The One, the Many, and the Few: A Philological Problem and its Political Form

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Beginning with a brief reading of Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* and its indeterminate conception of "partial" logical and political formations, this essay outlines, historically as well as theoretically, the constitution of the concept of "community" as a classical philological problem. The essay describes the advent of a general theory of interpretation in the Romantic era, as well as the conflation of the anti-Semitic discourses prevalent in Jena Romanticism with the generalization of interpretive doctrines from 1830 onwards. The hermeneutic doctrines of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Johann Gottfried Herder, as read by the American Transcendentalists and Ralph Waldo Emerson in particular, came to shape a major segment of the modern American philological field: Reinvested as poetic and metapoetic discourses, these hermeneutic doctrines invariably reproduced the equivocations of the concept of "community" and its counterpart in term logic, the "particular." The essay concludes with a brief reading of the later European reception of this chapter of Euro-American intellectual history and with a discussion of the classic model of "community" in recent philosophical formalism, Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*.

I. Introduction

In *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), Kant establishes a number of parallelisms between the classical tripartition of political regimes (democracy, aristocracy and "autocracy," i.e., monarchy), the tripartition of state powers (sovereign authority, executive authority, and legislative authority) and the tripartition of practical syllogisms:

> These [three state powers or forms of sovereignty] are like the three propositions in a practical syllogism: the major premise, which contains the *law* of that will; the minor premise, which contains the *command* to behave in accordance with the law, that is, the principle of subsumption under the law; and the conclusion, which contains the *verdict* (sentence), what is laid down as right in the case at hand. (Kant, *Metaphysics* [§ 45] 90-91)

Kant goes on to suggest, as Jean-Claude Milner has noted, that the classical tripartite model of possible political regimes (democracy, aristocracy, and "autocracy") can be rephrased as a political transposition of the central categories of classical Aristotelian term logic, at least in its secular *versio vulgata* articulating *universal*, *particular*, and *singular* terms, and this despite the fact that Kant does not explicitly refer to Aristotle in this context:

> Now, the relation of this physical person ["the sovereign"] to the people's will can be thought of in three different ways: either that *one* in the state has command over all; or that *several*, equal among themselves, are united in command over all the others; or that *all* together have command over each and so over themselves as well. In other words, *the form of a state* is either *autocratic*, *aristocratic* or *democratic*. (Kant, *Metaphysics* [§ 51] 110-11)

Milner has forcibly argued that this "logico-political parallelism"[1] made the transposition of the *dictum de omni et nullo* from syllogistic logic to political discourse possible, naturalizing the articulation of the *omnes* (all) to the *unus* (one) as a logical relation, rather than revealing its inadequacy as a frame within which political legitimacy may be conquered (Milner 30-31). I would like to suggest that this transposition also deprived the classical Enlightenment political organon of the means of dealing with political formations that belong, or claim to belong, to the median, or *particular* (as opposed to the *universal* or *singular*) order in Aristotelian term logic. The two logico-political series one/few/many and one/some /all and their parallel suspension of the particular justly prompted Marx to identify the "Jewish Question" in post-revolutionary, that is "Christian" Europe, as a *structural* one (47).[2]

Yet the English translation of Kant's *Metaphysik der Sitten*, as quoted above, is somewhat misleading in its terse description of the qualities that constitute particular logico-political terms. The "several" (the

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[1] My translation of Milner's original "parallélisme logico-politique." Milner also comments upon both excerpts from Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* (Milner 32).

[2] "The formulation of a question is its solution. Criticism of the Jewish question provides the answer to the Jewish question" (Marx 3).

"einige" or "few") are "equal among themselves" in English, yet "einander gleich" in German.[3] In the original, their coalition also *predates* their "Vereinigung," or unification. The original contains the suggestion, at no point further elucidated, that a relation of resemblance between the "einige" precedes their political coalition as the "aristoi" or, in the "altered form" of aristocracy, as *hoi oligoi* (Kant, *Metaphysik* [§ 52] 462). The English translation, on the other hand, suggests that this semblance is effectuated by the political system only. The German text binds the few on the grounds of a preexisting *similitude*, the English text with a contingent *equality*.

