Postmodern Identity Politics and the Social Tyranny of the Definable

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In what we are now used to calling postmodern times, discourses about race and gender are characteristically fraught with ambiguity. Various unprecedented gender identities have emerged in these dynamic times and have asserted themselves in concrete ways, claiming political rights, gaining economic power, and acquiring social legitimacy in a wide spectrum of practices ranging from a new female workforce invading previously all-male professions to gay and lesbian marriages and the going-public of alternative hybrid genders displaying their differences in transvestite performances and drag shows. Many new voices have spoken up on behalf of racial or ethnic minorities that have emphasized their cultural distinctness, even in making a bid to be recognized as fully integral components of a now unmistakably multicultural society.

While such conspicuous and colorful new identities have successfully asserted themselves, at the same time the idea of identity has been eroded from within by the very logic or *ill*logic of postmodern thinking, which does not take any identity as more than an arbitrary invention or convention: identity is considered to be at most a purely heuristic construct. The hard-nosed identity politics of the 1960s have come to seem impossible after the pervasive deconstructions of identity that gained ever greater currency, especially through the 1980s and 1990s. And yet the proliferation of new claims to identity has hardly abated.

Can some strands of postmodern theory give us critical insight into and sensitivity towards what identity and its claims consist in? Such theoretical reflection should serve at least to sharpen our awareness of the ultimate indefinability of identity. Whatever it is that makes human beings what they are is, in the end, *not* reducible to identical terms. So far, perhaps, most of us working in the academy today and in the variously theoretical disciplines would tend to agree. However, widely divergent pedigrees for this kind of insight can be produced, and the stated consensual premise concerning the ultimate indefinabilty of identity turns out to be only the beginning of seemingly irresolvable controversy.

Anti-identitarian thinking seems at first to belong to radical and iconoclastic movements aiming to liberate individuals from static myths inherited from the past and purportedly fixed in stone by tradition. Paradoxically, however, this emancipatory vision can also be cast in apparently traditional theological terms through reference to the image of God: our being made in the image of an *infinite* God is, at the same time, our being infinitely open and *in*definable as any sort of identical or essential nature. This is the consequence of God's infinity, which no language or knowledge can encompass. More precisely, a deeper insight into the non-identity of individuals belongs to *negative* theology, that is, to the admission that God is *un*knowable in any definable concepts or terms. In classical negative theologians such as John Scott Eriugena, the unknowability of God extends to the unknowability and thus also to the non-identity of individuals in general in their deepest core.[1]

The pervasive, almost irresistible privileging of what can be defined and specified and claim rights for itself in a democratic society supposedly based on argument and rational justification, including self-justification, entails certain liabilities and susceptibilities to being abused. The focus on definable identities seems to have been necessary for social progress, yet it has also led to some systemic distortions. For not only those whose identity can be well-defined have needs and a claim to protection and respect. In the overall scheme of things, those who have not yet

come to any developed degree of conscious or even combative awareness of self—as well as certain parts of us that have no individuated, isolable identity—are just as important and often even more in need of benign fostering. But, in the politics of identity, only those identifiable as belonging to some definite group are recognized and accorded rights and even privileges. If you do not have a label—a socially marketable or a politically appreciable distinctive identity that can give you a publicly recognized status, you have no social capital and no political leverage— you are no one. This, too, builds invidious biases into the social system and its communicative practices.

In order to make a case for the non-identical and to defend those persons and aspects of life and existence that fall below the threshold of identity and its claims, we need to critically examine the basis for the widespread vindication of identity in contemporary society. It proves to be complex. There is a confluence of inspirations and derivations in their genealogies that can make the agenda of these identity-based regional, gender, class, or special-interest groups and movements conflictual, or at least confusing.

Are these ideologies of identity informed by the structuralist insight into the relativity of all oppositional terms that lies at the foundation of the critical theory revolution of the last several decades, especially since the 1970s? Ferdinand Saussure famously maintained that in language that there are only differences without positive terms, and this insight was carried over and applied to culture generally by, among others, Claude Levi-Strauss in anthropology and Roland Barthes in semiotics. This structuralist theoretical paradigm entailed the valorization of difference—and consequently the self-assertion of their different identities by non-mainstream groups under the banner of their being different but not less entitled than those belonging to majority identity groups.

