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JESUS' SPECTRAL INTERVENTION: DERRIDA,
CHRISTIANITY, AND "HAUNTOLOGY"¹

Jesus, who was concerned till manhood with his own personal development, was free from the contagious sickness of his age and his people; free from the inhibited inertia which expends its one activity on the common needs and conveniences of life; free too from the ambition and other desires whose satisfaction, once craved, would have compelled him to make terms with prejudice and vice.

—G.W.F. Hegel, *The Positivity of the Christian Religion*

The longing to make the spook comprehensible, or to realize non-sense, has brought about a corporeal ghost, a ghost or spirit with a real body, an embodied ghost. How the strongest and most talented Christians have tortured themselves to get a conception of this ghostly apparition! But there always remained the contradiction of two natures, the divine and human, i.e. the ghostly and sensual; there remained the most wondrous spook, a thing that was not a thing. Never yet was a ghost more soul-torturing, and no shaman, who pricks himself to raving fury and nerve-lacerating cramps to conjure a ghost, can endure such soul-torment as Christians suffered from that most incomprehensible ghost.

—Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*

Derrida, as we see from the *Specters* epigraph, presents Jesus as the “greatest” and “most incomprehensible of ghosts.” His unusual, hyperbolic conclusion finds support from Hegel and Stirner insofar as they also see Jesus as having spectral and life-exceeding attributes. It is from within Derridean “absolute spectrality,” as a direct effect of the work of hauntology, that “absolute emergence” comes to underwrite the general problem of subject modelization and formation, a specific and “spooky” process in which the construction of subjects takes place within certain “heritages,” heterogeneous cultural, philosophical, political, and religious frameworks with the power to shape identity.

This “absolute emergence” tied to “absolute spectrality” is the reason why Derrida views Jesus as a uniquely ghostly figure, “the

¹ A revised version of this essay appears in my recent book entitled *Christianity, Plasticity, and Spectral Heritages* (Palgrave-Macmillan 2017).

most spectral of specters." Continuing from the argument concerning hauntology that was presented in the previous chapter, I would like to further extend this discussion of subject modelization to more precisely include the significance of a uniquely Derridean "spectral heritage" and a no less related Derridean "spectral subjectivity," especially as they are simultaneously developed in *Specters of Marx*. More specifically, this discussion of "heritage" and "subjectivity" will focus on Derrida's observations in "Apparition of the Inapparent: The Phenomenological 'Conjuring Trick.'" In this crucial chapter, Derrida begins his discussion of spectrality by first addressing a difference between "spirit (*Geist*)" and "specter (*Gespenst*)" for the purpose of showing that the "specter *is of the spirit*, it participates in the latter and stems from it even as it follows it as its ghostly double."²

In his examination of the "phenomenological 'conjuring trick,'" Derrida continues this distinction by adding that "the difference between the two is precisely what tends to disappear in the ghost effect, just as the concept of such a difference or the argumentative movement that puts it to work in the rhetoric tends to vanish."³ In distinguishing between the two "spiritual modes," Derrida is drawing attention to the ways in which the specter does not function as a pure dialectical figuration of spirit; in other words, the specter is troubled by the trace of its unseen capacities (aporias), while the ghost purports to or is assumed to have no such trace (aporia). It is the tension between these two spectral points that is critical to understanding subject modelization within a heritage, any heritage.

In this particular distinction, which I would argue frames Derrida's analysis throughout the work, the actual "impure dialectical" or aporetic status of the spectral-figure is consistently overlooked in the history of modern philosophy from Hegel onwards. It, the spectral-figure, therefore, is allowed to exist as if it were a persistent "inapparent" ghostly "presence" — a complete presence, with no trace or aporetic condition. In Marx's criticism of Stirner's "*Gespenst*," for example, we see a similar tension between specter and ghost developing in the context of an attempted de-spiritualization of materiality.

Put more simply, Marx's criticism of Stirner is that his (Stirner's) "*Gespenst*" leaves open the possibility of an "unaccounted for" ghost of a ghost, an unacknowledged spirit double or trace that exists beyond the first supposed dialectical abstraction in the form of an "inapparent apparition." In other words, Stirner's attempted "exorcism" of the "ghost," which relies upon a full dialectical closure or full dialectical completion, according to Marx, does not succeed. It, in fact, does not go far enough or, perhaps, cannot go

² Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Working of Mourning and the New International* (New York, London: Routledge, 1994), 125-126.

³ Derrida, 1994, 126.

far enough in ridding the “material” world of Idealist ghostliness—it, the “exorcism,” contrary to Stirner’s analysis, actually deposits “remains” or a remainder. This subsequently leaves in place a supposedly hidden and “inapparent” ghostly, metaphysical presence, which is assumed to reside finally and unproblematically in the center of the subject, the “I” (without a not-I). Metaphysical completion, then, becomes the endpoint upon which “ghosting” presumably would come to an “Absolute” or unconditioned, synthetic end in history and in subjectivity. If Stirner’s particular, Idealist, dialectical “exorcism” fails by Marx’s materialist account, then so, too, according to Derrida, does Marx’s own materialist-dialectical effort at “ghost chasing.”

We see developed in the chapter the idea that every attempt to rid the world of ghosts that requires a dialectical synthesis of “spirit and specter” (with no remainder or trace) inevitably leaves behind ghostly remains—Idealist or Materialist. For Stirner, as a case in point, it is the “inapparent” ghostly dimension/reserve of remainder within the human “interior” that presumably encloses the “I,” the unconditioned subject—the “absolute self” brought into ontological alignment with itself, subsequently ignoring the fundamental, vanishing “trace” of its ineluctable paradoxical (aporetic) status that is in its own “head.” For Marx, however, as Derrida understands him, it is the wider historical but no less ghostly materialist-dialectical dynamic of “use/exchange-value” within the horizon of “absolute” Capitalism that returns as a hauntological (spectral) moment—the remainder/trace of an incomplete materialist-dialectical synthesis. These two examples point to attempts, failed attempts according to Derrida, to complete an incompleteable dialectical process, Idealist and historico-materialist, respectively.

The lesson from Derrida’s analysis of Stirner and Marx’s failed dialectic is that one can only partially exorcise a particular “Gespenst,” but “Geist” apparently remains “uncaptured” by or irreducible to the haunting figure—it “sees,” but is unseen and it persists in its hauntological condition across a spectrum of ghostly appearances that falsely claim completion and “autonomy”—“I am thy father’s spirit” or the “visor effect” would be an example of this incomplete dialectical specter/spirit relationship, with the specter functioning as the persistent remainder of the “spirit,” the aporetic figure that interjects traces into the alleged culmination of difference into identity, Idealist and historical-material. The concept of the “visor effect,” which is crucial to understanding Derrida’s distinction of specter and spirit, is further developed as a critical element when Derrida writes in *Echographies of Television* that “there is a moment where Hamlet is very anxious to know whether the witness who saw his father . . . saw his eyes. Was his

visor up? The answer is: 'Yes, he wore his visor up', but it doesn't matter, he could have worn it down."⁴

What will not matter for Derrida is the fact that even with the visor "up" the ghost of King Hamlet will not comply with Horatio's demand—the ghost sees without fully being seen. "The fact that there is a visor symbolizes," Derrida writes, "the situation in which I can't see who is looking at me, I can't meet the gaze of the other, whereas I am in his sight."⁵ The ghost effect, or visor effect, creates a condition that situates the subject as one who is seen but does not entirely see—the gap between seeing and being seen is never closed. This is critical insofar as the supposed spectacle of the "source" remains virtually invisible to the subject, always remains unseen to the subject even as it sees, albeit partially.

The question, then, is what does one do with that which appears "inapparent"? In a manner of speaker, the heritage or law that comes from the partially viewed ghost necessitates the subject's "blindness," a blindness, for Derrida, that must be acknowledged in relation to the condition of the "inapparent" itself: "The specter is not simply this visible invisible that I can see, it is someone who watches or concerns me without any possible reciprocity, and who makes the law when I am blind, blind by the situation. He is the right of inspection itself."⁶ Derrida continues his explanation by pointing out that as one occupies the position of an "inheritor" the "other comes *before* me."⁷ This becomes the law of the genealogy of heritage—the occupation of time by the demands of another who always comes before me and in coming before me writes the law . . . from beneath a visor . . . for "me" . . . who has the power to amend it as a heritage.

It is worth noting in the context of the "visor effect"—the always before—that the seeming incorrigibility of "Geist" (that which inevitably creates the ghost effect) relates not only to material history, as in the case of Marx, but directly to the "time" of history as well. That is to say, ghosts become specters when the temporal incompleteness of their capacities are revealed or become aporetic. There is, for instance, the "time" of specters—the spectrum of history—and there is "spectral time"—the "trace" of the future or the trace of the capacities of the future alongside the "spectrum of history," which, for Derrida, is *to come* . . . not subject to the precise dialectical movement of history. . . the "out of jointness" of time.

