**Tangents and Metonymies in Derrida’s “*On Touching–Jean-Luc Nancy”***

***by Francesco Tampoia***

Abstract

At a distance of more ten years from publication (2000 French/2005 English translation), with this essay I will re-read, comment and discuss, in different way and in form of anthological sketch, the Derridean volume ‘On Touching-Jean Luc Nancy’, focusing in particular on its ‘tangents and its metonymies’, its manifold entanglements with the metaphysics of touch and bodily connections. Making use of the geometrical figure of the tangent, Derrida affirms that "[if] philosophy has touched the limit [my emphasis-J. D. ]. of the ontology of subjectivity, this is because philosophy has been led to this limit”. To touch is to touch a limit,a limit without depth or surface. How have we regarded touching in the past? The body?

My thesis is that if Derridean reflection remains mostly anchored to**Tocca in un sol punto, ma un punto che non è nulla: limite senza spessore e senza superficie” (p. 1is** Jean-Luc Nancy’s Corpus, it is inspired nevertheless by a different deconstructive gesture/s similar to different geometric tangents (the deconstructive practice is similar to the tracing of many tangents). **Tocca in un sol punto, ma un punto che non è nulla: limite senza spessore e senza superficie” (p. 169).**Discussing in particular Nancy’s *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, Derrida’essay ‘Deconstruction of Christianity’ and devoting an entire section of the book to the sense of touch in the Gospels, Derrida gives us numerous and special considerations on deconstruction and the deconstruction of touch in Christianity, admitting as well the enormity of this task. A reflection on the Kas Saghafi, “Safe, Intact”: Derrida, Nancy, and the “Deconstruction of Christianity” will follow in an exemplary way.

Following a discussion of touch and the body in both animal and human spheres, in the closing section of the essay, I will comment on the Patrick Llored’s essay *A Philosophy of Touching Between the Human and the Animal: The Animal Ethics of Jacques Derrida*, recently published in *A Companion to Derrida* (2014). This study addresses highly topical questions such as: ‘What does it teach us about touch, but also about the body and the life of the animal? To what extent is it capable of renewing our knowledge [*connaissance*] of non-human life and of generating an animal ethics reconceived from top to bottom? If touching is coextensive with the living body, that implies not only that we place the haptical question at the centre of reflection on the animal, but also that we take into account the consequence that is most disruptive for us today (*A Companion*, p. 512). And conclude along with Patrick Llored that the question of touch promises to transform everything we have understood until now about animality.

Key Words: *Psyché.* Aristotle. Nancy’s*Corpus*. The Deconstruction of Christianity. J. Derrida-Tangent. Kas Saghafi. Animality.

*More* (sections) Aristotle, J. L. Nancy, J. Derrida, Derrida and religion. Deconstruction. Animality.

In the *First Alcibiades* Socrates claims that the soul (*psyché*) is the man himself (*psyché* *estin anthropos*), and that nothing may be more properly called ourselves than the spirit that moves the body.

Can't we write anything without a story, without a stir, spelling trouble in the name of the history of philosophy? (J. Derrida)

PART I*: This is –of the other*

*Psyché*(Preamble)

More than a book, the volume ‘*On Touching-Jean Luc Nancy*’ looks like an unusual, virtual encyclopedia, a complex treatise on the philosophical history of touching and the body in which Derrida does not make plain to us its singular, problematic discourse. Surely, in our minimalist epoch,for its length and richness of '*Beaten Tracks*' the book seems un-producible, un-replicable, also lacking key-words to assist the common reader.

It deals with an imaginary and pleasant journey in the company of Aristotle who, in *Perì Psyches* 422b, asked himself whether touch is a single or plural sense. It is a real problem [aporia], Aristotle adds, whether touch is a single sense or a group of senses. “It is also a problem, what is the organ of touch; is it or is it not the flesh (including what in certain animals is analogous [substituted for "homologous"-Trans.] with flesh) ? On the second view, flesh is 'the medium' [to metaxu] of touch, the real organ being situated farther inward"( TJLN, 5).

From the Aristotle’s *Psyché* to Nancy’s *Corpus*, and the deconstruction of Christianity, Derrida goes in search of the sense of touching, of the different, ambiguous, disconnected consistence of corpus and spirit, springing from the Freudian definition: ‘*Psyché* [Psyche] is extended, *partes extra partes*; she is nothing but a dispersion of indefinitely parceled-out locations in places that divide themselves and never interpenetrate. No fitting inside anything, no overlap everything is outside another outside… Psyche is extended in her coffin. Soon it is going to be shut. Among those present, some are hiding their faces, others are keeping their eyes desperately fixed on Psyche’s body. She knows nothing of this – and that is what everyone knows around her, with such exact and cruel knowledge’ ( TJLN, 12-3).

Without fitting inside anything and with no overlap, everything is outside another outside, or inside another inside. Psyche seems a *special being*, the folding of a becoming-enclosed within the first outside. Allow me, on the way, to remind the reader that Aristotle’s afore mentioned text wasglossed by Derrida for about forty years prior to the publication of *On Touching--Jean Luc Nancy*. In exploring Aristotle’s texts and his influence, in particular within the tradition of *De Anima* (the Latin translation of *Peri psuches*), as well as Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, and simultaneously Hegel’s reflections on the topic, Derrida continually plays with his customary *palintropic* movementback and beyond in his thought- movement. 1 In the paragraph *Spacing* (The Incommensurable…) Derrida eloquently reminds us of Aristotle’s argument: ‘Touch may well exist apart from the other senses, but Aristotle stresses that without it, no other sense would exist. As has been noted, all animals possess this sense, which is also the sense of nutrition’(TJLN, 24).