In what follows, I will argue that logico-political ambiguities of this kind prompted the Jena Romantics and the American Transcendentalists to reject the possibility of the "particular" in their hermeneutic, poetic, and political doctrines. I will briefly retrace the advent of the ideology of logico-political *bi*partition in Schleiermacher's general hermeneutics, and outline its crucial influence on the development of the romantic literary field in the United States. The argument I wish to make unfolds on two planes: While logico-political *bi*partition originated in the anti-Semitic discourses of Jena Romanticism, it developed into a full-fledged poetic system that enabled the circulation of *racial* markers among those who participated in the literary field of American Romanticism. I will argue that this logico-political heritage proved decisive for the constitution of intellectual and literary history as academic disciplines, and has deprived current discussions around the notion of "community" of much of its historical content and political significance.

2. Sects and Sections

Tocqueville's analysis of Democratic Man in the United States takes the Romantic contraction of Kant's tripartite logico-political model into a bipartite one for granted: "[Each citizen] has only very particular and very clear ideas, or very general and very vague notions; the intermediate space is empty" (154; my translation). Tocqueville perceives bipartition, or the experience of politics as the intimate commerce of the One with the Many and of the Many with the One, as the state of affairs of democratic society. This, of course, illustrates Tocqueville's somewhat self-

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[3] "[E]ntweder daß einer im Staate über alle, oder daß einige, die einander gleich sind, vereinigt, über alle andere, oder daß alle zusammen über einen jeden, mithin auch über sich selbst gebieten" (Kant, *Metaphysik* 461).

sacrificial posture quite well, and serves as a reminder to the reader of *Democracy in America* that the demise of aristocratic particularism is predicated upon the advent of a democratic society, an advent that Tocqueville considers to be unavoidable.

Tocqueville's analysis was both prescient in its identification of the rejection of the particular as a central feature of *democracy as a political regime*, and belated in its identification of its origins as a central feature of *democratic culture*. The educated New England class and the dominant social and cultural order it represented had long discovered bipartite logic to be at the core of the "German thought" which Emerson revered for its articulation of philosophical sophistication and racial prestige, and which legitimized the Romantic claim to belong to what Emerson identified as the "Teutonic race," giving further credence to their claims as "lords, true lords, land-lords, who understand the land and its uses and the applicabilities of men" (Emerson, *Essays* 224). A generation of young New England scholars (the fabled "Harvard-Göttingen Men"[4]) studied in Germany and facilitated the transfer of Romantic knowledge practices between Germany and the United States.

On the cusp of Romanticism's institutional breakthrough in Europe, Friedrich Schlegel's *Athenäums-Fragmente* (1798) and, barely a year later, Schleiermacher's *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799) established the modalities of the evacuation of partial communities from the conditions of possibility of Romantic aesthetics, Romantic politics, and Romantic religious sentiment. Schlegel embraced "totality" and "the common" as the poles that demarcate the realm of Romantic poetics, while Schleiermacher supplied an apophatic, negative definition of "totality"[5] of Romanticism:

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[4] Notably, Emerson's brother William studied in Göttingen from 1823 onwards (Hurth 8-22).

[5] Schlegel, in Jonathan Skolnik's translation: "Romantic poetry is a progressive universal poetry. Its destiny is not merely to reunite all of the different genres and to put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric. Romantic poetry wants to and should combine and fuse poetry and prose, genius and criticism, art poetry and nature poetry. It should make poetry lively and sociable, and make life and society poetic. It should poeticize wit and fill all of art's forms with sound material of every kind to form the human soul, to animate it with flights of humor. Romantic poetry embraces everything that is purely poetic, from the greatest art systems, which contain within them still more systems, all the way down to the sigh, the kiss that a poeticizing child breathes out in an artless song" (Schlegel 37-38).