David Applebaum in *Jacques Derrida's Ghost: A Conjuration* describes a similar spectral effect within time: "When ghost time

⁴ Jacques Derrida, "Spectographies" in *Echographies of Television*, Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, eds. (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2002), 121.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 122.

is plugged in, asynchronous time grows disjointed or out of joint disperses or disseminates them. When the ghost infiltrates living time, cleaving it from itself, dissociating ipseity, the voice reading resembles the voice on mute, with the volume up.⁸ In this arrangement, "spectral time" is not reducible to the "spectrum of history"; the relationship maintains a gap and this gap only can be expressed as a "double-bind" or as the problem of the other that comes before me. (Derrida earlier in "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority" addresses the doubleness or paregon of justice—justice and the "possibility" of justice or justice *to come*, which is separate from law.) Again, time, for Derrida, becomes the site for something akin to "spectral aporetology," a temporal splitting or impossibility of time's futures and pasts.

As a further development of this concept of aporetic doubleness, John D. Caputo, in a sub-chapter from *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* entitled "Derrida's Séance: 'Es spukt,'" describes this "double binding" operation (whether it is use/exchange or history/spirit) as an ineluctable problem of the continuing temporal persistence of the hauntological "trace" or remainder in the following way:

Marx is both for and against ghosts. He both exorcises them and believes in them—since an exorcist is someone who believes in ghosts, who takes them seriously—but without quite being able to monitor these operations. Marx is in a double bind. On the one hand, he exorcises the ghost of the commodity, the spectral table that stands up on its feet and discourses with other commodities. He reduces that specter back to the artifactual, technical body that is constituted by labor. But, on the other hand, he finds this exorcism of the ghost on a pre-deconstructive "critique," on an "ontology" of the presence of what is really real that aims at dissipating this phantom into thin air, conjuring it away inasmuch as the real forces of production have no more to do with these fantastic beings than a railway does with Hegelian philosophy.⁹

Derrida's deconstructive account reveals that Marx's historicomaterialist analysis, ironically, "duplicates" or, unwittingly, reproduces the "ghosting" operation of Stirner, the figure with whom Marx thought himself to be in direct opposition. In both instances (Marx and Stirner), a similar "double bind" is identified by Derrida as being present; and, it is this common operation, noted by Caputo, of an incomplete dialectical "exorcism" that conspicuously and ironically leaves behind a more primary ghost-effect in the effort to rid a system of all ghosts.

⁸ David Applebaum, *Jacques Derrida's Ghost: A Conjuration* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 19.

⁹ John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 143.

Specifically in the case of Marx, he shows through his own “materialist” “exorcism” that the so-called “real-life” of commodities can be found in the material conditions of labor that produced them—the ghost-effect in the form of “materiality” returns as the spirit of history as class struggle. That is, the “ontological” (the fundamental real of commodities) is presumed to be specifically located in the modes and means of production as they exist and as they *will exist* as the on-going antagonism of classes within a “heritage” of labor. However, in returning the commodity to the “real” of production—in the history of human labor—Marx actually accomplishes the opposite, according to Derrida: he inadvertently “spiritualizes” the materiality of the object, making it the unquestioned ghostly (dialectical and metaphysical) space grounding not only of the object-commodity (use value), but of the entire system within which it continually circulates (exchange value).

Applebaum, in a related context, describes the return of the ghost as a repeating “repetition” that haunts the living: “A forbidden, the *revenant* enters the scene again and returns to where it was before forbidden to repeat repetition per se: a circumstance that closes on itself, and in closure, closes the crypt of meaning.”¹⁰ Although not specific to Derrida’s reading of Marx, Applebaum’s description of a ghostly return, in general, captures the process by which ghosts are presumably “busted” and then inconspicuously return in another form as an attempt to close down any and all inquiry regarding the work of spectrality, which takes shape around the heterogeneous unfolding of capacities, past, present, and future.

The inevitable and startling return that is ghostly repetition, we learn from Derrida, reproduces a “visor effect” and makes or posits “materiality,” human labor and the system governing human labor, as the unseen “scene” of foundational reality, i.e. the movement from use to exchange value. Derrida writes, “[i]t is not a matter here of negating a use-value or the necessity of referring to it. But of doubting its strict purity. If this purity is not guaranteed, then one would have to say that the phantasmagoria began before the said exchange-value, at the threshold of the value of the value in general, or that the commodity-form began before the commodity form, itself before itself . . .”¹¹

Marx, therefore, according to Derrida, inadvertently creates a *really real* “material” ghostliness as a pure ground (a “before itself”) that comes in advance of a formulation of value “in general,” as an attempt to rid the world of the immaterial. More simply, Marx ends up creating a particular form of ghostliness (a “visored” ghostliness) when he performs his materialist-exorcism of Stirner’s idealism.

¹⁰ David Applebaum, 19.

¹¹ Derrida, 1994, 200.

For Derrida, the *hauntological* moment is startling and invariably changes the "scene" of all heritages, including most immediately the Marxist heritage, in so far as the attempted act of "closing the crypt" ultimately becomes an impossible task, especially if ghosts become specters and always return . . . if only (finally) as aporetic "entities." Perhaps more precisely, returning and repeating ghosts represent the ongoing failed attempts by a single heritage at finally closing the crypt, a crypt that itself becomes spectralized. Acknowledging the return of ghosts as specters— the event of hauntology— produces, as we have seen, a general problem in the configuration of a univocal heritage, any heritage.

In Marxism, a "spectered/spooked- materialism," as a heritage, becomes unraveled along its aporetic disclosures. Derrida's hauntological work in *Specters of Marx*, therefore, exceeds the specific materialist formulations associated with Marxism and its historical legacy, philosophical and political. Marxism, I will argue, is more of a "case study" for Derrida, an historico-philosophical legacy, like all legacies, that falls within a hauntological condition.

This "return of ghosts" is what Marx, according to Derrida, simultaneously sees and doesn't see—the unavoidable spectral, hauntological moment within his own discourse. Once the Marxist heritage has been spectralized by Derrida, revealed to be part of the wider and deeper hauntological tradition, as I mentioned, the movement of (dis)emergence—the moments when each commodity-laden *world* arrives with its attending visible and invisible specters—leads to an unrestricted and palintropic hauntology, a condition with a capacity for additions, subtractions, or, simply, instances of change along an aporetic infinite trajectory appearing as the persistent trace of the "inapparent."

The un-closable "phantasmagoria" that supposedly first begins "before itself," as we see from Derrida, belongs explicitly to a hauntological condition, the persistent deconstructive space of *differance* as the plenitude of capacities. In this sense, every offered "phantasm," spiritual or purportedly material, is doubled or tripled or, simply, infinitely multiplied in its inevitable return not to a secure "grounded" ground (crypt) but instead to a mystical, abyssal, not synthetic, remaindered condition—an aporia. In this "spectered" and incomplete-able dynamic, ground is "phantasm," that which is lacking in an auto-genetic originary space, which means that it is not self-generating, self-sustaining, "autonomic," or immune from deconstructing in the abyss of "before itself," as described by Derrida.

This insight, which is consistent with Derrida's long-standing deconstruction of western metaphysics, has significant implications for the establishment of a particular kind of "heritage," more specifically a "heritage" that is posited as being "ghostly" when it is in fact "spectral."

Spectral heritages, with all their acknowledged capacities and traces, therefore, are out of compliance with what one might conventionally expect from a traditional heritage—clear inheritances that are presumed to touch or rest upon a “possible,” primal, *really real* ground of an undisturbed, pure, “cryptoed” tradition. This is why, in *Paper Machine*, Derrida writes, “[w]hat does inheriting from a tradition mean in these conditions, when one thinks from within it and thinks in its name, for sure, but *against it in its name*, against the very thing it will have thought it had to save in order to survive by losing itself?”

Derrida continues, “Again the possibility of the impossible: inheritance would only be possible at the point where it becomes the im-possible. This is one of the possible definitions of deconstruction—as inheritance. I did propose this once: deconstruction might perhaps be ‘the experience of the impossible.’”¹² A spectral inheritance, as opposed to a ghostly inheritance, acknowledges the “possibility of im-possibility” as it relates to a demand, obligation, undertaking or what I will discuss later in terms of Derrida’s reading of Heidegger, *Zusage*. If inheritance is deconstruction and *vice versa*, then we are brought back to the most fundamental aspect of Derridean inquiry, the “structure of the aporia.”¹³

The Spectre of the Aporia

Spectrality, within the conceptual space of “aporia,” then, deconstructs the foundation seeking presumptions of (traditional) heritage and this on-going work of spectralization, which is similar to the “work of mourning” (the reader will recall it appears in the subtitle of *Specters of Marx*) where the trace of the other is acknowledged, is further analyzed by Derrida in the context of the digital, virtual humanities.

In the chapter entitled “Artifactualities” from *Echographies of Television*, Derrida writes that, “to inherit is not essentially to receive something, a *given* that one may then *have*. It is an active affirmation, it answers an injunction, but it also presupposes initiative, it presupposes a signature or counter-signature of a critical selection.”¹⁴ This comment prefigures and directly relates to Derrida’s later statement that “deconstruction is inheritance.” As I will describe later, deconstruction can take on a palintropic character, a recursive and startling returning to a text, tradition, or heritage. Inheriting this aspect of deconstruction, let’s say, means accepting the proliferating context of an area of inquiry, reworking the work of the text in order to reveal its aporetic lines.