But, what is the property of the faculty of touch? Is touching anything on its own? Can we imagine the touching of something unextended? According to Aristotle touch is the first and the most important sense. It is the only sense of *immediate* external perception (from im-mediacy) and it is other sense, too. Touch seems to be, at the same time, the possibility of touching and not touching, of touching without touching. *Like a tangent touches a circle*, touch means discrimination as mediation, simultaneous concussion of the external and the internal. Once taken up this path, Derrida can timidly begin to orient himself inside a kind of movement, or rather trend-*mouvance*, can raise the possibility of a new history-of the senses and state also ‘that such a history cannot ignore the “mighty shadow”’ (*ombre immense*) of Hegel.

Poets and painters

Perhaps with Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*, perhaps with Canova in his celebrated sculptural group *Love and Psyché*, perhaps among others with the painter Giulio Romano (is there a link on and about *Truth and Painting, Painting and Truth*?, on the way see the Hegel-Heidegger-Derrida), the solitude of Psyche has been perfectly represented. Her corporeity may not be touched, and, at best, may only be imagined. I am reflecting carefully upon the well-known painting “*The rat of Psyché* ” by William Bouguereau inspired by the famous episode in mythology. The beautiful woman Psyche is being carried off by her immortal lover Cupid. So Bouguereau’s biographer Fronia E. Wissman poetically writes ‘she [Psyche] is literally being transported by love’. Essentially this is what the image represents: Psyche seems lost in a blissful reverie. She is being embraced by the handsome god of love, who, with his elegant wings and idealized features, seems custom made to drive young women into a frenzy of admiration and desire. The two figures seem as one in this work, and together their bodies form a lyrical arrangement. Floating draperies - delicate lilac for Psyche and muted blue-grey for Cupid - complete the composition and give the painting a subtle, sophisticated diagonal emphasis. In passing, the composition of *The Abduction of Psyché* (also known by the French title *Le ravissement de Psyché*) is one of William Bouguereau's most recognizable and famous works. Although the painter was certainly not the first to be fascinated by the legend, *The Abduction of Psyché* was inspired by an episode from Classical mythology. Indeed, the tale of Psyche and Cupid has appealed to many poets and painters over the centuries. The way in which the artist has depicted his version of the myth is what makes this particular image so memorable. The poets, the painters (contra Plato’s judgement on art as mimesis expressed in Book X of *The Republic* ) see many things the common people do not, they touch without And again, (see touching.

This Is My Body (On J. Luc Nancy *Corpus*)

Allow me, now, to close the parenthesis -poets and painters-, and return to my comments concerning *On Touching--Jean Luc Nancy*. F ~~But, let us return to the touch. Can one imagine an extension that is untouchable? To be sure, the act of imagining is neither thinking nor knowing, and nevertheless in no way a complete absence of thought or knowledge. Can one figure for oneself an untouchable extension, if one will? “ It is difficult, except (as Descartes, Kant, and a few others would have it) if an intelligible extension without a body is at issue, precisely there where the understanding passes imagination and sensibility; and except for some insensible sensible (Hegel, Marx, and so on).”(p.16) Ma il dubbio resta: si può immaginare un toccare che toccherebbe qualcosa di inesteso?~~rom a philosophical point of view my question is the same: Can we imagine a touch which should touch something unextended? Similar to a mirror, a full mirror, the image of *Psyché* can be turned at will to reflect what stands at different angles before and behind it. Along the difference between *Psyché and* s*pirit,* the relation is from incommensurable and incommensurable, imagination and imagination, articulation and articulation, imagination and philosophy. Se Psiche ha un corpo, è corporea.If Psyche has a body, if she is a corporeal being, remains nevertheless Resta, tuttavia, intangibile.intangible. At the same time she (Psyche) is a subject as well as a common proper name, designating the principle of life and breathe of soul and the animation of the a-nimal.

Resta, tuttavia, intangibile. ~~Nancy sa che pensare il toccare non può e non deve significare toccare.~~ With his Il filo del discorso, nel suo avvolgersi, ruotare, riaggomitolarsi si gioca dall’inizio alla fine sulle metonimie del toccare, che Derrida vuole offrire con ammirazione all’amico-discepolo Jean-Luc Nancy. usual winding, rotating and curling up of the thread of thought (I call ‘*metonymies* *of touch*)2, Derrida tells us about the admiration of the master for his disciple Jean Luc Nancy, who knows that thinking that touch cannot/must not mean touching. In his words he says that here we are in front of a difficulty. In his words, ‘The conceptual passage, if one may say so, in this argumentation between ‘the extension of the body. . . and the extension of the psyche or thinking ‘(which is a paradoxical extension resisting intuition, perception, and consciousness) is what exceed any measure in them both- and therefore exceeds common measure. That is their common iE dunque la misura comune. È dunque la misura comune. È la loro comune incommensurabilità” (p. 39).ncommensurability’(TJLN, 24). Of course, in hisSu questa storica discussione e/o spiegazione non rifugge dal confrontarsi con Descartes. historical philosophical narrative Derrida cannot avoid confrontation with the two Cartesian substances. WEssendo l’anima unita al corpo, a tutto il corpo, siamo di fronte a una contraddizione doppia: non è plausibile pensare che lo spirito sia estensione nella ghiandola pineale, né pensare l’estensione come un punto.hether the soul is united to the body, to the whole body, we are facing a double contradiction: to think that the spirit as extension is located in the pineal gland (not plausible), or to think of the extension as a point in space.E non è del tutto peregrino ricordare la definizione geometrica di punto che certamente Cartesio ha davanti (il punto è ciò che non ha parte alcuna, cioè che non occupa spazio alcuno), che anche Kant accoglie, fedele per tutta la vita alla geometria euclidea. And here it is not out of place to recall the definition of geometric point which Descartes, the geometer, posits: A point is that which has no part, that is to say, the point is what is not part of any kind and does not occupy any space; the same definition accepted by Kant, faithful to Euclidean geometry for the entirety of his life.

