying that 'God is death', i.e., that he is the direct opposite, as well as the negation of all things alive and finite:

> If to be alive is to be mortal, it follows that to *not* be mortal—to be immortal—is to be dead. If one cannot die, one is dead. Hence, Derrida does not limit himself to the atheist claim that God is dead; he repeatedly makes the radically atheist claim that *God is death*. That God is death does not mean that we reach God through death or that God rules over death. On the contrary, it means that the idea of immortality—which according to Marion is 'the idea that we cannot not form of God'—is inseparable from the idea of absolute death.[23]

This is all very true: if one treats Jean-Luc Marion as the paradigmatic exponent of the religious belief which, following the long tradition of Anselm's ontological argument, imputes the incapability to sustain any 'wound' to the very essence of the pleromatic godhead—then Derrida, indeed, is the radical denier of such faith. But is this the only way possible to conceive God? What if, apart from the 'God is death' of the absolutist theology embraced by Marion, there is also a 'death of God' theology which moves, according to its own self-atheologizing and self-deconstructive rhythm, away from the image of the unscathed Infinite towards the affirmation of the finite? Derrida's critical treatment of the Hegelian–Kantian model of God's demise complicates the dualistic picture painted by Hägglund, based on the simple opposition of the God who by definition cannot die, on the one hand, and the radical atheism which accepts the premise that whatever is alive must be mortal, on the other.

Despite Hägglund's atheistic interpretation, Derrida does not reject all possible religion. Although historically, almost all actual religions tended to define themselves as cults of the unscathed, understood either in the immanentis terms of the invulnerable life or in the transcendent terms of the otherworldly Infinite, he is nonetheless mostly interested in the self-deconstructive tendency of the 'modern religious sentiment' which attaches itself to the motif of the divine 'scathedness', and which the Hegelian Christianity defined—partly rightly, but also partly confusedly—as the 'religion of the death of God'. The question, therefore, is: can there be a religion of the scathed—the vulnerable, finite,

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[20] (Hägglund 2008, p. 2).
[21] (Hägglund 2008, p. 2).
[22] (Hägglund 2008, pp. 7–8).
[23] (Hägglund 2008, p. 8). The paradox of the deadening idemnification is a frequent subject of Abraham and Torok's reflections on the en-cryption, cryptonymy, and cryptophoria, also commented on by Derrida in his preface to their *Wolf Man's Magic Word*: "A crypt, people believe, always hides something dead. But to guard it from what? Against what does one keep a corpse intact, safe both from life and from death, which could both come in from the outside to touch it? And to allow death to take no place in life?" (Derrida 1986b, p. xxi). Indeed, "day in day out, *the crypt itself remains unscathed*" (Abraham and Torok 1994, p. 152; my emphasis). The 'shell', therefore, i.e., the wall that creates the crypt, not only deadens/oppresses the 'kernel', which lies there deposited, but also protects it and guards in its hiddenness—which, for Derrida, is precisely the dialectical model for the relation between Knowledge (shell) and Faith (kernel).

exposed—without any recourse to the Absolute? Again, it is Hegel who delivers main categories: just as his 'death of God religion' cuts into the neat dualism of traditional religiosity, sporting the image of the divine sovereign, on the one hand, and atheism resulting from 'Nietzsche's two words', on the other—so does his early concept of *unverletztes Leben*, 'unscathed life', serves to depict the inner mechanism of religious cults. But what if this very mechanism broke? What if it jammed, became 'reflective', and began to self-deconstruct? What if God himself, so to say, stepped down from the pedestal of undamaged vitality (or dead immortality) and let the second, kenomatic, source come more visibly to the fore?

The change which occurs in Hegel's thought between his early theological writings and the inception of *Phenomenology*—the shift from the traditional Christian image of religious community as mirroring the perfect, unscathed life of the godhead to the heterodox Christian-Gnostic notion of God depleting himself and emptying out into creation—can also be seen as the canvas for Derrida's own deconstructive manoeuvre. Far from refuting all 'religious sentiments' as inevitably gravitating towards the 'safe and sound', he, just like Hegel before, aims to distil—abstract—the streak of the other, self-deconstructive religiosity which affirmatively welcomes the finite and scathed. "Faith and Knowledge", therefore, does not deconstruct religion from the outside—the radical atheist position that Hägglund attributes to Derrida—but from the inside, following and enhancing the internal self-deconstructive moment of religion itself, which he—after Hegel (but also, as I insist here, implicitly, Isaac Luria)—identifies with the 'death of God' as the Lord and Master: a self-willed demise of sovereignty, which does not set an example in death, and does not call for the reciprocal sacrifice of life.

The experiment of "Faith and Knowledge", precursorial to his last seminars, is thus to test out for the first time the possibility of a 'modern religious sentiment' which will ultimately free itself from the infatuation with sovereign power: the 'more than life' image of the unscathed absolute to which no harm can be done. Derrida's double portrayal of the second source—the Abrahamic messianicity on the one hand, and the Platonic *khora* on the other—deliberately emphasizes their weakness and vulnerability, not typical for the foundational *arche*: *khora* is an 'open wound' itself, but also the messianic principle is anarchic, swerving away from the royal image of the *melekh ha-olam*, the King of the World, popular in the orthodox Judaism. This rhetoric of weakening aims at presenting these two visions of the second source as equally *kenomatic*: generously self-emptying, self-humbling, self-offering. Yet, this weakness should not be conflated with a mere negative depletion of power. It comes with a twist: with a decisive reversal, allowing for the escape of the discourse of power, vitality, and unscathedness altogether. What thus may appear as being weak and debilitated from the Nietzschean perspective of the *Wille zur Macht*—the ailing Judeo-Christian God laying himself down in the tomb/crypt—announces a radical change of register, which ultimately invalidates the attribute of omnipotence as the criterion of the creative power. Neither messianicity nor *khora* are powerful and pleromatic principles of foundation. They are the self-withdrawn, *tsimtsem*, anarchic 'sources' of the desert, the element of emptiness, *kenoma*—but precisely because of that creative, place-making, letting-be. *Seinlassen* is not a derivative of the infinite power; on the contrary, it involves an element of *Gelassenheit* that is understood as self-abandonement.[24]