Or are the new ideologies of identity beholden rather to the Enlightenment ideal of promoting free-standing individuals? This latter agenda has also been important in fueling a wide spectrum of liberation movements since the 1960's.[2] The assumptions of the Enlightenment have been placed under a heavy pressure of critique within the ambit of theory, especially postmodern theory, which is generally *anti*-Enlightenment in its premises and persuasions, since Enlightenment was perhaps the leading project of modernity. Even the philosophy of the Frankfurt school itself, for all its continuity with Enlightenment thinking, made programmatic especially in Habermas's thought, was based on a deep sense of the ambiguities inherent in the *dialectic* of Enlightenment, whereby the Enlightenment was charged with producing myths of its own and thereby leading to the totalitarianism of consumer society.[3]

Some recent revisions of identity theory take stock of the backlash against identity politics from left, right, and center, both within the academy and within political movements themselves. Such revisionist efforts take note of the reversal of the positive valence of identity in the discourse surrounding the liberation movements on behalf of disenfranchised minorities of a few decades before.[4] These authors attempt to defend identity politics and even a certain realist theory of identity. They admit the anti-essentialist arguments showing that identities are socially constructed and nevertheless insist that "identities can be no less real for being socially and historically situated."[5] In the end, they wish to defend the concept of identity and its relevance, despite the recent critiques provoked by its excesses: "We . . . believe that these critiques of

identity are largely mistaken, too often based on anecdotes about incidents where specific groups used poor political judgment rather than empirical studies of identity-based movements from which a larger analysis of their effects can emerge" (3). Like Habermas, such new proponents of identity turn away from the dominant trends of postmodernism in order to reaffirm something of a classic modern vision of progressive social liberation. But what does such an affirmation entail?

Especially dear to the ideology of the Enlightenment, individuals are discovered as valuable in themselves and not only in their relations within the social order, in which they are good for performing useful functions, delivering differentiated services such as those of butcher, baker, or candlestick maker. The individual's value is not functional, but absolute. Historically, the Bible and Judeo-Christian culture have played a key role in bringing about this affirmation of the unconditional value of the individual person. The individual is no longer essentially qualified as male or female, slave or free, Greek or Jew (Galatians 3: 28). All are equally and infinitely valuable in the sight of God. Such a notion of unconditioned individual identity and worth emerges as a concept from theological discourse. Particularly Saint Paul's role here has been key to recent discussion among philosophers.[6]

The Bible declares that Adam is made in the image of God. When God became something of a dubious hypothesis for Enlightenment thinkers, the human individual, newly discovered in previously unsuspected freedom and potential for self-realization, stepped forward in a bright new light. Without a transcendent foundation for value, the autonomous Enlightenment individual in important ways became an absolute value in himself. (At this stage in modern history, the generic individual was usually designated simply as *he*, though many women, beginning with the revolutionary *tricoteuses* [knitters]*,* were in fact very active and influential in disseminating enthusiasm for the new outlook.) Individual identity and the autonomy it claims is, in crucial ways, itself the invention of the Enlightenment, although the basis of it is borrowed from biblical religion and ethics especially as interpreted by Protestantism since the sixteenth century, with its emphasis upon the single individual directly face to face with God.

Theology offered the description of God as the source and ground of all being. God alone is unconditioned being. All else is derived from him and is therefore *conditioned* being. Eventually, however, absolute value was transferred from God to the human individual. This was an inevitable result of the proclamation of the Incarnation—that God became man. Such was the central thrust of Christianity for Enlightenment thought, as one can see, for example, from Hegel's philosophy of religion.[7] But then the problem arose of a plurality of absolutes or of claims to be valuable in oneself and not only in relation to some greater whole, within which one functioned. The claim to self-grounded, self-sufficient, self-generating value persists, but now in a fractured world, where all is no longer placed under the one supreme, unique source of value affirmed by monotheism. The death of God was the birth of the autonomous individual self with a claim to unconditional value. Theoretically, each individual is an origin of unconditioned value in and for himself or herself, just as theologically God is the unconditioned, ultimate source of value and good. In practice, however, rights and privileges for human individuals can only be granted and guaranteed on a very relative basis. Each person's absolute value is, in fact, qualified and severely restricted by that of everyone else. Each other person has exactly the same claim to being valued absolutely for him- or herself alone.