~~But lMa riprendiamo il lungo cammino sul senso del tatto.~~ I sensi sono cinque, tre oggettivi (tactus, visus, auditus), due soggettivi (gustus, olfactus).The senses are five, three objective (tactus, visus, and auditus), two subjective (gustus, olfactus). Secondo certi criteri il primo è il tatto perché è il solo senso della percezione esteriore immediata , quindi più certa.According to some criteria touch is the first and the most important sense because it is the only sense of *immediate* external perception. In *Anthropology from pragmatic point of view* Kant states: the sense of touch, the "knowledge" value of touch is exemplarily portrayed by the hand, the hand of man. Kant, in sum, speaks of the union of spirit and body, of the union of sensibility and touch. Derrida observes that in *Logodaedalus* ‘Nancy evokes the *Anthropology* here and there - we'll get to this -and always in a rather acute, original, and elliptical fashion. Since this is a time when the question of touch as such does not yet interest Nancy, he refers neither to Kant's irony about Descartes' roving speculation nor to a sort of Kantian short treatise of the five senses, and therefore of touch in particular’ (TJLN, 39). Though in ~~Questo, muovendo da altri contesti, hanno pensato dopo di lui Husserl e Heidegger.~~different contexts one could refer to Husserl and Heidegger.

Let us come back to Aristotele con la sua prosa da anatomista ha scritto che “il tatto è il solo senso che sia indispensabile all’esistenza del vivente in quanto tale.Aristotle’s clear prose and take up again the problem of touch. Aristotle writes: ‘Touch is the only sense that the existence of the living as such cannot dispense with. Gli altri sensi non sono destinati ad assicurare l’essere dell’animale o del vivente, ma soltanto il suo ben -essere (435b20-25). The purpose of the other senses is not to ensure the being of the animal or of the living, but only his *well-being* (435b20-25)’ (TJLN, 47).Ma senza il tatto, l’animale non potrebbe esistere” (p. 68). In Corpus , Nancy designa il toccare come un rapporto a sé del mondo, del nostro mondo.Nancy designates the touch as a kind of dealing/report to himself in the world, in our world. Scrive che il nostro mondo ( Corpus ) si tocca da sé, si tocca per diventare mondo, ma anche per uscire da se stesso.Our world *(Corpus)* touches without saying, touches for becoming the world, but also to exit from it. To say that Psyche is extended means that what remains/should remain, as a body or a tangible being,Significa, ancora, ricordare che la sua estensione non è quella di Descartes né quella di Kant. means to state that its extension is neither the same of Descartes nor that of Kant. ‘What is still needed from here on? Derrida’s answer ‘An explanation as to why the *Perì Psyches* of our time is now called *Corpus*, by Jean-Luc Nancy’(TJLN, 65).

San Tommaso ha cristianizzato l’aptologia.And again (‘again, (see The Untouchable, or the Vow of Abstinence’), may we ay weBisogna toccare senza toccare, cioè saper toccare senza toccare, senza troppo toccare, “in questo corpus del tatto non si tratta tanto di fare una lista categoriale delle operazioni che consistono nel toccare quanto di pesare , cioè pensare , ciò che in mille modi si dona al tatto, cioè il corpo, il corpus , in quanto esso pesa.touch without And again, (see touching? Are we fit to touch without touching? ‘Whether thinking is extended or weighed, we have apparently moved from the extension of a Psyche to weight (the soul or thought “is” extended) body weight (a body weighs always), as well as the weight of thought’ (TJLN, 71). Matter is heavy (*pesant*); thinking (*pensant*) has its weigh. E dunque che, in un certo modo pensa ” (p. 98).ToPensare il peso, e dire la pesantezza del pensiero, non è un chiasmo letterario. think about weight and to reflect upon the heaviness of thought is not simply a literary chiasm. I am thinking of a certain Hegel; I also would like to refer to the refined suggestions by Italo Calvino in *Six Memos for the Next Millennium.* My claim here is that nNessuno può negare l’affinità tra pensiero e peso, tra leggerezza e pesantezza, essa è confermata da spostamenti semantici, quali denken e danken , thinking e thanking .obody can deny the affinity between thought and weight, between lightness and heaviness, confirmed, as well, by semantic shifts such as *denken* and *danken, thinking* and *thanking.*