It is thus necessary to remember that this self-deconstructive movement within Graeco-Abrahamic heritage occurs not for the sake of weakness issuing in death, but for the sake of 'powerlessness' which lets live life and thus gives life—finite, scathed, and contingent. Hence, the 'weakness' of the Christian Messiah who lays himself in the 'crypt' is not the final word of the 'deconstruction of Christianity',

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[24] For Derrida, the true *Gelassenheit*, therefore, is the art of "abandoning God who abandons himself": not an attempt to cling to him, not even to grasp him—just "not give anything to God, not even Adieu, not even to his name . . . This is how I sometimes understand the tradition of *Gelazenheit*, the serenity that allows being without indifference, let's go without abandoning, unless it abandons without forgetting or *forgets without forgetting*" (Derrida 1995b, pp. 73, 84; my emphasis). He also calls this position, after Leibniz, an 'almost-atheism' (Derrida 1995b, p. 83). In a moment, we shall see that this paradoxical 'forgetting without forgetting' that leads to the 'almost-atheism' characterizes the Marrano 'memory of the Passover', constituting a Derridean alternative to the Hegelian 'memory of the Passion'.

in the way it is envisaged by Jean-Luc Nancy who in *Corpus*, the book written in 1992, finishes it with the 'death of God' and what remains of it—the dead divine *corpus*.[25] This, for Derrida, is the paradigmatic case of the wrong deconstructive move, which ends with the deification of death, and thus reinstates the sovereign status of 'God as death'. Derrida deliberately does not end his essay with the image of the corpse in the crypt, and adds the second section on '. . . *pomegranates*': the fruit which, according to the Jewish messianic sources, is still hanging on the branches of the Tree of Life.

This unwelcome inversion within the unscathed—from the sovereignty of the 'most living' into the sovereignty of death—is the reason why, in the later book devoted to Nancy, *On Touching*, Derrida fiercely attacks what he calls the Christian *delectatio morosa*, revelling in the 'tragedy of the cross'. Note that, once again, he refers to 'a certain Christianity', which already in "Faith and Knowledge" is accused of the infatuation with the thanatic power:

> *For a certain Christianity* will always take charge of the most exacting, the most *exact*, and the most eschatological hyperbole of deconstruction, the overbid of 'Hoc est enim corpus meum'. *It will still make sacrifice of its own self-deconstruction*. Hey, Sade—go for it![26]

Alluding to Lacan's "Kant avec Sade", which found a sadistic component of *jouissance* in a seemingly purely formal Kantian ethics, Derrida points to the libidinal surplus of enjoyment in the paradoxical pride taken in the absolute uniqueness of Christianity as the religion of the dead/killed God. The whole of Derrida's argument hinges here (as elsewhere) on the notion of sacrifice: *kenosis*, even the most radical, is still God's self-offering, and because of that, a toxic gift, which does not liberate its recipients but enslaves them by a perverse gesture of sovereignty. This is also the reason why, against Nancy's official thesis, Christianity can never fully deconstruct itself into atheism, because it will always be kept on the leash of indebtedness and obligation; a certain bad conscience which keeps returning, more or less involuntarily, in Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Nancy, despite their explicit allegiance to the 'innocence of becoming'. The Christian dead God can never let his people go: he will forever make them *schuldig*. Hence, as we have already suggested, in thinking about God-becoming-finite, we must pass beyond the traps of *kenosis*, which smuggles under its *skandalon* the idea of a cosmic catastrophe, and thus prevents from imagining God's act of finitization as a truly free opening, beyond the economy of debt and repayment. This is precisely where *tsimtsum*—withdrawal/retreat, or another 'death of God'—enters as the non-sacrificial and non-catastrophic gesture of the divine self-limitation: the gift without sacrifice: the gift of life, which releases the donné from the automatic obligation to return life to the donor.

4. Hail to Impurity: The Marrano God

But how is this reversal within the 'modern religious sentiment' to be achieved? The first necessary step is Derrida's deconstruction of the logic of indemnification inherent in all religions as 'ellipses of sacrifice', i.e., the mechanism of the offering for the sake of something that is always more-than-life—beyond harm, *unverletzt*, *indemne*—and hence, made exempt or abstracted from the ordinary fate of all the living. Indemnification is precisely the 'wrong' kind of abstraction, which produces a sovereign exception.

By making analogy with the mechanism of auto/immunity, Derrida demonstrates the double bind that affects all religions as 'religions of the living', that is, ultimately, as the most original expressions of life itself: the aporia between immunization and autoimmunization. The religious indemnification can be regarded here as the extreme of the immunizing tendency in which the religious systems, which invest too much in the ideal of an indemnified purity, are doomed to self-destruct under the weight of their overstimulated self-protection. Just like an organism, which overdefends against infection and

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[25] See (Nancy 2008a) as well as (Nancy 2008b).
[26] (Derrida 2005a, p. 60; my emphasis).