Of one form [of religion] only I should speak, for Judaism is long since dead. Those who yet wear its livery are only sitting lamenting beside the imperishable mummy, bewailing its departure and its sad legacy. Yet I could still wish to say a word on this type of religion. My reason is not that it was the forerunner of Christianity. I hate that kind of historical reference. Each religion has in itself its own eternal necessity, and its beginning is original. (Schleiermacher, *Religion* 238)

Much anecdotal history has been circulated about how Jewish salonnières, notably Henriette Herz, contributed to the intellectual socialization of the often-provincial young men who constituted the early Romantic constellations in Jena and Berlin. While it is true, if anecdotal, that Schleiermacher maintained personal ties with Jews throughout his life, and regularly corresponded with Dorothea Veit, daughter of Moses Mendelssohn and wife of Friedrich Schlegel, these ritualized biographical narratives have arguably overshadowed the structural function of anti-Semitism in the progressive institutionalization of Romantic hermeneutics in the literary and academic fields of the mid-nineteenth century. On account of the amount of evidence for the provisional historical culmination of anti-Semitic sentiment in German Romanticism, we can offer a supplementary *teleological* explanation of the function of such sordid passages in Schleiermacher's early work, focusing on what these proscriptions made possible both for the elaboration of a general theory of interpretation and for the dissemination of hermeneutics as a dominant cultural paradigm in the United States of the mid-nineteenth century, progressively constituting what Roger Lundin has called a hegemonic American "culture of interpretation"[6] that predicated cultural participation upon interpretive competences.

The passage from *On Religion* quoted above arguably prefigures, albeit negatively, the intersubjective, or "divinatory" interpretive modes Schleiermacher elaborates in his later technical writings on hermeneutics. The postulated suspension of all anthropological, linguistic, cultural, and ideological differences that alienate the interpretive subject from his or her interpretive object, in other words the generalizations and universalizations that purportedly legitimize *unmediated* insights into textual or anthropological material, are made conditional upon the same kind of logico-political parallelisms described above with respect to Kant. On its logical side, "das Jüdische" runs against the bipartite structure of hermeneutic circularity, which articulates a language with a specific text, a

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[6] See also Lundin's astute reading of Schleiermacher's early works in light of his later development of a systematic hermeneutic theory (67-75).

paradigm with an exemplar, a syntactic rule with a specific sentence structure, or the One with the Many. On its political side, the "particular" (as opposed, again, to the universal and the singular), understood as a hypothesized cypher for "das Jüdische," denotes communitarian social formations that persist alongside political bipartition or, in a more scriptural version of the same, alongside the US-American national motto *E Pluribus Unum* – "Out of the Many, One."[7] Here again, Schleiermacher explicitly conflates political arguments and logical expositions so as to undermine the legitimacy of supplementary, partial formations:

> If the character of any special religion is found in a definite quantity of perceptions and feelings, some subjective and objective connection, binding exactly these elements together and excluding all others, must be assumed. This false notion agrees well enough with the way of comparing religious conceptions that is common but is not agreeable to the spirit of religion. A whole of this type would not be what we seek to give religion in its whole compass a determinate shape. It would not be a whole, but an arbitrary section of the whole; it would not be a religion, it would be a sect. (Schleiermacher, *Religion* 220)

Teleologically, religious "sects" and logical "sections on the whole" are strictly synonymous. Within the context of the institutionalization of hermeneutics as a general political and cultural paradigm, they correlate as two versions of the same interdiction. Teleologically, "Jews," as logical "sections of the whole" and as a religious "sect," run counter to an epistemic and cultural doctrine that declares "meaning" to be generally problematic,[8] and problematic meaning to be one that must be apprehended, interpreted, and decomposed through the application of hermeneutic methods only. In other words, Schleiermacher institutes a technocratic approach to textuality and meaning that, if it posits "understanding" as its horizon and ultimate justification, nevertheless exclusively predicates "understanding" upon its *production*, rather than its *recognition*; here, the rather subtle fault line of Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* reveals its productivity. Anthropologically, and negatively, the "Jew" is construed as the member of a partial religious and political formation for which meaning must not be essentially problematic; put another

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[7] See W. C. Harris's excellent discussion of Emerson's "The Lord's Supper" (25-30).