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DerridaE riprende la sua e di Nancy analisi cristiana del tatto : “Tutti i vangeli presentano il corpo cristico non solamente come un corpo di luce e di rivelazione, ma, in modo non meno essenziale, come un toccante e toccato , come una carne toccante-toccata” (p. 132). resumes his *analysis* of Christianity’s relation to touch in § *Tender*. Thus he exposes the paradoxical nature of touch and body according to Christian tradition: ‘All the Gospels present the Critic body not only as a body of light and revelation, but in a hardly less essential way, as a body *touching* as much as *touched,* as flesh that is touched-touching’(TJLN, 99-100). II Vangeli sono in tal senso, se si esclude il Vangelo secondo Giovanni, una sorta di aptica generale .f we exclude the Gospel according to John, the Gospels are, in this sense, a sort of *general haptic.* La vita di Gesù è piena di episodi in cui il toccare è decisivo, per Gesù toccare è anche comunicare, mettersi a diretto con-tatto con gli uomini.The life of Jesus is full of episodes in which touch is decisive. For Jesus “touch is also communicative”; that is he finds himself in direct contact with men. We rFin troppo evidenti le tracce, sparse nell’opera dei padri cristiani, in Agostino, e via di seguito.ead traces of this in the writings of the Christian fathers, such as Augustine, as well as his contemporary Pope Leo Magnus with his *Sermones*. As Derrida suggests ‘one can take the Gospels for a *general haptics’*. Salvation saves by touching, and the Savior, namely the Toucher, is also touched: he is saved, safe, unscathed, and free of damage. Touched by grace’ (Ibid.). Derrida provides examples from the Gospels of salvation by touching: “Jesus the Savior is ‘touching,’ he is the One who touches, and most often with his hand, and most often in order to purify, heal or resuscitate. To save [*Sauver*] in a word. He heals or purifies the leper by touching him” (Matt. 8:3). He “heals Peter’s mother-in-law by touching her hand with his hand” (Matt. 8:15); “heals the blind by touching their eyes” (Matt. 9:29–30); “cures the deaf and the mute” (Mark 7:32–36); “heals and saves from fear” (Matt. 17:7–8); and he even cures death itself by touching a coffin” (Luke 7:13–15). Often (vulnerable and innocent) children are touched by Jesus (Luke 18:15–17). Jesus touches, having been touched to the heart, where he is “first moved and touched”(Ibid. 100–101). According to Derrida ‘Not only is Jesus touching, being the Toucher, he is also the Touched . . . he is there as well *for the touching*, he can and must be touched. This is the condition for salvation- so as to be safe and sound, accede to immunity, *touching*, the Toucher, Him. ‘Or better yet, touching, without touching, that which would come in contact with his body, namely- like a fetish, or the origin of fetishism- his garment, his cloak. It is not the touch that is saving, then, but the faith that this touch signifies and attests’( Ibid.)

Derrida observes that it seems that these literal allusions to touching are more rare or even absent in the Gospel according to John, perhaps because ‘Jesus becomes momentarily untouchable; and John is the one who gives a report of the “Touch me not” (*noli me tangere,* *me mou haptou*) intended for Mary Magdalene at the moment when she is still in tears, near the grave, and has just recognized him (Rabboni! Master!)’ (ibid,). In addition Derrida refers to the motif and the lexicon of touching in the Pauline Epistles, in Corinthians, Colossians, Timothy, Hebrews).

But what happens when one has to touch upon the untouchable? This theme is broached in Nancy’s text *The Experience of Freedom (*1988) where Nancy writes about the figure of touch in the realm of philosophy, which literally and usually never touches anything. Here, Nancy employs the figure of touch in relation to the concept of limits. And considering that ‘this touching, this contact, this tact will have just been able to touch on something untouchable [de l'intouchable] … literally there can only be a figure of touch. One only touches by way of a figure here; the object, the touchable thing, is the untouchable. The touchable is what is impossible to touch’(TJLN, 103).

Furthering this connection Derrida highlights “If philosophy has *touched the limit* [my emphasis-J.D.] of the ontology of subjectivity, this is because philosophy has been led to this limit’ (ibid.). No one has ever touched such an abstract thing as a limit; to touch is to touch a limit. This limit, which philosophy will have touched (upon), finds itself to be at the same time touchable and untouchable. Since there can be only a *figure* of touch; for one is possible only touches by way of a figure, as the touchable is what is impossible to touch; that is, there can be only a “[history] of the untouchable, therefore, of the immunity, the sound, the safe. Save or safe – touching. Is this “good news”? (TJLN, 104).

In expressing reservation on this Nancyan *figure* of touch Derrida intervenes with the query: What is the logical or rhetorical legitimacy, the phenomenological status of that which one cannot “without trepidation” call “the *figure* of ‘touch’ ”? (TJLN, 106). Is the entire tradition of Western philosophy a “haptology”, or better yet, a “haptocentric metaphysics?” And does not deconstructing Christianity risk following an essentially *Christian* logic? Derrida is conscious that today È il Corpus dell’umanità cristiana o addirittura abramica, giunto oggi alla fase di un autosuperamento che forse gli è profondamente proprio. the corpus of Christian or even Abrahamic religion has arrived at a stage of overcoming that perhaps is deeply own. Nel Cristianesimo è centrale la presenza del Corpus, inteso come carne, basti ricordare l’incarnazione, la transustanziazione, la nascita e il rigetto, la sacralità del pane e del vino, hoc est enim corpus meum .In the Christian ideology of origins there exists a central presence of the corpus, which is the *"flesh"*, as one thinks of incarnation, the transubstantiation, the birth and fall, the sacredness of bread and wine, *hoc est enim corpus meum.* Nancy stares at the deconstruction of Christianity, and thus at the deconstruction of the ancient and modern tradition that centers upon body and soul. Dire di Psiche che è estesa, pertanto, significa ricordare che rimane o dovrebbe rimanere, in quanto corpo, tangibile.