The gain in intrinsic value for the individual was at the same time, in effect, a loss of value based on the individual' s playing a part in a greater whole. This registers in dramatic ways in various cultural expressions of existential *Angst*, such as certain works of Expressionism like Edvard Munch's "The Scream," or in the argument for suicide as made, for example, by Albert Camus in *Le mythe de Sysiphe* (1942). The modern, supposedly liberated and apparently valorized individual is also *de*valued by being made valuable only for him or herself alone: s/he has no foundation for his or her attempt to be and mean. What worked for God is very difficult for a human individual to sustain. To create and emanate value from oneself alone is divine, but the human way can only be to create and transmit value through interacting with others. Humans become valuable by serving purposes more significant than themselves: existing for themselves alone as mere particulars rather than in relation to always larger wholes, they turn out to be vain and empty.

However, Enlightenment ideology has encouraged and keeps encouraging individuals, whether alone or in groups, to claim unconditional value for themselves. The premise of this claim is that every individual is entitled to the full privileges of value-in-him-or-herself. This is what Kant in his moral philosophy called being an "end-in-oneself" (*Zweck an sich*). This assumption leads to movements of various types militating for the rights of individuals of one group or another that for some reason seem to be denied the rights and privileges of being valued for their own sake alone. These movements are typically about self-assertion; they focus on *class* interests as extensions of *self*-interest that is simply made collective. Their common premise is the Enlightenment valorization of the individual as such and without necessary relation to anything greater or more important.

There is in this ideology of the individual an absoluteness and inviolability about each individual *I* that is at least quasi-religious. As unconditional, the value of the individual person is derived or borrowed from the absolute value of the Supreme Being. And yet all rights for any group or individual must be negotiated against the rights of others. This cannot be avoided in the social context, even though it did not apply in the theological context, where God is indeed one and only. Therefore, as we translate this idea of being valuable in and for oneself from the theological to the secular sphere, we need an appreciation not just of the unconditionality but also of the relativity of rights. Every individual does have an infinite dignity and worth, but not in virtue of their identity as defined differentially against others' identities. This unconditional worth has to be based on what in the individual cannot be identified or delimited in any definable way. This has been theorized by philosophers from Jean-Luc Nancy to François Jullien and Giorgio Agamben in various ways as "the common."[8] The "nothing" or no determinate identity that we all share in common is actually worth more in our valuation as human beings than any distinguishing trait or characteristics. It is in this common being alone that we are all equal.

A strong sense of the limitation of our rights by those of others is needed because of the tendency to absolutize the rights of any given class of individuals who come to self-consciousness and assert themselves, acquiring identity and voice, even, for example, through channels of social communication such as literary theory itself. All such organs of self-expression, as means of communicating, are the special concern of theory. They are intrinsic to how any identity comes to be significant and to how it signifies itself. But beyond the contingent relativities determining which individual identities emerge into visibility and self-assertion, there is an ethical question of

relation to others or to the Other (in terms, for example, of Emmanuel Levinas's ethics) that forces us to look beyond the absoluteness of any one individual's or group's claim to value.