[8] Along with the circular articulation of the *grammatical* and *divinatory* methods of interpretation, Schleiermacher's insistence that "misunderstanding" arises naturally in the course of interpretation is crucial here: *"The more strict practice [of interpretation] assumes that misunderstanding results as a matter of course and that understanding must be desired and sought at every point"* (*Hermeneutics* 22).

way, Schleiermacher declares the "Jew" to be the sole figure that can eschew the total investment of the logico-political field by technical interpretation, and to whom, conversely, access to both singularity and universality is denied. As such, its claims to legitimacy and cultural participation must be repealed.

The Romantic Interpreter and the Democratic Citizen share a common trait and a common faculty: Both have been granted singularity, and both may attain a form of logico-political assimilation, or dissolution, in the totality of the One. We can thus rephrase Schleiermacher's reading of Kant's "einander gleich sein" as a *nur einander gleich werden dürfen*. The Culture of Interpretation initiated by Schleiermacher protects its proprietorship on similitude – a similitude that can only be performed through hermeneutic exertions, and that cannot preexist its becoming legitimate by the demonstration of methodical, hermeneutic abilities.

3. A Cold Reading of Emerson

This bipartite logic came to define the emerging American literary field of the 1840s as well as, a century later, a national philological discipline that was purportedly attuned to the specific cultural traits of its source material.

Emerson's "The American Scholar" served as the blueprint for the dissemination of this logic and for the delegitimization of communal or particular claims across the literary field. Ostensibly a critique of the scholarly assiduity that purportedly characterized "German thought," "The American Scholar" nevertheless presupposes exacting scholastic dispositions. Emerson's discourse on power, social segmentation, and the originary "Unity" of man stages the reciprocations and prevarications of the One and the Many he had learned to wield through his reading of Schleiermacher's early work:

> The fable implies, that the individual, to possess himself, must sometimes return from his own labor to embrace all the other laborers. But unfortunately, this original unit, this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered. (Emerson, *Essays* 54)

The competent reader nevertheless finds that the great unification of the One with the Many and of the "*divided* or social state" (69) with Man is not to be achieved through the withdrawal from social (or *divisive*) insti-

tutions, but rather through the competent exertion of readerly abilities –
here, Emerson is being self-reflexive: "This writing is blood-warm. Man
is surprised to find that things near are not less beautiful and wondrous
than things remote. The near explains the far. The drop is a small
ocean" (Emerson, *Essays* 69).

If Emerson claims to have left the "abstractions of the scholar" (*Es-
says* 69) behind, the "fountain of power" of originary totality has never-
theless spurted, source-like, ocean-sized drops; Emerson makes legible
the transcendental "trifles" that bristle "with the polarity that ranges
[them] instantly on an eternal law" (69). Arguably, the style of poetic
utterance developed by Emerson in "The American Scholar" could be
described as a collection of Barnum Statements, in that Emerson's
aphorisms manage to convey the impression of representing a national
"singularity" precisely by virtue of their generality. Yet intellectual his-
tory suggests a somewhat less benign intent behind Emerson's weaving
together of micro- and macrocosmic discourses in the essay.[9]