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E riprende la sua e di Nancy analisi cristiana del tatto : “Tutti i vangeli presentano il corpo cristico non solamente come un corpo di luce e di rivelazione, ma, in modo non meno essenziale, come un toccante e toccato , come una carne toccante-toccata” (p. 132).Cerca di farlo con alcune tangenti , che meglio rappresentano la sua fenomenologia del toccare, il suo modo tattile di fare filosofia .Until this point in the work, Derrida has mainly commented on Nancy; now he shifts to propose some exemplary stories of fleshCerca di farlo con alcune tangenti , che meglio rappresentano la sua fenomenologia del toccare, il suo modo tattile di fare filosofia . with some *bribes,* which better represent his phenomenology of touch, its *tactile approach* to philosophy*,* taking up anew the afore mentioned concept of the tangent. To make clear his understanding of the topic, “Una tangente tocca una linea o una superficie, ma senza tagliarla, senza una vera intersezione, in una sorta di pertinenza impertinente.Derrida uses a geometrical figure, the tangent, as a key term of the book. He explains: ‘*A tangent touches a line or a surface, but without crossing it, without a true intersection thus in a kind of impertinent pertinence.* Tocca in un sol punto, ma un punto che non è nulla: limite senza spessore e senza superficie” (p. 169).*It touches only one point, but a point is nothing, that is, a limit without depth or surface, untouchable even by way of a figure’**(*TJLN, 131). Moreover, in order to uphold his method or attitude he adds: ‘The necessity of telling a story having to do with this affect and this affection, the compelling urge to pretend one is proffering a fable, and constantly to begin over again, stems no doubt from this impossible alliance of contact and the syncope. They suspend the process in simultaneity, but they also interrupt the synchrony promised by a touch, by the affect of a "self-touching" which, like the imagination, can only feel itself by feeling "its own powerlessness"(I'm using his words, again.), the power of powerlessness, *the possibility of the impossible*. So, I began again, and I already know that I shall proceed here only by a series of tangents. Not only one tangent, but I felt the need- the duty, in truth-to draw a series of other tangents’Ritorna al tatto, ai sensi, e si chiede: che ne è, a questo punto, della divisione dei sensi? (ibid.).

PART II: Part II ~~Nella seconda parte del volume Derrida, che fino a questo momento ha per lo più commentato Nancy, sente il bisogno di proporre alcune storie esemplari della “carne”.~~ *Exemplary stories of the "flesh"*

*Tangents*

What does the division of senses mean? Aristotele ha detto: si può vivere senza vedere, udire, gustare, sentire (nel senso dell’olfatto), ma non si sopravviverà mai un solo istante senza essere a contatto, in contatto.Aristotle reminds us that we can live without vision, audition, olfaction, and gustation; but never survive one moment without being in contact. L’essenza del tatto è l’attività motrice e la mano ne è l’espressione privilegiata, più alta.*The essence of touch is the tractor and the hand is the highest privileged expression*. PreviouslyAnassagora, prima di Aristotele, ha trattato diffusamente della mano, ha detto che le mani permettono all’uomo di essere il più intelligente degli animali, ma il modello di uomo che Anassagora ha in mente è l'uomo che ha le mani e le usa, l'uomo tecnico che proprio in quegli anni in Atene si imponeva a pieno titolo nel contesto sociale., he had dealt extensively with the hand. Anaxagoras said that the hands permit man to be the most intelligent of animals, but the man Anaxagoras has in mind is more or less one who uses his hands for practical ends, that is the technical man, the man in relation with material objects. Nancy, invece, tende a lasciarsi alle spalle la tradizione: “A me sembra che Nancy rompa con queste metafisiche aptocentriste, o comunque ne prenda le distanze.Nancy tends to move away this tradition, and seems to break with metaphysical or quasi metaphysical aptocentristes. Il suo discorso sul tatto non è intuizionista, né continuista, né omogenista, né individualista.His discourse on touch is neither intuitionist nor continuistic, neither homogenistic nor individualistic. What above all he reports to is ‘sharing, parting, partitioning, and discontinuity, interruption, caesura-in a word, syncope’.

Husserl, in Ideen II , ha trattato diffusamente la relazione senziente-sentito, toccante-toccato, soggetto-oggetto; Merleau-Ponty è pervenuto a una sorta di “riabilitazione ontologica del sensibile”; ma Nancy non la condivide, perché non crede alla confusione dell’uno nell’altro, dell’io e dell’altro.Husserl, *Ideen II,* dealt at length with the sensible pairings, sentient-heard, touching-touched, subject-object. Merleau-Ponty, as well, reached a sort of *rehabilitation of ontological sensitive*. Nancy disagrees, disbelieving in the confusion of one with another, of the ego and the other. Né intende ricadere nella ontologia occidentale con il privilegio della vista, tornare all’inizio, all’ontologia greca con l’ intuitus che guida ogni interpretazione della conoscenza, in conformità del primato del “vedere”, come ha fatto Kant, come ha fatto a modo suo Heidegger: “Kant infatti scrive, e Heidegger lo sottolinea: ‘Quale che sia il modo e il mezzo con il quale ( durch welches Mittel ) una conoscenza può rapportarsi a degli oggetti, quello in cui tuttavia essa si rapporta a loro immediatamente ( unmittelbar ), e a cui tende ogni pensiero in quanto mezzo , ècm l’intuizione ( und worauf alles Denken als Mittel abzweckt, die Anschaung )’” (p. 256).Neither does he intends to return to the Western ontology with its privileging of impression, to the Greek ontology with *'intuitus* that guides every interpretation of knowledge, in accordance with the primacy of "representation, image of reality", as Kant did, as quoted by Heidegger: "'To whatever kind of objects one's knowledge may relate itself and by whatever means (*durch welche Mittel*) it may do so, still that through which it relates itself to them immediately (*unmittelbar), and which all thinking as a means has as its goal [Heidegger's italics] is intuition (und worauf alles Denken als Mittel abzweckt [v. Vf. gesp.] ' die Anschauung) "*( TJLN, 202).