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 81.

¹³ See Samir Haddad’s excellent discussion of Derrida’s concept of “aporia” in his book entitled *Derrida and the Inheritance of Democracy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: University of Indiana Press, 2013).

¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, 2002, 25.

In a so-called typical “traditional, pure heritage,” however, traditions and things are passed forward, inherited by someone or bequeathed to someone in a strongly non-reflexive or non-recursive capacity—one, as a subject, in receiving a traditional, pure heritage, is traditionally under the strict obligation of the unmitigated inheritance; one, again, as a subject, “carries on” a heritage and, when the time comes, strictly bequeaths it forward in relation to a set of acquired, unmitigated responsibilities. In other words, confers a legacy. The point, however, is to see this work of inheritance in the opposite way, as not “strict” but as thoroughly mitigating, deconstructing; giving and receiving a “heritage” is, in fact, “un-restricted,” strongly *reflexive*, like, as Derrida notes in the subtitle of *Specters of Marx*, the work of mourning.

In the context of Derridean spectrality, a traditional relationship of a subject to a “heritage” and to the work of inheritance (receiving and bequeathing) is shown to be more than merely custodial—someone, a subject (a legacy), who will bequeath and to whom something is bequeathed, contrary to the typical strictures or conventions of tradition, actually shapes the “inheritance”/“heritage,” modifies and deconstructs it, defaces it in the “act” of stewardship: “When one inherits,” Derrida writes, “one sorts, one shifts, one reclaims, one reactivates”¹⁵ [my emphasis]. This is what Derrida means when he states that “deconstruction is inheritance.”

“Heritage,” which comes from an inheritance, then, is from this perspective precisely the opposite of how it is conventionally understood as a simple, perhaps even dogmatic, “bequeathing,” “receiving” and, in general, a “carrying on” of a discursive assemblage by a subject of a tradition. “Heritage,” in general, along with its receiving and bequeathing subjects, becomes, for Derrida, “spectral,” mitigated, deconstructed, and haunted by the ghosting of ontology/teleology or the heritage’s own inability to maintain and sustain its commands, its presumed incorrigibility, and its purported “strict purity.”

In addition, a heritage or, for that matter, any heritage, spectralized and (already) under deconstruction *in advance*, is not composed along a direct, immutable chain of custody; it does not remain confined to a “strict purity” of giving and accepting, as Derrida points out; it is, instead, “chaotic,” haunted by numerous spectral possibilities and capacities—codicils, mitigations, litigations, and qualifications that shape its coming and going in and out of possession. I would argue that this notion of “strict impurity,” to offset “strict purity,” is one of the major lessons of *Specters of Marx*. “Marx” and Marxism, for Derrida, are best configured or disfigured as, let’s say, “strictly” haunted,

¹⁵ Ibid.

surrounded by a multitude of spectral possibilities—plural capacities for inheritances and disinheritances.

Like every “heritage,” whether it accepts it or not, Marxism, according to Derrida, provides many (dis)inheritances or disconfigurations . . . it un-restrictedly bequeaths many “items” and obligations that are, contrary to the “business model” logic of “Marx & Sons,” to be modified, mitigated, litigated, and/or deconstructed. The point to remember from Derrida’s analysis is that a “heritage,” any “heritage,” does not move with, as I have mentioned, immutable and direct access to “strict purity”; moving as a ghost without a visor, fully “crypto.”

In fact, from a deconstructive perspective, each “heritage” is highly plastic and “strictly spectral” in its capacities. The question, then, arising out of the spectral displacement of a formerly restricted “purity,” is, which “heritage” or “heritages” (dis)emerge into the world? Express their capacities against a full “closing of the crypt?” Furthermore, one can ask: What is it that we, as subjects of the Marxist heritage, inherit? Are we simply left with the inheritance of a hegemonic “Marx and Sons,” as Derrida’s interlocutors affirm? The “strict purity” of “use-value/exchange-value” *reality* and its attending ideology (superstructure)? Or, are “Marx” and Marxism less orthodox, even heterodox, un-restricted in (dis)inheriting or possessing and dispossessing of many possibilities and capacities?

Clearly, for Derrida, given his emphasis on “sorting,” “shifting,” “reclaiming,” and “reactivating” of inheritances, it is the latter.¹⁶ He states as a “hypothesis” that “there is always more than one spirit. Whenever one speaks of spirit one immediately evokes *spirits, specters*, (my emphasis) and whoever inherits chooses one spirit over another.”¹⁷ The specific lesson is that “Marx” and Marxism, “inherently/inherit-ly,” produce “spectral-effects”—neither, in their traditional configuration, disconfigurations, or conjuration, are sufficiently inoculated from the replicating force of *differance*—the splitting or doubling of spirit, which Derrida understands as the work of hauntology.

More generally speaking, however, the lesson to be drawn from Derrida’s analysis is that all “heritages,” not just “Marx’s” or Marxism’s, come to rest on a similar “double bind,” an aporetic doubleness that is associated with spectrality, with each iteration of “heritage” explicitly *not* arising from a “strict purity” that is presumed to be resistant to the proliferating force of (dis)inheriting acts and (dis)inheriting capacities.

¹⁶ In *Derrida: Ethics Under Erasure*, Nicole Anderson writes, “In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida is not claiming to be Marx’s heir and thus claiming the baton for himself. Rather, in the same way that we saw him playing with the/his ‘proper name’ . . . Derrida performatively plays with more than one specter; his book(s) assumes more than one ‘filiation and affiliation’, more than one inheritance (196).

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, 2002, 25-26.

The Derridean deconstruction of "Marx" and "Marxism" most noticeably occurs when, as Derrida observes, the "strict purity" or supposed dialecticized base/super-structure of a system, any system is doubted—when, through hauntological inquiry, it becomes visibly un-restricted to an openness to other (spectral) possibilities and capacities. In other words, its prior "inapparent" condition is made more apparent by the plurality of its (the system's) possibilities and capacities, past, present, and future.

What this means, finally, is that *Specters of Marx* is not an inquiry restricted to the examination of *one* inheritance from Marx or Marxism; the book, as an instance of hauntological inquiry, a "case study," is very much un-restricted in its scope and can be read as having little to do with choosing or, for that matter, defending the "proper" ideological strictures of Marx or Marxism—of settling a dispute over which particular inheritance is the most pure.

Its focus, as Derrida continually points out in the work and elsewhere, is more keenly placed on *seeing/spying* "Marx" and "Marxism's" "generalized practice of spectrality" across the expansive (dis) inheritance "spectrum," an inheritance spectrum that ironically creates the obligation for a deconstruction of any and all "heritages" that purport, in their appeal to a "closed crypt," to be "strictly pure" or orthodox.

It is very important at this juncture to keep in mind that "heritages," political, religious, cultural, and social, have, in their un-restricted nature, immense powers to create obligations and, in effect, to produce subjectivities or create the spaces within which subjectivities can openly (dis)emerge. For Derrida, this occurs when inheritances "retain an undecidable reserve": "Only when the assignations are multiple and contradictory is there inheritance, only when they are secret enough to challenge interpretation, to call for limitless risk of interpretation. . . When there is no *double-bind* there is no responsibility."¹⁸ Inheritance requires that a subject (dis)emerge into a "capacity" reserve of plurality, not purity. That is to say, we inherit the responsibility, if one wishes to call it that, of acknowledging that the world that (dis)emerges *for us* does not capture in its entirety the reserve of plural worlds and aporetic capacities.

In the example of Marxism, which we have been discussing *via* Derrida, it is not enough or, perhaps, was not enough to be in distanced or in close solidarity with Marxist ideology from the viewpoint of "heritage-Marxists," one has or *had* to accept the obligation/inheritance purely and completely—in other words, one had "to be" a Marxist—interpellated as a Marxist subject . . . no half-measure. It is clear that *Specters of Marx* was, in part, Derrida's successful attempt to "short-circuit" or un-restrict the

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, 2002, 26.

hegemonic, strictly pure discourse of his Marxist interlocutors. Spectral inheritance, as opposed to ghostly bequeathal, therefore, evokes and honors plurality and disrupts purity—there is a radical break in and departure from the traditional concept of a Marx & Sons as a “Heritage & Sons.”

On a larger scale, however, as I have mentioned, plurality also must be seen in the context of subject modelization. For instance, the power of a “heritage” or any “heritage” to interpellate or hail subjects extends well beyond the ideological mechanisms of just Marxism. Religious heritages, obviously, interpellate or hail subjects all the time—even though one can call someone an “adherent” to a belief or faith system, it is more properly stated that someone “is” a Jew, Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jain, etc. Perhaps, in the effort to be precise, it would be better to say that someone occupies a very particular, although not necessarily exclusive, discursive space or *heritage-space* in which a person (dis)emerges as a subject of a “religious” inheritance.