produces too many antibodies that eventually turn against this very organism, religions overdefend against contamination with anything alien, and by purging all impure elements, also turn against themselves, and then they either stifle or become completely defenceless, which, in the end, amounts to the same thing: the incapability of a further survival, or living-on. The problem with immunization consists, therefore, in the self-destructive coupling of survival with purity, the mechanism that is so well described by René Girard in his scapegoat theory, but also by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger*. As an organism, which wants to protect itself, but in the process of building self-protection, it becomes alien to itself, i.e., it alienates the whole of what it actually is for the sake of an abstract ideal of itself, purely in and for itself—religious traditions engage in the same error, by staking their survival on averting all dangers of impurity and contamination, which eventually takes over the whole of their actual life, for the sake of an idealized, abstracted, more-than-life, hyper-pure essence of their identity that, by definition, cannot be touched by anything alien. This abstraction of a pure and indemnified more-than-life, which alienates the whole of actual life of the tradition, demands, therefore, the destruction–sacrifice of all that is alien, life included (precisely as in Kant's and Hegel's definition of 'moral religion' as the one which calls for the sacrifice of the actual—always pathological—'sensuous life'). Thus, instead of securing infinite survival, traditions, fenced behind the all too protective walls, collapse and die—unleashing violent cleansing upon themselves and others. On the other hand, however, the traditions face symmetrical danger coming from the corner of autoimmunization: while they begin to protect themselves against their own overprotection, it may leave them wholly unprotected, and thus unable to survive in their difference; once an organism loses the last traces of self-preservation, it simply dissolves, as a separate living unit, into its surroundings. This way or another, auto/immunity—death by suffocating purification or death by suicidal dissolution—leads to the paradoxical counter-result: not the infinite living-on, but the very opposite of survival. The medicine of salvation turns out to be a lethal *pharmakon*: a deadly poison when, inevitably, overdosed.[27]

Prima facie, Derrida pretends to be fatalistic about it, almost to the point of sighing–whispering, helplessly, with a tragic undertone, as if citing Shelley's poem, *The Triumph of Life* (on which he had written in *Living-On. Borderlines*) 'under his breath': "ah well, religion—ah well, life . . . What can be done about it?" Apparently, not much. The tragic wisdom of the self-dooming cycle of a living thing, which comes to life on the same grounds that then cause its demise, reverberates through Derrida's musings on the self-destructive nature of all living nature, as well as all phenomena that are fashioned after such naturalistic mode of being and its inherently tragic desire to live-on. But it is so only on the surface. In fact, Derrida has something else in store: hidden, disguised, encrypted. However, although delayed and deferred (as all messianic promises), this novelty eventually arrives to the surface, breaks through the concealment of the crypt—and takes the form of the ' . . . *pomegranates*' (necessarily and emphatically with the ellipsis which announces—without announcing—something surprising, unexpected, a pure new arrival). Thus, suddenly, at the very end of his essay, Derrida comes back to the issue of the modern philosophical ontotheology, which sublated and abstracted the language of old 'living religions', transforming them into 'religions of the death of God', and says that it . . .

> . . . en*crypts* faith and destines it to the condition of a sort of Spanish Marrano who would have lost—in truth, dispersed, multiplied—everything up to and including the memory of his unique secret. Emblem of a still life: an opened pomegranate, one Passover evening, on a tray. (FK, p. 100)

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[27] Naas comments: "It is precisely those discourses of life that believe they can exclude death, those that believe they can return to a life protected from corruption, that often lead to the worst possible violence, the most nightmarish scenes of death and destruction—all fed by the phantasm of a life greater than life, the dream, in short, of a miracle that can do without the machine" (MM, p. 196).

This passage, talking about encryption, is itself deeply cryptic, but the best way to approach it is not to dismiss it as a negative remark. In fact, it is rather an oblique appreciation of the Marrano *conversos*, who, only on the surface, would have lost the inner truth of their Jewish identity (even, as Derrida says in *Circumfession*, in the intimacy of their hearts) but, in fact, would have dispersed it, yet not in the manner of squandering and loss, but in the manner of multiplication which the Biblical topos affirms as the right thing to do, that is, as a mark of successful survival. The *marrano* (in Spanish, a swine) is a symbol of impurity which lost the memory of his uniqueness and betrayed loyalty to his tradition which is no longer One, but inherently *plus d'Un*, multiplied and dispersed also internally, contaminated to the point where it is no longer possible to tell the ownmost proper from the alien. But Marrano is also an emblem of a still life [*nature morte*], which locates itself in between the premodern cult of the Living God and the modern 'death of God' religion: seemingly dead, but—still—a life; still, quiet, restrained, self-withdrawn, and yet—still—a life. A paradoxical emblem of the 'dead nature': no longer natural, but yet un-dead; not a vitalist pleroma of unbound power, yet—still—some kind of denaturalized life that does not equal death, but stubbornly survives. An emblem of a survival, therefore—yet not by purification and indemnification, but by contamination, which nonetheless retains a trace of its original difference, the dim memory of the Jewish rite of Passover. Here it is, shown to you openly and plainly, on a tray. An opened pomegranate: wounded, cut through, exposing its inner flesh to the alien outside, exposing its scathedeness, wound, *blessure*, circumcision . . . [28]

There is nothing on circumcision in "Faith and Knowledge", but we know from other texts, most of all *Circumfession*, how important this symbol of a never-healing wound is for Derrida: a symbol of a wounded, self-restrained and self-circumcised, kenomatic second source of religion, which would be even more *kenotic* than the Christian God, even more deipassionistic than in Hegel's description of the modern 'death of God' religion, and even more universally messianic than all of the most radical Jewish, Muslim and Christian messianisms taken together. The true desert source, followed by his true–untrue mis-believing believers, the Marranos, who stay faithful to their tradition only by betraying it, or, as Derrida puts it somewhere else, by remembering in forgetting, because only in this way, one can keep a vestigial memory of the source that self-retreats: "one can only recall it to oneself in forgetting it (*on ne peut se la rappeler qu'en l'oubliant*)".[29] For, if God abandons himself, the only manner to keep him in mind—or encrypt him—is to 'forget without forgetting'.