Nella Tangente IV Derrida cerca di isolare alcuni motivi tra le diverse eredità filosofiche mantenendo fede alla regola esplicita nel contratto del libro: Le toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy .In *Tangent IV* -Tangency and Contingency, I: The "question of technics" and the "aporias" of Flesh"(contact, at bottom), before outlining a new tangential trajectory Derrida writes: ‘I am not preparing the arguments of a critical debate, even less a polemical one, between all the "contemporary" ways of thinking about the sense of touch that I am simply, in gratitude, trying to identify. It is rather a question of beginning timidly to orient myself inside a kind of movement-or rather trend [mouvance]‘ (TJLN, 216).Nancy ha usato il termine portage per indicare “una partecipazione, una incontestabile prossimità, delle affinità, degli incroci, una sorta di comunità o di contemporaneità del pensiero, della lingua, del discorso.I am following, always in the Nancy’ use of words, the meaning of terms such as "sharing out", participation, indisputable proximity, affinities, crossings, crossovers and cross-breedings-a sort of community or contemporaneity of thinking, language, and discourse. Derrida continues ‘I summarize this under the heading "tangency’, ‘a partitioning that imparts the parts, another departure (other departure is a quotation from Nancy that I shall shortly clarify), another way of proceeding, another writing, as well as the uneasy turbulence of another determination … another experiencing of decision making, another gesture of thought, another experiencing of the body, that is, another body and another *corpus*’ (TJLN, 218). It deals with a chance demanding both critique and deconstruction. It also takes into account division, including dissociations, singularities and diffractions, and, allow me, mental and linguistic metonymies as well as the Ciò che noi chiamiamo tangenza .Ma esse significano anche un’altra cosa, sempre nell’uso alla Nancy che facciamo di questa parola, e cioè una partizione partition che spartisce départage , un’ altra partenza (‘altra partenza’ è una citazione da Nancy che presto preciserò), un altro modo di procedere, un’altra scrittura, e, spesso protetta, dissimulata, appena decifrabile sotto enunciati che sembrano dipendere dalla stessa koiné ” (p. 274). technical process that encompasses human and non-human technology, including organic (what Stiegler calls the ‘organized inorganic’) technology. Nancy speaks of *partage*, the otherness that would follow on the one hand the trajectory of technology, and, on the other, the *beyond of Christianity*, perhaps having in mind his personal experience of a heart transplant.

Yet, Derrida observes, Nancy~~Ma perché Nancy insiste tanto sulla carne?~~Lo fa per avviare la decostruzione del cristianesimo come decostruzione del corpo, dunque del tatto cristiano, ma anche u-manista e antropo-teologico. is searching for the deconstruction of Christianity as a deconstruction of the body ever in a hu-manist and anthropo-theological way. Later on Derrida adds: ~~Il cuore del cristianesimo è la dottrina dell’incarnazione, e basilare per essa è la dottrina dell’ homoousia .~~ I have not done this in order to denounce, or criticize, or even to suspect any-latent or open – *Christianity*. Just as it is neither enough to present oneself as a Christian nor to “believe” or “believe oneself to be a Christian” in order to hold forth in a language that is “authentically” Christian, likewise it is not enough *not* to “believe” or believe oneself and declare oneself *non* Christian in order to utter a discourse, speak a language, and even inhabit one’s body while remaining safely sheltered from all Christianity. This is not about being free of harm, safe, and saved seeking one’s salvation or immunity outside of Christianity. These values would still be Christian ones. That is why, as I have suggested on several occasions, even if there were any sense to or necessity for it, the ‘deconstruction of Christianity” that Nancy has announced seems such a difficult, paradoxical, almost impossible task, always in danger of being exposed as a mere Christian hyperbole’ (TJLN, 220).

In Verso la conclusione Derrida si appella al succo della ricerca di Nancy, in particolare al libro Corpus : “Senza raccogliere, egli raccoglie sulla parola corpus, che soprattutto non si può tradurre semplicemente con corpo, tutti i linguaggi che vengono a ‘dire’ la disseminazione” (p. 355), ricordando che tra i corpi e le immagini dei corpi vi sono sempre degli interstizi, dei limiti, dei bordi. §13 Part III (And to you. The Incalculable) Derrida underlines what, in his view, is the very critical point of Nancy’s research.Following the last pages of *Corpus* seems that we can pick out precisely ‘that which *cannot be picked up or sublated (aufheben)*, that is to say, the dissemination of essence, of the One, and of what confers Oneness on the Being of whatever it may be. But this dissemination is not tied itself to anything like the body, the very body *itself* the being-body of the body, the being-properly the body proper: the"flesh"(TJLN, 284). First of all, Derrida continues, it is important to remember that dissemination pluralizes any singularity that allows one to say ‘the’. Nancy, instead, calls corpus a *sublating dissemination* that does not come upon thebody by way of the body; rather ‘he gathers, without gathering around the word corpus, which can above all not be translated merely “body”(corps), all the way of speaking that come to “tell” of this dissemination’(Ibid.). Additionally, allow me to gloss that the correct and fundamental meaning of “gathering” can be better understood by the expression “laying-open of a relation”( [*Theaetetus*](http://plato.stanford.edu/search/r?entry=/entries/plato-theaetetus/&page=2&total_hits=729&pagesize=10&archive=None&rank=12&query=Plato)208d).