From this Derridean insight, the overall lesson to be learned from *Specters of Marx* regarding spectrality’s “double bind” is that heritages simultaneously unfold in this general process of interpellation within and against strictures. Subjects will emerge in, against, and through what will be identified as non-exclusive, responsible “heritages,” “heritages” that pass down objects and obligations that do not conveniently overlook their troublingly “haunted” and un-restricted conditions. One can infer from Derrida’s analysis that these “haunted” heritages present moments that can potentially create subjects of “responsibility”—subjects who deliberate over the implications of accepting or, for that matter, not accepting a heritage and its inheritances:

We inherit language in order to be able to bear witness to the fact that we are inheritors. That is to say, we inherit the possibility of inheriting. The fact that we inherit is not an attribute or an accident; it is our essence, and this essence, we inherit. We inherit the possibility of bearing witness to the fact that we inherit, and this is language. We receive as our share the possibility of sharing, and this is none other than the possibility of inheriting. This structure seems circular, clearly it is, but it becomes all the more striking as a result. We are drawn into this circle in advance. We inherit nothing, except the ability to inherit and to speak, to enter into a relation with language, with law or with “something” that makes it possible for us to inherit, and by the same token, to bear witness to this fact of inheriting . . . We are witnesses, by bearing witness to—thus by inheriting—the possibility of bearing witness.¹⁹

What is it that we know we inherit? The answer, the “impossibility of the task of inheriting,” Derrida later writes.²⁰ We

¹⁹ Jacques Derrida, 2002, 132.

²⁰ Ibid.

cannot inherit cleanly or purely, without any relation or responsibility or deliberation. Implicit in every opportunity for inheritance also is the prospect of disavowal. This is a crucial point in that the relationality of inheriting places is an unanswerable demand on the subject who is called upon to "inherit"; this is a "relationality" that transforms into a second demand to be responsible for the incomplete forming of relation itself... to language, to law, to the "something," to the other that placed it under the obligation in the first place.

This is what I define as the generic burden of hauntology that Derrida leaves to us—the impossibility of completing the task of inheriting, of resting on the strict purity of inheritance, the orthodoxy of a language within and from which one is bequeathed something, if anything. Derrida presses this impossibility further when he says that "there is nothing; we inherit nothing. In fact, the dead are dead."²¹

This, however, doesn't mean that inheriting doesn't "transfer" something—the dead return as specters: "Just because the dead no longer exist does not mean that we are done with specters. On the contrary, mourning and haunting are unleashed at this moment. They are unleashed before death itself, out of the mere possibility of death, that is to say, of the trace, which comes into being as immediate survival—and as 'televised.'"²² The dead, understood as "not existing" but also as not being done with us, occurs as an emergency, an event that comes into being as alternative possible worlds, worlds that demand that the subject accept the impossible task of inheriting completely.

It is only the non-existing dead, as specters, who can produce the space for mourning and haunting, simultaneously. Yes, one can say, Marx is dead and Marxism, then, for Derrida (because we are not done with specters), becomes the space for the impossibility of inheriting "Marx," with all the codicils and variations. The specters of Marx proliferate away from the condition of strict purity and mystical foundation. This is the important hauntological lesson that teaches us that, among other things, we inherit "the possibility of bearing witness."

Just as Derrida deconstructed the widely accepted notion that a "heritage" or any "heritage" is "strictly pure," he, additionally, by extension, deconstructed the accompanying notion that the subjectivities following such a "heritage" also are "strictly pure" or, even, "necessary" as products of a tradition. From this section and the previous section, it should be clear going forward, as a working premise for the latter parts of this study, that the long-held notion that the ontological spaces and related subjectivities that follow them are complete, restricted, and necessary is untenable, especially given the economy of hauntology.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

That is, with the many traces that comprise what I'm calling hauntological emergence, which form "spectral heritages," come "spectral subjectivity or subjectivities," subject-formations made possible by the un-restricted additions, subtractions, and infinite changes in (plural and emergent) heritage-*worlds*. If there are "specters of Marx and Marxism," as Derrida argues, then what would be the attending or (dis)emerging subjectivities to these spectrally troubled inheritances?

This is an expansive question (the production of spectral subjectivities *vis-à-vis* haunted origins) and one well beyond the scope of just Marxism, with many possible answers appearing in the form or context of "varieties" of a tradition. Each "spectralized" heritage, Marxist or other, would need to bear witness to the impossibility of a pure inheritance by claiming only a particular "inheritance" or bequeathal with the acknowledgement that there are others "shares" to be distributed, sifted, and sorted.

While our focus thus far has been on the "Marx" and "Marxism" heritage, it is fairly easy to see that Derrida's discussion of the significance of "heritage" extends well beyond the Marxist tradition—hauntology proliferates across all traditions. The control of "heritage," as we have seen, is a foundational problem for traditions in particular and in general. For instance, a "heritage" that has been spectralized is "out-of-control" and oddly positioned to ask questions about what it in fact bequeaths and what kinds of subjects it in fact creates in the work of passing on its so-called inheritance tasks and obligations.

If every "heritage" therefore is in a "double-bind," then it stands to reason that every heritage must open a space for the work of responsibility—the sorting, shifting, and filtering, to paraphrase Derrida, of that which it presents to be inherited. This point is emphasized time and again by Derrida in "Artifactualities." He even goes so far in his discussion as to suggest that we have a responsibility, perhaps even a duty, to sort, shift, and filter the inheritance we receive from our heritages of which we have never been aware:

. . . even people who haven't read Marx, or who have never so much as heard his name, even anti-communists or anti-Marxists are inheritors of Marx. And then, is it not possible to inherit from Marx without inheriting from Shakespeare, without inheriting from the Bible and from quite a few other things, too.²³

It is this observation by Derrida that opens the most pressing questions, what else and from whom does one inherit? What else is one responsible for and to? What else must we bear witness to, with and without knowing it?

²³ Jacques Derrida, 2002, 26.

The preceding questions allow, now, for a turn in the inquiry – a turn away from the specificity of “Marx” and “Marxism,” but not away from the topic of “heritage,” “inheritance,” and “responsibility.” Derrida brings this portion of his discussion of metaphysics to a close on the topic of the “history of ghosts,” which marks three specific heritages or relations of consciousness to objects. The first is “the relation of consciousness to the object *as truth* or as relation *to the truth* as mere object.” This speaks to history of the ghost that requires that mind must transparently correlate to the world – object-dominated metaphysics. The second is “the relation of consciousness insofar as it is *the truth*, to the object.” The history of the ghost, here, refers to the heritage in which there is a subject-dominated metaphysics. The third is the “*true relation* of consciousness with truth.” This, given the previous context, refers to Hegelian Idealism.

While these are clear “markers” of the history of the ghost or the history of philosophy, it is Derrida’s concluding discussion of this “history” that will allow our turn to “other” heritages, namely Christianity. In concluding an overview of the “history of ghosts,” Derrida surprisingly writes that “this tripleness reflects the Trinity: God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.”²⁴ He adds that, “the spirit provides mediation, thus passage and unity. It gives rise, by the same token, to the metamorphosis of the spiritual into the spectral.”²⁵ It is, of course, much more complicated than this both historically and theologically. The “procession” of the “Holy Ghost” is the major issue upon which the Great Schism of 1054 occurs.

The “single procession,” by which the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father alone would, as I read Derrida, fit with his comment regarding “passage and unity.” The “double procession,” however, would then work as an example the spiritual “metamorphosing” into the spectral. What does this mean? In the “double procession,” with the Holy Ghost coming from two sources, the Father and Christ, spectrality thus appears at the origin of Christian theology. Granted the Father and Christ are one, but the “doubling” of the procession produces a double-bind, a difference at the source, which then becomes, following Derrida, spectral and not spiritual.

As is made clear in Derrida’s example, the questions of the spirit and the history of the ghost are very much linked to a concern beyond the specific issue of Marxism. I would argue that, for Derrida, the importance of hauntology directly lies in its general connection to this “metamorphosis of the spiritual into the spectral.” This translates into a concern for how heritages literally transition from unity to plurality or transcendence to immanence. What better example can be found of this than the “Holy Spirit,”

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, 1994, 154.

²⁵ Ibid.

the "Holy Ghost," spectralized through what Derrida refers to the opening epigraph as the "Christic moment"?

The Spectres of Jesus in Christianity

From this point forward, I will be more interested in focusing on a very different "heritage," inheritance, and obligation . . . not that of "Marx" and "Marxism," but, namely, that of "Jesus" and "Christianity"—the Derridean "Christic moment." After all, isn't it Derrida who says that we "inherit" from the Bible as well as Marx and Shakespeare? What I am arguing is that by extending Derrida's analysis of the concepts of heritage and "spectrality" in this way, as we have discussed it, it is possible to see Derrida's "belated," "premature," and, in this instance, spectral deconstruction of "Marx" and "Marxism" mapping directly onto the "spectral heritage" of "Jesus" and "Christianity," if not all figures and heritages.