On the one hand, the second source of religion called *khora* is a wound itself, *l'epreuve*, an ordeal, constant slipping out of being: the open, still-living flesh of the pomegranate—but, on the other, it is also full of still-growing the seeds of what is yet to come. Just as Marranos exited all forms of institutionalized religions, being now neither Jewish nor Christian, so does *khora* remain outside: "*It* will never have entered religion and will never permit itself to be sacralized, sanctified, humanized, theologized, cultivated, historicized. Radically heterogenous to the safe and sound, to the holy and the sacred, it never admits of any *indemnification*" (FK, p. 58). And just as Marranos are oblivious and unsure of their past and identity, impure and contaminated, universally despised, yet precisely because of that masters of survival, so is *khora*: treated by Plato as being metaphysically inferior,

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[28] In French, the title of the section is '. . . *et grenades*': a phrase which involves an ambivalence lost in the English translation, but which was well spotted by Michael Naas, who in *Derrida from Now on* writes: "While the latter context [which I have just analysed—ABR] justifies the translation of grenades by 'pomegranates', its context here, in the midst of a text on religion and science, faith and violence, is not so determined as to exclude the other meaning of grenades in French, namely, 'grenades'. Indeed, Derrida appears to have lobbed this word into the middle of the fifty-two sections of "Faith and Knowledge" in order to gather or, rather, disperse many of the themes of the phantasm that we have been following throughout this essay, in order to evoke all the tensions between, precisely, faith and knowledge, nature and culture, the pomegranate of religion and the grenade of techno-science, a symbol of female fertility, of life-giving seed, on the one hand, and an image of masculine violence, of shrapnel-casting death, on the other, the blood-red pomegranate of Persephone, on the one hand, and the army-green hand-held machine of technoscience, on the other" (Naas 2008, p. 205, later on as DFNO). The intimate link between pomegranates and grenades can thus be deconstructed, but it cannot be fully deactivated: whenever the kenomatic source comes into the presence of a revealed religion and its techniques of maintaining this presence in the media machine, the innocent fruit hardens into a potential weapon.

[29] (Derrida 2005c, p. 49).

rejected by Abrahamic monotheisms, *khora* is, in fact, their secret messianic energy without which they turn stale, dead, cultic, too indemnified. It signifies another desert: not the one of a raging jealousy of the One God who cannot stand any rivalry, but the one of an original contamination, heterogeneity, always already 'more-than-one', subtle and generous potentiality that is not yet formed into rigid identities, of a 'still life', but nonetheless always surviving, living-on, always there, in the dark silent background, hidden and secret. If Judaism follows the 'jealous God' who turns the desert into his kingdom (pure absolute Life), and if Christianity follows the 'dead God', who, in the gesture of inverse sovereignty, indebts his believers with the infinite *Schuld* (pure absolute Death)—Marranism can be seen as penetrating deeper beneath those religious fixed identities into the realm of *khora*, where every singular being tolls with the effort of Survival, yet is free from any form of sovereign power.

What Derrida is thus aiming at is neither dualism nor a synthesis of the two sources, but their constant 'impure' oscillation (FK, p. 59) or *Schweben*—the favourite movement of German Idealism, from Kant to Hegel, which already Luther ascribed to *ruah Elohim*, the Spirit of God hovering over but also reflecting, mirroring and thus absorbing the image of the watery abysses below. This is not a God establishing his invincible identity in the gesture of subduing the darkness of *tohu va-vohu*, but a God who gives up on the triumphant integrity of the unscathed; opens himself, like the pomegranate, and exposes to the outmost vulnerability, accident and chance; affirms the wound of the precarious finite life. This messianic God is thus nothing else but the *khora* that awakens from its indifference to self-awareness, and says Yes to itself and its own ordeal.[30] A Marrano God—unstable and internally dispersed, multiplied—who only pretends to be the highest and most perfect *primum ens* of the globalatinized philosophical ontotheology, firmly squatted in the center of the Kingdom of Being, but, in fact, in its hidden depths—or 'under his breath'—is the very opposite: the wound and lack itself, self-emptied *kenoma*, always in the state of revealing and manifesting itself, which inevitably betrays its dark source.[31]

In Scholem's account, "authentic tradition remains hidden"[32], and Derrida shares this Marrano declaration. The 'reflecting faith' (FK, p. 59), which he has in mind as an alternative to its Kantian/Hegelian version, must thus keep close to the clandestine level of revealability, not contending itself with any determinate form of revelation. For, even the humblest and most loving God, when fully revealed in the articulated set of beliefs, tends to lose the kenomatic aspect of retreat, and assumes the pleromatic aspect of visibility and power. The more he comes into light, the more he gains presence, the more he fleshes himself out—the more he falls under the rules of 'ontologism', in which all phenomena want to steal the show: be the only thing of light, presence, being, and vitality, and then 'jealously' guard it only for itself. Very much in and from this world, the revealed God represses the otherworldly source in retreat. To maintain the abstraction of messianicity means, on the other hand, to be faithful to the 'night events' of the hidden and hiding source—and to avoid full identification with any overt theology, or, more generally, with any 'light': be it of the revelation/illumination or of

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[30] This awakening is a cryptotheological theme of Derrida's essay on Joyce, *Ulysses Gramophone*, where God, implicitly compared to a writer who relinquishes the right of control over his work, pours himself into the creation and then releases it, by leaving only his consenting signature: *Yes, yes*.

[31] Again, it is Michael Naas who seems particularly attentive to Derrida's gnomic, cryptic, and simultaneously hyper-condensed Marrano imagery, which deliberately avoids full articulation. While commenting on the pomegranate 'still life', he states that "faith would be a Marrano that eludes this putative self-presence (like a crypt within ontotheology) and opens this seemingly indivisible identity (like a cut pomegranate) [. . .] Faith would thus be encrypted like a Marrano within religion, given a chance to circulate within a religion only on the condition of hiding or being concealed within it [. . .] Faith would be encrypted in ontotheology in this way, sublimated, one might say, *forced underground, forced to go by other names or go about in other guises*, able to reveal its true identity only to other members of the same secret community [. . .] But the Marrano Derrida is evoking here would be a Marrano, even to this secret community, a *Marrano of Marranos*, then, a secret even for or to those in on the secret, not unlike the desert within the desert that is *khora*. It is in this sense that we must understand why Derrida refers to himself not only as 'a sort of Marrano of French Catholic culture' but, in an untranslatable French phrase, as *le dernier des juifs*, that is, as the 'last of the Jews', 'the least of the Jews', but also 'the most Jewish of Jews', the most because the least, the least became the most, the first because the last, and so on" (MM, pp. 232–33; my emphasis).