By means of an autobiographic example, Derrida recalls a syntagma that was imposed on him, during years past in order to illustrate that ‘on the multiplicity of deconstructions, hasn't been "there is no 'the' . . . " but "if there is any" [sl'1 y en a] (the pure and unconditional in so many forms: event, invention, gift, forgiving, witnessing, hospitality, and so on-"if there is any") (Ibid.). Each time it becomes necessary to point to *the possible (the condition of possibility) as to the impossible* (my emphasis) ‘The fact remains that this multiplicity announces itself as ‘deconstructive’. It is necessary to account for this analogy or affinity, to say deconstruction in the singular again, in order to say it in the plural in the ‘singular plural’ –and explain at least why in the two syntagmas, the ‘there is’ turns *to a conditional* (‘if there is any’) in one instance and to a *negative modality* (‘there is no…) in the other ( TJLN, 288).

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Nancy has been very clever, Derrida admits, building upon ~~Dando atto a Nancy di aver cercato di farlo con un pensiero iperbolico che mette in gioco, senza riserve, corpo e anima, un pensiero che pone davanti la questione (filosofica) del toccare.~~ a hyperbolic thought that brings into play, unconditionally, body and soul, a thought that advances the philosophical issue of touch. And yet, as an *ironic* philosopher, with his personal way of writing and thinking,him Derrida remainsin search for the proliferation, for the liberty of the mixed, for the matrix, for the grid of multiplies, neither looks for the reduction of language-saying always the same things, nor tells the same story twice, avoiding the simple and the universal. There are deconstructions and deconstructions. In sum, the body is subject to infinite, interminable research.

Through *On Touching-jean-Luc Nancy* Derrida has searched to demonstrate the theological foundations required to think about the body, its propriety and its integrity; an examination that privileges the notion of touch as a kind of contact with such thinking. With roots in Christian thought and in the Christian conception of incarnation, where spirit is made flesh in the body of Christ, this thinking demonstrates the inseparability of Western philosophy and Christian theology.

Once more the haptical inquiry starts again. Touch, which was already on stage, enters the scene. With Psyche. ‘For one can also ask oneself-yet another question-whether this was only an announcement of the pure and simple possibility of a world, a possibility, then, that couldn't see the light of day except by the annulment of its possibility, that is to say, by becoming the impossible or what will have stopped being simply possible after having become present, or rather effective’ (TJLN, 307).

To us theChiude con un invito: “Rimangono da pensare insieme il primo bacio e il suicidio, il principio e l’atto della filosofia autentica, la loro giovinezza e la loro disciplina. invitation: *to be thinking along the first kiss and the suicide, the beginning and the act of true philosophy, their youth and their discipline. Compito impossibile d’una aptologia generale” (p. 363).Impossible task of a general haptology’.*

PART III: Further tangents

Among numerous philosophical (tangential) contributions to the theme, I’ll refer to Kas Saghafi’s essay in which he reviews the Nancyan elaboration of Christianity as a project aimed at the *deconstruction of Christianity*.3 With the essay *Safe, Intact”: Derrida, Nancy, and the “Deconstruction of Christianity”* Kas Saghafi prefers to dwell on the intersection of Derrida and Nancy’s work concerning the topic of religion, and upholds that for Derrida, in general sense, the goal of *religion* (from Latin *re-ligere*) remains above all to gather the living, the intact, the unscathed. In addition, of particular interest in Derridean last writings is the term *salut* which in France has the meaning of greeting, salutation, and importantly salvation. Saghafi observes that Derrida’s view on religion (see *Faith and Knowledge)* may be better understood by reflecting on terms and expressions such as: *safe,* *intact,* the restoration of *unscathed*, *holy*, *neighbor* of *whole*, *salut*, whose physical integrity is intact and also capable of conferring *le salut*. These terms deal with a chain of analogous motifs recalled in a series of dense, elliptic paragraphs of the afore mentioned text, in which Derrida maintains that a discourse on religion- to talk religion/ to talk of religion- cannot be dissociated from a discourse on salvation [*salut*], that is to save, be saved, and/or save oneself. Indeed, the meaning of term unscathed- explained in a footnote, is “that which has not suffered damage or prejudice, *damnum*” (FK, 69–70 n. 16). Thus the word “unscathed” speaks of “the unimpaired”: “the pure, non-contaminated, untouched, the sacred and the holy before all profanation, all wound, all offence, all lesion” (FK, 69–70).’ (SIDN, 449)

On the way let us remember that Hegel speaks of “*the truth as the whole”*. In the same text Derrida argues that the religious is bound up with the convergence of two experiences: the classical two strata or two sources of “religion” which are the experience of *belief* [*croyance*] and the experience of the unscathed, of sacredness, [*sacralité*] or of *holiness* [*sainteté*] (FK, 33).’(SIDN, 450 )

Further into the text he explains: We are here in a space where all self-protection of the unscathed, of the safe and sound [*sain(t) et sauf*], of the sacred (*heilig*, holy) must protect itself against its own protection, it own police, its own power of rejection, in short, against its own*,* which is to say against its own immunity. It is this terrifying but fatal logic of *the auto-immunity of the* *unscathed* that will always associate Science and Religion (FK, 44, paragraph 37).( SIDN, 450 )