Let us briefly add another layer to the historicization of the early
suspension of the partial order in American poetics. Johann Gottfried
Herder's writings on hermeneutics, which Emerson demonstrably read
during his formative years as a Unitarian minister, put forth an elaborate
doctrine of hermeneutic indeterminacy that layers several performative
intentions, such as the location of authorial intentionality, the clarifica-
tion of the meaning of ambiguous or incomplete texts, and, most im-
portantly, the production and attribution of racial characteristics and
markers to the practioners of this hermeneutic theory.[10] Herder's recur-
rent metaphor for processes of interpretation, the "cultivation of a jun-
gle," commingles the concrete historical reality of plantation slavery and
the anti-Semitic sentiments prevalent in early Romanticism, Jews being
described as "parasitic weed" (*Ideen* 702; my translation) feeding off the
wilderness of literary texts that are not "their own." Intent on turning
the textual "jungle" of unmediated texts into the pleasant "palm-grove"
of philologically mediated *Werke*, interpreters must however submit to a
crucial, imperative hermeneutic principle, put forth in the form of a fic-
tional dialogue between two philologists:

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[9] See also Bluford Adams' discussion of Emerson's treatment of Barnum in his note-
books (20-30).

[10] The following discussion of Herder repeats, albeit with notable discursive changes, an
argument I have made in a recently published monograph (Monot 154-63).

> *Euthyphron:* The language [of ancient Hebrew poetry] abounds in roots [. . .], and our commentators, who rather dig too deep than too superficially, have uncovered enough of them. They never know when to quit, and if possible would lay bare all the roots and fibres of every tree, even where one would like to see only their flowers and fruits.
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> *Alciphron:* These are the negroes, I suppose, upon your palm plantation.
>
> *Euthiphron:* They are necessary and useful people. We must treat them with mildness, for even when they do too much, they nevertheless do it with a good intention. (Herder, *Geist* 666; my translation)

Adequate interpretive work, like adequate agricultural work, rests on the philological or agricultural laborer's ability to circumvent certain unspecified yet specifically unproductive labor steps. When he is unable, unwilling, or unfit to avoid unnecessary hermeneutic toil, the interpreter becomes, in Herder's wording, "ein Schwarzer," that is, a figuration of the philological interpreter whose hermeneutic dispositions are also the least Romantic ones (Herder, *Geist* 666). With Herder, Romantic reading thus becomes an *auto-anthropometric* instrument enabling interpreters to produce and authenticate their own Romanticism, linguistic maturity, and whiteness. James Marsh's highly influential 1833 translation of Herder's *Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* suggests the possibility of a more essentialist take on the production of racial markers in the process of textual interpretation:

> *Alciphron:* These are the *slaves* I suppose upon your plantation of palms.
>
> *Euthiphron:* A very necessary and useful *race*. We must treat them with mildness, for even, when they do too much, they do it with a good intention. (Herder, *Spirit* 36; my emphasis)

Herder's theory of interpretation legitimizes the attribution of racial markers ("negroes") and the dissemination of a genteel humanism ("people"); Marsh's translation and transculturation of Herder harshly privileges the racialization, or naturalization of slavery ("a very useful race"), while blurring the specific racial discourse on Blackness that Herder explicitly refers to (Marsh: "These are the *slaves* I suppose [. . .]"). This, I believe, made it possible for Emerson to encrypt the promise of racial and technocratic superiority of American Romanticism's defining metalinguistic text. In what is perhaps the most frequently commented upon passage in the American Romantic corpus, Emerson elaborates on the Boehmian and Swedenborgian theory of signatures, while reinvest-

ing Herder's metahermeneutic doctrine, as a kind of racial contraband, in *Nature*'s metapoetic commentary:

> Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance. *Right* means *straight*; *wrong* means *twisted*, *Spirit* primarily means *wind*; *transgression*, the crossing of a *line*; *supercilious*, the *raising of the eyebrow*. [. . .] Most of the process by which this transformation is made, is hidden from us in the remote time when language was framed; but the same tendency may be daily observed in children. Children and savages use only nouns or names of things, which they convert into verbs, and apply to analogous mental acts. (Emerson, *Essays* 21)