[32] (Scholem 1973, p. 264).

the Enlightenment, either the light of the revealed Faith or the light of the enlightened Knowledge. To be faithful to this original night is, therefore, to be nothing else but a Marrano: a forgetful believer of a self-effacing God in denial. Just as *khora* does not enter any explicit theological discourse, so does Marrano stand apart from any revealed religion. However, it is precisely this separation that brings him closer to the ever-receding realm of revealability.[33]

Closer, but still not fully identified with the second source. The complex dialectic—oscillation, *Schweben*—between the two poles of hidden revealability and open revelation comes to the foremost strikingly in the concluding paragraph of the italic section, which once again refers to *khora* and its indifferent, automatic production of beings—but also, more obliquely, evokes the Lurianic heritage of *tsimtsum* as a withdrawal committed out of generosity, in which God dies in his original form, makes gift out of his 'holocaust' (see again *Glas*) and then disseminates its traces/ashes in the world as the seeds of the messianic promise:

> It makes way, perhaps, but without the slightest generosity, neither human nor divine. The dispersion of ashes is not even promised there, nor death given. (FK, p. 100)

Naas says very rightly that "the [Derridean] testament questions even the testament of ash, as if the promise of ashes already promised too much" (MM, p. 242)—yet without this miracle of the promise, there would be no religion, which must always hover in between the two sources: the kenomatic *khora* which, left on its own slides into 'indifference'—and the pleromatic God the Sovereign, who by his own quickening power, easily turns into a 'monstrosity'. The Marranos occupy precisely this troubled, instable in-between.

5. Still Life, or the Marrano Denaturalization

Could this at-once contaminated and abstract messianicity, which would maintain itself in the Marrano middle between no religion of pure revealability and all religions of particular revelations, be the new 'reflecting faith', the coming of which Derrida announces at the end of the Latin–italics section—as if at the end of the age of ontotheology and at the limits of reason alone?

> Respect for this singular indecision/oscillation or for this hyperbolic outbidding between two originarities, the order of the 'revealed' and the order of the 'revealable', is this not at once the chance of every responsible decision and of *another 'reflecting faith'*, of a new 'tolerance'? (FK, p. 59; my emphasis)

If so, then its most suitable bearer would indeed be the Marrano as the universal figure of dispersion and contamination, the very opposite of the identitarian purity: the master of survival, the *mischling* being at home nowhere and everywhere, and the new citizen of the globalatinized empire, carrying his 'secret' difference within himself.[34]

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[33] See Naas commenting on this ontologistic rule of presence: "The sacred or the holy is related not just to sovereign power but to an exuberant, fecund force capable of bringing to life in a spontaneous and automatic way. The phallus effect or the fecund belly rises up of its own accord, self-seeding and self-bearing—like an Immaculate Conception" (DFNO, p. 204). This is how every *revealed* religion, precisely because of the moment of coming-into-light, necessarily must result in the repression of the kenomatic source for the sake of the visible and monstrable, which automatically tends to assume aspects of pleromatic vitality.

[34] The Marrano context of the modern 'reflecting faith' as being secretly internalized and suppported only by the 'inner heart', itself also prone to forgetting, was spotted very aptly by Yirmiyahu Yovel: "For them [Marranos] authentic religion had been desinstitutionalized and privatized . . . , *depending on the inner heart as its almost sole support*. There were, of course, supporting fragments of memory and custom, and the sense of secret fraternity . . . In the end, and all along, the person had to face the most important religious truths—decisions about value, and about personal fate in this and the next world—within a private 'inner forum'". This could indeed be a good portrait of Derrida as the Marrano: grappling with the imperatives of the 'inner heart' (in constant polemical reference to Paul and Augustine); resorting to supporting accessories like tallith (as in "Silkworm"); having a sense of secret fraternity (including even *frere* Heidegger, as in *On Spirit*: *Heidegger and The Question*); bearing witness to the most singular idiosyncrasy that is a secret, even to itself (as in *Archive Fever*); and the play between the 'inner forum' and the 'fors/fortress' of the crypt, in which the Marrano secret has been deposited (as in

As we have seen, Derrida associates the Marrano mode of *sur-vie* with a 'still life', *nature morte*. Neither simply alive nor simply dead, posed in the strange suspension between natural vitality and 'more-than-life' thanatic sublimation, it is life denaturalized—taken out of nature and its vitalistic sacred, yet, at the same time, arrested in what Lacan calls the 'inversion of the desire': a process in which libido turns away from life and the 'sheeplike conglomerations of the Eros', and aims at an identification with the other powerful unscathed, the death-drive.[35] This suspension blocks the mechanism of religious sublimation, which replaces the one unscathed of the infinite Life with another unscathed of the invulnerable Death, and situates itself in the middle of the finite life, understood as the process of survival. This suspension can also be described by the Hegelian term, *die Zerrisenheit—arrachement*—which Derrida reuses, but with a changed dispositif. While in Hegel, it served as a critique of the Jewish religion, which is allegedly accountable for the violent break with nature, hatred for life, and the sin of deracination, in Derrida it denotes a right move—but only provided that it does not end up in the 'counter-fetishism' of the thanatic machine. 'Violent sundering'—yes, but simultaneously *arrested*, caught in the cadre of 'still life', *nature morte*, content with its aporeticity, not trying to resolve it in the symmetrical 'inverted' sanctification of death. Thus, right after the section devoted to the 'Jewish question' and 'Jewish survival', Derrida introduces the 'two figures', which he sees as responsible for the self-destructive logic of the returning religions:

> 1. Violent sundering, to be sure, from the radicality of roots (*Entwürzelung*, Heidegger would say . . .) and from all forms of original *physis*, from all the supposed resources of a force held to be authentically generative, sacred, unscathed, 'safe and sound' (*heilig*): ethnic identity, descent, family, nation, blood and soil, proper name, proer idiom, proper culture, and memory. 2. But also, more than ever, the counter-fetishism of the same *desire inverted*, the animist relation to the tele-technoscientific machine, which then becomes a machine of evil, and of radical evil, but a machine to be manipulated as much as to be exorcised. (FK, p. 91; my emphasis)

The first figure alludes to the caricature version of Judaism that is widely sported by 'a certain Christianity' (including Hegel and Heidegger)—the blind and mechanical antithesis towards all living *physis* as the unscathed source of authentic vitality—which Derrida spitefully endorses and intensifies, to the extent of denying the properly 'separated', even the blood line, proper name, and proper memory. The truly 'sundered' and 'separated' one would thus be the Marrano, ultimately and decisively cut from any form of the unscathed that necessarily populate all revealed religions. But to be truly 'separated' also means to be able to live on in the condition of permanent *Zerrissenheit*, to be for ever indifferent to the temptation of counter-fetishization, i.e., to the last remnants of the animistic magic looking for the substitutes of the lost vital sacred—even if, following the Lacanian 'inverted ladder of desire', this replacement is to be found in the dead machine, the mechanical death-drive that is itself incapable of dying. The Marrano type of survival, stubbornly living on in the contaminated and compromised realm between Life and Death, Eros and Thanatos—these two giant powers of the pure and unscathed, which always threaten our singular finite lives—is offered by Derrida, as if on a tray, as a modest possibility of salvation. For all of us.

"Fors", written as a preface to Abraham and Torok's famous book on cryptophoria); and finally, faithful to the 'encrypted' Jewish God, who comes to haunt the living as a *reverant* or ghost/phantom, and who is not 'resurrected daily', as in Hegel, but merely evoked as a spectre (as in *Specters of Marx*). Yovel himself admits it by calling Derrida's 'non-Jewish Jewishness' the very epitome of the Marrano experience consciously turned into a universal condition, where the split, non-integral and unfinished identity becomes a paradigm of the modern subject which, precisely because of that, can only be described in terms of a meta-identitarian remnant (*le derniere des Juifs*): "Derrida considered himself a non-Jewish Jew and a kind of Marrano. He identified in his Jewishness all the marks of dualities and disintegrated identity that his philosophy ascribed to the human condition in general" (Yovel 2009, pp. 88, 367; my emphasis).

35 (Lacan 1989, pp. 104–5).

6. A New Alexandria, or the Marrano Universalism

"Faith and Knowledge" is not just a theological treatise, it is also a politico-theological one that should be read as the rejoinder to the conception of the 'global Latin empire' put forward by the most influential Hegelian thinker of the 20th century, the founding father of the French Theory, Alexandre Kojève. Derrida's vision of the globalatinized world draws polemically on the Kojèvian precursorial reflections on the nature of late-modern globalization: instead of the 'universal homogenous state', which according to Kojève, will come at the end of history ultimately won by the Western Christianity, Derrida projects a global empire based on the principle of contamination, which will never erase all the differences and impurities without trace. In the new global era, we will not so much all become Christians as rather Marranos, carrying on in our 'inner hearts' the dirty secret of our non-homogeneity.

According to Kojève, history ends with the universal homogenous state where all differences between races, classes, and individuals become irrelevant, and there is no longer any need for the struggle for recognition, which constituted the only fuel of historical development. When the Christian–Occidental model of globalization becomes hegemonic, all individuals all over the world will be granted the same abstract and inalienable rights for which they will no longer have to fight: this is the law of history, executed with mechanical precision and efficiency, which cannot be counteracted. Derrida partly agrees with this diagnosis—he does not contest the efficiency of the globalatinizing machinery imposing hegemonic homogeneity everywhere—but disagrees with Kojève's proposal, in which he tries to rescue the last 'Greek' remnants of the Master and Slave dialectics and its struggle for recognition.[36] For Derrida, it is rather the desire to live on and survive, the desire not to perish in the global dispersion but, despite the dangerous condition of the universal exile, 'save the name' (one of the possible meanings of Derrida's favourite phrase: *sauf le nom*), which can counteract the machine of the 'wrong' Christian abstraction. He thus envisages the global order as a kind of a *New Alexandria*, an empire which stakes on 'mixtures' and thrives on 'contaminations'. Derrida's question is: can we once again engage in the process of contamination, which would reactivate the differences that have been declared invalid in the 'Christian' abstract model of universalization, yet without the reintroduction of the struggle for recognition, which inevitably ends up in non-democratic forms of social hierarchy? Can we have both: the differences that matter and a purely horizontal plane of their encounters, clashes, interchanges, and intermarriages?

Although critical of the post-Hegelian idiom of universality as 'globalatinization', Derrida is also completely against the isolation of cultures, undertaken in the name of their illusory purity. As we have seen, the true danger to the survival of cultures, traditions, and religions lies not in contamination of the proper with the alien, but in the obsessive warding off the spectre of impurity. The 'radical evil' of the process of 'globalatinization', therefore, consists in the violent clash of the two abstractions: the formal purity of 'a certain Christianity', and its strategy of universalization which confronts the self-defensive 'purity' of indigenous cultures. Yet, Derrida is far from dismissing every universalizing strategy. He openly claims that "we also share [...] an unreserved taste, if not an unconditional preference, for what in politics, is called republican democracy as a universalizable model" (FK, p. 47). Thus, while the critical part of "Faith and Knowledge" consists of the deconstruction of the religious phantasms of purity, present not only in the traditional premodern traditions, but also in the abstract 'certain Christianity' of Kant and Hegel—the constructive part consists of turning our attention to the alternative, Marrano-messianic movement of universalization, which constantly occurs in its modern half-secularized variant.