The seminal inspiration of the human rights movement is the idea that certain rights are natural and universal and ought to be guaranteed quite independently of history or social context. They are taken as context-transcendent and are advocated as applicable irrespective of local or regional or cultural or any other contingent norms. However, in any explicit and formulated rendition, they are not culturally neutral and do not come from nowhere. Any specific and concrete formulation of what someone declares to be universal and absolute creates a disequilibrium: other contingent norms are threatened by an absolute. All systems of value can aim at the absolute and universal, but only on condition of not appropriating it for any particular finite code and language.[9]

Disability theory can be pondered here as an example. The rights of the handicapped require special attention and provision. There is even an absolute ethical imperative behind this. However, when these rights are absolutized in specific forms, they risk infringing on the rights of others. Loading and unloading wheel chairs on buses in big cities at peak hours, for example, can cause traffic jams that bring circulation to a standstill (especially when the lift mechanism refuses to function properly). This is certainly tolerable, up to a point, but there are nevertheless limits. Those who are not officially designated as handicapped are in many ways weak and vulnerable too. The stresses and strains of public travel can cause illness and injury to anyone, not just to those certified as disadvantaged and wearing an official badge to that effect. This is where there has to be negotiation and balancing—weighing of which rights are to take precedence when and where. Some find themselves often confronted today with situations where no one without a handicapped sticker on their car can find any place to park, while rows of handicapped-reserved places remain empty day and night.

One theoretical tendency of movements like disability rights is to create the fiction of a generality of normal people who do not have special needs. But this fiction of the "normal," too, is an invidious labeling. An ironic reversal has occurred when rather than complaining about being discriminated against through presumably stigmatizing categories, like homosexual or black or female, a particular identity group is able to exploit its status as minority and presumably disfavored in order to gain advantage and claim special privileges and compensations. In many competitive activities, like seeking jobs or applying for admission to universities, being in some special minority category can prove to be a distinct advantage. The claim for enfranchisement on an equal basis mutates into a stealing of privilege in the name of some particular category or group and its preferential treatment. Easily identifiable, publicly recognized categories become the basis for special rights, but there are many kinds of weakness and disadvantage that do not fall into such categories, or are at least not easily identifiable as doing so.[10]

The tyranny of identity, of the recognizable category and label, has become pervasive in our society. People are treated in terms of their definable characteristics and the discriminating traits by which they fall into various categories. The digital logic of 1 or 0, such as reigns in administrative milieus, furthermore, dictates that you either are or are not disadvantaged or

deserving. It ignores the fact that all of us are these things rather in various ways and in infinitely varying degrees and according to variable circumstances.

Those without any special label may be the most apt *not* to be represented. A politics which manipulates power or advantages always on behalf of what is defined and categorized builds a prejudice into the system. In fact, these are the same epistemological tendencies that Cornel West analyzed as having engendered white supremacy and the demotion of blacks as a race in the first place[11]: "observing, comparing, measuring, and ordering of the physical characteristics of bodies" (49) led to a certain type being perceived as ideal and normative. To this extent, the mania for the special categories of identity politics is the perpetuation of an invidious and oppressive system.

This sort of epistemic problem has long been a source of concern in national politics steered, or at least deflected, by special-interest groups. Pretending that all that exists and needs to be cared for humanly is parceled out into definable groups with labels blinds us to a deeper level of reality, human and even non-human. As in much Marxism, the mistake is made of treating all reality, including ourselves, as at our disposal, as exhaustively comprehended by our categories. We need instead to foster greater sensitivity towards the deep vulnerabilities in the human mind and body that remain unidentified in explicit social terms, as well as to what transcends the human and thereby resists the totalizing systems of human beings and yet nevertheless demands to be respected as well (ecology or nature and divinity or life itself are prime examples).

In the postmodern perspective, there is a degree of choice about identities, since they are recognized as constructed. It is not that we have no identities, but we do not simply *have* them. We own them and appropriate them in ways we freely choose. Like the dead God who, once dead, becomes an obsession present everywhere, according to Freud,[12] so the deconstructed identity is not done away with but is made into an obsession with identity, an obsession that threatens to eclipse concern for what is not so easily identifiable. In a more productive reaction to this situation of shattered and reasserted identity, we accept the challenge to take responsibility for our identities.

We should, furthermore, recognize that there is always a degree of non-identity in every identity that we may choose to assume. The non-identical may be our deepest being and "nature."[13] Here, again, nature may come back from beyond the obliterations that modern and postmodern culture have perpetrated against it. It may be, then, that race, for example, should be a criterion in hiring, but it should also be recognized as an artificial construct used for pragmatic purposes: the hiring agency must take responsibility for its use of such a criterion. This bias in policy should not be mystified as natural justice. It is the result of a certain politics. And politics means taking up the cause of a certain party rather than keeping an equal measure for all or "regarding no persons," as an older Scriptural idiom put it concerning God's unbiased regard for all (for example, in James 2: 1-9).