Laboring in Emerson's metaphorical and metonymical wilderness, a reader whose philological dispositions were those of a Herderian "negro" or a Marshian "slave" would quickly identify the paradoxical valence of "root" as both etymological metaphor and exemplar of organic growth. In this passage, "root" serves as the covert intersection of biology and etymology; the "transformation" of material appearances into words is *both* a natural process and a cultural procedure, causing Emerson's ambiguous metalinguistic and programmatic exposition to collapse. Following Herder in his prompting of "knowledgeable renunciation" as a hermeneutic attitude, Emerson also follows Herder in the circulation and attribution of racial markers during the process of interpretation, instituting metalinguistic awareness as a form of racial auto-anthropometry. Again, participation in the romantic readership that was emerging in the Boston area around 1840 was predicated upon the reader's willing surrender of all his or her "particular" hermeneutic dispositions, notably those which might have made a critique of Emersonian linguistics possible. Correlatively, American Romanticism, at least in its shrewd Emersonian incarnation, promised a type of racial assimilation *through* reading that casually dispensed with constitutional provisions and neglected to disclose the terms of the *philological contract* that binds the interpreter with the *omnes* of white, that is, "transparent"[11] Romanticism.

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[11] I am of course referring to the political content of Emerson's great color-blind trope in *Nature*, the "transparent eye-ball" (Emerson, *Essays* 10).

4. "Community" as a Philological Fable: Two Theses

In what follows, I propose to sever some of the ties that bind academic commentary to the Romantic configuration described above. The two theses that follow attempt to revoke the philological contract that predicates critical legitimacy upon the perpetuation of political bipartition.

a) The hermeneutic rationalities of the Euro-American nineteenth century rejected "the particular" as an interpretive and political position. Simultaneously, the appearance of an institutional discourse on hermeneutic method instituted a technocratic regime in the philological field that correlated interpretive competence with racial belonging. In his early notes on scientific racism, Emerson outlined the core belief of this new regime: "The negro is imitative, secondary; in short, reactionary merely in his successes; and there is no organization with him in mental and moral spheres" (Cabot 430). Within barely two decades, Emerson's Transcendentalist doctrine and its manifest racial contents made its way back to Europe, and disclosed the anti-Semitic origins of its structural forms anew. In a number of essays in comparative religion, Ernest Renan, in his function as the dignitary of bourgeois humanism during the Second French Empire,[12] duly presents a particularly sordid kind of *circulus in probando*, in which Schleiermacher's *On Religion* comes to act as the demonstration of the superior technical abilities of Christian hermeneuts:

> The Hebrew people, like all Semitic peoples, do not know what a method of thought is. The idea that truth comes forth out of effort, from a succession of hypotheses and conclusions – such as we see at work among the Indo-European peoples who produced philosophy and science – was unknown among the Hebrews. (qtd. in Graetz 218)

> The East has never produced anything as good as we have. What is Jewish about our Germanic and Celtic Christianity, about St. Francis of Assisi [. . .], Schleiermacher, Channing? Are you comparing those flowers open to the romantic and delightful wind of our seas and mountains to your Esthers and Mordechais? (qtd. in Graetz 218)

The inclusion of Unitarian theologian William Ellery Channing in Renan's canon of methodically inclined, *hence* non-Semitic thinkers is, I think, of some importance, for it shows that the process of seculariza-

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[12] Edward Said is particularly astute in his reading of Renan's position in the philological field of the Second Empire (133-46).

tion initiated by Schleiermacher's development of a general theory of interpretation was conceived of as a transatlantic process as early as 1860, i.e., during Emerson's lifetime (Jaffe 56-59; Monot 272-74). The recognition of the American literary field by European secular humanists rested, as I would like to argue, on the successful demonstration by American public intellectuals (an anachronistic yet convenient term) that the logico-political structures of European Romanticism had been solidly implemented in the United States. If, as Renan claims, "the Jews handed over the Hebraic Bible to European science," thus sealing their fate as a people with "nothing essential left to do" (239),[13] I would nevertheless like to stress that Renan's historical discourse is thoroughly geared towards the reformulation of "European" as a *global* category that is ethnically informed, yet one that manages to obscure this ethnic content through the foregrounding of technical, interpretive dispositions.