There is a strong supporting context for moving the concept of spectral-deconstruction into a discussion of the "Christic moment" as it relates to the larger heritage problem of linking "Jesus" and "Christianity." This commerce between a Jesus-figure and a Christian-heritage already has been proffered by none other than Derrida himself in his discussion of Stirner, in which he (Derrida), as the epigraph notes, views "Jesus" as the "greatest and most incomprehensible of ghosts," a ghost *par excellence*. Perhaps more directly, John D. Caputo, as we have seen, in making the case for a "religion without religion," affirms the generalized hauntology behind this spectral move when he writes, "The ghost, the *revenant*, is the ever recurrent specter, the messianic prospect of the *tout autre* who haunts our self-presence, our self-sufficiency, who disturbs the order of the same, who comes to us as the voice of the dead to whom we bear a responsibility, and as the voice of the ones still to come, as those others, other-than-the-living present who lay claim to us."²⁶

Traditionally, "Marx and Marxism" and "Jesus and Christianity," as a conjoined figure/heritage dynamic, set out to "lay claim to us," as Caputo writes, when they produce particular subject positions or subject-obligations through a heritage demand. That is, figures and heritages allow subjects, in general, to emerge within a space of inheritance. However, in this space of inheritance, what should be understood as a "pluriverse" of unrestricted legacies, spectral obligations that "lay claim to us," instead appears as univocal space within a traditional configuration of subjectivity.

Derrida's "Marx-ic" and "Christic" moments, consequently, permit the forestalling or, possibly, the avoiding of dogmatism, political and theological. The result is a marriage of deconstruction and inheritance which, perhaps, substantiates a

²⁶ John D. Caputo, 1997, 146.

more inclusive, wider “spectrum” of actual and virtual subjectivities that take on what Derrida views as the impossible task of inheriting—bearing witness to the relationships formed with language and “something.”

The crucial question, which we already have begun to answer, at this point is, how do we get from “specters of Marx and Marxism” to “specters of Jesus and Christianity”? I will argue that it is through Derridean deconstruction’s concept of the “wholly other,” which I will argue is at the core of his discussion of hauntology. Just as “Marx” and “Marxism,” through a “spectral analysis,” become wholly plural, so, too, do “Jesus” and “Christianity.” In fact, John D. Caputo, again, in *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, refers to the way in which deconstruction itself disallows for a “regathering” or “reassembling” of a complete system—the basic lesson of deconstruction. I would argue that this could be extended to include any previously totalized figure/heritage based system in which the figure purportedly gives rise to the heritage . . . whether Marx/Marxism or Jesus/Christianity or, even, Paul/Christianity.

One could ask, as Caputo does, “But what about Jesus?” And, the answer, more or less, is that Jesus, and I will argue like Marx (although Caputo does not take it this far), becomes in this instance a “disfiguring” figure—a subject who deeply interrupts the reconfiguration or re-completion of a totality *sans* spectrality.

The whole point of the *tout autre* in deconstruction, the cutting edge behind this idea, if it is an idea, its burning passion, is a messianic one, to keep the system open, to prevent the play of differences from regathering and reassembling in a systematic whole with infinite warrant, and to take its stand with everyone and everything that is rejected and expelled by this omnivorous gathering, everything that is disempowered by all this power, with everyone who suffers at the hands of this gathering power, with all the detritus and excrement of the System.²⁷

From Caputo’s application, derived directly from a close reading of Derrida and further mapped onto Christianity in his short book *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?*, Jesus, as a messianic figure, holds “open the door” of the would-be closed and total system, preventing it from a self-shutting and thus creating an “inside” separated from an “outside.” The messianic Jesus, then, is unique among the range of “Jesus” in that he, as representing the wholly other in Christianity, “keeps the system open,” and, more significantly, open to “everyone and everything that is [would be] rejected and expelled” from a totalized, self-shutting “ghosted” Christianity.

This, I will point out, is to no one’s surprise the exact same lesson that Derrida draws from his astute examination of “Marx” and

²⁷ John D. Caputo, 1997, 246.

"Marxism"—that "Marx" is a "messianic subject" (wholly other) and a figure who produces a "messianic" subjectivity that prevents the ideological "heritage" or "political philosophy" from enclosing itself. The Derridean insight, quite apart from Caputo's "Jesus who deconstructs," here is complex and, at the same time, crucial insofar as we have a Jesus who, like Marx, holds open heritages—a figure, understood as an un-restricted spectral figure, that is not necessarily nor exclusively a member of the heritage that he historically and theologically founds.

The "modelization" of un-restricted, spectral subjectivities that then follows from this deconstructive instance, I will argue, becomes hauntingly radical—Founding Figure ≠ Heritage, Marx ≠ Marxism, Jesus ≠ Christianity, Paul ≠ Christianity. This logic would then include any founding figure, through a spectralization of subjectivity, who stands outside of or is not restricted to or is not an exclusive member of a heritage, a heritage that is ironically founded upon that very figure's presumed "strictly pure" subjectivity.

A "Jesus who deconstructs" is an important consideration in this hauntological recalibrating of the "Christic moment" in Christianity; however, to truly get the Derridean point, one needs to posit not just a "Jesus who deconstructs," but a "deconstructing Jesus"—a Jesus-subjectivity, like a Marx-subjectivity, that undergoes radical interpellation from a plurality of "heritages."

One of the most significant recent examinations of the relationship between Jesus or a Jesus-subjectivity, as I have called it, and the traditional Christian "heritage" is Carl A. Raschke's *GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn*.²⁸ In the book, which is designed to appeal to a wide audience, including the "Churched," which is unusual for a scholarly study, Raschke introduces the concept of "GloboChrist" to complicate the reader's understanding of a Jesus-subjectivity as well as the reader's attending understanding of the tradition that follows from it, namely the heritage of the "Great Commission." For Raschke, Jesus and the Christian heritage must be viewed "spectrally," although he doesn't use that particular term, in order to see a Jesus or Jesus-subjectivity as emerging within a contextualizing, deconstructing space—perhaps even as a simultaneously contextualizing, deconstructing space.

More specifically, the postmodern concept of "GloboChrist" leads to a Jesus/Christianity dynamic in which the emphasis is placed not on the development of a strict "formulation" of Christianity, but on the unrestricted formation of "relation" or "relationality" within the theological context of Christianity. By this I take Raschke to mean that Jesus, in the context of "GloboChrist" and

²⁸ Carl A. Raschke, *GloboChrist: The Great Commission Takes a Postmodern Turn* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

²⁸ Raschke, 2008, 118.

as a Jesus-subjectivity, and Christianity, in the context of spectralization, are not reducible to a monolithic, "strictly pure" heritage—Jesus, in effect, doesn't just simply deconstruct something, a religious dogma, for instance; he both deconstructs, which is the usual reading, and he is *deconstructing*, which is the more radical reading in my view that leaves us not with a single formulated "Jesus" or, the opposite, merely more "Jesuses," as many faces, but with the a new concept of a Jesus-subjectivity, a radically *deconstructing* subjectivity in relation to a plurality of inheritances. In other words, Jesus doesn't found or anchor a heritage; he disrupts the very possibility of heritage as a single or restricted legacy.

In fact, following from this, the now spectralized inheritances of Christianity along with a deconstructing Jesus-subjectivity explicitly point to a truly radicalized Jesus-subject that is exactly the opposite in form from the subjectivity that is affirmed by the traditional Christian theological view—Jesus, from this perspective, in his divine presence, works to restrict the Christian heritage and subsequently makes strictly pure a Christian (Christo-mimetic) subjectivity. That is to say, the tension between heritage and inheritance resides in the opposition between a spectralized, unrestricted Jesus-subjectivity and a ghostly, restricted Jesus-identity. When one merges Raschke's GloboChrist with the Derridean concept of spectrality, the "Great Commission" of Christianity takes on a radical new meaning—the Christian heritage, through a deconstructing Jesus-subjectivity, becomes radically "unrestricted."

This new meaning, I will argue, is the heightened awareness of a new responsibility, as an "impossible task," to the hauntological dimension of a reconfigured figure and heritage. The Christian inheritors, finding themselves in a "double-bind," must come to view Jesus as a specter and, simultaneously, view the heritage that emerges from this spectral figure as being thoroughly "plural-relational-global" in its historical and theological aporetic reality: "Jesus contextualized! He did not give scrupulous arguments for some theological position or interpretation he had chosen to defend against other "lawyers" or gentile opponents. Jesus contextualized because he came to reveal the Father. Jesus revealed the Father in his teachings, which were always contextualized in terms of his relational dealings with others, especially those who were neither morally nor doctrinally pure—prostitutes, tax collectors, and thieves, as well as the unlearned and unwashed."²⁹

A "contextualizing Jesus" is what I would call a Jesus who is "deconstructing" and is "deconstructed," along with deconstructed/deconstructing received Christian heritage. As Raschke describes him, this so-called traditional Jesus would, from my discussion, differ from a "spectral Jesus"—one that we

²⁹ Raschke, 2008, 118.

begin to see the plural possibilities of in Derrida's hauntology "heritage." More precisely, these possibilities for subjectivity reside in the formation of emergent figures, which are un-strict, unrestraining, and plural. What is important to note here is not only the "global" processes of "contextualization/deconstruction," which is fundamental to the incarnation itself, but the sharp contrast between traditional doctrinal purity and hauntological, relational unrestrictedness in the Christian inheritance—bearing witness to the existence of many "shares" of a tradition/heritage.