Without careful attention to the non-identifiable, to what is indeed no person and remains virtually invisible because unidentified by discourse, identity politics are at risk of becoming an attempt to make exclusionary tactics work in favor of a group that has been harmed by those very tactics in the past rather than to escape or at least to exit from the system of binary

opposition and oppression. The result can at best be the attempt to achieve retribution for past wrongs rather than to right the system for the future.

I wish, then, to voice a plea on behalf of what or who is no one or nothing identifiable. The non-identity of what is deepest and most precious in human beings is apt to be forgotten for lack of any label or discursive marker. The order of identity is an order of discourse. It is apt to distort or suppress the *other* order or *dis*order that subtends every discursive, artificial system of instituted significances. This other, sacred sphere of existence is what Georges Bataille seeks to gain access to through sacrifice and festival. It is also what Michel de Certeau traces through Christian traditions in his "heterologies."[14] It is what has been held sacrosanct as the divine throughout the history and especially the pre-history of cultures.

I have endeavored to show here how certain recent, let us say, loosely, "postmodern" theorists of identity have brought out ways in which the very notion of identity escapes treatment by an objective logic that would enable it to be deliberately advocated and directly established in any straightforward way. And yet the practical applications of identity politics often still tend to conceive identity in individualistic terms and as something other than just a relation. They conceive it as something substantive rather than relational to the extent that they make unilateral assertions of identity. The dialectic between the claims of identity in the style of the Enlightenment and the deconstruction of identity following the insights of post-structuralist theory can be traced, as we have seen, in some of the most highly influential work on the politics of identity down to Cornel West and Judith Butler.[15]

Identity can come back in postmodern thought as an indefinable sort of *non*-identity. Identity is one of the primary concepts of metaphysical tradition, but it can also return after the post-structuralist critique of metaphysics in an unsettled and unsettling form, a kind of return of the repressed. Non-identity ("das nicht Identische") is a key concept for Theodor Adorno—or rather the key to moving beyond conceptual thinking—in his philosophy of "negative dialectics."[16] Of course, we need to think in terms of identities in order to think beyond them. All this can be considered to lie broadly within the tradition of the Enlightenment and yet to emphasize the self-critical turn whereby the Enlightenment illuminates and exposes its own myths, including that of identity, when it is construed as a sort of pure or natural entity. Enlightenment in this way, along this critical path of thinking, becomes the dialectic of Enlightenment.

Clearly, fundamental issues in philosophy are here engaged that do not admit of definitive answers but turn on questions that must remain inevitably controversial. Still, in any case, it is imperative that we recognize something as not resolvable in verbal terms at the bottom of all our discourses. A crucial and difficult question of philosophical logic is whether that indefinable Namelessness which elusively appears here should be recognized as difference par excellence, as the absolutely and indescribably unique, or as being without any identifying difference at all. Or perhaps as the absolutely universal? Difference is not predicative but appellative: like the proper name as it is theorized by Franz Rosenzweig, it names unique being that cannot be said or be linguistically determined. It can, nevertheless, be invoked or called upon as a difference that *could* be made by one who opts to respond.[17]

Issues of recognizing racial, gender, and class differences have been cast in a new, original light by a number of recent political and cultural theorists thinking along these apophatic, non-identitarian lines.[18] Especially theological approaches by feminists open up a space of the apophatic, which transcends the oppositional logic of much now institutionalized gender discourse.[19] A new generation of American feminist theological thinkers, overcoming traditional tensions that polarize the European and American approaches, have begun to converge with French feminism. French feminists, including eminently Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, have long pursued a re-inscription of female identity, whereby the identity of woman is not simply asserted against that of man or as equal, since that is typical of the oppositional logic that has proved inadequate in the postmodern view, but as irreducibly different.