On Derrida's account, all religions contain in themselves an aporetic tension between particularity and universality. Just like the kabbalistic God of Isaac Luria, they constantly pulsate between contraction, where hey defensively withdraw into their 'most proper' identities, and expansion, where they overreach and messianically appropriate the alien element. In Franz Rosenzweig's *Star*

[36] See most of all (Strauss 2013).

of Redemption, which Derrida knew well and often commented upon, this 'oscillation' takes the form of a division of labour within the Judeo-Christian alliance. While Judaism's role is to contract and keep the message of all Abrahamic religions intact and unscathed in its original purity, the role of Christianity is to expand—proselytize, convert, overreach the pagan world—but then also inevitably risk contamination.[37] According to Rosenzweig, Judaism stays pure, but pays for it with the lack of worldly activity—whereas Christianity is messianically active, but pays for it with the hazard of losing itself in the alien. Derrida also thinks in terms of the Judeo-Christian alliance, though perhaps more tense internally, and assigns the roles differently. Pace Rosenzweig, he perceives Christianity—from Saint Paul through Kant to Hegel—as an abstract internalized faith which, by the very nature of its formal abstractedness, resists any contamination with 'impure' elements. If, therefore, this universalizing variant of Christianity involves the radical internalization of morality, then the Jews are the last stumbling block of resistance to it, strangely though, not from without, but from within the Judeo-Christian 'gathering'. That, Derrida claims, was well spotted by Nietzsche: "The Jews and European Judaism even constituted in his eyes a desperate attempt to resist, in so far as there was any resistance, a last-ditch protest from within, directed against a certain Christianity" (FK, p. 50). Following Nietzsche, Derrida portrays European Judaism in Marrano terms as an internal opposition struggling for a different form of Christianity, irreducible to the abstract internalization advocated by Saint Paul.[38] Jews, always accused of their 'carnal' leanings, which would render them material and not sufficiently spiritual, bear the mark of particularity—yet, in Derrida's reading, it is not a drawback but a chance: a chance to rethink positively the moment of contamination against the phantasm of spiritual purism.[39]

Could it be that, in the end, this seemingly most despised Marrano condition offers the key to a new form of universalization—a kind of Marrano universalism? Perhaps, this is what Derrida has in mind when he poses the question:

> How then to think [. . .] a religion which, without again becoming 'natural religion', would today be effectively universal? And which, for that matter, would no longer be restricted to a paradigm that was Christian or even Abrahamic? (FK, p. 53)

Neither the 'natural religion' of one universal human nature nor the 'revealed religion' of a particular chosen nation (first Jewish, then European–Christian), this newly thought religion is still 'abstract',

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[37] See (Rosenzweig 1985), especially Part 3, "Redemption".

[38] Perhaps, it is precisely this 'different Christianity' which has not yet revealed its essence, of which Derrida speaks in the *Gift of Death* about his reflections on Jan Patocka's *Heretical Essays* (Derrida 1995a, pp. 6–7).

[39] There is a myriad of meanings of the Derridean use of the term 'machine', and Michael Naas is very good at listing them, but there is one which he omits, and which seems to play a crucial role in Derrida's essay on religion. For, if miracle is indeed 'breath' (*ruah*, *souffle*) and life of faith, then machine is law and ritual: the pattern of repetition, in which faith confirms itself in the worldly conditions. However, it is precisely this pattern of repetition which rendered Jewish religion susceptible to the accusation of a 'mechanical obedience', which started with Saint Paul and culminated in Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*: one of the tenets of Derrida's essay is to deconstruct this objection levelled from the angle of the 'genuine faith' or the purely spiritual *Innerlichkeit*. The paradox of this 'authenticity' is that while it derives from the 'religion of the death of God', it nonetheless restores God to pure life in the inner shrine of the soul: as I have shown, the Hegelian 'infinite mourning' (which, being infinite, cannot ever become the complete work of mourning) makes God 'resurrect daily' in the nostalgic effort to compensate for the scandal of his sacrificial death. Whereas Derrida's Marrano argument is that there is nothing to mourn or compensate for: God has died for the world to make it possible—make the 'space available'—and there is no need to repent for it; God has given up on the singular miracle of his life, so that the machine of being could go on; or, in yet other words, God has abandoned his unique idiom for the sake of the strange institution called reality. 'Authenticity', and 'pure faith', therefore, would be the internalized variation on the unscathed *unverletztes Leben*, which, being the force of pure life, is also the force of pure death. And since this equation—pure life is the same as pure death—is also a Hegelian formula, one can also read Derrida's essay as a Hegelian correction of Hegel himself, who, otherwise a dialectical thinker of universal contamination, has to be made free of this one phantasmatic blind spot of 'purity': his theologically driven, Lutheran, investment in *sola fide*, 'pure faith'. As Naas very rightly comments: "Hence faith and knowledge, religion and science, the miracle and the machine, must be thought together as a single possibility, a single possibility that divides or fissures already at the origin. They are not the same thing, but they cannot be thought separately. Both are possible only on the basis of a 'testimonial *deus ex machina*', which always already betrays and displays the duplicity of origins, a *deus* that from the beginning becomes *deux*, at once miracle and machine" (MM, p. 166).

staying close to the source of revealability itself. Yet, its abstraction is to be conceived in a different way than in Kant's formalism or Hegel–Kojève's universal sublation in one global 'religion of the Spirit', in which "the moral law inscribes itself at the bottom of our hearts like a memory of the Passion" (FK, p. 50). Although close to the revealable 'desert in retreat', the new religion is not contentless: it urges its believers to 'wander away from their origins' and to engage in the universalizing process, for, as Derrida says, "in uprooting the tradition that bears it, in atheologizing it, *this* abstraction, without denying faith, *liberates* a universal rationality and political democracy that cannot be dissociated from it" (FK, p. 57; my emphasis). The link between abstraction, in which the content retreats from presence, and liberation is absolutely crucial here: just as the Christian 'memory of the Passion' hinders the abstraction, by indebting the creatures with the moral call to self-sacrifice—the Marrano 'memory of Passover', a dim remembrance of Exodus, liberates creation in a truly emancipatory gesture of *khorein*/*Seinlassen*/*tsimtsum*, which then becomes a blue-print for all further liberations: the universal rationality and political democracy to come, which, as Derrida says in *Rogues*, will eventually have been 'like the khora of the political'.[40]