It is, taking from Raschke's perspective, that the two are mutually exclusive, with one sense of inheritance negating the other. That is to say, "doctrinal purity," which is the "strict purity" of a traditional heritage, produces strict non-relationality and oppressive exclusivity—subjects and subjectivities are presumed to not fully exist when they are situated outside of a traditional heritage or "formulation." By contrast and from my reading of Derridean hauntology and Raschkean globo "relationality," spectrality radicalizes a Christian heritage, opening it to the discarded margins and negations of its former restrictiveness.

In this sense, not only do existents exist within the space of inheritance, in this case Christian, but so, too, do non-existents, as "relational" possibilities, which I would argue ties back to Raschke's relationality of a uniquely global Christ as a "GloboChrist." If we are to then see Jesus as contextualized, having a Jesus-subjectivity rather than a Jesus-identity. This would be a Jesus-subjectivity as a Jesus-event that is deconstructing and deconstructed. In this instance, I would say that we also need to see the theoretical potential of a forceful and radical plasticity within a Jesus-subjectivity, a radical plasticity that allows for the emergence of the plurality of inheritances as impossible responsibilities without a complete origin or a closed finality.

The now spectralized inheritances of Christianity along with a deconstructing Jesus-subjectivity explicitly point to a truly radicalized Jesus-subject that is exactly the opposite in form from the subjectivity that is affirmed by the traditional Christian theological view—Jesus, from this perspective, in his divine presence, works to restrict the Christian heritage and subsequently makes strictly pure a Christian (Christomimetic) subjectivity. That is to say, the tension between heritage and inheritance resides in the opposition between a spectralized, unrestricted Jesus-subjectivity and a ghostly, restricted Jesus-identity.

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If Derrida's *Specters of Marx* is perhaps less about the ideological shoring up of a properly named Marxist "heritage" and, as I have argued, more about a "*certain spirit of Marxism*"³⁰ or the general process of spectralization of Marxism, then it is reasonable for us to then examine the extent to which Derridean spectrality, as it is formed around the ineluctable moment of ghost-chasing and ghost-making, continues to be relevant to the "heritages" surrounding "Jesus" and "Christianity." We already have seen from John D. Caputo's discussion of Marx's "double bind," *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, that an "ontology of presence" leads to an instance in which a ghost is simultaneously removed and then inconspicuously (re) installed from and into a heritage. Once this process is understood, the crypt can never be fully closed.

The Derridean lesson to be drawn from this recounting of the "double bind" is rather stark. We learn that an appeal to "heritage" alone cannot sufficiently exorcise ghosts, although it may conjure them. By this point I mean to emphasize that spectrality should be seen as a condition that is specifically haunted by the unavoidable breakdown of a particular binary arrangement (ghostly presence/ghostly absence) that presumes the totality of a heritage.

Derrida says quite clearly that ". . . a radicalization is always indebted to the very thing it radicalizes."³¹ In other words, from this observation, there is no purely "outside" the radicalized thing, no way out of the collapsing opposition—each radicalization or, perhaps, spectralization arises from the supposed closed "thing" in its philosophical, religious, literary, or artistic metaphysics of presence. Moreover, if this attentiveness to non-closure is indeed one of the primary lessons of *Specters of Marx*, then it is crucial to further examine the significance of spectralization in other *heritage-worlds*, namely "Jesus interpellated" *heritage-worlds*—worlds, artistic, literary, political,

³⁰ Jacques Derrida, 1994, 92.

³¹ Ibid.

and theological, in which Jesus “calls” many subjectivities into existence.

I will add here one more important link onto the series of incomplete ontology, unfinalizable teleology, and spectral subjectivity: the concept of aporetic *plasticity*. The Derridean discussion of heritages thus far points to the possibility of “plastic” heritages. The context for this may be found in Catherine Malabou’s book entitled *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*. Malabou, informed by Derridean deconstruction, provides a preliminary definition of “plasticity” that relates to two, yet intertwined, aspects of the concept of plasticity, aspects that are relevant to the formation of worlds and subjects as I have been discussing it.

The first, most common meaning of “plasticity” refers to that which is changeable or malleable—“susceptible to changes in form.”³² The second meaning of the term that Malabou gives emphasizes plasticity’s “power to bestow form, the power to mould,”³³ which, as she notes, gives meaning to the terms “plastic surgeon” and “plastic arts.” It is important to further consider the significance of this duality as it relates to Jesus’s overall plasticity without finality within a heritage space that is formed and forms by the demand of a bequeathal.

First, there is plasticity as it relates to Jesus’s capacity to be the amendable condition of what I’ve referred to as a (plural) *heritage-worlds* and, second, to a plasticity within Jesus as the capacity to call forth or produce or shape subjectivities in those worlds. First and most obvious, Jesus is a historical and theological figure who is himself supremely “plastic,” malleable; that is to say, in the western humanities, as well as other non-western traditions, Jesus “morphs” into a very wide array of images—sage, healer, prophet, zealot, Savior, apocalypticist, atheist.

In addition to these images, there are, perhaps, representations of Jesus that suggest a higher degree of plasticity, which brings me to my second point, plasticity as “bestowing form.” In this sense of the term, with each subject-iteration of Jesus along this range of plasticity, there lies a “production” of sub-attending mimetic subjectivities or subject-heritages. In other words, every “modelization” of Jesus-subjectivity carries with it a “heritage” within which people can experience a “Christo-mimetic-subjectivization.”

For instance, if Jesus “is” a zealot, then a follower can be a Christian “zealot” or, correspondingly, a Christian “apocalypticist,” or, for that matter, a Christain “atheist.” In the extreme, if, as Susannah Heschel describes in her book *The Aryan Jesus*, Jesus is not Jewish, but an Aryan, then a follower of Jesus in

³² Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic* (New York/London: Routledge, 2005), 8.

³³ Malabou, 2005, 8.

Hitler's Germany could more easily reproduce a Nazified Christian subjectivity.³⁴

This, of course, is not to say that a Nazified Jesus is in any way consistent with the even the broadest Christian tradition; it is not. What Heschel's research shows, however, is that Jesus's plasticity is historically, politically, theologically, and literally uniquely expansive—even to the point where a Jesus-subject can historically, politically, and/or theologically appear that is diametrically opposed to the most basic understandings of the Gospel's message of love.

This radical plasticity is in a sense “ontological” plasticity, plasticity without restriction, beginning to end—even if it leads to a “Nazified Jesus” as Heschel describes. In this context, it is crucial to understand the relationship between an incomplete ontology, unfinalizable teleology, and the modelization of (dis)emergent subjectivities, especially as it informs the direct production of Jesus-subjectivities in philosophy, religion, literature, and politics. Each and every iteration of Jesus's many historical, cultural, ethnic, and theological subjectivities or subject-heritages allows for the (dis)emergence of a particular and corresponding “Christian” subjectivity—a plastic Christo-mimetic “Truth” of identity to be lived out in the world. It must be remembered, however, that this “Truth” is not univocal, Platonic; it is a “Truth-event” (to borrow slightly from Alain Badiou) that reveals an aporia or belongs to the structure of the aporia—the undetermined “structurality” of structure.

Derrida observes in *Aporias* that what I've described thus far as a (dis)emergent or deconstructing subjectivity within a pluralized Christian heritage begins with a more prior “desedimentation of the theological strata hiding the original nakedness of the evangelical message to be restored.” This “desedimentation,” however, points to two forms of tradition-oriented deconstruction, Lutheran-Heideggerian “*destructio*” and Derridean deconstructive “inheritance”:

Even before this historical sequence (of between thirty and forty years), one must remember the Nietzschean, Freudian, and above all Heideggerian premises of deconstruction. And especially, in relation to Heidegger, that there is a Christian, or more precisely a Lutheran tradition of what Heidegger calls *Destruktion*. Luther, as I describe in my book on Jean-Luc Nancy and what Nancy calls the “deconstruction of Christianity,” was already talking about *destructio* to designate the need for a desedimentation of the theological strata hiding the original nakedness of the evangelical message to be restored.

³⁴ Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

What interests me more and more is to make out the specificity of a *deconstruction that wouldn't necessarily be reducible to this Lutheran-Heideggerian tradition* [my emphasis]. And that's perhaps what differentiates my work from those who are close to me, in France and abroad. Without refuting or rejecting anything at all, I would like to try to make out what separates an ongoing deconstruction from the memory it inherits, at the very instant when it is reaffirming and respecting that memory's inheritance . . .³⁵

Here, Derrida, referring largely to the tradition informing Jean-Luc Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity, pauses over the issue of "inheritance" as that which demands reaffirmation and respect, which, as Derrida comments, points to a deconstruction that would not be "necessarily" reducible to the "Lutheran-Heideggerian tradition." This deconstruction I would argue is different from the generic work of "auto-deconstruction" in which the structurality of the structure refuses to uphold opposing terms—heaven and earth. More precisely, Derrida is pointing to the ways that "memory's inheritance" is itself a deconstruction that relies upon a palintropic maneuver rather than a destructive one.