The non-identical may seem hardly worth worrying about. It has no face or front, nor any constituency behind it. But if we lose sight of it, the conflicts between different identities can only tragically battle out their differences unto death or, at best, effacement of one another. Most importantly, it is necessary to discern and retain this elusive dimension of the non-identical in order to deal in a more supple manner with the identities that are overtly declared: we must remember that they do not declare everything and that they in fact inevitably dissemble what is most important about any one of us.

NOTES

[1] Thomas Carlson in *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and the Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), explores the anthropological relevance of John Scott Eriugena and other negative theologians in order to argue that humanity is without any definable identity. What defines human nature is paradoxically its lack of any essential, defining characteristics. I have treated negative theologians including Eriugena in *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), vol. 1. Other contemporary philosophers, for example, Slavoj Zizek in *The Fragile Absolute—or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000), likewise employ often highly heterodox theology in their questionings of identity politics.

[2] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990) and Jane Flax, *Disputed Subjects* (London: Routledge, 1993) could count among innumerable possible examples as representatives of this tendency.

[3] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1944).

[4] Witness to widespread questioning of identity politics is borne by Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: Norton, 2006).

[5] Linda Martín Alcoff, Michael Hames-García, Satya P. Mohanty, Paula M.L. Moya, eds., *Identity Politics Reconsidered: Future of Minority Studies* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), p. 6.

[6] See Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) beyond the usual references to Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: La fondation de*

l'universalisme (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), trans. Ray Brassier as *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and Giorgio Agamben, *Il tempo che resta: Un commento alla lettera ai Romani* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000), trans. Patricia Dailey as *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[7] This genealogy is suggestively treated by Mark C. Taylor in *Erring: A Postmodern Atheology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[8] Jean-Luc Nancy, *Déconstruction du christianisme*, vol. 2: *L'Adoration* (Paris: Galilée, 2010), p. 12. François Jullien, *De l'universel, de l'uniforme, du commun et du dialogue entre les cultures* (Paris: Fayard, 2008).

[9] Cf. Critical reflections concerning human rights by Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Il potere soverano e la vita nuda* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), vol.1, p. 92 ff, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen as *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[10] What I am criticizing here is not preferential treatment per se but rather the hypocritical representation of it as "fairness." Some of the perverse tendencies of egalitarian ideologies inherited from the Enlightenment are examined by Stephen T. Asma, *Against Fairness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Asma champions an ideal of justice against narrow Enlightenment ideas of fairness and equality that ignore pervasiveness and inescapability of exceptions. In a somewhat similar vein, Stanley Fish advocates for favoritism in articles in the *New York Times*. See, for example: http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/07/favoritism-is-good/

[11] Cornel West, "A Genealogy of Modern Racism," chapter 4 of *Prophesy Deliverance! An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982).

[12] Sigmund Freud, *Totem und Tabu* (1912/13) and *Der Mann Moses und der monotheistische Religion* (1939) in *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1950).

[13] A crucial source for thinking the non-identical is Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1966).

[14] De Certeau, *La Faibless de croire* (Paris: Seuil, 1987). Bataille, *L'expérience intérieure* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).

[15] See, for example, Judith Butler, "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism,'" in Judith Butler and Joan Scott, *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[16] Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1966), trans. E. B. Ashton as *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 1973).

[17] For Rosenzweig, see *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988; originally 1921), trans. William W. Hallo, *The Star of Redemption* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).

[18] See, for instance, essays in John Rajchman, ed., *The Identity in Question* (New York: Routledge, 1995) and in particular by Homi Bhabha, "Freedom's Basis in the Indeterminate," pp. 47-62. For Bhabha, post-colonial poets Derek Walcott and Sonja Sanchez, responding in the "disjunctive present," show how "Claims to identity must never be nominative or normative" (55).

[19] Catherine Keller, "Rumors of Transcendence: The Movement, State, and Sex of 'Beyond'" and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "God the Many-Named: Without Place and Proper Name" in John Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, eds., *Transcendence and Beyond: A Postmodern Inquiry*

(Indiana University Press, 2007). See, further, Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).