Hence, the globalization of general hermeneutic practices triggered off a double movement that, in my reading, has become constitutive of modern, post-Romantic philology. On the one hand, the implicit addressees of literary texts became universalized, or generalized as the *omnes* of universal discourse, and the appropriate understanding of literary texts became motivated with the promise of the attribution of a generalized, unmarked ethnic identity. On the other hand, and correlatively, philological practice became the backdrop against which institutional interpreters could freely inscribe their exegetical virtuosity as a natural competence; in this respect, it is worth noting that the ritual opposition of Deconstruction and Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics seems to falter when we consider the emblematic value of their respective claims that their interpretive or deconstructive dispositions do not constitute "a method" (Derrida 273).[14] Emptied of its specific historical content as *aristoi*, sect or section, the "particular" order, now under the guidance of benevolent *maîtres penseurs*, could again function within the bipartite logico-political structure of a purportedly democratic philology, while delivering the gratifications – narcissistic and otherwise – of those intellectual dispositions that purportedly *cannot be taught*; thus, Derrida

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[13] This passage is not quoted in Graetz's otherwise extensive treatment of Renan's anti-Semitism. My translation of: "Depuis Jésus-Christ, les juifs, selon moi, n'ont servi qu'à conserver un livre. Du jour où ils ont transmis la Bible hébraïque à la science européenne, [. . .], ils n'ont plus rien eu d'essentiel à faire" (Renan 239).

[14] "Deconstruction is not a method and cannot be transformed into one" (Derrida, "Letter" 273); see also Gadamer 27.

could claim somewhat ingenuously: "no deconstruction without democracy, no democracy without deconstruction" (Derrida, *Politics* 105).[15]

b) Recent discussions of "community" in the philological humanities have canonized rather formalist historical narratives that deconstruct (and hence construe, *ante* deconstructive gesture) the advent of the "modern individual" as the result of the dissolution of "originary" communities. Jean-Luc Nancy's much discussed account of this process in *The Inoperative Community* is characteristic of this formalist strain:

> The first task in understanding what is at stake here consists in focusing on the horizon *behind* us. This means questioning the breakdown in community that supposedly engendered the modern era. The consciousness of this ordeal belongs to Rousseau, who figured a *society* that experienced or acknowledged the loss or degradation of a communitarian (and communicative) intimacy – a society producing, of necessity, the solitary figure, but one whose desire and intention was to produce the citizen of a free sovereign community. (9)

While Nancy purports to revise Rousseau's account, he nevertheless reverts to a thesis that reproduces all of the messianic-historical traits that, as he suggests, are covertly at work in Rousseau's narrative; the analysis of "the horizon *behind* us," a metaphor as archetypal for the hermeneutic tradition as Friedrich Schlegel's definition of the historian as a "rückwärts gekehrter Prophet" (Schlegel, *Fragmente* 85), produces little more than a formalist reenactment of the same:

> The genuine community of mortal beings, or death as community, establishes their impossible communion. Community therefore occupies a singular place: it assumes the impossibility of its own immanence, the impossibility of a communitarian being in the form of a subject. In a certain sense community acknowledges and inscribes – this is its peculiar gesture – the impossibility of community. A community is not a project of fusion, or in some general way a productive or operative project – nor is it a *project* at all [. . .]. (Nancy 15)

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[15] "Saying that to keep this Greek name, democracy, is an affair of context, of rhetoric or of strategy, even of polemics, reaffirming that this name will last as long as it has to but not much longer, saying that things are speeding up remarkably in these fast times, is not necessarily giving in to the opportunism or cynicism of the antidemocrat who is not showing his cards. Completely to the contrary: one keeps this indefinite right to the question, to criticism, to deconstruction (guaranteed rights, in principle, in any democracy: no deconstruction without democracy, no democracy without deconstruction)" (Derrida, *Politics* 105).