Sean Gaston, for instance, in *Starting With Derrida* distinguishes between the palintrope from the palindrome in the following way: "a palindrome, a word or a phrase or number that reads the same backwards as forwards. . . a palintrope has a slightly different rhetorical flourish: it starts differently, with a start, it *startles* itself as it starts again."³⁶

The palintropic, deconstructive character of "memory's inheritance" requires that in the case of Christianity's deconstruction a "returning" (through "memory-work") take place. This would amount to a return to thinking that turns back on itself, startles itself with its possibilities for thinking anew. If, contrastively, auto-deconstruction "levels" oppositions/contradictions within the tradition of Lutheran-Heideggerian *destruction*, palintropic deconstruction ("inheritance- deconstruction") thus opens upon a creative plurality of traditions or heritages.

This distinction between destructive and creative trajectories of deconstruction speaks also to a general (mis)understanding of deconstruction—there is *no* meaning only the destruction of sense in texts, traditions, heritages, etc. Derrida, here, affirms the contrary. There is a creative overabundance of meaning, but non-univocal meaning as the "possibilities for" meaning in heritages. So, when heritages deconstruct, they do not necessarily auto-deconstruct or only auto-deconstruct. There is a palintropic

³⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Aporias: Dying – Awaiting (One Another at) the Limits of Truth*, trans. Thomas Droit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 137-138.

³⁶ Sean Gaston, *Starting With Derrida: Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel* (New York: Continuum, 2007), ii-iii.

deconstruction that is not reducible to *destruction* – instead, we are presented with a deconstruction that is plastic in that it is related to “memory’s inheritance,” creative, malleable, and forming.

This particular creative aspect of deconstruction is crucial to understanding my argument regarding Derrida’s perspective on the Christian heritage as it is derived from *Specters of Marx*. In this instance, “memory’s inheritance,” as the work of deconstruction, must, as Derrida states, “untie” itself from both a complete destruction of or the monolithic revelation of an original Christian message.

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 the sacrifice of its own self-deconstruction. Hey, Sade – go for it! For there is deconstruction and deconstruction. Let us never forget the Christian, in fact, Lutheran, memory of Heideggerian deconstruction (*Destruktion* was first *destructio* by Luther, anxious to reactivate the originary sense of the Gospels by deconstructing theological sediments). Let us never forget this, lest one mix up all the “deconstructions” of this time. And of the world. But in truth, one can never forget this Christian (Lutheran, Pascalian, Hegelian, Kierkegaardian, Marxian, and so forth) memory when one reads Heidegger, when one also questions his denials. A “deconstruction of Christianity,” if it is ever possible, should therefore begin by untying itself from a Christian tradition of *destructio*.³⁷

This lengthy passage provides the context for the previous quote from Derrida and points to a highly charged contest over the place of deconstruction in Christian theology. The standard deconstructive turn on Christianity leaves the Christian heritage “destroyed,” in a Nietzschean sense. However, there are other theological traditions, Christian “negative theology,” for instance, that view deconstruction as affirming a “traditional” Christian heritage. The difficulty lies between these two versions of deconstruction – atheistic and theistic. Clearly, Derrida has not affirmed either, the “death” of Christianity nor Christian theology *via* deconstruction’s presentation of radical alterity interpreted as God. This is and will be an on-going debate around Derrida’s theological application.

(Im)plastic Specters

Just as there are many instances of Jesus’s plasticity across the western humanities and non-western humanistic traditions, there also are heritages of “implasticity,” strong orthodox injunctions against such operations of plasticity in both senses of the term. The most obvious examples of these restrictions (aesthetic and

³⁷ Jacques Derrida, *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 60.

theological) come from the field of art history in which painters such as Caravaggio (1571-1610) and Rembrandt (1606-1669) who, respectively, attempted to portray Jesus outside the representational, theological "norm" or orthodox-heritage.

One of the most famous examples of this is Caravaggio's *Calling of St. Matthew* in which Jesus appears in the dark confines of a tavern, seeking the "tax collector" Matthew. While the painting alludes to Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, with Jesus's hand reaching out to Matthew, the context is realistic and gritty—a primary instance of Caravaggio's "naturalism." Jesus, in the painting, has a realistic human body; he occupies a human space in which the ambient light co-mingles with divine light to form a faint halo above his head; his common robe contrasts with the fine apparel of Matthew and his attendants. Jesus is, finally, ordinary and material—outside the implastic heritage-subjectivity of the Catholic Church at the time.

One could even go so far as to say that Caravaggio's painting makes the sacred, in general, profane, as with *The Death of the Virgin* in which Andrew Graham-Dixon states that "never before in the history of Christian painting had Mary, mother of God, been made to seem as poor and frail and vulnerable as this. Wearing a simple red dress, unlaced at the bodice to make her more comfortable in her last moments, she lies stretched out on the makeshift bier of a plank of wood. She looks shockingly dead."³⁸

Caravaggio's "naturalism," featuring "shockingly dead" holy figures, opens a crucial space to ask questions about (dis)emergent subjectivities in the context of the "profanation" of the sacred, which occurs not only in painting but, as we will see, appears in literature as well. In other words, more specifically in relation to Jesus's subjectivizing, plastic power: What subjectivities does "He," as a strangely "common" and "plastic" figure, call forth?

Of course, for some of Caravaggio's contemporaries, this was not the proper question to be asking—the role of painting was to affirm theological implasticity. *St. Matthew and the Angel* (first version), for instance, was reported to have "pleased nobody."³⁹ Giovanni Pietro Bellori describes the rejection of the painting by the priests: "After he had finished the central picture of St. Matthew and installed it on the altar, the priests took it down, saying that the figure with its legs crossed and its feet rudely exposed to the public had neither decorum nor the appearance of a saint."⁴⁰ That, of course, was Caravaggio's aesthetic and

³⁸ Andrew Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 310.

³⁹ Graham-Dixon, 2010, 236.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

theological vision, to make "Christ and his followers [look] a lot more like beggars than cardinals."⁴¹

This was, I will argue, a serious challenge to the supposed implasticity of what Tillich would describe as an "ultimate concern." Caravaggio, in shaping Jesus into the subject-figure of a "beggar," opens or threatens to open through painting new heritage possibilities for Christianity, with enormous consequences.

The second art historical figure to be discussed in the context of the "plasticity" of Jesus is Rembrandt. Like his predecessor, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, too, sought the "profanation" of the sacred and his studies of the "face of Jesus" provide an interesting example of subject modelization in religious and theological discourse—perhaps with the same radical consequences for theological implasticity as Caravaggio. George S. Keyes in "Perception and Belief: The Image of Christ and the Meditative Turn in Rembrandt's Religious Art" recounts F. Schmidt-Degener 1915 reception of a *Head of Christ* as an image of Jesus that "rejected the traditional, more Apollonian image of Christ found in Italian art, [replacing] it with an image of a Nazarene so believable that . . . it was one of the most treasured monuments of Christian art."⁴² Keyes adds that this response was not peculiar to Schmidt-Degener.

In fact, Keyes states, "what this group of early twentieth-century admirers found so compelling in these painted images of Christ was Rembrandt's bold redefinition of Jesus not as a heroic figure embodying suffering but as an inward, undemonstrative beings who compels reverence by his very existence in the mind and imagination of the beholder."⁴³ Here, in Rembrandt's work, we see the plasticity and shaping power of Jesus' image, a power to "morph" or (dis)emerge out of the Apollonian subject and "morph" or (dis)emerge into the Nazarene subject, which is similar to Caravaggio's transformation of Jesus and his followers into beggars from saints. Moreover, we see the plastic, bestowing power to shape a Christo-mimetic subjectivity through the "mind and imagination" of the viewer, with the image of Jesus becoming an "object of meditation."⁴⁴

The following issue to be discussed, then, rests how the object of meditation is contextualized—what series of assemblages of relationality, in this instance theological, are opened, as heritages, to the "meditating" viewer?

⁴¹ Ibid., 236-237.

⁴² George S. Keyes, "Perception and Belief: The Image of Christ and the Meditative Turn in Rembrandt's Religious Art" in Lloyd DeWitt, *Rembrandt and the Face of Jesus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 1.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

These two art historical “image-inheritances” demonstrate the extent to which widely available depictions of Jesus can produce instances not only of visual plasticity but also theological plasticity—Jesus “becomes,” as we have seen, in this dynamic movement from sacred to profane the focal point for new “theological” subject-possibilities or subject-heritages. Visual leading to theological plasticity is related to but, I would argue, distinct from identity plasticity.