It is, therefore, not abstraction as such that implies the risk of the 'radical evil' (FK, p. 43), but only its wrong form. The danger is twofold: either the abstraction is incomplete, because it is hindered by an 'irrational' cultic moment of the 'memory of the Passion'—or it is too complete in its purely formal aspect of aggressive secularization which literally 'kills God' in the manner of radical Enlightenment, by burning all the mystery with its scorching light: 'denies faith', 'uproots traditions', and 'atheologizes' religions by violently forcing them to comply to 'reason alone'. Another abstraction, on the other hand, allows traditions to wander with it, condensed in a sort of a portable version—as the scroll of Torah that must compensate for the loss of the Temple and the death of the present God; a piece of parchment that can be carried into all places at all time by anyone, once the connection with the sacred space harbouring the divine pleromatic presence had been broken; "an opened pomegranate, one Passover evening, on a tray" (FK, p. 100) or some other 'supporting fragments of memory and custom' (as Yovel calls them), which, like Derrida's tallith, would remind him of the self-absented divine spectre.[41]

7. Conclusions

This type of the Marrano abstraction is not a knowledge that is a priori hostile to faith. To the contrary, when it uproots and atheologizises, it also secures the tradition its true survival. Derrida states this very clearly in the fragment devoted to Yoseph Yerushalmi in *The Archive Fever*: it is only the 'portable' Judaism which is a proper 'Judaism unterminable', i.e., the one that is capable of infinite survival.[42] When it is too rooted in its rituals and too caring about its inner purity; when trying too hard to recreate the lost privileged space and time of the Temple and being too deeply buried in its archives, Judaism (which here is just an example of any tradition concerned about its living-on) ossifies, dies, and lays itself in the 'crypt' as 'Judaism terminable': the one that is destined to perish with its own 'death of God', that is, the demise of the visible cult. Only this Judaism which wanders away from its own origins, boldly jumps the 'fences around the Torah', being raised by the all-too protective rabbis, confronts other traditions, marries all languages under the sun, and lets them speak Hebrew as if from within, as the Marranos did, allowing the tradition to survive. This is because tradition, as the very etymology suggests, thrives only on treasons—and dies from too much awe, faithfulness, and untouchable indemnity. This dialectical movement between particularity and universality is what Walter Benjamin, in full accordance with Scholem, defines as the very essence of *Tradierbarkeit*:

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[40] (Derrida 2005b, p. 44).

[41] It must, therefore, be emphasized that, for Derrida, the tallith is not a symbolic part of the sacramental whole, where the external elements of liturgy complement the internal element of faith. It is not an external symbol of the internal faith, where the two form an integral cotemporaneous totality. Derrida's tallith is detached and 'abstracted' from its religious context, and functions as a mnemonic device, the role of which is to remind of the almost-forgotten, by-gone, and concealed God. In that sense, it is rather a Benjaminian allegory, taken out of the 'tradition in ruins', than a living sacramental symbol.

[42] (Derrida 1996, pp. 74–100).

passing on the tradition through its inevitable betrayal. By opening the traditional isolated 'gene pool' to 'mixture' and 'contamination', translation simultaneously preserves it and puts at risk—yet, this very risk is nothing but life itself.[43] Thus, when contracted–condensed–abstracted to its most dense 'portable' minimum; when shrunk by this radical *tsimtsum*, which separates the Marrano from every visible/revealed cult, the Marrano tradition turns out to be nothing but the teaching of the universal messianic justice, following the example of the ever-retreating kenomatic source: "this justice, which I distinguish from right, alone allows hope, beyond all 'messianisms', of a universalizable culture of singularities, a culture in which the abstract possibility of the *impossible translation* could nevertheless be announced" (FK, p. 56; my emphasis).

In the New Alexandria, therefore, universality can be reached only from a particular standpoint, even though it is a point of departure that is only to be shaken in the final act of 'burning the archives' and letting them survive solely in the scattered form of cinders, which remembers only in and through forgetting. This is the main theme of *The Archive Fever*, but is also the subject of last paragraph of "Faith and Knowledge" which we have already quoted, and which compares the Marrano survival to the 'dispersion of ashes' (FK, p. 100). Here, however, the nostalgic-mournful perspective must be decisively rejected. The Marranos—uprooted from any overt religious identity, atheologized to the limit of the 'almost-atheism', deprived of any cultic piety, and withdrawn into the secret of their 'inner hearts', always on the brink of self-denial and self-oblivion—are not the victims of global modernization, which indeed may be said to have begun with the 15th century 'Marrano experience'.[44] Derrida's intention is to invert this negative image, and to present the Marranos, the people without de-nomination and hence 'without name', as the harbingers of a possible universal faith that will speak simultaneously all the archival, long-forgotten languages (like Hebrew), and a new idiom of the future yet to come:

> On the bottom without bottom of an always virgin impassibility, *khora* of tomorrow in languages we no longer know or do not yet speak. This place is unique, it is the One without name. (FK, p. 100)

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[43] See (Benjamin 2003a, p. 257). For Benjamin, the translation works as *die Ergänzung*, or the completion, where it is simultaneously a contaminating and completing agent, gesturing towards the elusive totality of the 'pure language'—the living *lingua adamica* that Benjamin talks about in his essay "On Language as Such of Man and the Language of Man"—which can only be partly reflected in the fragmented languages of the 'post-Babelian' condition: "All higher language is a translation of lower ones, until in ultimate clarity the word of God unfolds, which is the unity of this movement made up of language" (Benjamin 2003b, p. 74).

[44] See (Yovel 2009, p. 61), where the Marrano is described as the first modern "type [of man] that lives beyond the spheres of conventional belief and mentality".

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