Let me attempt to formulate an avowedly ingenuous paraphrase of the above and propose a simplification of Nancy's alternative account of "community" as the specter that haunts the imaginary of philological modernity:

1) Death is the genuine community of mortal beings.

2) Mortal beings cannot achieve community in death, because they would not be mortal anymore, but dead (suspension of the subject).

3) Consequently, the concept of "community" is, in Nancy's (rather than Aristotle's) sense of the word, "singular," because it denotes something that is "impossible" (suspension of the predicate).

4) This impossibility is "inscribed' (by whom? for whom?) in the concept of "community."

5) This anonymous inscription is nevertheless "assumed" and "acknowledged" by the concept of "community" itself as the impossibility of the "immanence" of what it denotes.

6) The concept of "community" also "assumes" and "acknowledges" the impossible immanence of what it denotes as the impossibility of its "being" as subject ("Community therefore [. . .] assumes [. . .] the impossibility of a communitarian being in the form of a subject").

7) Things that "are" cannot be "a community."

8) A dead community, made possible (that is: a dead community of "mortals") would resolve the aporias described in points 2) to 6).

9) "Community" is not a project of something in particular.

10) "Community" is not a project at all.

For the sake of the argument, I will assume that my reader will consider the above paraphrase to be rigorous, hence fair. In light of this attempted clarification, Nancy is right, of course, but for the wrong reasons. Even though points 9 and 10 serenely reverse the *dictum de omni et nullo* that served as the starting point for the present essay, and even though I readily grant that it is in the nature of neoliberal rhetoric to capitalize on the dismantling of logical axioms, I would like to suggest that, despite appearances, Nancy's account is *not* aporetic, but rather devoid of its concrete historical referent. It seems to me that the formal

description of "community" presented by Nancy readily admits of a different reading, in which rigidly normative claims (points 2 and 7) give way to *constative*, that is, historically informed arguments. In the present essay, I have described how the concept of "community" was informed by the rejection of *particular* logico-political structures from the early stages of European Romanticism onwards, and how the crucial actors of the Romantic movements in Europe and in the United States conflated these particular logico-political formations with figural representation of the "Jew." It seems evident to me that the canonization, or at least the institution of formalist narratives as critical paradigms in the philological humanities, has not managed to mitigate the suspicion (possibly shared by Nancy himself [Hammerschlag 11-15; 164-95]) that these *forms* merely conceal a *name* – a name relegated, like the particular logico-political formations it was conflated with, to *non-being*.[16] Replacing these forms with a name is the price the philological humanities must pay for a non-aporetic reading of their recent theoretical tradition.

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[16] Boyarin's critique of Nancy is even more direct, and worth quoting at length: "Nancy would doubtless be horrified at the suggestion that his rhetoric is complicit in perpetuating the annihilation of the Jew, yet it seems clear that this is one potential accomplishment of his further allegorization of Blanchot. *That which the Jew represented before 'he' was annihilated is that which 'we' must let come, must let write itself.* The word 'henceforth' indeed implies that the secret of freedom from myth has passed from the Jews to a community which does not exist, which is only imaginable in and by theory. The secret becomes potentially available to all who await a second coming of this sacrificed Jew. I insist: This plausible yet 'uncharitable' reading cannot be stretched to an accusation of anti-Judaism. On the contrary, it is clear that Nancy and thinkers like him are committed to a sympathetic philosophical comprehension of the existence and annihilation of the Jews. My claim is rather that within the thought of philosophers such as Nancy lies a blindness to the particularity of Jewish difference which is itself part of a relentless penchant for allegorizing all 'difference' into a monovocal discourse" (Boyarin 223-24).

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