In religious and cultural studies, the most common instance of visual-theological implasticity, and the one with which readers may be most familiar, is, of course, representing Jesus in art as a white European—clearly the most common depiction in the western humanities and one which points to white Euro-centric subject-heritages. By transforming the representation of Jesus beyond this limited identity to better fit with the extensive range of ethnic possibilities, such as an Asian Jesus, Latino Jesus, or Black Jesus, the possibilities for subject modelization and production dramatically increase, as we have seen in the context of a “multi-cultural” Jesus.

While it is this dimension of representational plasticity/possibility that is most often observed within a multi-cultural setting, it still remains a question as to what extent a shifting of representational identity would initiate a shift in a corresponding theological subjectivity—a shift in one domain doesn’t necessarily produce a new “theological” subject-heritage in another. That is to say, the critical shift to emphasize here is not so much the one from one identity position to another identity position within the discourses of culture and ethnicity, although significant, but it is the more fundamental shift *away* from a presumed subject of “universality”—the normative subjectivity of the “White Face,” as Deleuze and Guattari refer to it.

The process of “plasticization,” which I would describe as being determined by the (haunto)logic governing the formation of subjectivities, as it is found in *Specters of Marx*, especially in relation to hauntology’s fracturing of universality by way of the “visor effect,” can be draped onto something one might call the “theo-spectralization” of Jesus. By this I mean a very specific Jesus subjectivity that undergoes plastic adjustment as an image (art or literary) and a Jesus subjectivity that produces or instigates plastic adjustments. In other words, each spectralized pictorial, theological, and, as we shall see, literary depiction of Jesus makes possible, through its transformation, a radical subject-heritage.

In fact, as I will argue, it is within the space of art and literature that these “specters of Jesus” most critically (dis)emerge to challenge the putative universality of an implastic heritage, any heritage, and the subsequent bequeathals that come to define it. A “spectered” or “spectralized” Jesus, then, does more than add another identity position to the range of possible identity positions that are indexed to culture, for instance—this particular

spectralization of Jesus, one that radically subverts the conditions of subjectivity, like Derrida's subversion of Marxism's subject heritage, fundamentally calls into question the concept and basic mechanisms of theological, philosophical, and literary (artistic) subjectivization itself.

The wider significance of this move to what I am calling spectral subjectivities is confirmed by a reading of Simon Critchley on the general problem of a post-deconstructive subjectivity in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas, and Contemporary French Thought*. Critchley writes, "[m]etaphysics is always a metaphysics of the subject, insofar as philosophy has always sought to name the *subjectum*, the ultimate foundation or beginning point for an understanding of entities, or to offer a thesis on the Being of beings."⁴⁵ Critchley goes on to add that,

[i]n this broad sense, the master words of premodern metaphysics – *eidos*, *ousia*, *causa sui* – are all subjects. *The subject is the subject of metaphysics*, and philosophy deals with the determination of the subject as the ultimate foundation upon which entities become intelligible. The possibility of the subject is the very possibility of philosophy.⁴⁶

I would only add that while the "possibility of the subject is the very possibility of philosophy," it is the "possibility" of theology, art, and literature. Moreover, following the logic of hauntology, the possibility of the subject . . ." is the very possibility of subjectivity, as a condition of plasticity.

Given this description that is provided by Critchley, one could ask: how does this "very possibility," as he defines it, of the subject occur? The answer, from Derrida *vis-à-vis* Heidegger, comes by way of a "post-deconstructive subjectivity."⁴⁷ In response to the issue of subjectivity, Derrida comments in a conversation with Jean-Luc Nancy that one would "seek a new (post-deconstructive subject) determination of the responsibility of the 'subject'" through a "relation to the 'yes' or to the *Zusage* presupposed in every question."⁴⁸ This is a crucial insight by Derrida and is, I will argue, directly related to the problem of "inheritance" or bequeathal as he discusses it in *Specters of Marx*.

The "founding" moment of a post-deconstructive subjectivity— one that occurs in the midst of an awareness of a relation to the "yes"—is conditioned by the *Zusage* (vow, pledge, commitment, acceptance, promise, covenant, or undertaking) attending the

⁴⁵ Simon Critchley, *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas, and Contemporary Thought* (London: Verso, 2009), 53.

⁴⁶ Critchley, 2009, 53

⁴⁷ See Critchley's lengthy discussion in the section entitled 'Post-Deconstructive Subjectivity" in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas, and Contemporary Thought* (London: Verso, 2009), 70-82.

⁴⁸ Critchley, 2009, 70.

inheritance or heritage giving rise to the subject and not just the identity position. The relation to the "yes" (*Zusage*) pre-figures the subject or represents the inaugural demand of the "bequeather" that interpellates or, better, founds the subject within a heritage-space.

We already have seen in the context of Derrida's "hauntological analysis" the ramifications of saying "yes" to Marx. However, the topic moving forward will fall under the still "haunted" historical and theological question: what does it mean to say "yes" to Jesus? What is the *Zusage*, if there is one, relevant to the "Christic moment," the determination of a responsibility in relation to a spectralized Jesus? Or, what is the commitment, promise, vow, undertaking that will emerge as a hauntological Christianity? The answer may appear as a reaffirmation of an orthodox, implastic heritage or emerge alongside something like Raschke's "GloboChrist," which sees the *Zusage* as a responsibility to a foundational or radical "force" of relationality.

Before looking more closely at the implications, historical and theological, of the concept of "specters of Jesus," it is important to briefly examine the ways that Derrida links subjectivity, specifically a post-deconstructive subjectivity, to Heidegger's use of *Zusage*. The word, I should note, does not appear in either the English or French versions of *Specters of Marx*. Neither does the word appear in *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. I mention this because *Specters of Marx* (1993) and *Archive Fever* (1995) appear well after *Of Spirit* (1987), where it is a critical within an era of Derrida's Heidegger work in which he was particularly concerned with or perhaps more accurately particularly focused on the status of the "aporetic supplement" in Freud and Heidegger.

The word is used in "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'" (1990) in reference to Heidegger's distinction between philosophy and theology but after that he more or less abandons it. The point that I am making here regarding *Zusage* concerns the conspicuous way the term becomes absent but also clearly remains (spectrally) part of Derrida's later works. It is clear that Derrida's discussion of inheritance and heritage in *Specters of Marx* conceptually relates directly to *Zusage*, especially in the context of "bequeathal."

That the word falls away after *Of Spirit* and "Force of Law" is interesting, especially given that the final note in *Specters of Marx*, which seems to directly call for its use:

Freud and Heidegger. In *The Post Card* . . . the signatory of *Envos* couples them like *two specters* [my emphasis]: 'Here Freud and Heidegger, I conjoin them within me like two great ghosts of the 'great epoch.' The two surviving grandfathers. They did not know each other, but according to me they form a couple, and in fact just because of that, this singular anachrony.'

Derrida goes on to define the “singular anachrony” that couples the “surviving grandfathers.” He writes, “[g]iven that a *revenant* is always called upon to come and to come back, the thinking of the specter, contrary to what good sense leads us to believe, singles toward the future. It is thinking of the past, a legacy that can come only from that which has not yet arrived—from the *arrivant* itself.”⁴⁹

Zusage, as I have described it here, participates directly in hauntology and spectrality; that is if we read correctly Derrida’s “non-arrival” of the past as legacy. In this sense, *Zusage* creates a subject through an implastic covenant, a subject who is placed under an obligation, included in a heritage. What must be remembered, however, is that every obligation or inclusion in a heritage, as Derrida notes, is attended by a sifting and filtering—it is a plastic inclusion. The subject, even beyond its volition, is simultaneously located along different and differing points within an inheritance—since deconstruction is an inheritance, as he notes.

When inheritances are presented as obligations, they are accompanied by different and differing subject-worlds. Each subject-world, as a result, calls out a demand or demands and each emerging subject takes shape around that or those particular call(s). This “plasticity” of the subject and the heritage may explain the reasons for Derrida sets aside the implastic term *Zusage*. Perhaps it lacked the pliability that one finds more readily in heritage or legacy.

If, as Derrida says, Christianity must undergo a theological “unting” from the strictures of *destructio*, then perhaps Heideggerian *Zusage* is precisely that mode of implasticity that must be avoided if a proper “unting” can occur. Heritage, in this context, then, is more open to a reshaping, a radically palintropic discursive moment favoring plasticity, perhaps even a plasticity that ultimately throws open the very condition for heritage in the first place.

The call(s) of heritage within this arrangement startle the subject, throwing into crisis the shape that it may take as it wraps itself around a world—a world that continually arrives and departs, as I discussed in the previous section. The question moving forward is, what degree of plasticity or implasticity can be assigned to Jesus, as a figure who both shapes subjectivity and is shaped by the calls to subjectivity? We will begin with traditional and contemporary configurations of Jesus’s subjectivity. In particular, we will examine the contentious debate regarding the subjectivity of Jesus *ala* John Milbank and Slavoj Zizek’s dueling concepts of the monstrosity of Christ, dialectic or paradox.

⁴⁹ Derrida, 1994, 191.

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