He argues, furthermore, that there is a necessity for’every religion or all sacralization also to be healing [*guérison*] – *heilen*, *healing* [*in English*] – health, *salut*, or promise of a cure – *cura*, *Sorge* – horizon of redemption, of the restoration of unscathed, of *indemnification*). The same must also be said for the English “holy,” neighbor of “*whole*” (“entire, intact,” therefore “safe, saved, unscathed in its integrity, immune”) . . . Whoever possesses *le* “*salut*,” that is, whose physical integrity is intact, is also capable of conferring *le* “*salut*.” “To be intact” is the luck that one wishes, predicts or expects. It is natural to have seen in such perfect “integrity” a divine grace, a sacred meaning. By its very nature, divinity possesses the gift of integrity, of *salut*, of luck, and can impart it to human beings. (FK, 74–75 n. 25, paragraph 39, citing Benveniste 1973, (SIDN, 451 )

Thus, the “absolute imperative” or the “law of salvation [*loi du salut*]” is “saving the living as intact, the unscathed, the safe [*le sauf*] (*heilig*), which has the right to absolute respect, restraint [*retenue*], modesty” (FK, 49, paragraph 40). This intentional attitude, Derrida continues, ‘bears several names belonging to the same family: respect, modesty, restraint, inhibition, *Achtung* (Kant), *Scheu*, *Verhaltenheit*, *Gelassenheit* (Heidegger)” all of which mark a restraint or holding back [*halte*] in general, constituting “a sort of universal structure of religiosity” (FK, 49, paragraph 40). These terms open the possibility of the religious, a possibility that itself remains divided. On the one hand, it involves “respectful or inhibited abstention before what remains sacred mystery, and what ought to remain intact or inaccessible, like the mystical immunity of a secret.” On the other hand, this holding back “opens an access without mediation or representation” to what remains unscathed, but “not without an intuitive violence” (FK, 49).’ (SIDN, 451 )

Patrick Llored in his essay *A Philosophy of Touching Between the Human and the Animal: The Animal Ethics of Jacques Derrida*,4 considers what he sees as the most important question of Derrida’s late philosophy, the question of animality. In a lecture given on subject of animals at the Third Cerisy conference devoted to his work, in 1997, entitled “The autobiographical animal”, Derrida criticized Emmanuel Levinas for his anthropocentrism towards the animals. He polemized thus: If I am responsible for the other … isn't the animal more other still, more radically other, if I might put it that way, than the other in whom I recognize my brother, than the other in whom I identify my fellow or my neighbor? If I have a duty … toward the other, wouldn't it then also be toward the animal, which is still more other than the other human, my brother or my neighbor? 5

Llored maintains not only that the question of animal is at the heart of deconstruction, but also that Derrida’s late thought presents a philosophy of the living being, included non-human life. In his evaluation of touching Llored calls upon *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy* as the basis for a Derridean animal ethics. ‘It is the massive presence of animal figures that confers on the major Derridean concepts such as *différance*, the trace, the supplement, the *pharmakon* and, finally, touch [*le toucher*], their primary meaning’.6 Aristotle himself writes of the ‘coextensivity’ of touch and living body. ‘What does it teach us about touch, but also about the body and the life of the animal? To what extent is it capable of renewing our knowledge [*connaissance*] of non-human life and of generating an animal ethics reconceived from top to bottom? If touching is coextensive with the living body, that implies not only that we place the haptical question at the center of reflection on the animal, but also that we take into account the consequence that is most disruptive for us today: a reconsideration of our relation to the animal through the question of touch and everything that it involves, as much from the side of what I will call the politics of animality as from the side of our ethical relation to animals’.7 The question of touch must be able to transform everything we have understood until the present day regarding animality, beginning with our power over it.

**Notes**

\*Jacques Derrida, On Touching-jean-Luc Nancy, Stanford University Press Stanford, California English translation © 2005 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University, henceforth TJLN. Originally published in French in 2000 under the title Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy © 2000, Editions Galilee.

1) Sean Gaston, *Starting with Derrida: Plato, Aristotle and Hegel,* London and New York Continuum, 2007. In the second part of the book, *‘Histories- of the senses’*, Gaston deals with the New history of the senses.

2)Metonimy=a rhetoricalfigure of speech that consists of the use of the name of one objector concept for that of another to which it is related, or of which it is apart, as “scepter” for “sovereignty,” or “the bottle” for “strong drink,”or “count heads (or noses)”

for “count people”.

3) Kas Saghafi, *Safe, Intact”: Derrida, Nancy, and the “Deconstruction of Christianity”* published in A companion to Derrida / First Edition, ed. by Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor. © 2014. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd in *A Companion to Derrida* 2014. In this paragraph I follow in part the volume *A Companion to Derrida* 2015, henceforth SIDN,449.

4) Patrick Llored, *A Philosophy of Touching Between the Human and the Animal: The Animal Ethics of Jacques Derrida*, in *A Companion to Derrida* 2014.

5)[Derrida, J.](http://www.tandfonline.com/action/doSearch?action=runSearch&type=advanced&result=true&prevSearch=%2Bauthorsfield%3A(Derrida%2C+J.)) 2008 . *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Edited by: Willis New York : Fordham University Press . [2006] 2008, pp. 106–107)

6) Patrick Llored, *A Philosophy of Touching Between the Human and the Animal: The Animal Ethics of Jacques Derrida*, in *A Companion to Derrida* 2014. p. 509

7) Ibid p.512